



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

October 11, 2017
Board Meeting 17-25

SPECIAL AND REGULAR MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

Administrative Office
330 Distel Circle
Los Altos, CA 94022

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

DRAFT MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING – STUDY SESSION

President Hassett called the special meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Nonette Hanko, Cecily Harris, Yoriko Kishimoto

Staff Present: General Manager Steve Abbors, Assistant General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz, Chief Financial Officer/Administrative Services Director Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Public Affairs Manager Christine Butterfield, Visitor Services Manager Michael Newburn, Management Analyst II Gordon Baillie, Docent Program Manager Renee Fitzsimons, Volunteer Program Manager Paul McKowan, Docent Program Coordinator Jennifer Williams

1. Docent and Volunteer Programs Structure Study – Review of Draft Report (R-17-113)

Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz provided opening comments discussing the impetus of the Volunteer and Docent Programs Structure Study and its place in the previous and current fiscal years' action plans. Any implementation of the study's recommendations can be implemented as directed by the Board of Directors and in line with the District's 2015 Financial and Operational Sustainability Model. Staff will return to the Board for acceptance of the report at the December 13, 2017 Board meeting and asks that Board members submit any written comments to staff on or before November 15, 2017.

Director Harris arrived at 5:02 p.m.

Visitor Services Manager Michael Newburn provided introductory comments and summarized the process used by District staff and the consultant, Conservation by Design, to develop the

study and recommendations. Mr. Newburn introduced Ms. Rici Peterson of Conservation by Design to present the results of the Docent and Volunteer Programs Structure Study.

Ms. Peterson described the method used for gathering input, including an online survey sent to current and previous volunteers and docents, interviews of current staff, meetings with members of the District's Management Team, and conducting focus groups comprised of current docents and volunteers. The project team also interviewed members of the District's peer agencies that have similar programs and met with the Board's Diversity Ad Hoc Committee. Ms. Peterson described five challenges identified by the study: a need for a Districtwide communication plan for external messaging; undefined goals and success targets; unclear roles and responsibilities; undervaluing interpretive communications; and insufficient evaluation and quality control of "unpaid staff." Ms. Peterson outlined various recommendations designed to address each of the five challenges previously identified, including a Districtwide Interpretive Master Plan for messaging that addresses content, consistency, and control; improving the visitor experience; augmenting staff levels; and a greater focus on staff and volunteer training and performance.

Director Riffle inquired regarding any unique challenges the identified by the study.

Ms. Peterson stated the widespread and complexity of the District's preserves present challenges to the program, including geographic locations, populations served, natural resources found on the preserves, and the various histories of the preserves.

Director Riffle requested additional information regarding the Interpretive Master Plan and preserve-specific interpretive plans.

Ms. Peterson and Melanie Pierson of Conservation by Design described the overall message that could be developed for all of the District's preserves, and preserve-specific plans would be unique to the visitors that visit each of the preserves and the unique opportunities and experiences provided by each of the preserves.

Public comment opened at 5:51 p.m.

Debbie Mytels, District docent, described her wonderful experiences as a docent and stated that many docents may want an opportunity to weigh in on the recommendations in the report. Additionally, Ms. Mytels expressed concern regarding the rigid nature of program as described in the recommendations.

Kathryn Green, District docent, spoke in favor of the District's mission and values and thanked the District for considering resources to the docent and volunteer programs. Ms. Green stated her support for the District and raising the bar for the docent program. Ms. Green described her ability to grow and share information as a District docent as her knowledge grows, which is possible because she is not required to follow a script at the District allowing for flexibility. Ms. Green spoke in favor of maintaining flexibility in the docent program.

Ms. Peterson responded to Ms. Green's comments including maintaining flexibility for docents. Any themes developed would be done in partnership with volunteers, docents, the Board, management staff, etc. Themes are not designed to be scripts but are general concepts to be shared.

Marilyn Bauriedel, District outdoor activity docent, spoke regarding the familial nature of the docents and spoke in favor of maintaining flexibility in the docent program structure.

Jayita Bhojwani, District docent, spoke in favor of the docent program and requested additional time for docents to review of the report and provide feedback. Ms. Bhojwani spoke in favor of additional training but stated she hoped the collegiate nature of the docents continue, where they can learn from each other and are treated equally.

Jan Hintermeister, District docent, spoke in favor of the empowerment currently felt by docents once they have been training and expressed caution about making too many changes that could potentially damage the program.

Vivian Neou, District docent, spoke highly of the District's current docent program and stated her support for Docent Program Manager Renee Fitzsimons receiving additional support as recommended by the report. Ms. Neou expressed anger regarding Recommendation 32 and her belief that it points to racial profiling. Finally, Ms. Neou spoke regarding visitors that utilize the preserves for exercise and stated that for those visitors the interpretive elements may not be necessary for all docent-led hikes.

