



SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

*The Board of Directors conducted this meeting in accordance with
California Government Code section 54953.*

DRAFT MINUTES

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

Vice President Gleason called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 5:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Margaret MacNiven, and Curt Riffle

President Cyr announced that he is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 “just cause” exemption due to illness and disclosed that there are two adults, his wife and granddaughter, present in his remote location.

Members Absent: Karen Holman

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, Assistant General Counsel Egan Hill, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Stephanie Gross, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Planner III Galli Basson, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner III Erica Strohmeier, Senior Capital Project Manager Paul Kvam, and Senior Real Property Agent Kelly Hyland

Vice President Gleason announced that the public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District’s Administrative Office, and on the District website.

Director Holman arrived at 5:09 p.m.

1. Hawthorns Historic Complex Feasibility Study Results and Options (R-25-68)

Planner III Galli Basson presented. Planning Manager Jane Mark, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner III Erica Strohmeier, Senior Capital Project Manager Paul Kvam, Senior Real Property Agent Kelly Hyland assisted in answering Board questions.

Director Riffle commented that the easement is old, constrained, and difficult to change, and asked if the easement holder would be willing to change the easement before even pursuing any changes.

Ms. Basson stated that Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) holds the conservation easement and takes that responsibility seriously, particularly when the easement terms were established by a donor. She noted that it is highly unlikely they will change the terms.

Director Holman asked whether discussions have taken place with POST regarding the easement and if the options presented today have been reviewed with them.

Ms. Basson remarked that POST has reviewed the proposals to ensure there is alignment with the conservation easement values.

General Manager Ana Ruiz stated that based on conversations with POST, the conservation easement was purposely made to be restrictive. Any changes would be counter to the reason why the easement was put in place and any changes would be very unlikely.

Director Holman commented that a conversation should be had with the originator of the covenant of the easement to determine whether the originator's perspective has changed and if the easement still aligns with their original intent.

Planning Manager Jane Mark stated that staff have been in discussion with POST since 2014 to explore any flexibility in the conservation easement. POST has been adamant that the conservation easement must be protected. She added that it would be rare that the conservation easement would be modified for a potential development proposal, and staff does not believe that POST would be willing to approach the Woods family to modify the conservation easement.

Director Holman acknowledged POST's legal and moral obligations as the holder of the conservation easement and clarified that she is not asking POST to violate those responsibilities. Rather, she suggested that POST consider approaching the Woods family to inform them of the current situation and determine whether their original intent still aligns with the existing easement.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked if options 6 and 7 could be combined and suggested that if an ad hoc committee is convened, part of its discussion should include exploring potential partners such as non-profits or the county.

Ms. Basson responded that both options can be combined, and that the Board would determine the charge of the ad hoc committee and that it could include exploring potential partners.

Director MacNiven inquired why the cottage was not included on the list to consider for reuse as a single-family housing.

Ms. Basson stated the cottage can be included as an option, but the garage was added because it is in better condition and requires fewer upgrades.

Director Kishimoto commented that viable options are Option 2, the reuse of the garage, or Option 3 restoration similar to the Alma College Culture landscape.

Public comment opened at 5:58 p.m.

Mary Hufty, Councilmember for the Town of Portola Valley and liaison to the District since January 2025, expressed her commitment to strengthening the partnership between the Town and the District. She highlighted that open space organizations are the Town's largest landholders which aligns with their values and general plan. She emphasized the importance of ongoing coordination and communication and an opportunity to discuss the skyline corridor, focusing on issues like road safety, fire preparedness, housing readiness, and responsible land management. She shared that she was not aware of discussions related to access to Alpine Road until last week. She clarified that she was not speaking on behalf of the full council but reaffirmed her commitment and deep care about the work and is ready to support a vibrant and responsible partnership between the District and the Town.

Director Kersteen-Tucker noted one of the options for the Board is to create an ad hoc committee and asked how Ms. Hufty would envision such a committee working with the Town council.

Ms. Hufty commented that the Town would entertain the idea but would need to attain the authorization of the council. She noted that the Town has reviewed 51 plots in the town and identified only four affordable housing sites, with the Hawthorns property being one of them. She added that the Town has an ad hoc committee focused on identifying housing sites.

