



AG + OPEN SPACE
SONOMA COUNTY

SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A P P R O V E D M I N U T E S

**Virtual Meeting Due to Sonoma County's Shelter in Place Order
September 22, 2022 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Don McEnhill | Jan McFarland | Sue Conley | Wendy Eliot |
| Michelle Whitman | Bill Smith | Cary Fargo | Thembi Borrás |
| Steve Rabinowitsh | Jesús Guzmán | Kristina Tierney | Josh Proctor |

MEMBERS ABSENT:

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|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Osvaldo Jimenez | Curt Nichols | Brian Barnacle |
| Tawny Tesconi | Neysa Hinton | Paul Martin |

STAFF PRESENT:

Misti Arias, General Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Mary Chambers, Agricultural Specialist; Jacob Newell, Stewardship Supervisor; Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician; Lauren Alpert, Community Relations Assistant; Lisa Pheatt, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk.

Call to Order

Chair Michelle Whitman called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

Chair Whitman took a roll call (this may change as people arrive late and will not reflect the actual members present):

Curt Nichols, no; Brian Barnacle, no; Don McEnhill, yes; Jan McFarland, yes; Bill Smith, yes; Cary Fargo, yes; Paul Martin, no; Steve Rabinowitsh, yes; Jesús Guzmán, yes; Kristina Tierney, yes; Osvaldo Jimenez, no; Sue Conley, yes; Tawny Tesconi, no; Neysa Hinton, no; Wendy Eliot, yes; Michelle Whitman, yes.

Public Comment

Chair Whitman asked for any public comments on items not on the agenda.

Teri Shore wanted to make comments on the status of the Sonoma Developmental Center but didn't know if it would be discussed in the General Managers report out. Chair Whitman affirmed

that it would be in the General Managers report out and Ms. Shore said she would wait for her comments until then.

Susan Kirks, representing Paula Lane Action Network and Madrone Audubon Society, wanted to let members and staff know that ten days ago it was confirmed that an adult female badger was alive even though there has been damage to her habitat by the City of Petaluma. She is 95% certain that the female badger's cub did not survive. She asked for continued diligence to restore the badger's habitat. Ms. Kirks also announced that she and two other women have incorporated a new land trust called Conservation Trust of the North Bay and she will share more about this organization in the future.

Approval of Minutes from July 28, 2022

Chair Whitman asked for any revisions on the July 28, 2022 minutes. There were none. Don McEnhill motioned for the minutes to be approved as is. Sue Conley and Cary Fargo both seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor except for Wendy Eliot, Sue Conley, Josh Proctor and Thembi Borrás who all abstained as they were not present at the July meeting.

General Manager's Report

- Misti Arias, General Manager, welcomed two new Advisory Committee members, Thembi Borrás, representing District 3, and Josh Proctor, a youth representative. Ms. Arias read the bio for each new member. Ms. Borrás and Mr. Proctor both spoke and said they were happy to be part of the committee.
- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program funding agreement for vital streams and forests is going to the Board on October 25, 2022.
- A workshop for Vital Lands Initiative Implementation is going to the Board on November 8, 2022.
- A Vegetation Management Program update on the proposed recommendations for the future PG&E settlement expenditures for 2023 and 2024 will go the Board on December 13, 2022.
- Kim Batchelder, Vegetation Management Coordinator, is partnering with a Technical Advisory Committee in late October to host a public meeting to share initial recommendations and provide an update on activities in Sonoma County before taking the recommendations to the Board in December. These recommendations are based on the CLEE Report categories ranging from supporting the Vegetation Management Grant program, county organization and collaboration, long-term sustainable funding, data gaps and technical tool development and application, community outreach and education and workforce development and local capacity building. The Board will give Mr. Batchelder additional guidance on how to maintain and enhance collective efforts on vegetation management and wildfire resilience and community safety throughout the County.
- Ag + Open Space has one easement that needs to stay in agriculture and the landowner is selling the property. Staff is reviewing the buyer's qualifications to ensure that the property stays in ag. The proposed buyer will need to meet all the components of the affirmative agricultural conservation servitude.
- Staff is reviewing a proposal to amend the building envelope location for Forever Forestville to avoid a recently mapped jurisdictional wetland.



- There are updated landowner applications on our website and are available electronically.
- Ag + Open Space submitted an application to the Department of Conservation's Sustainable Ag Land Program for the McClelland Dairy project on September 8, 2022.
- The Matching Grant Program recommendations for funding will be presented at the October 27, 2022 Advisory Committee meeting. There are only two applications in this cycle. There are still ongoing discussions about possibly opening up the program for another round.
- Ms. Arias provided an update on the Sonoma Developmental Center: The draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is out and Permit Sonoma are taking public comment until September 26, 2022. One proposal working with local organizations reached out to Regional Parks and Ag + Open Space but not sure on the progress on the open space areas at this point, which are planned to transition to parks and stay open and undeveloped.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting for questions and comments from Advisory Committee members and members of the public. A discussion ensued and one member of the public, Ms. Shore, commented on the importance of protecting the SDC open space land and asked the Advisory Committee members to consider writing letters by September 26, 2022 and attending the SDC site tour that is open to the public on September 29, 2022.

Matching Grant Program & Agricultural Subcommittee Appointments

Chair Whitman announced that since John Nagle left the committee, there is one vacancy on the Agricultural Subcommittee that opened up that needs to be filled. Also, at the last meeting two members volunteered for the Matching Grant Program Subcommittee, herself and Kristina Tierney. There is more room if there is any interest. It was voted on at the last meeting that the MGP would not reopen but would move forward even though only two applications were received.

Mary Chambers, Agricultural Specialist, explained that the Ag Subcommittee member's main role will be to provide insightful feedback on the projects that Ag + Open Space is working on. These include property evaluations and the Farmland for All program, as well as other items. Meetings would take place the first Tuesday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 every other month, or every month if something urgent came up.

Mr. Proctor volunteered to join the Ag Subcommittee but said he would need to check his schedule to see if that would work for him. Ms. Chambers said she could also move the meeting to accommodate Mr. Proctor's schedule.

The MGP Subcommittee meetings will take place soon and the focus is to help with the recommendations and the financial amounts that would go to each project that would then be presented to the Board. Then in early 2023 a reevaluation of the guidelines for more efficiency in the application process would be the main goal. Meetings would take place once a month.

Mr. Proctor volunteered to join the MGP Subcommittee as well.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting to the Advisory Committee members and members of the public. A short discussion ensued. Ms. Kirks expressed that she is against moving forward with just two applications and would prefer that the process be opened up again now to allow for more applications to come in.



New Monitoring Tools & Technology (Remote Monitoring)

Jacob Newell, Stewardship Supervisor, and Taylor Acosta, Stewardship Technician, presented a PowerPoint presentation on new monitoring tools and technology that Ag + Open Space is using to improve efficiency and effectiveness in monitoring easements. "Remote monitoring" will help Ag + Open Space meet the Land Trust Alliance's monitoring standards as well as those in Ag + Open Space's Stewardship Policy. Stewardship staff monitor easements to ensure that landowners are following the legal requirements to permanently protect the land. In the past, this has all been done on the ground, which includes conversations with landowners, inspecting the land, taking photos of any changes, and writing a report documenting the visit. The Land Trust Alliance standards require accredited land trusts to monitor properties at least once every twelve months; the Stewardship Policy directs staff to monitor properties every twelve to eighteen months. With the number of properties in our purview, that would be five per week or one per day, which is a high volume of reports to generate. Advancing technology has increased access to satellite imagery, and a company called Upstream Tech has partnered with land trusts to develop a new program called LENS that enables easement monitoring via review of aerial or satellite imagery. Ag + Open Space is now in a two-year pilot program with LENS, which provides access to imagery as well as an efficient monitoring report function. LENS will not replace ground monitoring entirely but will help staff to reach the amount of monitoring we are able to conduct each year. Ms. Acosta presented the LENS program and demonstrated its different features.

Chair Whitman opened the meeting to the committee members for a discussion. The meeting was opened to the members of the public for comment, but there were none.

For more information, please feel free to contact Mr. Newell or Ms. Acosta at Ag + Open Space. The PowerPoint presentation is available upon request.

Projects in Negotiations

Chair Whitman asked why there are seven properties in the appraisal process on the Projects in Negotiations spreadsheet. Ms. Arias explained that there could be several reasons and it varies on different projects. Some are waiting for the appraisers to get back to Ag + Open Space, approvals may not be moving forward to the Board, negotiations over the value of the price with landowners are still taking place, some may be in a disagreement with price but continue to be on the spreadsheet.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members

There were no announcements.

Adjournment

Chair Whitman adjourned the meeting at 6:31.

Next Meeting: October 27, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

