



**SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING**

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

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

*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**

President Kersteen-Tucker called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Open Space District to order at 5:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Karen Holman, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Margaret MacNiven, 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/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Nalini Pillay, Conservation Grazing Program Manager Matthew Shapero, Rangeland Ecologist Lewis Reed, Facilities and Fleet Manager Brandon Stewart, Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter

President Kersteen-Tucker 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.

**1. Conservation Grazing Vegetation Management and Brush Reduction Program (R-26-20)**

Conservation Grazing Program Manager Matthew Shapero, Rangeland Ecologist Lewis Reed, and Facilities and Fleet Manager Brandon Stewart presented. Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter assisted in answering questions.

Director Holman asked whether goats have been used for grazing.

Mr. Shapero shared an example of a pilot program using grazing goats at a location in the Stanford area. While the project was successful at that location, he noted that when the goats were moved to another site, they stopped eating the coyote brush. He explained that the timing of palatability of coyote brush for goats varies throughout the year and is typically the highest in February through early April. Because the goats were moved in May, they did not consume coyote brush at Mindogo. He further noted that staff are still interested in using sheep and or goats to manage coyote brush and other invasive species.

Director Holman expressed interest in staff trying to use goats again for grazing and suggested they could possibly graze on more than just coyote brush.

Public comment opened at 6:59 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 6:59 p.m.

No Board action required.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

President Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 6:59 p.m.

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

President Kersteen-Tucker called the regular meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 7:09 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Karen Holman, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Yoriko Kishimoto, Margaret MacNiven, 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/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, and Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Nalini Pillay

President Kersteen-Tucker 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 7:10 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:10 p.m.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

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

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

**SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**Introduction of Staff**

- Steve Roberson, Equipment Mechanic Operator

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

Public comment opened at 7:11 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 7:11 p.m.

**Motion:** Director MacNiven moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to approve the Consent Calendar.

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

- 1. Approve the February 11, 2026 Board meeting minutes**
- 2. Approve Claims Report**
- 3. Formation of an Ad Hoc Committee to update Board Governance Policies (R-26-21)**

General Manager's Recommendation: Approve the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee of three Board members to be appointed by the Board President to update Board Policy 6.07, *Code of Conduct* and potentially also Board Policy 1.06, *Board Officers* pursuant to Board Policy 1.04, *Board Committees*. Consistent with other recent Ad Hoc Committees of the Board, these meetings would be compensable.

- 4. Award of Contract to LSA Associates, Inc., for Environmental Review and Permitting Services for the Beatty Parking and Trail Connections Project at Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (R-26-22)**

General Manager's Recommendations:

1. Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with LSA Associates Inc., to provide environmental review and permitting services for the Beatty Parking Area and Trail Connections Project for a base contract amount not to exceed \$242,737.
2. Authorize a 15% contingency in the amount of \$36,410 to cover unforeseen circumstances.
3. Authorize a \$13,120 contract allowance for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment if it is determined to be necessary, bringing the total not-to-exceed contract amount to \$292,267.

**5. Award of Contract to Vishal Subramanyan to provide Wildlife Photography and Videography at Various Preserves (R-26-23)**

General Manager's Recommendation: Authorize the General Manager to enter into a two-year contract with wildlife photographer Vishal Subramanyan in the amount of \$70,000, funded at \$35,000 per year, to support ongoing wildlife documentation and related communication needs.

**6. Approval of Agreement with Santa Clara County for Radio Communications Services (R-26-24)**

General Manager's Recommendation: Authorize the General Manager to enter into a new five-year agreement with Santa Clara County for an amount not to exceed \$187,320 to: (1) perform annual radio maintenance and repair, and (2) support implementation of a new digital simulcast radio communications system.

**BOARD BUSINESS****7. Bear Creek Stables Long-Term Agreement with the Friends of Bear Creek Stables (R-26-25)**

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided opening remarks. Assistant General Manager Brian Malone presented the item. Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan and General Counsel Hilary Stevenson assisted in answering questions. President of the Friends of Bear Creek Stables, Rick Parfitt also assisted in answering questions.

Director Kishimoto commented that horses may carry ticks and asked whether treatment using pesticides would be covered either under the District's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program or veterinarian care.

Mr. Malone stated that it would fall under veterinarian care under the IPM program, but he would need to look further into whether there are any restrictions.

President Kersteen-Tucker expressed that one of the cornerstones of the program is to ensure that every boarder has a volunteer responsibility, whether through their own service or through the use of their horse. She noted that Attachment F does not reference this expectation. She stated that, as a Director, it is important to receive assurance from Friends of Bear Creek Stables (FBCS) regarding how the commitment from boarders will be measured.

Mr. Malone stated that it was not initially a Board of Directors (Board) directive to make volunteering mandatory for the boarders but it could be included in the agreement as a requirement.

Rick Parfitt, President of Friends of Bear Creek Stables, explained volunteering is addressed in two places in the business plan and current boarders would have the option to either participate in public programming or relocate after two years.

