



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: November 28, 2018

MEMO TO: MROSD Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, AICP, General Manager *AR*

FROM: Jane Mark, AICP, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Hawthorns Public Access Planning Project

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The Comprehensive Use and Management Plan for the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve (Hawthorns Area Plan) will prescribe the future use and management actions for the property, including actions related to public access (trails, parking, signage), resource management, and operations. Staff have had initial meetings with the Town of Portola Valley to discuss the Town's permit review and approval process, and their request to include the Alpine Road Trail realignment in the Hawthorns Area Plan.

District staff recently developed a proposed public planning process and tentative schedule for the project to present to the Planning and Natural Resources (PNR) Committee by December and then subsequently to the full Board in early 2019. However, the recent and unexpected departure of the Planner III assigned to the project is significantly affecting staff capacity. Given other competing priorities and projects that are already underway, the General Manager recommends placing the Hawthorns Area Plan, which was about to begin in earnest, on hold until the Planner position is filled and on-boarded to kickoff and manage the project.

BACKGROUND

In 2006, the Board of Directors (Board) accepted the 79-acre Hawthorns property as the largest private land gift received by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District). The property transferred to the District in 2011 as the Hawthorns Area of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. Soon after in 2012, the Board adopted a Preliminary Use and Management Plan for the property (PUMP; R-12-46). Since that time, staff have implemented a number of actions prescribed by the PUMP, including:

- Secured the historic mansion and surrounding structures against trespass and vandalism.
- Evaluated long-term management alternatives for the historic complex.
- Sought partnerships to restore and preserve/manage the historic resources.
- Established an onsite employee residence to provide presence and monitoring.
- Implemented wildfire fuel reduction and defensible space safety measures in accordance with Woodside Fire Marshal prescriptions.

In addition to these actions, the PUMP included a directive to study the feasibility of providing public access and connecting to existing trail networks as part of a subsequent planning process.

As a priority action in the 2014 Open Space Vision Plan and Measure AA Five-Year Projects list, the District plans to open the undeveloped, western portion of the Hawthorns Area (approximately 63 acres of the 79-acre property) to public access. Due to the local history, potential connections to surrounding Town trails, and high community interest in the Hawthorns property, the District anticipates and is planning for high public interest and engagement throughout the planning process. As part of this project, the District will include the proposed relocation and widening of the Town's existing Alpine Road trail in the planning process.

NEXT STEPS

Once the Planner III position is filled, staff will present the proposed planning process and a revised project schedule to the PNR Committee. In the meantime, the Town of Portola Valley will be informed of the need to put the project temporarily on hold pending the filling of the Planner III vacancy. Recruitment of the Planner III vacancy is set to begin by early December.