



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

10000 Alma Bridge Road, Los Gatos, CA 95033
The meeting was held on-site at the former Beatty Property

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riffle called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 1:10 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Curt Riffle

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, Assistant General Counsel II Egan Hill, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Shaylynn Nelson; Senior Capital Project Manager Mark Brandi, Capital Project Manager I Ayden Sabharwal, Capital Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple, and Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 1:10 p.m.

Deputy District Clerk Shaylynn Nelson reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 1:10 p.m.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the April 15, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes

Public comment opened at 1:10 p.m.

Ms. Nelson reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 1:10 p.m.

Director Kersteen-Tucker identified the misspelling of Chair Riffle's name in the April 15, 2025 minutes under Committee Business.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to approve the April 15, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes subject to the correction of a misspelling.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (R-25-56)

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided opening remarks. Senior Capital Project Manager Mark Brandi and Capital Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple presented. Assistant General Managers Susanna Chan, Brian Malone and Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington assisted in answering questions.

Director Kishimoto inquired whether staff considered utilizing Miller Point parking lot for District visitor use.

Mr. Brandi explained Miller Point parking lot is not being proposed to access the preserve since it was deemed infeasible by County Parks. County Parks intends to permanently charge for parking at Miller Point parking lot to address budget shortfalls. Furthermore, the land underlying the lot is owned by Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water). County Parks would need to renegotiate the lease agreement with Valley Water before allowing District use on the lot. County Parks was not interested in renegotiating the lease.

Director Kishimoto noted that the District currently has an agreement with the County at Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve and suggested an agreement could be reached if the District would pay to build out the parking lot, especially since Miller Point parking lot is currently lightly used.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked if staff believes there is a possibility for the District to use Miller Point parking lot.

Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan responded that after the County provided the District with reasons that the Miller Point parking lot was infeasible, staff reached out to ask if the County would consider an agreement if the County could collect fees from District visitors who parked at the lot. The County responded that it would be challenging to renegotiate their agreement with Valley Water and there are further constraints they would need to consider. Ms. Chan stated there is a possibility of further conversations with the County, but an agreement is not feasible at this time.

Chair Riffle inquired if there are any species of concern in the area that the Committee should consider before reaching a decision.

Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington explained that aside from newts, another species of concern are bats and their usage of structures. He noted having the staging area away from the structures is advisable.

Chair Riffle asked about traffic and newt mortality as a result of the project.

Mr. Brandi explained no additional studies have been conducted but the phased approach associated with options 1 and 2 will limit visitor use of the preserve area seasonally to avoid vehicle trips during the newt migration period.

Public comment opened at 2:29 p.m.

The following people expressed concern for the newts:

- Shani Kleinhaus
- Monica Richards
- Merav Vonshak
- Molly Sandomire
- Dashiell Leeds
- Rea Freedom

The following people spoke in favor of option 1:

- Ed Dee
- Jessica Tseng

The following people spoke in favor of option 2:

- Maria Ristow
- Dirk Franklin

The following people spoke in favor of option 3:

- Jennifer Koga
- Junyan Wang

Mike Bushue spoke in favor of option 1 or 2.

Public comment closed at 2:52 p.m.

Mr. Brandi responded to comments regarding conducting a pilot study of new newt crossing infrastructure in the highest priority zone of the roadway (as opposed to the smaller, lower priority zone) as part of the Beatty Project. He explained staff could explore the possibility but there would be challenges. One challenge is County Roads, the project partner on the roadway and the official project proponent, has expressed a desire that improvements associated with a pilot study be permanent. Since the extent of the roadway improvements in priority zone 1 are extensive, it could prove challenging to conduct a pilot study. Staff has asked County Roads to consider if there is a small, feasible piece of the zone that could be put forward as a pilot study.

Director Kishimoto suggested a fourth option that emphasizes the trail and further negotiations with Valley Water and County Parks regarding Miller Point parking lot. Also, there may be a possibility for the District to take over the lease of the parking lot in the future, giving the District more control to close the parking area and avoiding the need for a separate Beatty parking area. She suggested the money saved from the Beatty parking lot could be used towards the priority zone 1 roadway improvements.

Director Kersteen-Tucker advocated for a pilot study in an area that is more representative of the hot zones. She suggested recommending options 2 and 3 to the Board of Directors (Board). She expressed appreciation for the fact the District has Measure AA commitments, and the public has interest in developing trails. She also expressed interest in how the District can have more substantive conversations with Valley Water regarding Miller Point parking lot.

Chair Riffle advocated for option 2. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to begin installing newt crossing improvements along the roadway. He stated the District likely will need to develop a parking lot in the future since Miller Point parking lot is not a long-term solution and it will become increasingly expensive the longer the District waits. He expressed appreciation for the phased approach and seasonally closing off portions of the trails. He explained there is an opportunity to educate the public on the best times to avoid the trails due to newt presence.

Ms. Ruiz advised that the County is actively seeking revenue sources since they have a budget shortfall. She explained that an opportunity for a partnership to use the Miller Point parking lot would likely require a monetary contribution or fee-based parking to allow them to raise revenue. She stated there is a benefit to a pilot program to learn the type of infrastructure that is effective for newts. She explained that staff can consider placing the pilot program in a higher priority zone but advised it would have to be a subset of the priority section since that entire zone is \$17M and the District can only afford a small portion of this amount. Additionally, any infrastructure would need to be permanent.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked if forwarding a few options to the Board would give staff an opportunity to investigate the option of assuming a lease of the Miller Point parking lot.

Ms. Ruiz explained staff could explore it further, but the County is seeking revenue sources and it would be unlikely for them to allow the District to assume the lease. Staff can continue conversations and suggest offers that supplement the revenue source.

Director Kersteen-Tucker requested staff also consider a smaller subset of the priority 1 zone for the pilot project and the projected cost.

Chair Riffle moved option 2 with the additional direction for staff to return with information on the cost and extent of the pilot project occurring in priority zone 1, and continue discussions with the County and Valley Water to identify options, if any, that the District could pursue to form a partnership for the use of Miller Point parking lot.

Director Kishimoto expressed a preference for option 4 to remove from consideration the Beatty parking area, implement trail improvements, and continue negotiations with the County and Valley Water to reach an agreement for the Miller Point parking lot.

Ms. Ruiz stated staff can return with information on whether Miller Point parking lot is a possibility. Given the complexities, if Miller Point parking lot is not possible, then the remaining options should be presented to the Board. She further expressed there are escalation cost implications if the Beatty parking area is deferred.

Director Kishimoto asked and received confirmation that the parking lot is not large enough to support equestrian parking stalls. She suggested the lot could be exclusively for equestrians depending on how frequently it is used. She suggested forwarding to the Board both options 2 and 4.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to forward to the Board of Directors Option 2 to implement the Beatty parking area and trail improvements in phases, beginning with a small, seasonal, permit-only parking area until the adjacent Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project improvements are implemented and to contribute funding to complete the final design and construction of a portion of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project as a pilot project to test the efficacy of new newt crossing infrastructure.

In addition, for staff to return with information on the cost and extent of the pilot project, preferably in priority zone 1, and continue discussions with the County and Valley Water to identify options, if any, that the District could pursue to form a partnership for the use of Miller Point parking lot.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-1-0 (Opposed by Director Kishimoto)

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:21 p.m.

Shaylynn Nelson
Deputy District Clerk