President Kersteen-Tucker suggested that, under the section titled *District's Responsibilities* where it references maintenance of occupied structures, staff could list which structures that are the responsibility of the District and which are the responsibility of the FBCS.

Mr. Malone stated that the District will prepare a document, similar to a standard tenant move-in day checklist, identifying who is responsible for specific structures, and pictures will be taken of each structure.

President Kersteen-Tucker noted that on page six of the staff report, the first bullet point under the *Boarding* section states that, "All horse owners boarding at the Stables will be required to participate in programming as either a volunteer and/or using their horse(s)." She inquired whether the staff report, as the primary document the public will consult, could be updated to reflect that in two years the boarders would be required to volunteer or relocate.

Mr. Malone explained that although it is too late to amend the report, the clarification will be noted in the minutes, and the agreement can be amended at the direction of the Board.

President Kersteen-Tucker called for a recess of the Board meeting at 8:32 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Director Cyr returned to the dais at 8:38 p.m.

Director Holman inquired whether pledges could be included as part of fundraising, along with donations and grants, to assist the FBCS in reaching their fundraising goals.

Mr. Malone explained the Board could choose to allow pledges to count towards the fundraising total but the Board previously only approved donations and grants.

Director Kishimoto requested that the insurance requirements equivalent to those imposed by the North American Horsemen's Association (NAHA) be included in the agreement.

Mr. Malone stated the insurance requirements such as those imposed by NAHA could be added as an attachment to the insurance and shared with the Board.

Public comment opened at 9:29 p.m.

The following people spoke in favor of the General Manager's recommendation:

- Karen Read, as read by Marcie Colonna
- William Whitney
- Rachel Parakh
- Cindy Clark

Public comment closed at 9:35 p.m.

Director Kishimoto commented that this is a careful decision that carries long term financial implications and should be given great consideration. She noted that she requested several items for staff to either bring back to the Board or clarify. In addition, she commented that the business plan was provided one day ahead of the meeting and referenced the agreement language which stated that the “business and programming plan shall be subject to the District’s reasonable review and approval.” She expressed that she did not feel she had sufficient time to review the plan, felt rushed, and stated her preference for the plan to be returned to the Board with the requested changes incorporated, allowing additional time for the Board to review.

Director MacNiven commented that she also feels rushed to make a decision but expressed her support for the program. She commented that she does not want to set the FBCS for failure and noted that the agreement is favorable to the District and includes numerous protections and would like the FBCS to succeed. She suggested striking from the General Manager’s recommendation the two optional five-year extensions to be executed at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Malone explained that the authority to extend an agreement is typically given to the General Manager. However, he noted that under the language of the agreement, any five-year extensions would be required to be presented to the Board for consideration.

General Manager Ana Ruiz added that the structure was intentional, as the District is entering into a new and different agreement. She explained that the nonprofit organization will also be building its capacity during the first two years to meet the agreement’s requirements. She stressed that any extensions would be presented to the Board to demonstrate that the FBCS met all the requirements of the agreement and the additional milestones to consider whether to extend for another five years.

Director Holman commended the many individuals involved, stating that good things happen when good people come together. She noted that she has often recognized the Bear Creek Stables group and FBCS for their hard work and creativity and that she would also like to publicly acknowledge District staff as part of that collective effort. She described the outcome as a positive direction for the District and believes that it can be built upon and developed into a landmark for the District. She further commended the FBCS for raising \$250,000 without an agreement and for amending its bylaws. Lastly, she requested that funding pledges count towards the fundraising goals for the next period and expressed support for adding Director Kishimoto’s insurance requirements to the agreement.

Director Gleason expressed support for the agreement and noted that before the District expends a significant amount of money, the FBCS must first demonstrate it can meet milestones, and requested adding the terms suggested by the Board. He expressed support for adding additional requirements as outlined by Director Kishimoto and stated he does not believe a Board decision will need to be deferred to a later date. He requested that staff continue discussion with the FBCS and address any concerns with the business plan during those discussions.

Mr. Malone stated that the agreement requires an annual business plan, with the first year encompassing the plan that was provided. For future years, there will be a new or updated business plan that is submitted annually to the District for review and approval.

Director Cyr expressed his support for the FBCS Agreement and acknowledged the significant amount of time invested, and that the outcome reflected careful thought, thorough consideration, and the ability to balance differing opinions.

Director Riffle commented that while he appreciates Director Kishimoto's perspective and her concern about potentially having more time to review the materials, he did have the opportunity to read through the business plan. He expressed some concern for certain numbers presented in the plan such as the vet and farrier fees of \$18 per month. However, he emphasized that the specific numbers were less important than the commitment of the people involved and the organization's highly volunteer driven nature and the ongoing donations to support the work.

Mr. Malone clarified that initially the FBCS will not have horses onsite, which is likely the reason the vet and farrier costs are so low.

Director Riffle expressed support for the Board reaching a decision without continuing to a future meeting.

Director Kishimoto proposed a motion to continue the item to the March 25 Board meeting and for staff to incorporate the Board's proposed changes into the agreement. She stated that she felt rushed and indicated that, if the item were brought to a vote tonight, she would vote against it.