Mike Bushue expressed opposition to destroying or mothballing the buildings.

Karen Askey, Chair of the Site Evaluation ad hoc committee working with Ms. Huffy, encouraged the Board to consider Option 7 and engage in further discussion with the Town.

Public comment closed at 6:10 p.m.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that she is in favor of Options 6 and 7.

Director Riffle asked how staff would like to proceed with Board input.

Ms. Basson responded that she is seeking Board input of the desired next steps. Once the Board decides on the direction, staff will return to the Board with more detailed information. She noted that the Board could pursue Options 1-5 or a combination of Options 6 and 7. If the Board is interested in partnering with the Whites on the lower barn, forming a Board ad hoc committee would be the appropriate next step.

Director Riffle noted that there can be many deviations of the proposed options and suggested that the Board could charge the ad hoc committee with returning to the Board with more realistic and feasible options.

Ms. Basson agreed, stating that different permutations of each option is possible. The Board will need to provide a specific charge to the ad hoc committee.

Director Riffle expressed support for forming an ad hoc committee, noting the potential opportunities and the importance of the public-private partnership with the Whites. He acknowledged that the Whites may need to make a decision soon and suggested the ad hoc committee could be tasked specifically with determining what can or cannot be done to preserve the partnership. He added that other options could be explored later or, if necessary, inform the Whites that the partnership may not be able to proceed.

Ms. Ruiz stated that there is currently a viable and time-sensitive partnership with the Whites. She suggested that if the Board approves Option 7, the partnership should be pursued as the lead, while also engaging in conversations with the Town regarding the other structures due to their interest. She emphasized the need to move the lower barn project forward in an expedited manner, while concurrently exploring uses, partnerships, and funding for the rest of the site.

Director Kersteen-Tucker suggested that if the ad hoc committee is convened that it would be helpful to clarify with the Town if they are willing to work with District on something other than multifamily housing.

Director Holman commented that she is in favor of forming an ad hoc committee and combining Options 6 and 7.

Director Gleason emphasized the importance of preserving the value of the partnership with the Whites. He also supported combining Options 6 and 7, stating that if there is an opportunity to serve both the partnership and the Town's goals through discussion, it would be a fantastic outcome.

Director Riffle asked Director Kersteen-Tucker if she could elaborate in her thinking of Option 6.

Director Kersteen-Tucker responded that if the District were to pursue a multi-housing project, it would fall outside the District's area of expertise and would likely involve transferring ownership of the property. She also inquired whether there are any potential partnerships in addition to the Whites to transferring ownership for a portion of the property.

Director Riffle asked if she is suggesting that the ad hoc committee explore all the different options that the District might have, whether that involves working with the Whites, considering some form of multi-housing, and if the District is not able to pursue those options, then determine whether there is another entity that could figure it out, or identify a potential new owner.

Director Kersteen-Tucker stated she is fine with either approach and noted that it could be a fairly quick conversation to determine whether there is any interest from the County, the Whites, or the Town.

Senior Planner Tina Hugg stated that one of the first tasks for the ad hoc committee will be to fully immerse the committee in the details. Staff will review all the constraints, the zoning code,

the conservation easement, the Woodside Fire discussions, to ensure the committee understands the complex environment that staff has been working within over the past two years.

Ms. Ruiz suggested that the most helpful step would be for the Board to define the ad hoc committee's charge in broader terms, specifically to work with staff, Woodside Fire, and the Town Council to identify and explore opportunities for reuse or rehabilitation at the historic complex, prioritizing the lower barn. She emphasized keeping the charge broad enough to allow the committee to collaborate with these entities in reviewing codes, regulations, and requirements, with the goal of uncovering new possibilities not previously identified. This approach would allow conversations to emerge around potential uses and the interests of each entity, leading to exploration of viable options.

Director Riffle asked about the tradeoffs, including cost and staff time.

Ms. Ruiz responded that staff will return at the next Board meeting with information on the implications to the action plan and other priorities that the Board has already set.

