



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: February 28, 2018

TO: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Board of Directors

FROM: Dave Jaeckel, Management Analyst II

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, Acting General Manager

SUBJECT: Project Update for the Cooley Landing Park Business and Operating Plan Project and Upcoming Open House Event at the Education Center

PROJECT BACKGROUND

On March 22, 2017, the District's Board of Directors authorized \$200,000 to develop a business and operating plan for the Cooley Landing Park and Education Center. The purpose of this plan is to: a) provide the City with a useful roadmap on how best to manage and maintain the Park in the long-term; b) identify existing and potential new funding sources to keep the Park operating as envisioned; and c) address the long-term use and management of the Education Center.

On September 7, 2017, the District's Diversity Ad Hoc Committee met to discuss the business and operating plan for the Park and Education Center. During this meeting it was determined that developing a business and operating plan for the Park and Education Center would not be useful without a potential operator of the Education Center being identified beforehand. The power of a business plan comes from the specificity of the recommendations and implementation actions it provides, which rely heavily on the operators' mission, services, programming, and value proposition. As a result, the Committee confirmed that the best approach to move forward with developing a business and operating plan for the Park and Education Center was to focus on the following four phases of work:

1. Selecting an operator for the Education Center;
2. Developing a business plan for a selected Education Center operator; and
3. Developing an operations plan for the Park; and
4. Assisting with operator onboarding for the Education Center.

On October 24, 2017, the District in partnership with the City of East Palo Alto issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit community outreach and engagement services to identify and help select an operator for the Cooley Landing Education Center. The RFP was sent to five firms and was posted on the District's website. A total of four proposals were received and evaluated by a selection committee consisting of City of East Palo Alto and District staff. Lily Lee and Audree Jones-Taylor were selected as the most qualified consultant team based on their prior community engagement work, strong project management skills, and deep knowledge and connections with the City of East Palo Alto and surrounding communities.

In December 2017, the Packard Foundation awarded the District a \$50,000 grant to fund Lily Lee and Audree Jones-Taylor's work to search for an Education Center operator.

PROJECT UPDATE

In January 2018, Lily Lee and Audree Jones-Taylor began conducting background research and outreach to community organizations in East Palo Alto. They are currently in the process of determining which of these organizations are capable and willing to operate the Educate Center. This scope of work represents Phase One of the larger Cooley Landing Park Business and Operating Plan Project, shown below. As noted before, the Packard Foundation is funding this phase, which includes community outreach for selection of an Education Center operator. Midpen would fund Phases Two and Three: development of a business plan for a selected Education Center operator and an operating plan for Cooley Landing Park. A final fourth phase may be needed to help onboard an Education Center Operator to begin providing presence, programming, and services to the site. The type of assistance needed will be confirmed as the project moves forward, and may require Board approval. As a reminder, the Board allocated a total of \$200,000 for the project in March 2017.

Phase	Funding	Timeline	Status
One – Education Center Operator Selection	\$50,000 – Packard Foundation Grant	January – June 2018	In progress
Two – Education Center Business Plan	Est. \$50,000 – Midpen General Fund	June – August 2018	Not started
Three – Park Operations Plan	Est. \$50,000 – Midpen General Fund	June – August 2018	Not started
Four – Education Center Onboarding Assistance	TBD	August – October 2018	Not started

UPCOMING OPEN HOUSE EVENT

As a component of Lily and Audree’s Phase One work, an open house event will take place at the Education Center on March 1, 2018 from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. This event will provide a forum for interested community organizations to meet one another, hear from City of East Palo Alto leadership about their expectations for a future Education Center operator, tour the facility, and brainstorm about challenges and opportunities associated with the long-term operation of the facility (see Attachment A below). Midpen Board Members are welcome to attend.

NEXT STEPS

Following the open house event, Midpen staff and leadership will meet with the City of East Palo Alto’s City Manager and Assistant City Manager to discuss questions raised by community organizations during the open house event, City funding commitments for the Education Center, and City expectations for the operation of the Education Center. After this meeting takes place, the City of East Palo Alto City Council will have a study session on March 20, 2018 to discuss the operation of the Education Center and clarify next steps.

Attachment A: Cooley Landing Open House Agenda

Cooley Landing Open House Agenda Thursday, March 1, 2018

Working Agenda – Draft version 2-19-2018

Purpose: Recruit organizations to support Cooley Landing as operator or partner

Audience: Potential operators and partners, including East Palo Alto organizations that serve local community needs and organizations from anywhere that give environmental education programs

	Time	Topic	Lead
1	10:00 am	Tours of grounds of Cooley Landing	Lily
2	10:10 am	Welcome, Introductions, and Purpose - Participants to spend 3-5 minutes highlighting their organizations and their experience/interests related to Cooley Landing	Lily/Audree
3	11:15 am	Overview - Celebrating Cooley Landing and the success it already is today	City
5	11:20 am	Current search for an operator and partners	Audree
6	11:30 pm	City leadership	City
7	11:45 pm	Break, Networking, and tour of building All participants are invited to use resource tables where they can offer written materials	Everyone
8	12:20 pm	Visioning Board Break Out Session – Prioritize goals within the scope of 2010 Cooley Landing Vision Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formation of Friends of Cooley Landing- Criteria, East Palo Alto community needs and interests• Best Case Scenario for Operation - Models and Structures, e.g. school programs, visitor hours• Challenges and Barriers, options for on-boarding• The Perfect Cooley Landing what do you see when you see Cooley Landing	Everyone
9	12:50 pm	Groups report out	Audree
10	1:20 pm	Lessons learned, next steps	Audree
11	1:45 pm	Adjourn and more informal tours	Lily