



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Committee conducted this meeting in accordance with California Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20. All Board members and staff participated via teleconference.

Tuesday, August 24, 2021

DRAFT MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Director Kersteen-Tucker called the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee to order at 2:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Karen Holman, Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, and Yoriko Kishimoto

Members absent: None

Staff present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Brian Malone, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Jennifer Woodworth, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Planner III Alex Casbara, Planner II Xucan Zhou

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth announced this meeting is being held in accordance with Governor Newsom's Executive Order allowing Committee members to participate remotely. The District has done its best to conduct a meeting where everyone has an opportunity to listen to the meeting and to provide comment. The public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website. Ms. Woodworth described the process and protocols for the meeting.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Olivier Yiptong provided comments in support of allowing e-bikes on District trails stating they are safe and speeding is not an issue because the rider can easily control their speed.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the June 15, 2021 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to approve the June 15, 2021 Planning and Natural Resources Committee amended meeting minutes.

Public comment opened at 2:05 p.m.

Ms. Woodworth reported no public comments had been submitted.

Public comment closed at 2:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Hawthorns Area Draft Vision and Goals (R-21-112)

Senior Planner Meredith Manning introduced the members of the project team and their roles for the project.

Planner II Xucan Zhou described the location of the Hawthorns area in the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve near the Town of Portola Valley and public trails in the area.

Planner III Alex Casbara reviewed the proposed draft vision and goals for the Hawthorns area, which seek to protect and restore natural habitats and resources, provide ecologically sensitive public access, support regional trail connectivity, interpret the natural and cultural history of the area, etc.

Director Kishimoto requested and received additional information regarding the requirements associated with Alpine Road Trail being a designated scenic corridor.

Director Holman inquired how the olive grove would be addressed by the project.

Mr. Casbara stated the proposed goal that focuses on the natural and cultural history addresses the need for landscape management, which includes the olive grove.

Director Holman spoke in favor of protecting the viewshed from development not on District land and protecting wildlife connectivity from barriers created by development.

Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington stated the undeveloped nature of the area and lack of barriers allows for free passage of wildlife.

Planning Manager Jane Mark reported District staff are often notified of and provide comments, in support of the District's mission, on external development projects. Ms. Manning added that District trails are designed and built to maximize a natural viewshed for visitors wherever feasible.

Public comment opened at 2:36 p.m.

Dudley Carlson inquired how the District would control the invasive olive trees, which create a fire risk. Ms. Carlson provided comments regarding Sweet Springs Trail, which is maintained by the Town of Portola Valley and borders the property, stating it is very narrow when hikers encounter equestrians on the trail and also experiences erosion due to cyclists. Ms. Carlson also inquired regarding parking for the area and expressed concerns about spillover parking on nearby roads.

Jeremy Dennis, Town Manager for the Town of Portola Valley, expressed concerns regarding spillover parking onto town roads and negative impact of residents. Mr. Dennis spoke in favor of supporting wildlife connectivity and working with the District on the project in the future.

Ms. Woodworth read the submitted comments into the record.

Karen Vahtra stated wildfire is a key concern for Portola Valley and should be included in the project vision and goals. Ms. Vahtra stated additional maintenance may be needed for wildfire prevention including burning coyote brush and other highly flammable fuels.

Public comment closed at 2:44 p.m.

Director Kishimoto recommended including creek restoration in the natural resources goal.

Ms. Manning suggested modifying the Natural Resources goal to state "Protect and restore native aquatic and terrestrial habitats, ..."

Director Kishimoto suggested adding the word 'Local' to the 'Regional Connectivity goal title, and to expand the goal text to prioritize safety for multimodal users accessing the Hawthorns Area.

Director Holman suggested updating the Public Access goal to read "Open the Hawthorns Area to public access ~~and~~ balancing access with the ability to provide sufficient parking..." Director Holman inquired about the type of assistance and support that could be provided by the Town of Portola Valley to locate potential parking areas nearby.

Mr. Dennis reported he has outreached to neighboring property owners, who expressed concern their parking could be overwhelmed on the weekends. He offered to connect District staff with the property owners to continue conversations.

Director Holman suggested a Portola Valley board or committee, or a community group could potentially assist with interpretive options for the Hawthorns house and site.

Director Holman recommended including language for the District to "pursue partnerships to adaptively reuse, rehabilitate, and manage key features of the Hawthorns Historic District..."

Ms. Ruiz stated there are various challenges and constraints to finding a partner for the site to rehabilitate the structures. Ms. Ruiz suggested keeping the goal broad at this time until more information is gathered.

Director Holman suggested altering the project vision to state it “reflects the region’s natural, agricultural, architectural, and social history” and suggesting including additional description of the property’s conservation easement.

Ms. Manning suggested the vision statement could reference the conservation goals established in the property’s conservation easement, which states the property will be preserved in perpetuity in a natural and undisturbed state.

Director Kersteen-Tucker stated the operations and management goal could be amended to reference the property should be managed in a manner that “provides opportunities to work as good neighbors with surrounding residents and partners in promoting ongoing public support and appreciation.” Director Kersten-Tucker recommended including a reference to wildfire resiliency in the natural resources goal. Finally, Director Kersteen-Tucker spoke in favor of the current language of the natural and cultural history goal.

Ms. Manning suggested modifying the natural resources goal to read: “protect, restore, and provide resiliency for native...” to address wildfire resiliency.

Mr. Casbara stated the operations and maintenance goal could be modified to emphasize public partnerships and neighbor relationships through an adaptive management process.

Director Kishimoto spoke in favor of prioritizing protection of natural resources over the other aspects of the District’s mission.

Mr. Casbara suggested amending the vision to read “The District will protect biotic resources, provide balanced public access opportunities, and interpret natural and cultural resources...”

Ms. Mark stated due to the property’s eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, the District will follow the Secretary of Interiors standards and suggested including language regarding this in the Natural and Cultural history goal. The goal could be revised to read: “Pursue partnerships to manage the historic resources on the property to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s standards for historic properties.”

Director Holman commented on the public’s high interest for the natural and cultural history of the site, which includes the historic buildings.

Ms. Mark stated staff will provide a revised draft vision and goals for Committee consideration at the November 16, 2021 Committee meeting, based on the Committee’s feedback.

No Committee action required.

ADJOURNMENT

Director Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 3:42 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk