



AG + OPEN SPACE  
SONOMA COUNTY



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OPEN  
SPACE  
SONOMA COUNTY

## SONOMA COUNTY OPEN SPACE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

#### REVISED AGENDA PACKET

February 22, 2024 | 5:00 pm

MEMBERS PLEASE CALL IF UNABLE TO ATTEND

#### MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY PARTICIPATE VIA ZOOM OR IN PERSON

The February 22, 2024 Sonoma County Ag + Open Space Advisory Committee meeting will be held in person at Ag + Open Space's office located at 747 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA. The public may also participate virtually through Zoom.

Members of the public can watch or listen to the meeting using one of the two following methods:

1. **Zoom:** Join the Zoom meeting on your computer, tablet or smartphone by clicking:  
<https://sonomacounty.zoom.us/j/98316944769?pwd=MURud1o3TDVhRWStOSEF5Z25MdElzdz09>

If you have the Zoom app or web client, join the meeting using the Password: 778144

**Call-in and listen to the meeting:** Dial 1 669 900 9128 Enter meeting ID: 983 1694 4769

2. **In Person:** Members of the public may attend in person at Ag + Open Space's office at 747 Mendocino Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA in the large conference room.

**PUBLIC COMMENT DURING THE MEETING:** You may email public comment to [Michelle.Nozzari@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Michelle.Nozzari@sonoma-county.org). All emailed public comments will be forwarded to all Committee Members and read aloud for the benefit of the public. Please include your name and the relevant agenda item number to which your comment refers. In addition, if you have joined as a member of the public through the Zoom link or by calling in, there will be specific points throughout the meeting during which live public comment may be made via Zoom and phone.

**DISABLED ACCOMMODATION:** If you have a disability which requires an accommodation or an alternative format to assist you in observing and commenting on this meeting, please contact Michelle Nozzari by email to [Michelle.Nozzari@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Michelle.Nozzari@sonoma-county.org) by 12pm Wednesday, February 21, 2024 to ensure arrangements for accommodation.

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Public Comment**  
Comments on items not listed on the agenda. Time is limited to 2 minutes per person/item.
3. **Approval of Minutes from January 25, 2024**      **Attachment A**      ACTION ITEM
4. **General Manager's Report**  
Misti Arias, General Manager
5. **Stewardship Update**      DISCUSSION ITEM  
Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager
6. **Advisory Committee Administration**      ACTION ITEM  
a) Election of Committee Officers
7. **Projects in Negotiations Attachment B**
8. **Announcements from Advisory Committee Members**
9. **Adjournment**  
Next Scheduled Meeting: March 28, 2024.

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**FUTURE MEETING TOPICS**  
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

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**3/28/24**

Acquisition Update

**4/25/24**

Vegetation Management Update



## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

747 Mendocino Avenue – Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
January 25, 2024 | 5:00 pm

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### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jan McFarland, Ladi Asgill, Steve Rabinowitch\*, Themi Borrás, Bill Smith, Wendy Eliot, Michelle Whitman, Josh Proctor

\*AB2449 Attendance

### MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kristina Tierney, Paul Martin, Kevin McDonnell, John Shribbs, Mark Stapp, Don McEnhill, Dayna Ghirardelli, Angel Lopez

### STAFF PRESENT:

Misti Arias, General Manager; Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager; Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager; Michelle Nozzari, Administrative Aide.

### Call to Order

Chair Themi Borrás called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

### Public Comment

Chair Borrás opened public comment for items not on the agenda. Chair Borrás also increased the time for members of the public to speak to 3 minutes per person/item.

- Duane Dewitt, a member of the public and a respiratory therapist, representing the Roseland Creek Area, passed around a t-shirt with a quote that stated, “Trees are Life.” Mr. Dewitt spoke about his concern regarding new developments popping up in the Roseland Area. He spoke about the District’s role in protecting 19 acres along Roseland Creek (what he calls the “Roseland Neighbor Woods”). He spoke about building community support for an Earth Day Celebration in April, including efforts of the Pomo Park and Preserve Partnership which is seeking to create a park and nature preserve with community support.
- Susan Kirks, representing Paula Lane Action Network based in Petaluma, and Madrone Audubon Society, a countywide nonprofit organization protecting and preserving wildlife habitat, provided comment. Ms. Kirks expressed her gratitude to hear Duane Dewitt speak. She noted Ms. Kirks spoke about how many individuals who work for grassroots non-profits volunteer efforts are dedicated to long term goal of conservation. Her own nonprofits have existed for 60 years and 25 years. She hopes to work with the District on the Paula Lane Conservation Easement. Ms. Kirks supported the increase in time to 3 minutes.

**REVISED 2.21.2024**



- Chair Borrás read a disclaimer message regarding zero tolerance for public disruptions and disrespectful behavior.

#### AB2449

Per AB 2449 Member Steven Rabinowitsh attended this meeting remotely due to contagious illness. Chair Borrás took role call and confirmed that quorum was physically present.

#### Approval of Minutes from October 26, 2023                      Attachment A                      ACTION ITEM

Chair Borrás opened this item for comment from the Committee Members.

- Vice Chair Eliot noticed an error in her attendance and Member Ladi Asgill's attendance.

Chair Borrás opened the item for public comment.

- Duane Dewitt provided clarification to his comment regarding concern of a conflict of interest with Sonoma Water. The Advisory Clerk noted that per counsel she was instructed that it was appropriate to summarize public comments and the specific comment was referred to management to be addressed.

Chair Borrás called for a vote on the October 26, 2023, minutes with revisions. The meeting minutes were approved by the majority and Vice Chair Wendy Eliot abstained.

#### General Manager's Report

Misti Arias, General Manager

General Manager Arias noted that the Advisory Clerk did provide notes of components to include in the report related to questions received, including Mr. Dewitt's question.

- She noted that she would hold off on providing response about the Water Agency until the next meeting when Mr. Dewitt maybe present for the General Manager's Report, if not she may reach out to him.
- General Manager Arias also noted that another question regarding the Petrified Forest was resolved. There has been interest from the community to see this property acquired and protected. Both General Manager Arias and Acquisition Manager Jennifer Kuszmar attended a tour with Supervisor Gorin's team. The real estate agent representing the buyers is aware that if there is a potential buyer, Ag + Open Space would be interested in helping to protect the property, but the agency will not pursue acquisition without an interested individual or entity who is willing to own and operate the property.

#### Upcoming Board Items

- On February 6, 2024 Southeast Santa Rosa Greenway will be going before the Board. Ag + Open Space has been working closely with the City to get all pieces together to get this project ready for the transition from Caltrans to City of Santa Rosa ownership.
- On March 5, 2024 Matching Grant Program Guideline and Application will be going to the Board.

**REVISED 2.21.2024**



- On March 12, 2024 the Farmland for All Buy, Protect, Sell Pilot Program will also be going before the board.
- The Board authorized a fourth cycle of Vegetation Management Program Grants through PG&E settlement funds. This cycle will be announced in the next couple of weeks. This funding cycle will be different from previous rounds of funding as \$1 million will be allocated to regular applications and \$1 million will be for applications identified by our partner organizations that will be focused on high priority, high impact projects.
- On December 12, 2023 three acquisition projects went before the board and were approved. These acquisitions included 1) Mark West Wikiup Open Space Preserve, 2) the acquisition of McCormick Ranch which is an addition to Hood Mountain Regional Park, 3) Hood Mountain Salt Creek Addition (Weeks Ranch).
- Recent closings include La Franchi Laguna which is adjacent to Denner Ranch. These two acquisitions are significant to the Laguna de Santa Rosa and are historically the confluence of Mark West Creek. These may hopefully one day be the site of a restoration project led by Sonoma Water and the Laguna Foundation.
- Ag + Open Space is also participating in McCormick Ranch's transition of ownership from Sonoma Land Trust to Regional Parks. This should be closing by the end of January.
- In February the Stewardship Team will present to the Advisory Committee.
- If a member of the public is interested in protecting their land or a property that is of public interest, they can complete an application on the Open Space website. The primary contact for inquiries is Simon Apostal, Acquisition Assistant. A link to the application can be found here: <https://www.sonomaopenspace.org/protect-your-land/conserving-your-land/>
- Ag + Open Space cannot pursue a project that does not have a willing seller.

Chair Borrás opened this item to comments.

### 2023 Year In Review

Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager

This presentation showcased projects that have closed in 2023 or closed in early 2024.

Chair Borrás opened this item for public comment.

- Member Bill Smith congratulated the District Staff and the Advisory Committee on all of its achievements and work. He noted that in his 40 years of living in the county, the Open Space District has done so much to protect and enhance the county landscape.
- Vice Chair Eliot also expressed her congratulations on the closure of so many acquisition projects and also noted the great leadership of the General Manager.
- Member Michelle Whitman noted that the District appears to have cleared a log jam and asked what cleared this backlog of projects.
- General Manager Arias indicated that the adoption of the Vital Lands Initiative was critical to accomplishing this work as the agency shifted to implementation. It takes a lot of energy and focus to complete these projects. The other significant factor was an increase in staffing and shift in roles to support the Acquisition Team.
- Member Ladi Asgill asked if this meant that there was more work on the backend of these projects now that the acquisitions have closed?

**REVISED 2.21.2024**



- General Manager Arias noted that most projects that closed were projects where the agency's role is stewarding and monitoring, rather than owning and operating. Ag + Open Space owns over 300 conservation easements and monitors these properties on an 18-month cycle; this translates to 6 properties a week. Ag + Open Space has streamlined remote monitoring and adjusted staff structure to deal with needs on a continuous basis.

Chair Borrás opened this item for public comment.

- Susan Kirks, representing Paula Lane Action Network and Madrone Audubon Society. Ms. Kirks commented that one area that needs more attention is species protection, understanding habitat needs, and wildlife corridors. She also spoke about a need to invite and collaborate with smaller, less funded organizations that have species conservation expertise. She noted that Paula Lane Nature Preserve has been devastated, as the habitat for the American Badger has been impacted, as evidenced by the absence of the species. The Paula Lane Action Network hopes to transfer property title transfer to a qualified entity. Ms. Kirks also acknowledged the accomplishments of the District under General Manager Arias' leadership and with Jennifer Kuszmar in the Acquisition Program Manager roles.

#### Advisory Committee Administration

- a) Advisory Committee Rules of Procedures & Brown Act  
Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager
- b) Hybrid Meeting AB 2449 Review  
Amy Ricard, Community Resources Manager  
Aldo Mercado, County Counsel

Chair Borrás opened this item for comments.

- A question was asked as to why a member would need to disclose whether there were individuals over/under 18 years old present. Counsel pointed out this is related to undue influence concerns.
  - Counsel clarified that if a member participating through AB2449 and their remote location is posted in the agenda, a vote does not need to take place as the public is aware of their remote attendance. He noted that if Just Cause is invoked, the chair should identify the general reason, but not go into detail beyond the category provided in the legislation.
  - There were no public comments.
- c) Ad Hoc Subcommittee Assignments

Chair Borrás took a roll call vote to approve constituency of the subcommittee assignments of the Agricultural Ad Hoc Subcommittee, Endowment Subcommittee, and Matching Grant Program Revision Subcommittee. All members approved the constituency of the subcommittees. Members in favor: Jan McFarland, Steve Rabinowitsh\*, Thembi Borrás, Ladi Asgill, Bill Smith, Michelle Whitman, Josh Proctor, Wendy Eliot

Chair Borrás took a roll call vote to approve the dissolution of the subcommittee assignments of the Acquisition Ad Hoc and Matching Grant Program Application Evaluation Subcommittee. All members approved the dissolution. Members in favor: Jan McFarland, Steve Rabinowitsh\*, Thembi Borrás, Ladi Asgill, Bill Smith, Michelle Whitman, Josh Proctor, Wendy Eliot

- The chair asked staff to clarify why Matching Grant Evaluation Subcommittee and Acquisition Subcommittee were being dissolved.
- General Manager Arias noted that Ad Hoc subcommittees were formed on as needed basis and that the work of the Matching Grant Evaluation Subcommittee was complete. For the Acquisition Subcommittee, it was originally created to address how the agency was changing the selection criteria based on the Vital Lands Initiative, which was then addressed by the full committee. Mrs. Kuzmar commented that dissolution of this subcommittee was needed because the work around why was formed had concluded and shifted. This subcommittee may be reformed at some point in the future when the Buy, Protect, Sell Program launches. She thanked anyone who participated in this subcommittee.
- Vice Chair Eliot asked about the status of the Endowment Subcommittee. General Manager Arias stated that the Stewardship Update went to before the board, but the timeline for legislation related to the investment policy has shifted. Subcommittee will be called upon to meet get feedback on the legislation.

Chair Borrás open this item for public comment:

- Susan Kirks, representing Paula Lane Action Network and Madrone Audubon Society, noted a procedural mistake.

d) Committee Calendar & Roster

Chair Borrás opened this item to the Committee Members and Staff for comment.

- Member Whitman noted that there was an error; Don McEnhill represents the Environment.
- General Manager Arias noted that Jesus Guzman has notified the District that he cannot continue serve on the Advisory Committee due to other obligations.
- Member Whitman noted that the Advisory Committee might consider only meeting when there are action items to vote on.
- No comments from the public.

e) Election of Committee Officers

- Chair Borrás is willing to give others the opportunity to Chair the Committee. If no one else is willing currently, Chair Borrás is willing continue to be the Chair.
- Vice Chair Eliot is stepping down to allow others become Vice Chair.
- Chair Pro Tem Rabin Steve Rabinowitsh will not continue in the role and invites others join.

Due to low attendance, this item was continued to the February 22, 2024 meeting.

### Projects in Negotiations

- No comments

### Announcements from Advisory Committee Members

Member Whitman announced that an elk was sighted near Joy Road in Occidental.

### Adjournment

**REVISED 2.21.2024**



Chair Borrás adjourned the meeting at 6:36 pm.

**Next Meeting: February 22, 2024**

This meeting will be in person with an option for members of the public to join via zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Nozzari  
*Advisory Committee Clerk*

**REVISED 2.21.2024**





Conservation Easement Project Name	Acreage (approx)	Sup. District	Vital Lands Initiative Goals						Step 1	Step 2			Step 3			Step 4			Status	Comments	
			Agricultural Lands	Community Identity	Healthy Communities	Water	Wildlands	Project Evaluation		Initiating Project	Due Diligence	Project Structure	CE Negotiations	Appraisal Process	FOC	BOD	Escrow/Closing	Purchase Price (BOD Approved)			
Abril Ranch	1,929	4																	On-Hold	Stalled due to federal mineral rights ownership	
Bavarian Lion Vineyards	1,858	4																	Initiating Project	Initiating Project	
Bianchi Family	633	5									+								Initiating Project	Initiating Project	
Blucher Creek Headwaters	212	5																	Initiating Project	Project back to active - initiating project structure	
Camp Meeker Forest Open Space Preserve (formerly Baumert Spring)	372	5																	Negotiating CE	FOC date 1/4 anticipated BOD date Feb/March	
Chanslor Ranch (fee acquisition)	378	5												+			\$5,500,000	Negotiating CE	closed on fee purchase, negotiating transfer		
Crawford Gulch	92	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Deniz Ernest & Beverly Trust	217	2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Deniz Family Farm	315	2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Diamond W Ranch	849	2																	Negotiating CE	Project Structure - CE drafting	
Laguna Edge	29	5									+	+							Initiating Project	Initiating project; may only seek riparian protections	
Limping Turkey Ranch	158	2																	Initiating Project	Initiating project	
Lobban – Creekside Addition	3	1																	Appraisal Process	Working on project structure	
Lobban – Mark West Creek	266	1																	Appraisal Process	Working on project structure	
Lobban – Miyashiro Addition	5	1																	Appraisal Process	Working on project structure	
Mark West Wikiup Preserve	31	4															+	\$5,100,000	Escrow/Closing	BOD authorization 12/12	
McClelland Dairy	348	2																	Negotiating CE	Project Structure -- negotiating CE language	
McCormick Ranch - Regional Parks	253	1															+	\$3,500,000	Approvals/Baseline	BOD date 12/12	
Nolan Creek 1	317	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Nolan Creek 2	171	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Nolan Creek 3	49	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Peters Ranch	278	2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Preston Farm	133	4																	Negotiating CE	Project Structure - development and CE negotiations	
Rincon Hills	218	1																	Negotiating CE	Project Structure - development and CE negotiations	
Rowland Mack	168	1																	Negotiating CE	Project Structure - development and CE negotiations	
Russian River Redwoods	394	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
South Sonoma Mountain - Grove	369	2																	Initiating Project	Initiating project	
South Sonoma Mountain - Rodgers Creek	798	1 & 2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
South Sonoma Mountain - Skyline	492	2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Spring Hill Ranch	579	2																\$2,620,000	Appraisal Process	Appraisal update and FOC	
Starrett Hill	319	5																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Willow Avenue Farm	8	2																	Initiating Project	Project Structure - development	
Witt Home Ranch	395	2																	Initiating Project	Initiating project	
Wolf Creek Ranch	1,195	5																	On-Hold		
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>14,103</b>																			<b>\$16,720,000</b>	
+ indicates change in phase since last update																					
<b>On Hold projects</b>																					
Oak Ridge Angus (LaFranchi)																			On-Hold	On hold	
Terrilinda Dairy																			On-Hold	On hold at request of owner	
Lafranconi																			On-Hold	On hold at request of owner	
Fornage Ranch (move to inactive)																			On-Hold	On hold	
Petersen Rd Dairy																			On-Hold	On hold	