



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
September 24, 2020 | 5:00 pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tawny Tesconi	Don McEnhill	John Nagle	Michelle Whitman
Curt Nichols	Neysa Hinton	Paul Martin	Bill Smith
John Dell'Osso	Jan McFarland	Taj Hittenberger	Evan Wiig
Doug Lipton	Jennielynn Holmes	Kristina Tierney	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Cary Fargo

STAFF PRESENT:

Bill Keene, General Manager; Karen Gaffney, Conservation Planning Manager; Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager; Jen Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator; Stephanie Tavares-Buhler, Acquisition Specialist; Sara Ortiz, Administrative Aide; Aldo Mercado, County Counsel; Mariah Robson, Advisory Committee Clerk

Call to Order

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

Chair Dell'Osso announced that regular future agenda items may include a Community Relations update, and other topics that members would like to hear about. These would be added quarterly.

Public Comment

No public comment on items not on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Dell'Osso asked for any corrections to the minutes. One correction was requested from Michelle Whitman under Projects in Negotiations. A property was referred to as Willow Side and it should be Willow Creek.

John Nagle motioned to approve the minutes from August 27, 2020 with the correction, and Don McEnhill seconded the motion. All were in favor, with eight abstentions from Doug Lipton, Jan

McFarland, Paul Martin, Evan Wiig, Jennielynn Holmes, Taj Hittenberger, Bill Smith and Michelle Whitman, who were not in attendance at the August meeting.

General Manager's Report Out

- The Mattos Dairy near Roblar Road is going to the Board for approval of a conservation easement on October 6, 2020.
- The ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program will open in the next few days and the application period will be open until October 30, 2020. We anticipate bringing recommendations forward in late November or early December. The Matching Grant Program closes next week on September 30, 2020. We anticipate bringing forward recommendations in early 2021. Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Coordinator, will be scheduling subcommittee meetings for both of these programs soon.
- Ag + Open Space is working on a press release about the findings of the Agricultural Economic Impact Report undertaken by Dr. Eyler at Sonoma State University. We will likely issue that release next week.
- Ag + Open Space has developed a comprehensive outreach plan to publicize the launch of the ASAP program. This will include a press release to go out on September 28, 2020. A print advertising campaign, website update, email blast to a targeted list of agricultural stakeholders, an announcement in a monthly e-newsletter article and social media are underway.
- The Torr property that connects to Willow Creek and Bohemia Ranch closed.
- Carrington Ranch off of Coleman Valley Road was transferred to Regional Parks.
- Bill Keene, General Manager, was interviewed by Tawny Tesconi this morning on her show "From Farm to Table with Tawny Tesconi." Mr. Keene reflected on the past eleven and a half years as the General Manager. He also discussed the broad work of the Ag + Open Space. The interview is accessible on the KRSH website.
- Mr. Keene discussed his upcoming retirement from Sonoma County serving as the General Manager. Committee members gave regards and well wishes to Mr. Keene.

Subcommittee Report Out

The Advisory Committee currently has one active subcommittee, the Matching Grant Program. The Subcommittee has not met since the last Advisory Committee meeting and had no report out. Chair Dell'Osso did say that the Matching Grant Program application deadline is next week and then subcommittee meetings will convene to review the applications.

Update on Our Work with Agriculture

Mr. Keene spoke about the study with Dr. Eyler on the affects COVID-19 has had on Sonoma County agriculture. Dr. Eyler predicts agriculture will recover in 2022; however, small farmers and ranchers are in trouble and need help. Ag + Open Space created the ASAP, an emergency Matching Grant Program, to help local farmers and ranchers who meet the criteria. Ag + Open Space was also in the process of hiring an Agricultural Specialist position to help with agriculture projects. However, that position has been put on hold until the next General Manager is on board.



Karen Gaffney, Conservation Planning Manager, spoke about Ag + Open Space supporting agriculture with data analysis via the Veg Map, which is a fine scale LiDAR system that helps to prioritize lands for protection. Also, Ag + Open Space has received \$8 million and \$3.5 million from an RCPP grant in agricultural conservation.

Stephanie Tavares-Buhler, Senior Acquisition Specialist, discussed agricultural projects. There are currently thirteen active projects on agricultural lands.

Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager, spoke about ag easements. Ag + Open Space works in accordance with the 2017 Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices. Stewardship handles use requests on the lands. These lands will be stewarded into the future and the more land owner turnover the more use requests come to stewardship to help resolve. A lot of what this entails is the interpretation of the original easement. For more information on the Ag + Open Space work with agriculture, the PowerPoint presentation is available upon request, or contact Ms. Emerson or Ms. Tavares-Buhler.

Vital Lands Initiative Next Steps

Mr. Keene acknowledged that due to his impending departure, the Board of Directors would like the Vital Lands Initiative to be finalized with the new General Manager. This will be brought back to the Advisory Committee for a review in the first part of 2021 before taken to the Board for approval.

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 and connects to Willow Creek and Bohemia Ranch, closed.
- General Services will be bringing a conservation easement over Parcel J on Beverly Way in Santa Rosa to the Board at the end of the calendar year.

Announcements from Advisory Committee Members and Members of the Public

No announcements.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Next Meeting: October 22, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Robson
Advisory Committee Secretary

