



SPECIAL MEETING

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

Wednesday, May 6, 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 Regional Open Space District to order at 5:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Yoriko Kishimoto

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 Planner Tina Hugg, Planner II Cecelia Gerstenbacher, Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Baressi, Planning Manager Jane Mark

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.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0 (Kishimoto absent)

BOARD BUSINESS**1. Presentation of the Hawthorns Area Plan Action Table and Schematic Parking Designs for Consideration as the Basis for the Project Description to Conduct Environmental Review (R-26-59)**

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided opening remarks and assisted with answering questions. Senior Planner Tina Hugg, Planner II Cecelia Gerstenbacher, CSW|ST2 Project Manager Jessie Maran, and Parametrix Senior Consultant Andrew Lee presented. Skyline Area Superintendent Chris Baressi, Planning Manager Jane Mark, and CSW|ST2 Landscape Architect Paul Stevenson assisted with answering questions.

Director Gleason emphasized the important history the District has with the Town of Portola Valley (Town) with the building of the Windy Hill trails and suggested staff consider engaging the volunteer program to participate in building the Hawthorns trails to increase engagement and ownership from the Town.

Ms. Gerstenbacher inquired whether Director Gleason was referring to including them in NR 1.1 of the action table or more broadly.

Director Gleason stated it was a general suggestion and recommended adding it to where it relates to the actual building of the trails. He noted the volunteer program and the people who would engage with it are potential partners.

Director Holman inquired whether the Board of Directors (Board) could take action at tonight's meeting to eliminate one of the parking area options and only perform environmental analysis on the preferred parking area option to save time and money.

Ms. Ruiz explained that the recommendation is to have both options analyzed under CEQA so that the Board can consider the environmental analysis and findings for each option.

Director Holman noted that due to the phased nature of the two parking area options, CEQA review would essentially result in the analysis of four projects, requiring substantial work. She also stated that she believes San Mateo County requires that paved parking lots have urban aspects, such as striping, signage, and colors for handicapped parking spots, and requested that the aesthetic impacts be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report document.

Ms. Mark explained that the District is not seeking a permit from the County of San Mateo for the parking improvements, but rather from the Town, and that the District would need to be consistent with the parking guidelines and codes within the Town.

Director Holman requested that staff analyze the aesthetic impacts as part of the analysis of parking lot surfaces and research the Town's parking design requirements.

Public comment period opened.

The following speakers provided comments:

- David Smernoff
- Joshua Portner

- Kristi Corley
- Rita Comes
- Leslie Kriese
- Craig Taylor
- Helen Quinn
- Patt Baenen
- Nancy Powell

Public comment period closed.

Ms. Hugg responded to the public comments.

President Kersteen-Tucker suggested that an updated FAQ page be added to the District website if her colleagues and staff found it appropriate.

Director Riffle, Chair of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee, suggested at the time of the Committee meeting that his colleagues tour the site.

Ms. Hugg confirmed that there is currently a FAQ on the project website that was last revised in 2023, which staff can update.

President Kersteen-Tucker called for a recess at 7:33 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 7:39 p.m. All Board members present, with the exception of Director Kishimoto, who was absent.

Director Holman indicated a preference for option 9. She suggested that an analysis of option 10 may not be worth pursuing due to its interruption to the trail along Alpine Road, its introduction to a change in the intersection from a 3-way to a 4-way configuration, the need for more cut and fill and grading, the longer driveway to get to the parking, and because it would require the need to remove more trees

Director MacNiven supported analyzing the phases for both options 9 and 10 since it is most cost-effective [as opposed to analyzing separately or sequentially if these options were later pursued].

Director Cyr supported analyzing both options so that the Board could have as much information as possible and better understand the nuances of each approach prior to making a decision.

Director Gleason also supported analyzing both options 9 and 10.

Director Riffle supported analyzing both options 9 and 10. He noted there will be a lot of interest from the Town and other constituents and he would like them to be able to view the analysis.

