



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, March 17, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Members present: Jed Cyr, Yoriko Kishimoto, 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 Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Shaylynn Nelson, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner III Ashley Mac, Planner II Cecelia Gerstenbacher, and Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Public comment opened at 1:01 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:01 p.m.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Select Committee Chair for 2026 Calendar Year

Director Cyr nominated Director Riffle to serve as the Committee Chair for calendar year 2026.

Director Riffle accepted the nomination.

Public comment opened at 1:01 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:01 p.m.

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to select Director Riffle as Committee Chair for Calendar Year 2026.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Approve the December 10, 2025 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Public comment opened at 1:02 p.m.

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

Public comment closed at 1:02 p.m.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Chair Riffle seconded the motion to approve the December 10, 2025, Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 2-1-0 (Director Cyr abstained)

3. Presentation of the Hawthorns Area Plan Draft Action Table and Schematic Parking Designs for Consideration as the Basis for the Project Description to Conduct Environmental Review (R-26-35)

Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner II Cecelia Gerstenbacher, CSW|ST2 Project Manager Jessie Maran, and Parametrix Senior Consultant Andrew Lee presented the item. General Manager Ana Ruiz, Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, and CSW|ST2 Landscape Architect Paul Stevenson assisted in answering questions.

Chair Riffle noted that in the Action Table page 1 of 21 is not listed. He suggested adding the page number at the bottom of the page for clarity and ease of reference.

Chair Riffle noted that in the Action Table page 1, under Focus Area of NR2. Wildlife, the action type “eval” is not referenced in the paragraph above. He suggested including an explanation of “eval” for completeness and to avoid confusion.

Director Kishimoto noted that on page 4 under the Focus Area NR3.3 the Purpose is to “*Protect and monitor water quality to support long term preservation, restoration, and enhancement of aquatic resources within Hawthorns,*” and suggested raising the priority level from low to medium.

Senior Resource Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter explained that, in reviewing the Action Table from a natural resource’s perspective, staff considered the 79-acre parcel within the context of the rest of the District’s priorities and potential issues and compared to other bodies of water within the District.

Director Kishimoto suggested adding the context provided by Mr. Sifuentes-Winter to the Action Table, otherwise it is difficult to interpret.

General Manager Ana Ruiz inquired whether the priority level could remain the same if the context was added to the Action Table.

Director Kishimoto requested that the priority level be increased to medium priority.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter stated he could consult with the District’s Water Resource Specialist and further discuss prioritization.

Director Riffle also expressed concern, noting that when he reviewed the Natural Resources Management items, he felt they should be considered high priority, and suggested that having additional context for how those distinctions were made would be helpful.

Ms. Ruiz explained that the evaluation considers priorities both at the District level and within Hawthorns, including what are the natural resources priorities such as the condition of Los Trancos Creek relative to other resource elements. She noted that some resources elements require more attention as compared to the creek.

Mr. Sifuentes-Winter explained numerous technical, botanical, and wildlife surveys have been conducted in the area to identify resources requiring protection. He noted that while some special species are present, none rise to the point of needing District action to protect a species. He further stated that given the preserve’s location, and in comparison to other areas with higher priority, this area has been ranked accordingly.

Director Kishimoto commented that she would be comfortable deferring to staff regarding the assigned priority level, however, she requested that additional context or a prominent footnote be added to the Action Table.

Director Cyr agreed that an explanation to the Action Table would be helpful.

Chair Riffle commented on NR 1.1 of the Action Table, under Potential Partners, the term “volunteers” should be clarified to refer to District volunteers. Additionally, regarding NR 2.4, he noted that multiple actions are listed but only the neighbors and the Town of Portola Valley (Town) are identified as Potential Partners. He asked whether the Potential Partners apply to all actions or solely to Action A.

Ms. Gerstenbacher responded that it would be indicative of Action A and noted that this will be clarified in the Potential Partners section.

Chair Riffle requested clarification regarding the ranking in Operations and Maintenance 5.3 of the Action Table, noting that actions include evaluating future trail connection for (a) Sweet Springs Trail ranked low and for (b) Alpine Trail improvements ranked high.

Ms. Gerstenbacher responded that Alpine Trail improvements will be included in the primary opening phase of the property and ranked higher on the priority list because they are part of opening the property to the public. She explained that improvements to the Sweet Springs Trail, or the potential for such improvements, are anticipated to occur later and are accordingly ranked lower in priority.

Ms. Hugg further clarified that the Alpine Road Trail improvements referenced are limited to connections from the trail to the trailhead, as well as improvements around the driveway. She emphasized that the District’s scope applies only within its property boundary. She further explained that coordination with the Town would occur at a future date following completion of the District’s planning process for the Hawthorns property. At that time, during the implementation phase, the District will engage with the Town.

