



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Administrative Office
330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, CA 94022

September 29, 2015

DRAFT MINUTES

ROLL CALL

Director Riffle called the Special Meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 5:02 p.m.

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Larry Hassett, and Curt Riffle

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: General Manager Steve Abbors, General Counsel Sheryl Schaffner, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Planner III Lisa Bankosh, Planner III Gretchen Laustsen, Operations Manager Michael Newburn, and District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

No speakers present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

VOTE: 3-0-0

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 1. Approve the Planning and Natural Resources Committee Minutes:
August 11, 2015**

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Hassett seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the August 11, 2015 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting.

VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Implementation and Phasing of the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan, including the Bear Creek Stables and Alma College Site Plans (R-15-144)

Planner III Lisa Bankosh presented the staff report providing an overview of the overall implementation schedule including opening Phase I of the western and southern areas of the preserve in 2018, which would include building parking lots at Alma College and Bear Creek Stables, providing a pedestrian crossing at the Alma College site, and provide access to redwoods. Ms. Bankosh described the key actions of Phase II of implementation including a building a multiuse trail segment, opening of the multiuse trail to bicycles, Alma College site rehabilitation, and tenant selection for the Bear Creek stables facilities. Phase III implementation includes a proposed parking lot in the northeast corner of the preserve, additional trail connections and potential partner for the Alma College site.

Director Riffle requested additional clarification regarding opening the Bear Creek Stables and any required improvements to be completed before the stables are opened to the public.

Planner III Gretchen Laustsen explained that the improvements to Bear Creek Stables related to the public access area are planned for Phase I of implementation; however, the current permitting system allowing public access would continue.

Director Hassett inquired regarding the need of a ranger position to be added at the midyear budget when the preserve is not planned for opening until 2018.

Operations Manager Michael Newburn explained that the hiring, academy and training of a new ranger candidate typically takes at least year requiring the position to be funded as part of the midyear adjustment.

Ms. Bankosh next described various natural resource management considerations, including invasive species management plan, reforestation of the redwoods, relocation of a large bat population, and pond rehabilitation. Ms. Bankosh described the cultural resources management plan including potential protective measures for various historic buildings on the Alma College site and removal of structures that do not contribute to the cultural landscape. Ms. Bankosh summarized California Environmental Quality Act considerations for the Alma College site and current buildings there. Next, Ms. Bankosh described maintenance and operations work required for opening the preserve to the public including trail building, reducing wildfire risk, and increased Ranger patrol.

Ms. Laustsen presented a summary of the Bear Creek Stables site plan and design alternatives. Ms. Laustsen explained staff is currently studying existing conditions, permitting feasibility, financial feasibility and district policy. Ms. Laustsen presented in detail the three design alternatives for the Bear Creek Stables, describing the possible structures, number of paddocks, parking areas, and rough cost estimates for each alternative. Finally, Ms. Laustsen also provided an update of the current water resources inventory and the next steps for the study.

Director Hassett expressed his concerns regarding the use of District funds to complete improvements to be used by a future stables tenant.

Ms. Lausten explained that many of the improvements necessary to opening the stables for public access as soon as possible would require District funding. Otherwise public access would most likely require closures in the future to complete the improvements at a later date.

Public comment opened at 6:43 p.m.

Lyndall Erb expressed her concerns regarding paved areas and its effect on horses. Ms. Erb also expressed her concerns at the complex scope of the project.

Erfert Fenton spoke in favor of protecting the old barn at the Alma College site. Ms. Fenton also stated her belief that the stables caretaker also benefits the preserve as a whole. Finally, Ms. Fenton suggested use of flashing lights at the road crossing.

Pam Ashford spoke regarding the size of the paddocks and the reduction of the number of boarders at the site. Ms. Ashford also spoke in favor of combining Alternatives A and B. Spoke concerning the disruption the construction will have on the horses.

Peter Hargreaves spoke in favor of creating a crossing at Summit Road. Mr. Hargreaves provided comments on the lengthy timeline for full opening of the preserve and dangerous for pedestrians on Bear Creek Road. Permit access to western side of the preserve

Margarita West expressed her concerns regarding the high cost of the improvements and spoke in favor of maintaining the current stables.

Caral Paral expressed her concerns for allowing the potential farm animals to be in a more natural environment. Ms. Paral also expressed her concerns for the farm animals being located at the hillside where wild animals, such as mountain lions may use them as prey.

Thomas DeMeo spoke in favor of cyclist trail connections through the preserve. Mr. DeMeo also spoke regarding spending ten million dollars to open the stables for public access before the western area of the preserve is open to cyclists.

Cathy Schulbach expressed her concerns related to construction impacts of the pedestrian crossing on Bear Creek Road.

Karen Read spoke regarding the lack of the public's access to horses in Alternatives A and B. Ms. Read also spoke regarding the current size of the horse paddocks.

Jenny Whitman thanked staff for working closely with the current tenants of Bear Creek Stables. Ms. Whitman also spoke regarding the livery stable and the current pony cooperative program. Finally Ms. Whitman expressed her concerns of having farm animals near the hillside and their exposure to predators.

Melany Moore spoke regarding the current number of boarders at the stables and requested that the level remain the same. Ms. Moore also spoke in favor of preserving more buildings at the Alma College site.

Charlie Krenz spoke regarding the cost per customer for the improvements required for visitor access.

Frank Bakonyi spoke in favor of waiting for a final decision on the alternatives until a tenant is chosen for Bear Creek Stables. Mr. Bakonyi also spoke in favor of moving the parking areas to more northern areas of the preserve.

Public comment closed at 7:06 p.m.

Ms. Lausten explained that upgrades and construction of new paddocks is required for a use permit from Santa Clara County, which is required for various public access requirements.

Director Hassett expressed his concerns regarding the use of public funds for improvements to be used by a private business and encouraged other stable operators to review the proposed plans.

Motion: Director Hassett moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to:

1. Confirm the proposed Preserve Plan actions, including Bear Creek Stables, to facilitate completion of the Preserve Plan document and Draft Environmental Impact Report.
2. Confirm staff's recommendation to remove Bear Creek Stables Design Alternative C from consideration due to associated environmental impacts.
3. Support the proposed phasing plan, including the addition of new Operations, Natural Resources, and Engineering & Construction staff.
4. Continue work on water resources development for the Preserve.
5. Direct staff to proceed with design and engineering of Phase I public access improvements, additional water systems testing, and plans for high priority resource management actions.

VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Director Riffle adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 7:28 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, CMC
District Clerk