President Kersteen-Tucker also supported analyzing both options.

Director Holman inquired whether staff was comfortable moving forward with the CEQA analysis given that there are unanswered questions regarding what is allowed by the Town.

Ms. Ruiz explained that the project description is broad to allow flexibility for the District to work within the description boundaries. She stated that within those boundaries, the District

would engage in conversations with the Town to discuss grading recommendations and number of parking spaces, but staff needs to establish the boundaries within which the District would work.

Director Gleason expressed concern with continuing with the CEQA process prior to establishing an initial alignment with the Town and inquired whether efforts could be made to see if there is a solution that can be reached once the District ultimately pursues permitting with the Town.

Ms. Ruiz explained that with prior projects it has been difficult to have conversations with the Town without an application from the District. She stated that the District cannot assemble an application without defining a project description to serve as the basis for environmental review. She further explained that the District will be unable to obtain concrete guidance and conditions until an application is submitted, and that information or guidance received from the Town prior to submitting the application can shift over time.

Ms. Mark further added that a lot of the questions being asked are about specific details, but the District is at this time only considering conceptual designs. She noted that as the design progresses, the District will have more information that can be included in the project application. She also stated that staff presented at a Town Council meeting two years ago and received input from the Town.

Ms. Ruiz further explained that it will be difficult for the District to obtain clarity at this time without an application. She noted that the Board is an elected body, with each director representing their ward and constituents. She stated that both the Town and the District have processes, policies, legal obligations, responsibilities to the public and that the District must navigate its own responsibilities prior to submitting an application.

Director Holman suggested that staff make another effort to work with Town staff with the support of the Town mayor to answer some questions prior to submitting an application, which would ideally save time and money.

President Kersteen-Tucker noted that the Town mayor was present in an unofficial capacity and not relaying the position of the Town Council. She expressed that she is not in favor of delaying the process, especially considering that the PAWG has devoted a tremendous amount of time and effort to move the project forward to provide public access.

Director Riffle expressed support for the general manager's recommendation and explained that the District has owned the property since 2011 and it was entrusted to the District to make it available to the public, which is part of the District's mission. He further noted that over five years, the District has had 37 meetings and spent hundreds of hours searching for a solution that will work for Portola Valley residents, the District's constituents, and the District itself. He explained that the District has not previously been successful on other projects with the Town and expressed concern that further conversations without an application will delay the project without resulting in appreciable results. He added that the District will likely achieve appreciable results once there is a specific project for the Town to review and provide feedback. He expressed support for moving forward.

Director MacNiven expressed support for the general manager's recommendation. She stated that the public appreciates access to open space and that parking lots are an inevitable part of providing access. She noted that the Portola Valley residents will have access to beautifully preserved, protected, and publicly-owned and managed acres and the general public should have access as well. She expressed that the District constantly seeks ways to accommodate visitors safely and in tune with nature and that she supports forwarding both options for CEQA analysis.

Director Gleason expressed appreciation for the proposal and noted that there has been great outreach to the public and finding a solution that works for both the District and the Town. He expressed concern with spending time forwarding the project only to reach an impasse with the Town. He stated that although he is in support of moving the project forward into CEQA, he would encourage staff to engage with the Town in the interim to minimize the risk of running into permitting issues later.

Ms. Mark responded that staff will be consulting with the Town during the CEQA process and if, through the consultations, staff finds there are concerns or issues that need to be addressed, staff can work through the CEQA consultation process with the Town.

General Counsel Hilary Stevenson confirmed that when the District commences the CEQA process, that the District can enter into a new phase of conversations with the Town.

Motion: Director MacNiven moved, and Director Riffle seconded the motion to accept the Action Table and Schematic Parking Designs, with any changes recommended by the Board of Directors, as the basis for the project description to conduct environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0 (Kishimoto absent)

ADJOURNMENT

President Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Shaylynn Nelson
Deputy District Clerk