President Kersteen-Tucker commented that while she wants to be supportive of the program, she is concerned about the aspects of the proposal that she believes may be difficult and challenging to implement. She also expressed concern regarding the continued impact on high-level staff over the next couple of years. At the same time, she stated she would like to give FBCS the opportunity to move forward with the plan and demonstrate its success. Although she had initially preferred a slower approach, she does not believe postponing a month would accomplish much. She then asked Director Kishimoto whether she would like to include her concerns or considerations into the motion before the Board.

Director Kishimoto requested that staff incorporate the NAHA standards into the insurance requirements. She stated that inclusion of these standards would serve as an assurance due diligence.

Mr. Malone explained that he does not recommend incorporating NAHA insurance requirements into the agreement, as insurance providers and their requirements may change over time. He noted that the agreement already requires insurance to be in place before signing the agreement. If it is the Board's interest, he stated that the agreement could remain unsigned until documentation demonstrating compliance with NAHA standards is provided to the District. He further stated that additional language may not be necessary in the agreement, as staff could ensure that both the insurance certification and any restrictive requirements imposed by the insurance provider on FBCS are obtained and then be provided to the Board as an informational item.

Director Kishimoto requested that the language be added to the agreement.

Mr. Malone said it would be unwise in the agreement to specify the insurance provider. However, if the Board wished to approve the agreement this evening, the Board could direct the General Manager to negotiate with the FBCS to add language requiring that insurance coverage meet requirements that are the same or similar to the standards of the NAHA insurance.

Director Kishimoto commented that including the requirements in the agreement is important and expressed concern that without these requirements explicitly included, there would be no assurance of their fulfillment and that could be a potential risk. In addition, she requested that language be added to the boarder agreement to clarify that boarders are required to volunteer.

Mr. Malone stated that the requirement for boarders to either volunteer in public programs or allow their horse to be part of the programming is already reflected in the business plan under the Programming Plan, which was provided to the Board as Supplemental Attachment D on page 25.

President Kersteen-Tucker responded that the business plan does not state that at the end of two years, the FBCS anticipate that all their boarders will be involved in programming.

Mr. Malone stated that the Board can direct the General Manager to negotiate with the FBCS to include in the business and programming plan the requirement that any new boarders must commit to participating in the programming and that existing boarders will be required by the end of two years to participate in the programming.

Director Kishimoto requested that staff return with information regarding pesticides that may be used as part of veterinary care. She stated that she will vote against the General Manager's recommendation due to the Board having less than 24 hours to review the business plan.

President Kersteen-Tucker stated that she would be supportive of the recommendation if the business plan *Summary of Plan, Approaches, and Challenges* includes the same language as in the Board report on page 6 that all horse owners boarding at the stables will be required to participate in programming as either a volunteer or using their horses.

Mr. Parfitt agreed to add language that existing boarders would have up to two years to either participate in the volunteer programs or relocate, and new boarders would be required to participate.

Director Gleason suggested adding the insurance standards as an example rather than a specific requirement.

Mr. Malone stated the Board could direct staff to negotiate that inclusion with the FBCS.

**Motion:** Director Holman moved and Director Gleason seconded the General Manager's recommendation to enter into an initial two-year agreement with the Friends of Bear Creek Stables to operate Bear Creek Stables for the purpose of providing public equestrian interaction, nature programming, and horse boarding services, with two optional five-year extensions to be executed at the discretion of the Board of Directors, with the following amendments to:

- 1) Include a requirement in the Agreement to follow the North American Horsemen's Association (NAHA) Risk Reduction Program for Equine Business Owners/Operators or equivalent.
- 2) Include language into the business plan that existing boarders are given two years to comply with the requirement to either volunteer in public programming or allow their horse to support public programming, or otherwise relocate, and that new boarders be required to do the same from the start; and
- 3) Allow pledges to count towards the Friends of Bear Creek Stables' second phase of the \$250,000 fundraising goal.

**ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-1-0 (Director Kishimoto opposed)**

Director Kishimoto requested to reflect in the record that she opposed due to the Board having less than 24 hours to review the business plan.

**INFORMATIONAL REPORTS**

A. Committee Reports

None

B. Staff Reports

Ms. Ruiz reported that the State of the Valley Conference will be held on February 27. She also provided an update on the District's Careers and Conservation Fair scheduled for March 6 at the Los Altos Community Center.

C. Director's Reports

Director Gleason reported that he attended a few volunteer events on District sites and provided an update.

Director Cyr inquired who he should RSVP with for the Stevens Creek Summit. Director Riffle responded that he would send a registration link to sign up.

Director Holman reported that she and Director Kishimoto attended the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project event and provided an update.

Director Kishimoto added that the event also included a 1.2 mile extension of Stevens Creek. She also recognized that the District is a strong supporter of the Summit and invited any Board member who wished to attend and had not received an invitation to notify her.

Director MacNiven reported that she attended the February 20 La Honda Creek Trail opening.

President Kersteen-Tucker reported that she too attended the February 20 La Honda Creek Trail opening.

**ADJOURNMENT**

President Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 10:34 p.m.

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