Director Kishimoto suggested delineating more clearly the Public Access Map as shown on slide 27 of the staff’s presentation and include clarification in the staff report to the Board.

Chair Riffle agreed with Director Kishimoto’s suggestions.

Chair Riffle recommended removing the word “alternative” from the third bullet on slide 37 of the staff’s presentation, noting that hammerhead is the recommended option.

Director Kishimoto suggested adding context to the staff report to the Board for Option 9, including the information as described on slide 42, noting that it is difficult to understand without visual reference. She also recommended including photos showing the visibility of vehicles turning left to head out to Portola Road.

Director Kishimoto requested to include photos of the proposed trees to be removed along with the total number, and indicate whether any of the trees are classified as a special tree.

Chair Riffle addressed the public comments received about children’s safety at the crosswalks and asked about the overall safety of using the crosswalks.

Ms. Maran suggested including a photo would be helpful. She explained that the Alpine Trail dips down to Alpine Road where it intersects with Portola Road and where pedestrians can use a

crosswalk to get to the other side of the road. This formalized, safe, and predictable crossing ensures good sightlines for all users, and allows users to see each other when necessary.

Director Kishimoto suggested that, when the item is presented to the full Board, the staff report include a summary of the specific sections referenced in the District's Parking Guidelines.

Chair Riffle noted that, in the Action Table on page 11, under section PA1.1, there are two action items labeled as "c" and asked whether this was correct.

Ms. Gerstenbacher acknowledged this was an error and stated that the first "c" will be corrected to "b".

Chair Riffle requested that the Priority section of PA1.1 also be updated to reflect this correction.

Chair Riffle noted that PA 4.2 in the Action Table on page 13 does not include information regarding phasing, priority, action type, cost, or potential partners.

Ms. Gerstenbacher noted that this was a formatting error and stated that it would be corrected.

Chair Riffle noted that on page 15 of the Action Plan under PA 7.1 under Purpose it states "*Consider accommodating transportation demand management strategies...*" and requested to change it to "*Incorporate ~~Consider accommodating~~ transportation demand management strategies...*".

Chair Riffle inquired whether the Town should be listed as a potential partner in the Action Table on page 16, PA 8.2, to consult on the cultural or historical aspects of the property.

Ms. Gerstenbacher noted that it would be appropriate to list the Town as a potential partner that the District could consider collaborating with.

Public comment opened at 2:51 p.m.

Betsy Morgenthaler, Portola Valley Open Space Committee, spoke in favor of opening Hawthorns without a parking lot. She commented that an incremental approach would allow earlier public access, reduce immediate impacts, and provide time to evaluate future parking needs and whether a parking lot is necessary.

Mary Hufty, Portola Valley Town Vice Mayor, speaking in her personal capacity, spoke in favor of considering a one-way circulation through the parking lot, noting that it could reduce conflicts and simplify circulation by requiring drivers to look in only one direction. She also commented that the Town is developing a village in Portola Valley with increased housing and is seeking housing sites which is why the historic site is of interest to the Town.

Public comment closed at 2:59 p.m.

Ms. Mark responded to Ms. Morgenthaler's comments noting that there may be a no project alternative as part of the CEQA process, however, this would result in no trails and no development at the site.

Mr. Lee responded to Ms. Hufty's comment regarding the one-way passage through the Hawthorn site, explaining that the design was to limit access to a single point to minimize the degree of interaction with Alpine Road. He noted that having two driveways could create user confusion trying to figure out which way to enter and exit. He added that a one-way parking layout would not significantly reduce site work, and its benefits compared to its costs were very modest.

Director Kishimoto asked whether the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would clearly distinguish the impacts of Phase 1 versus Phase 2.

Ms. Mark responded that staff would work with the CEQA consultants to clearly identify what those impacts are per phasing.

Public comment reopened at 3:04 p.m.

Kristi Corley commented that if there is a potential parking lot it should be permeable with rock. She also expressed concern about Alpine Trail, which is a key route for schoolchildren, and it should be discussed thoroughly with the Town's Trails Committee to come up with a good solution for either Option 9 or 10.

Public comment closed at 3:06 p.m.

Director Riffle suggested that before this item is presented to the full Board, to advise the Directors take the opportunity to walk the Alpine Road trail so that it provides a better perspective of the site. It will also provide them with an opportunity to see key elements such as the Robert's Market parking, the stop sign, and traffic conditions.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Cyr seconded forwarding the draft Action Table and Schematic Parking Designs, with any changes recommended by the Committee, to the Board of Directors for consideration as the basis for the project description to conduct environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:11 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC, District Clerk