



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

**MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Historic Train Depot
110 Higgins Canyon Road
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

**Tuesday, October 22, 2019
1:30 PM**

APPROVED MINUTES*

CALL TO ORDER

Director Cyr called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at to order at 1:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr and Karen Holman

Members Absent: Yoriko Kishimoto

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, Senior Resources Management Specialist Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Senior Resources Management Specialist Julie Andersen, Rangeland Ecologist/Botanist Lewis Reed, Resource Management Specialist I Matt Sharp Chaney, and Senior Property Management Specialist Elaina Cuzick

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

No speakers present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

VOTE: 2-0-0 (Director Kishimoto absent)

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 1. Approve the September 24, 2019 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Minutes**

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Cyr seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the September 24, 2019 Planning and Natural Resources Committee meeting.

VOTE: 2-0-0 (Director Kishimoto absent)

2. Addendum to the Mindego Hill Ranch Grazing Management Plan to Expand Conservation Grazing into the South Pasture (R-19-140)

Rangeland Ecologist/Botanist Lewis Reed provided the staff report describing the purpose of the proposed addendum, including guidelines for ongoing resource management work, expansion of the grazing area, and additional infrastructure improvements.

Public comments opened at 1:42 p.m.

BJ Burns, San Mateo County Farm Bureau President, stated that based on the size of Mindego Ranch, more cattle could be grazed there than are currently allowed. Mr. Burns expressed concern regarding mountain lion and coyote predation and stated the District should increase the reimbursement to the grazing tenants if predation occurs.

Public comments closed at 1:45 p.m.

Motion: Director Cyr moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to forward a recommendation to the Board of Directors to adopt an addendum to the Mindego Hill Ranch Grazing Management Plan as an amendment to the Russian Ridge Use and Management Plan that adds the south pasture as part of the conservation grazing area on the property.

VOTE: 2-0-0 (Director Kishimoto absent)

3. Amendments to the Grazing Management Policy (R-19-139)

General Manager Ana Ruiz recommended having the Committee hear the presentation and receive public comment and otherwise continuing the item to provide staff additional time to meet with stakeholders, including members of the conservation and agricultural communities, given very recent comments received and the level of interest from new stakeholders. This additional outreach and public input would help refine any final recommendations that the Committee would consider at a later date.

Resource Management Specialist I Matt Sharp Chaney provided the staff presentation reviewing the steps taken to develop the draft Grazing Management Policy, including stakeholder outreach workshops, meetings with the San Mateo County Farm Bureau Executive Committee, scientific literature review, Board committee review, and grazing tenant survey and interviews. Mr. Sharp Chaney described the District's Conservation Grazing Program, including program goals and size, current reimbursement practice, and livestock protection measures, and the three strikes program used in other areas of the state with regards to mountain lion predation.

Sheila Barry, Bay Area Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor with the University of California, provided additional information regarding the process used and information gathered at the stakeholder workshop meetings.

Mr. Chaney provided a summary of the responses received from the grazing tenant surveys and workshops held with partner agencies, agricultural producers, and wildlife advocacy stakeholders, and outreach to additional organizations and stakeholders. The four components of the draft Grazing Management Policy Amendment are economic factors, wildlife and livestock protection, research, and public connection. Mr. Sharp Chaney reviewed the various suggested edits to the draft policy, which are the result of feedback received from stakeholders and members of the public.

Senior Property Management Specialist Elaina Cuzick presented a case study, with information provided by District grazing tenant Ronnie Seever, to illustrate the impacts of predation on grazing economics.

Director Holman requested clarification regarding penning options for calves.

Mr. Chaney reported penning livestock would be difficult due to the landscape and large acre pastures where cattle are widely dispersed. However, the District can help identify pastures that are more easily protected, where animals could be sequestered for a short period of time after calving, which is when predation is most likely to occur.

Public comments opened at 2:38 p.m.

Kimberly Boester, program coordinator for Project Coyote, which seeks to promote coexistence between people and wildlife shared information regarding her organization's work with ranchers to reduce interactions between predators and wildlife using nonlethal tools. Ms. Boester thanked the District for its emphasis on nonlethal tools to prevent conflicts and stated Project Coyote would be happy to work with the District on this program.

Ron Sturgeon thanked the District for its work on the draft policy and spoke in opposition to the Marin County Livestock Protection Program. Mr. Sturgeon suggested the District's Animal Unit Month (AUM) rate should be cut in half in order to help support grazing operations. Mr. Sturgeon provided alternatives to the draft policy amendment language including a request that the District provide 100% economic relief for ranchers to sustain ranching and the natural resource benefits of grazing.

Lynn Cullens, Associate Director of the Mountain Lion Foundation, provided comments regarding the negative impact the loss of cattle has on grazing operations. Ms. Cullens expressed opposition to lethal measures to control predation on conservation preserves. Ms. Cullens said the reason for increased mountain lion predation is due an increase in lethal controls and a lack of a stable adult mountain lion population.

BJ Burns, San Mateo County Farm Bureau President, spoke in favor of strong consideration of the current predation situation for ranchers, stating the lion population will continue to increase.

Tiffany Yap with the Center for Biological Diversity spoke against lethal removal of mountain lions on conservation lands. Ms. Yap spoke regarding the contributions mountain lions have to the environment, including promoting biodiversity, supporting riparian areas, and helping sustain habitats for aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals.

Vince Fontana commented on the size of cattle that may be lost to predation, which can vary. Mr. Fontana expressed concern regarding the lack of deer in the area, which is leading to additional predation of livestock.

Doug Edwards commented regarding the number of mountain lions in San Mateo County and the lack of data related to the size of the lion population. Mr. Edwards spoke in favor of verifying the size of the San Mateo County mountain lion population.

BJ Burns provided comments regarding the dwindling number of ranchers in the area stating that the public are putting them out of business.

John Cozzolino invited District staff to visit his and other ranch properties to see evidence of mountain lions in the area. Mr. Cozzolino spoke in favor of game management for predators.

Ms. Cullens spoke regarding the mountain lion population in the area and spoke against killing mountain lions stating that working together with ranchers to share information can help find compromise and solutions.

Public comments closed at 3:14 p.m.

Director Cyr spoke in favor of District staff further working on the draft policy to incorporate public feedback and return to the Committee at a later date.

Director Holman suggested staff should hold a meeting with the various stakeholders to seek consensus.

Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington reported a similar meeting was planned, but due to low interest from the conservation community, the meeting was not held. Staff will work with the ranching and conservation communities to organize another meeting.

No Committee action taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Director Cyr adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 3:20 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk