



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED MINUTES

**Virtual Meeting Due to Sonoma County's Shelter in Place Order
August 27, 2020 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tawny Tesconi	Don McEnhill	John Nagle
Curt Nichols	Neysa Hinton	Cary Fargo
John Dell'Osso		

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Austin Maners	Paul Martin	Jennielynn Holmes	Bill Smith
Doug Lipton	Evan Wiig	Taj Hittenberger	Michelle Whitman
Jan McFarland			

STAFF PRESENT:

Bill Keene, General Manager; Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Jen Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator; Leslie Lew, Stewardship Specialist; Kathleen Marsh, Stewardship Supervisor; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

Chair Dell'Osso called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

Public Comment

No public comment on items not on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

Curt Nichol motioned to approve the minutes from June 25, 2020 as is, and John Nagle seconded the motion. All were in favor, with one abstention from Kristina Tierney, who was not in attendance at the June meeting.

General Manager's Report Out

- Sonoma County is dealing with a third fire in four years. Staff are busy working in the Emergency Operations Center and are assisting with the County's Watershed Task Force as initial evaluations of fire-related impacts to the Russian River and coastal watersheds are completed. The fires are impacting Ag + Open Space properties and we will do a complete update at a future meeting.

- Legislative Services Agreement with consultant Rebecca Marcus will go to the Board on September 22, 2020.
- The grant and acceptance of a conservation easement over Parcel J, at the end of Beverly Way near Chanate in Santa Rosa, is going to the Board also on September 22, 2020.
- The Estero Americano Coast Preserve is going to the Board on October 6, 2020 to approve the initial public access work for trails and signs.
- The Mattos Dairy near Roblar Road is going to the Board for approval of a conservation easement.
- The new Lawson trail at Hood Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve is now open to the public. We are coordinating with Regional Parks on outreach. The trail is about two miles and is above Oakmont off of Pythian Road and goes all the way to the top of the ridge, with amazing views of the Sonoma Valley.
- A new Advisory Committee member joined the meeting tonight, Kristina Tierney. She introduced herself to the other members and staff. She is a Sonoma Valley native and studied earth sciences. She has worked for public agencies and now is with the City of Sonoma doing conservation and protection work.

Subcommittee Report Out

The Advisory Committee currently has one active subcommittee, the Matching Grant Program. Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator, announced that the application deadline for Matching Grant projects has been extended from August 31, 2020 to September 30, 2020 due to the fires. There will be a subcommittee October 13, 2020 to go over applications, then application results will be brought to the October 22, 2020 Advisory Committee meeting.

Grazing Program

Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager, introduced a PowerPoint presentation on the Ag + Open Space Grazing Program. She explained that three staff members from Stewardship would be making the presentation: Kathleen Marsh, Stewardship Supervisor; Leslie Lew, Stewardship Specialist; and Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician. Ms. Marsh talked about the benefits of grazing, types of arrangements currently being used, and future grazing opportunities. Ms. Taylor spoke about several properties being used for grazing and how grazing can enhance biodiversity and habitats. Ms. Lew discussed the grazing project on Calabazas using sheep and goats who eat the yellow star thistle. It is a challenging area to graze but the program was successful last year and this year with our current contract with Sweetgrass Grazing. That contract is in place until 2022. Ms. Marsh spoke about future grazing on the Young Armos property which is a 46-acre District owned property. Stewardship staff plan to establish grazing on the property in Spring 2021. Committee members asked questions and made comments after the presentation. For more information, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Marsh.

ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program

Mr. Keene introduced the Agricultural Support and Protection Emergency Matching Grant Program, which the Board authorized in July 2020. Misti Arias, Acquisition Manager, did a brief overview of the program and what the expectations are and what Ag + Open Space is hoping to achieve. Ms. Kuszmar added that agriculture in Sonoma County has been acutely affected by COVID-19. In July the Board authorized Ag + Open Space to move forward with this program, which will provide



emergency Matching Grant Program funding to support farms and ranches and help keep them in production. Ag + Open Space met with our Ag Advisory Team to get feedback. The application and evaluation process will be streamlined to be simple and accessible. Ag + Open Space will get the materials out, both in English and Spanish, as soon as possible. The information will be on the Ag + Open Space website as well. For more information, you can contact Ms. Kuszmar.

Matching Grant Program ASAP Program Committee Designation

Mr. Keene explained that this program is new to us, and it took several meetings with the Ag Advisory Team and others to come up with the program parameters. It is similar to the original Ag + Open Space Matching Grant Program, and there may be conflicts of interest, but that will be addressed. Mr. Keene asked Advisory Committee members for volunteers to create a Matching Grant Program ASAP Program subcommittee. The limit is six people and the minimum needs to be two people. The Fiscal Oversight Commission will also be part of the subcommittee. John Nagle and Neysa Hinton agreed to volunteer. Ms. Arias and Ms. Kuszmar said that an email will be sent out to the Advisory Committee members not present at tonight's meeting to ask for more volunteers.

Projects in Negotiation

Mattos Dairy, 866 acres near Roblar Road, is going to the Board on October 6, 2020. The Torr property, 360 acres in Camp Meeker and Monte Rio, went to the Board in August 2020 as a joint item with Regional Parks and was approved. This property connects to Willow Creek and Bohemia Ranch and will be closing on September 15, 2020.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members and Members of the Public

No announcements.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Next Meeting: September 24, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

