



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

December 10, 2025
Board Meeting 25-32

SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

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

REVISED DRAFT MINUTES

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

President Cyr called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Karen Holman

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, 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 Shaylynn Nelson, Planner III Erica Strohmeier and Senior Planner Tina Hugg, and Planning Manager Jane Mark

President Cyr 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 joined the meeting at 5:32 p.m. and announced that she is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 "just cause" exemption due to illness. She disclosed that no one is present in her remote location.

1. Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations (R-25-157)

Planner III Erica Strohmeier presented. General Manager Ana Ruiz, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planning Manager Jane Mark, and Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan assisted in answering questions.

Director Holman stated that she is a member of the Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee and voiced her reasons why she supports the minority recommendation of the Committee to defer the Hawthorns Area Plan Project and redeploy staff resources to other priority endeavors. She said that there are numerous challenges that still remain with the project. She questioned whether the project would be fruitful if it were to take an additional five to seven years to complete. She suggested looking at other projects where staff may be deployed and which may or may not include aspects of the historic complex. In addition, she noted the preserve is only 79 acres with minimal public access benefits and considerable parking constraints and questioned whether the cost-benefit analysis might lead to other options.

Public comment opened at 5:57 p.m.

Darcy Smith, Town Manager of the Town of Portola Valley (Town), accompanied by Councilmember Mary Hufty, Open Space Committee Chairwoman Betsy Morgenthaler, and Parks and Recreation Committee Vice Chair Karen Askey, mentioned that the project must comply with the Town's General Plan and codes and that all required approvals must be obtained before proceeding. She explained that the Town's current priority is addressing its long-term fiscal health, which will limit available staff resources. She noted there may be future opportunities that the Town may be interested in pursuing for the use of the Hawthorns Historic Complex and noted that the site is an important property to the Town.

Mike Bushue, Equestrian Trail Riders Action Committee, commented that he would like to see the trails open as soon as possible and that a 10-to-15-year delay is egregious. He noted that efforts to open the Hawthorns Complex for trails, access, and additional parking have been underway for years and would help mitigate the road traffic along Alpine Road and Portola Road.

Ronny Krashinsky urged the Board not to support Option 2, stating that the extensive Public Access Working Group (PAWG) process resulted in a robust concept plan that should move forward. He encouraged the Board not to view community engagement as a negative, and in his opinion that there would be broad support for the project as the residents would gain access to new open space and trail improvements along Alpine Road. He also addressed concerns regarding the Town's capacity, noting that a new planning director has been hired and expressed hope that staff capacity will improve. Lastly, he added that Option 1 was also not ideal and questioned why the zoning changes for the Historic Complex would impact residential zoning for the entire Town, stating that there must be a variety of options to avoid this impact.

Public comment closed at 6:05 p.m.

Director Riffle stated that he is a member of the Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee, noting that the process has been long and complex and every possible option has been explored. He stated that a majority of the ad hoc committee concluded that Option 1 was the most time and cost-efficient approach at this time. He acknowledged the Woods family for

making the property available and emphasized that the District's responsibility is to protect and steward its natural resources and, as appropriate, provide public access. He noted that the PAWG recommendations resulted from a thorough and community driven process and expressed concern that pursuing the Historic Complex could conflict with delivering those recommendations. He stated that delays risk increased costs and result in loss of momentum, which should be avoided. He noted that Option 1 allows the District to revisit opportunities for the Historic Complex in the future and expressed appreciation to the Whites for more than two years of partnership exploration. He expressed hope that continued collaboration with the Town could lead to future opportunities for the site and concluded that Option 1 is the most prudent option given the current circumstances of the District, the Town, and the project.

Director MacNiven noted that she too is a member of the Hawthorns Historic Complex Ad Hoc Committee and noted that the Hawthorns Area Plan PAWG process was thorough and that it will disappoint many if the project does not proceed. She stated that if the District does not continue with the Hawthorns Area Plan, significant progress would be lost, and the District would need to start over. She expressed the most comfort with deferring the Hawthorns Historic Complex project.

Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed support for Option 1 and acknowledged the new leadership in the Town. She noted that deferring the area plan project would negatively impact the many participants in the PAWG process and result in a loss of momentum and community engagement. She emphasized the complexity of the project, the importance of maintaining relationships and stated her support for Option 1.

Director Gleason commented that although the preserve is small, it holds great interest to the areas that are close to town. He compared St. Joseph's Hill, emphasizing its value to the community, and stated that Hawthorns would serve a similar role for Portola Valley. He highlighted other aspects such as improvements to Alpine Road, dog and bike use, and the District's use of this site for natural resource interests, including wildflower training, volunteer events, and docent led programs. He noted that it is relatively easy for people to get to the site and it carries an outsized importance. He expressed support for Option 1.

Director Kishimoto expressed support for Option 1 and mentioned that it is important to proceed with the public trails and restoration of Los Trancos Creek.

Director Holman offered an amendment, “Defer the Hawthorns Historic Complex Project until after the Hawthorns Area Plan is adopted and implementation of Area Plan projects is underway or until such time as a path forward is identified by the Town of Portola Valley for the Historic Complex.”

Director Riffle expressed concern that staff should remain focused on moving the PAWG recommendations forward. He stated that adding an “or” statement could divert attention from getting the PAWG recommendation underway and indicated he would not support the amended motion.

Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed concern that the District needs to remain focused on Measure AA projects. She questioned whether the amendment would provide more or less clarity for staff and whether it could potentially distract staff from implementing the Hawthorns Area Plan.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the amendment could create confusion for staff. She clarified that the Town is able to separately offer a proposal for the Board to consider addressing the Historic Complex and the absence of an amendment would not preclude this possibility.

Director Kersteen-Tucker opined that the amendment is not needed.

Motion: Director Riffle moved and Director MacNiven seconded the motion to select Option 1 to defer the Hawthorns Historic Complex Project until after the Hawthorns Area Plan is adopted and implementation of Area Plan projects is underway.

ROLL CALL VOTE: **7-0-0**

ADJOURNMENT

President Cyr adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 6:35 p.m.

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT FINANCING AUTHORITY

Chair Cyr called the Financing Authority 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, Curt Riffle, and Supervisor Abe-Koga

Director Holman announced that she is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 "just cause" exemption due to illness. She disclosed no one is present in her remote location.

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria

FINANCING AUTHORITY BUSINESS

1. Confirm Current Officers of the Financing Authority and Accept Report on the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Financing Authority activity for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025 (R-25-158)

Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak presented.

Public comment opened at 7:04 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:04 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved and Supervisor Abe-Koga seconded the motion to confirm the current officers of the Financing Authority and accept the report on the Financing Authority's debt issuance.

ROLL CALL VOTE: **5-0-0**

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cyr adjourned the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Financing Authority at 7:06 p.m.

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

President Cyr called the regular meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 7:15 p.m.

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

Director Holman announced that she is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 "just cause" exemption due to illness. She disclosed no one is present in her remote location.

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/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Shaylynn Nelson, Senior Capital Project Manager Mark Brandi, Management Analyst II Sophie Christel

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 7:16 p.m.

Hasan Adil shared his personal perspective regarding accessibility challenges, noting that his wife uses a wheelchair. He expressed appreciation for the District's preserves but raised concerns that some trails are not only impassable by wheelchair but also unsafe. He cited the Grasshopper Trail at the La Honda Creek Preserve as an example, noting that while the parking lot includes accessible parking and a restroom, shortly after the trail begins there is an off camber drop that is narrow and too steep, as well as three to four cattle gates that require height and a lever to open. He noted that while some preserves, such as Rancho San Antonio, have accessible paths, unsafe trail conditions can discourage people with mobility challenges from using the open space. He

noted that his intent was not to complain, but to offer his time and assistance to help improve trail accessibility.

Public comment closed at 7:19 p.m.