Ms. Mark stated that staff is considering bringing in additional staff to assist with a more comprehensive assessment of the other structures, as the focus has expanded beyond the lower barn to include the garage, carriage house, and other structures that are contributing to the historic district significance. She noted this is a multi-pronged effort requiring support from the senior planner. She also expressed concern about the Town's capacity to engage, noting previous challenges in coordinating on just the lower barn, and hesitated to assume the Town's staff availability for broader discussions.

Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed concern about the feasibility of coordinating multiple stakeholders and noted that such collaboration takes significant time. She suggested that before the item returns to the Board, staff provide an assessment of how realistic it is to find partners that are willing to participate in collaborative discussions, along with an estimate of the potential cost in staff time and resources.

Ms. Ruiz responded that staff will use their best judgment in assessing time and implications, noting that this process is being approached as a last resort. She explained that the District has reached the end of what it can explore internally and emphasized the need for conversations with the Town and Woodside Fire to identify solutions for the site. While the partnership with the Whites may or may not remain viable, she stressed that the District must still determine what is possible in order to deliver the best public benefit.

Director MacNiven commented that on the coast, she frequently receives questions about whether the District would allow housing, and if the District allows housing in Portola Valley, it could set a precedent, raising expectations that similar actions could be taken on the coast. She clarified that she is not opposed to the idea, but emphasized the importance of considering the potential precedents being set.

Director Riffle clarified if the next step is for staff to come back to the Board with a recommendation based on tonight's discussion, and then the Board will decide how to proceed from there.

Ms. Basson confirmed that the General Manager's recommendation would be to form an ad hoc committee and that staff will work on defining the committee's charge, and will return to the Board on June 11.

No Board action was required.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Gleason adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 6:42 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Vice President Gleason called the regular meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Karen Holman, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Margaret MacNiven, and Curt Riffle

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, Assistant General Counsel Egan Hill, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Stephanie Gross, Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight, Human Resources Supervisor Rebecca Wolfe, and District Controller Michael Foster

President Cyr announced that he is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 "just cause" exemption due to illness and disclosed that his granddaughter is present at his remote location.

Vice President Gleason announced that the public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 7:01 p.m.

District Clerk Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 7:01 p.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director MacNiven seconded the motion to adopt the agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDA

Public comment opened at 7:04 p.m.

Mike Bushue spoke in favor of the Bear Creek Redwoods North Parking Area Project – 65% Design. He also spoke on the Lone Madrone Corral Replacement Project and expressed concern about grazing cattle having access to the plastic fence and that staff has reassured him that the manufacturer will confirm it is rated for cattle.

Public comment closed at 7:06 p.m.

- Science and Stewardship Symposium Update
- Bear Creek Redwoods North Parking Area Project - 65% Design
- Lone Madrone Corral Replacement Project

CONSENT CALENDAR

Public comment opened at 7:06 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:06 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to approve the Consent Calendar.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

1. **Approve the May 14, 2025 Board meeting minutes**
2. **Approve Claims Report**
3. **Award of Contract for Engineering Design and Construction Support Services for the Purisima Creek Trail Slide & Bridge Repair Project at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (R-25-69)**

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Herrera Environmental Consultants to provide engineering design and construction support services for the Purisima Creek Trail Slide & Bridge Repair Project at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve for a not-to-exceed base contract amount of \$952,616

2. Authorize an allowance in the amount of \$95,262 to cover additional technical studies or permit support that may be required during the engineering design development phase.
3. Authorize a 15% contingency in the amount of \$142,892 to cover unforeseen tasks or construction support beyond the current scope, bringing the total not-to-exceed contract amount to \$1,190,770.

4. Award of a Construction Contract for the Big Dipper Culvert Repair Project in Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve (R-25-70)

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to enter into a contract with Old La Honda General Engineering of La Honda, CA for a not-to-exceed base contract amount of \$86,893.
2. Authorize a contingency of 15% in the amount of \$13,034 to be reserved for unanticipated issues, bringing the total not-to-exceed contract to \$99,927.

BOARD BUSINESS

5. Public Hearing to Comply with New Legal Obligation to Report on Vacancies and Recruitment and Retention Efforts (Assembly Bill 2561/Government Code Section 3502.3) (R-25-71)

Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight and Human Resources Supervisor Rebecca Wolfe presented.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented that through the Conservation Career Fair there is a great opportunity to let people know that the District offers competitive pay and benefits.

Vice-President Gleason commented that he is looking forward to hearing more about the Conservation Career Fair and asked if the District tracks the conversion rates from interns to full-time staffers.

Ms. Basnight responded that it has not been tracked, but staff can start tracking that information.

Public hearing opened at 7:24 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no comments for the public hearing.

Public hearing closed at 7:24 p.m.

No formal Board action was required.

6. Public Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget and Three-Year Capital Improvement and Action Plan Public Hearing (R-25-72)

Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, and Assistant General Manager Brian Malone presented.

Director Kishimoto commented on the Bear Creek Stables project, noting that while it is not a big rock project, it is projected to cost \$8M over the next three years. She acknowledged that

although the majority of the Board has previously supported the project and many staff are working on it, now is the appropriate time to evaluate it in the context of comparing it against other project and priorities. She added that she personally does not support the widening of the road and asked her colleagues if the project should continue.

Mr. Malone provided a detailed update on the project, including the phasing of work, and the responsibilities of the Friends of Bear Creek.

Director MacNiven remarked that she did not realize that the cost would be so expensive.

Director Gleason spoke about the value of smaller projects that are initiated by staff. He noted that while large projects are important, they are often complex and vulnerable to delays. In contrast, smaller projects have filled in space between big rock projects such as the Fog Drift Vista trail at Russian Ridge, the Thornewood Rock of Ages trail, and the Thimbleberry trail. He asked if this type of strategy should be adopted.

Ms. Chan responded that the Bear Creek Redwoods trail project moved quickly because a master plan and environmental clearances were already in place, enabling rapid implementation. She emphasized that such planning work is essential to allow projects to proceed efficiently. Additionally, she added that staff continually look for ways to streamline processes and use resources effectively. When larger projects are delayed or paused, available staff capacity can be redirected to smaller projects, allowing continued progress and productivity.

Director Gleason acknowledged the importance of the significant groundwork required before project implementation and expressed appreciation for the creativity and initiative involved in both large and smaller stand-alone projects. He raised the idea of developing a broader strategy to ensure the District maximizes value from projects already underway.

Public hearing opened at 9:00 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no comments for the public hearing.

Public hearing closed at 9:00 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to direct the General Manager to present the proposed FY26 Budget and Action Plan to the Board of Directors for adoption at their regular meeting on June 11, 2025.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

7. Controller's Report on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget (R-25-73)

District Controller Michael Foster presented.

Public comment opened at 9:26 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 9:26 p.m.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Riffle seconded the motion to accept the Controller's Report on the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

Director Gleason provided an update of the Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Meeting held on May 20, 2025.

B. Staff Reports

Assistant General Counsel Egan Hill reported that an announcement pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.1(a)(3)(B) that the Board had previously approved terms of a settlement agreement, which has now been fully executed. Therefore, it can now be reported that on February 26, 2025, the Board voted 7-0 to authorize a settlement agreement with Susan Cretekos. The substance of the agreement was payment of a settlement to resolve pending litigation regarding a claim of right of possession of District land. The litigation is Santa Clara County Superior Court case number 25CV461186. A copy of the agreement is available by request in the General Counsel's office.

C. Director Reports

Director Kersteen-Tucker reported that she and Director Kishimoto attended the May 20, 2025 Board Briefing for the Hawthorns Historic Complex.

Director Kishimoto reported that she attended a Bay Conservation and Development Commission meeting on May 15. She also shared that Alice Hanko contacted her to inquire whether the District would be holding a celebration of life for Jay Thorwaldson, who passed away in March, as he was instrumental in the formation of the District. She left the matter for staff and Board's consideration.

Director MacNiven reported that she attended the opening of the new LEAD San Mateo County building on May 15, and attended the 125-anniversary celebration of the Sempervirens Fund on May 18, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Gleason adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 9:34 p.m.

Maria Soria
District Clerk