Ms. Peterson provided additional information regarding the background behind Recommendation 32 explaining large groups present challenges, and the statements regarding people of color belonged in a different area of the report. The two sections were incorrectly compounded. Ms. Peterson apologized for the mistake and stated she would correct the report to accurately reflect the information provided by staff.

Mary Bernstein, District docent, spoke highly of the District's current docent program. Ms. Bernstein expressed concern that the information provided by docents would be changed into a marketing campaign.

Ms. Peterson explained the use of themes is not meant to be propaganda but is designed to help visitors connect to the preserves. The content presented by the docents would not be changed, but the techniques utilized would be more consistent across the District.

Public comment closed at 6:24 p.m.

Director Harris spoke in favor of maintaining the fun of the program and inquired regarding the purpose of the project.

Mr. Newburn spoke regarding the origin of the project, including seeking additional direction for the program and questioning if any improvements were needed for an already highly functioning program, such as ensuring everyone has received training, helping the program grow, etc.

Director Harris inquired regarding the term "high priority preserve."

Docent Volunteer Program Manager Renee Fitzsimons referred to the 2009-2011 Interpretive Preserve Program and the process used at that time to identify priority preserves.

Director Cyr spoke in favor of connecting with visitors in a natural way throughout the District's preserves and their visitors.

Director Siemens spoke in favor of having individual preserve plans that incorporate Districtwide themes, but these would be suggestions and not required content for docent hikes.

Director Riffle suggested additional work is required before the report is finalized. The goal of the project is to connect more people to the District’s preserves, which can be done with a combination of District staff, volunteers, and docents. Director Riffle suggested the docent program could use refinement but not reinvention.

General Manager Steve Abbors spoke in favor of helping align the District’s volunteer and docent programs with the mission and goals of the District, while maintaining the independence and creativity of the program and its docents. The District is also here to serve all of its preserve visitors and is constantly evolving to meet their needs.

President Hassett adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 7:00 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING

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

ROLL CALL

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

Members Absent: Nonette Hanko, Cecily Harris, Yoriko Kishimoto

Staff Present: General Manager Steve Abbors, Assistant General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz, Chief Financial Officer/Administrative Services Director Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Public Affairs Manager Christine Butterfield

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

No speakers present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

VOTE: 4-0-0 (Directors Hanko, Harris, and Kishimoto absent)

Director Harris arrived at 7:10 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY

- Proclamation to Honor the Retirement of Michael Newburn

CONSENT CALENDAR

Public comment opened at 7:17 p.m.

No speakers present.

Public comment closed at 7:17 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director Harris seconded the motion to approve the Consent Calendar.

VOTE: 5-0-0 (Directors Hanko and Kishimoto absent)

1. Approve September 27, 2017 Minutes

2. Claims Report

BOARD BUSINESS

3. Mount Umunhum Preview Events and Grand Opening Celebration Summary (R-17-115)

Public Affairs Specialist II Peggy Gibbons provided an informational report on the District's efforts for the Mount Umunhum Preview Events and Grand Opening Celebration.

Director Cyr shared positive comments he has heard from his friends commending staff on their work for the grand opening and the entire summit.

Director Harris inquired whether other lessons were learned as part of the process.

Public Affairs Manager Christine Butterfield commented on the importance of communication, the importance of identifying staff and resource needs early, and an understanding that standard services in other areas of the District may be affected as additional resources are committed to a preserve opening.

Public comment opened at 7:38 p.m.

No speakers present.

Public comment closed at 7:38 p.m.

No Board action required.

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

- Work Order and Asset Management System
- Youth Engagement Strategy in Fiscal Year 2017-18

INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

A. Committee Reports

No Committee reports.

B. Staff Reports

Chief Financial Officer Stefan Jaskulak reported the District’s audit is almost complete and issuance of a new tranche of bonds is scheduled for Board approval on November 8, 2017.

Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz reported SB793 was signed by the Governor. The design-build process is very different from the District’s current contracting process, and staff will be attending training on the process and learning from other agencies that already use design-build. Ms. Ruiz also commented on staff’s attendance and presentations at a recent meeting of the Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network.

C. Director Reports

The Board members submitted their compensatory reports.

Director Harris commented on the current air quality in the area and spoke in favor of staff wearing masks and avoiding the poor quality air.

President Hassett adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District into closed session at 7:56 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

1. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL-ANTICIPATED LITIGATION
Significant exposure to litigation pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(b) (*one potential case*)

Public comment opened at 7:56 p.m.

No speakers present.

Public comment closed at 7:56 p.m.

The Board went into closed session at 7:56 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

President Hassett adjourned the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 9:02 p.m.