Director Kersteen-Tucker and Ms. Ruiz asked staff to speak with Mr. Adil to relay information about the District's easy access ADA accessible trails and then also have further discussions regarding the topic he raised.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

CONSENT CALENDAR

Director Kishimoto pulled Agenda Item 9.

Public comment opened at 7:22 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:22 p.m.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to approve all the Consent Calendar items with the exception of Agenda Item #9.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

- 1. Approve the November 12, 2025 Board meeting minutes**
- 2. Approve Claims Report**
- 3. Quarter 1 Proposed Budget Amendments for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026 (R-25-159)**

General Manager's Recommendation: Adopt a resolution approving the proposed Quarter 1 budget amendments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026.

- 4. Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Financial Report (R-25-160)**

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Review and accept the Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25) Annual Financial Report.
2. Adopt a resolution approving the transfer of \$9.5 million from the General Fund Unassigned Fund balance to the Committed for Infrastructure Fund.

- 5. Award of Contract for Madonna Creek Spillway Design (R-25-161)**

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to enter a contract with Terraphase Engineering to provide consulting services for spillway design and environmental permitting at Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve for a base amount not to exceed \$119,632.
2. Authorize a 10% contingency of \$11,963 to cover unforeseen circumstances for a total contract amount not to exceed \$131,595.

6. Granite Data Solutions Computer Workstation Procurement (R-25-162)

General Manager's Recommendation: Authorize the General Manager to purchase Dell computer workstations in the amount of \$70,000 from Granite Data Solutions.

7. Renewal of GIS Software Enterprise Agreement (R-25-163)

General Manager's Recommendation: Authorize the General Manager to renew a three-year Small County and Municipality Government Enterprise Agreement for geographic information system (GIS) software licensing with Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc., for an amount not-to-exceed \$191,628.

8. Acceptance of a Gift of the Bonner Trust Property located in San Mateo County (Assessor's Parcel Number 083-290-040) as an addition to Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve (R-25-164)General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Determine that the recommended actions are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as set out in the staff report.
2. Adopt a Resolution authorizing the General Manager or other appropriate officer to accept the Gift Deed of the Bonner Trust Property.
3. Adopt a Preliminary Use and Management Plan, as set out in the staff report.
4. Withhold dedication of the Bonner Trust Property as public open space at this time.

9. Approve an Agreement to Exchange Interests in Real Property between Jikoji, a non-profit corporation (Jikoji), and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District). District to receive a formal public trail easement for two existing trails that are currently open to the public and managed by the District, an access easement over all existing roads on the Jikoji property for patrol and maintenance purposes (no public access), and a 5-year license to conduct wildlife and plant studies along portions of Jikoji property (Santa Cruz County APNs 088-011-08 and 088-011-09) in exchange for District quitclaiming an unused roadway easement (where no roadway currently exists nor is needed) on Jikoji property (R-25-165)General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Determine that the recommended actions are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as set out in the report.
2. By a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors, adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager or other appropriate officer to execute the Agreement to Exchange Interests in Real Property between the District and Jikoji, the easement and deeds referenced therein, license and related documents.
3. Amend the Use and Management Plan for Long Ridge Open Space Preserve to include the access and public trail easements to be acquired by the District.

4. Withhold dedication of the public trail easement and access easement to be acquired by the District as public open space at this time.

Director Kishimoto asked and received information regarding whether the second gate near the pond is open at all times.

Public comment opened at 7:39 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:39 p.m.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Gleason seconded the motion to approve Consent Calendar Agenda Item #9.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 7-0-0

10. Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District for the Science and Stewardship Symposium (R-25-166)

General Manager's Recommendation: Authorize the General Manager to amend the Memorandum of Understanding with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (fiscal agent for the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network) to increase funding for the Science and Stewardship Symposium, raising the total not-to-exceed amount from the current \$12,000 to \$150,000 (a \$138,000 increase).

