



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Administrative Office
5050 El Camino Real
Los Altos, CA 94022

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riffle called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 1:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, 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 Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple and Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the August 26, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Public comment opened at 1:02 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:02 p.m.

Motion: Director Kersteen-Tucker moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to approve August 26, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (R-25-126)

Senior Capital Project Manager Mark Brandi presented. General Manager Ana Ruiz, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Capital Projects Field Manager Bryan Apple, and Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington assisted with answering questions.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked whether the Banjo Point parking lot could be expanded or shared.

Mr. Brandi explained staff has not engaged in conversations about the Banjo Point parking lot with Santa Clara County Parks (County Parks). He noted that Banjo Point parking lot is discontiguous from District property.

Director Kersteen-Tucker asked for staff to consider Banjo Point parking lot as a backup option.

Director Kishimoto inquired whether the CEQA scoping process would include exploring a new lot if demand exceeds capacity.

Mr. Brandi stated staff would be evaluating Phase 1 of the project under CEQA and further discussions would be needed with the Planning department to determine whether Phase 2 or future improvements could be considered as well.

Ms. Ruiz further explained that Phase 2 is currently highly speculative. Moreover, staff will not have sufficient details for Phase 2 to have it considered under CEQA.

Director Kishimoto asked and received confirmation that staff will return to the Board at a later date if there are intentions of exploring Phase 2.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired if parking space could be optimized for additional parking as part of the repaving and restriping of the Miller Point parking lot.

Mr. Brandi stated staff can consider whether the layout could be improved to maximize parking spaces.

Chair Riffle called for a recess at 1:58 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 2:00 p.m. All committee members were present.

Director Kishimoto inquired whether staff could place interpretive signs at the Beatty house.

Mr. Brandi said staff could consider the opportunity to interpret cultural resources associated with the property, the historical uses, and the biological resources, including educational opportunities associated with the California newts.

Director Kersteen-Tucker inquired whether equestrian parking would be available at the Miller Point parking lot.

Mr. Brandi stated that equestrian parking is not possible at the Miller Point parking lot due to the topography and site constraints. He explained that in the future, if a parking expansion is needed on District property to meet parking demand, then staff can contemplate adding equestrian parking on District land at that time.

Chair Riffle asked whether the trails would allow dogs.

Mr. Malone confirmed that dogs would likely be allowed since the surrounding preserve and County Parks allow dogs on leash.

Director Kishimoto suggested including in the staff report to the Board a summary of key details, such as whether dogs are allowed on the trail, the optional connector trail, and which trails will be seasonally closed to the public.

Mr. Brandi stated that staff will add more granular information to the staff report when it is presented to the Board.

Public comment opened at 2:29 p.m.

Merav Vonchak spoke in favor of protecting the newts.

Jeff King spoke in favor of developing the Beatty trail connections.

Jennifer Koga spoke in favor of revised option 2 and newt protection.

Mike Bushue advocated for the District to allow horse trailer access and parking on District land through a special permit.

Shani Kleinhaus advocated for a revised option 2 without the possibility of expanding into the meadow.

Dashiell Leeds spoke in favor of revised option 2 with an accelerated implementation of newt passages in Zone 1 and no development of the Beatty meadow.

Tiffany Yap advocated for the District to implement newt passage features prior to increasing parking infrastructure.

Public comment closed at 2:48 p.m.

General Manager Ana Ruiz responded to the public comments that the revised option 2 is recommended by staff and takes into consideration the different comments received by the members of the public. For example, it limits the footprint of parking to what currently already exists and only contemplates expanding parking if demand exceeds the available parking; if demand exceeds capacity, then staff would re-evaluate the existing conditions as they occur at that time, such as the status of the newt population and newt passage project. Moreover, the process to consider an expansion of parking will be subject to an open public engagement process and require additional CEQA review. This analysis and the findings would also need to be presented to the Committee and Board for review, direction, and approval. Revised option 2 limits parking to what currently exists with equestrian parking identified as part of Phase 2. The trail would be seasonally opened based on the newt migration data.

Mr. Brandi followed up that regarding the meadow, the entirety of this portion of the Beatty property was evaluated under previous biological and botanical resource studies when the project was initiated in 2020. Staff will revisit and confirm the findings from those studies, which found that there were no sensitive species of plants or animals located within the meadow area.

Director Kishimoto requested that the Board report include the status of the Beatty house and also reference the Board's prior decision regarding the house. She inquired if there was an estimate regarding available roadside parking along Alma Bridge Road.

Mr. Brandi responded that he does not have the information but can gather the information prior to presenting the item to the Board.

Director Kishimoto requested staff to break out the District's contribution to the newt passage improvements and the cost estimates for phase 1 and phase 2.

Director Riffle recommended clarifying the fiscal impact section when presenting to the Board with an emphasis on the District's contribution and a notation of the total project cost, which anticipates additional outside funding.

Director Kishimoto suggested a preference for revised option 2 but requested an amendment to the motion to avoid implying that both phase 1 and 2 are being approved.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved the amended motion, and Director Kersteen-Tucker seconded the motion to forward to the full Board of Directors revised option 2 to implement Phase I of the Beatty parking area and trail improvements: a trail connection and improvements to Santa Clara County Park's Miller Point Parking Area. Board to consider expanding parking on the Beatty Property as part of a future phase if/when parking demand exceeds the Miller Point parking capacity and attempt to time the implementation with the County-led Newt Passage Project. In addition, contribute funding to complete the final design and construction of a different portion (subset of Zone 1 – higher priority zone) of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, which is north of the Beatty property.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

Director Kishimoto suggested that the following items be included in the Board report: a detailed cost breakdown for phase 1, dog access, the estimate of roadside parking, and the status of the Beatty house.

Director Kersteen-Tucker recommended also including in the Board report an expanded description of the meadow and a clarification that equestrian parking will be considered at a later phase.

Chair Riffle commented that the Committee received a lot of feedback from the public and expressed a desire that staff consider it when evaluating future phases.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:20 p.m.

Shaylynn Nelson, Deputy District Clerk
Maria Soria, MMC, District Clerk