11. Award of Contract to Panorama Environmental, Inc., for California Environmental Quality Act Services for the Skyline Field Office Rebuild Project (R-25-167)

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Panorama Environmental Inc., to provide California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Services for the Skyline Field Office Rebuild Project for a base contract amount not to exceed \$141,531.
2. Authorize a 15% contingency in the amount of \$21,230 to cover unforeseen circumstances bringing the total not-to-exceed contract amount to \$162,761.
3. Authorize a separate contract allowance of \$20,000 for additional technical studies, if needed, bringing the not-to-exceed contract amount to \$182,761.

BOARD BUSINESS

12. Beatty Area Parking and Trail Connections at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (R-25-168)

Senior Capital Project Manager Mark Brandi presented.

Public comment opened at 8:28 p.m.

Mike Bushue, Large Animal Evacuation Group, advocated for the extra half mile connector trail and requested clarification whether the \$2M cost estimate includes the trail all the way up to

Priest Rock or if there is a separate section. He also asked about the proposed modifications at Limekiln related to newts, what is the pass/fail criteria and whether there is a threshold that would determine whether to remove or modify the installed equipment.

Mr. Brandi responded that the cost estimated includes the portion of the trail up onto the Beatty property and the immediate amenities that would be installed on the lower portion of that property. He clarified that the segment from Beatty up to the Priest Rock trail is not included in the cost estimate because it would be constructed in-house by District staff. The newt passages would not be removed unless they proved to be detrimental to newts on the roadway. Otherwise, the intention would be to build the first phase of the improvements into the overall project. Staff would move on to other segments of the road for additional improvements.

Edward Dee, Vice President of the Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers, spoke in favor of Option 2, particularly the phased implementation approach that prioritizes trail construction before development of a new parking area, unless parking demand at Miller Point exceeds capacity. He stated that most trail users would access the preserve by foot or bicycle from nearby communities, minimizing newt mortality, and that deferring parking construction would reduce environmental impacts, vehicle trips, and climate-related effects. He also expressed appreciation for the District's continued commitment to Measure AA projects, specifically Portfolio 22.

Public comment closed at 8:36 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved and Director MacNiven seconded the motion to:

1. Direct the General Manager to negotiate with Santa Clara County the suitable improvements for shared use of Santa Clara County's Miller Point Parking Area to serve as the staging/parking area for the Beatty Area trailhead at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve, including a roadway crossing. Any improvements would be paid for and implemented by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.
2. Direct the General Manager to pursue a new trail connection and trail loop off the Beatty Property that connects the Miller Point Parking Area to the larger Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve trail system.
3. Approve a funding contribution of \$650,000 to support the final design and construction of a portion (subset of Zone 1 – highest priority zone) of the Alma Bridge Road Newt Passage Project, located north of the Beatty property, to serve as a pilot for the newt crossing improvements.
4. Direct the General Manager to return to the Board of Directors at a later date if/when parking demand at the Miller Point Parking Area consistently exceeds capacity to determine whether expanded parking should be considered.

ROLL CALL VOTE: **7-0-0**

President Cyr called for a recess at 8:41 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 8:44 p.m. All Board members present.

13. 2024 Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report and Climate Program Update (R-25-169)

Management Analyst II Sophie Christel presented. Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington assisted with answering questions.

Director Holman left at 9:17 p.m. and returned at 9:19 p.m.

Director Holman inquired whether utility usage for staff residing at the new housing development located at the former District administrative site will be tracked.

Ms. Christel stated that she was unsure but would inquire with staff.

Director Kersteen-Tucker commented on the greenhouse gas emissions associated with livestock and why conservation grazing is important. She asked how, when, and where the District communicates this trade-off to the public and suggested that it represents an important public education opportunity.

Mr. Lenington agreed that the District could do more to communicate the trade-offs. He noted that it is a key component of the District's conservation grazing program and that it is occasionally included in newsletters or articles, but it should be communicated more consistently.

Mr. Malone added that while there is always more that can be done, there are many preserves with public and grazing access that include interpretative signage explaining the purpose and benefits of grazing, and that additional information, including a science advisory panel report summarizing supporting research, is available on the District's website.

Director Holman asked if there is anything that precludes the District from insulating older building that the District inherits.

Ms. Christel responded that she would need to defer to the property management staff. Noting that in some cases insulating older buildings can be difficult because there is no attic space for insulation, which would require re-roofing the building.

Director Holman asked whether the Skyline office project is considering using fallen trees or other on-site materials for outdoor furniture or similar uses, as was done for the construction of the District's new administration office. She noted that while this may not eliminate greenhouse gas emissions, using materials already on District lands could help reduce energy expended elsewhere.

Ms. Christel deferred the question to the Planning staff who are developing those plans.

Public comment opened at 9:29 p.m.

Dr. Rick Lanman, Institute for Historical Ecology, noted that he and Dr. Chris Potter conducted a study to understand how big the historical redwood forest in Santa Clara County was in the past. He said that planting redwoods on 480 acres of former redwood forest could offset the District's administrative greenhouse gas emissions in about 15 years. He also highlighted that mature redwoods are fire-resistant, surviving high-intensity fires, and encouraged the Board to review his study, which is available online, and consider planting redwoods in the preserves.

Tom Calederwood, a volunteer and a trail patrol for the last five years, echoed Dr. Lanman's points. He emphasized that planting redwoods aligns with the District's mission to restore natural environments. He also said that redwood restoration should be a priority rather than an

afterthought given the Bear Creek Redwood and Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserves are named after redwoods. He said that redwoods benefit not only the trees themselves but also benefit other plants, species, and wildlife, and that their shade will keep invasives at bay. Finally, he noted from personal experience that planting and maintaining trees is more rewarding than invasive removal, leading to increased volunteer participation and stronger community engagement.

Public comment closed at 9:35 p.m.

Mr. Lenington stated that while redwood planting has benefits, the District must be careful not to disrupt existing biodiversity in native landscapes such as grasslands, shrub habitats, and oak woodlands. He noted that restoration efforts are focused on previously disturbed areas impacted by invasive species.

No Board action is required.

INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

Director Riffle provided an update of the Board Appointee Evaluation (BAE) Committee meeting on December 9, 2025.

B. Staff Reports

Ms. Ruiz reminded the Board that the District's annual holiday luncheon will be held on Wednesday, December 17 at the Bloomhouse site in East Palo Alto.

C. Director Reports

Director MacNiven apologized for a comment made while deliberating about Bear Creek Stables at the October 22, 2025, Board meeting. She noted her comments did not keep with her or the Board's values for being open to public feedback and expressed her commitment to learning from the experience and acting more thoughtfully moving forward.

President Cyr stated that the Board deeply values the public's right to provide comments, whether positive or negative. He reinforced that the Board values civility and respect in all interactions and stated that he and the General Manager are fully aligned on this matter and that the Board will be holding a refresher on Board norms and the code of conduct.

Director Kishimoto reported she attended a LAFCO meeting in the past week and noted that she will be serving as vice chair next year. She also reported that she met with members of the Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers group for a general check-in meeting.

Director Holman commented that people are imperfect and mistakes are forgivable, and that people will forgive if a thoughtful response is given and one takes accountability for mistakes made. She suggested the board reflect on the timing of its response on this matter and expressed respect for members of the public who have written on the topic and confidence that their motivations align with the District's values.

Director Gleason commented that while criticism can be difficult to hear, it is essential for the Board, as a public agency, to listen and it is important that they consider feedback. He emphasized the importance of listening as an organization, noting also that it is the Board's responsibility.

Director Riffle spoke about the December 3 Board retreat and noted that it included productive discussions on several topics. He stated that the retreat provided an opportunity to drill down into projects and to increase understanding amongst the Board and staff on how to move forward.

Director Kersteen-Tucker shared pictures from the Night of Lights parade that was held December 5 in Half Moon Bay, noting that members of staff joined the community in the celebration.

President Cyr reported he attended the December 9 BAE Committee meeting. He briefly reflected on what he described as "a whale of a year" and stated that he felt supported both by staff and by his colleagues.

ADJOURNMENT

President Cyr adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 9:50 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC
District Clerk