



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Committee conducted this meeting in accordance with California Government Code section 54953(e) and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Resolution 21-33. All Committee members and staff participated via teleconference.

Tuesday, November 16, 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

District Clerk Jennifer Woodworth announced this meeting is being held in accordance with California Government Code section 54953(e) and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Resolution 21-33 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

Ms. Woodworth announced no comments had been submitted.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

1. Approve the August 24, 2021 Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Director Holman moved, and Director Kishimoto seconded the motion to approve the August 24, 2021 Planning and Natural Resources Committee amended meeting minutes.

Public comment opened at 2:02 p.m.

Ms. Woodworth reported no public comments had been submitted.

Public comment closed at 2:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

2. Hawthorns Area Plan - Revised Vision and Goals and Draft Working Group Strategy (R-21-156)

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided introductory comments including information regarding a separate process to determine how the historic complex of buildings on the property will be addressed in the future. The focus of the Hawthorns Area Plan is broader and includes natural resource management and public access opportunities.

Planner III Alex Casbara described the Hawthorns area of the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and presented the revised vision and goals for the Hawthorns area, which seek to protect and restore natural habitats and resources, provide low intensity public access, support regional and local connectivity, interpret the natural and cultural history of the area, etc. Mr. Casbara reviewed the purpose and goals of the proposed working group to evaluate various public access components, such as parking area and driveway location, trailhead locations, trail connections to Portola Valley's existing trails, regional trail connections, etc. The working group is proposed to begin its work in 2022 and continue for approximately eighteen months to provide feedback to the Planning and Natural Resources Committee and Board of Directors. Mr. Casbara explained the working group members would represent various stakeholders and partners and include non-voting District and Town of Portola Valley liaisons.

Director Kishimoto suggested the purpose of the working group to focus only on the public access component of the Hawthorns Area needs to be clearly stated, and continued protection of natural resources and environmental habitats will be the focus of District staff. Additionally, the working group will be providing recommendations to the Board of Directors.

Director Holman commented the working group will be focused on public access, and the stated vision and goals of the Hawthorns Area are broader than the purpose of the working group. As a result, it may be difficult for the working group to have such a limited purpose, and public access should not be prioritized above the other aspects of the District's mission.

Ms. Ruiz stated the project goals represent the District's braided mission statement and various priorities regarding land preservation, resource protection, and ecologically sensitive public access.

Director Holman suggested goal #1 should continue to address protection and restoration of native habitat instead of managing for ecological resiliency.

Director Kersteen-Tucker spoke in favor of the previous version of the vision statement also being included for the project. Additionally, the protection and restoration of native habitat should be included in goal #1, stated recreational amenities cannot always be integrated into a visual landscape as stated in goal #5 but can complement the visual landscape, and promotion of ongoing public support and appreciation should be included in goal #6. Director Kersteen-Tucker agreed the advisory role of the working group should be clear and suggested the District broaden its recruitment to other partners and stakeholders.

Mr. Casbara agreed that the list of suggested recruitment partners is a representative sample and will be broadened.

Public comment opened at 3:03 p.m.

Shani Kleinhaus with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society provided comments in support of having working group members that represent various issues associated with the Hawthorns Area, including public access, natural resource protection, etc. to ensure a balanced recommendation from the working group. Ms. Kleinhaus quoted the conservation easement for the Hawthorns Area stating that it does not specifically require trails and public access.

Elizabeth Weigen requested clarification regarding some of the terms used in project goals.

Mr. Casbara and Planning Manager Jane Mark provided additional information and clarification regarding the following terms: viewpoints, viewsheds, and low-intensity public access.

Ms. Woodworth read the submitted comments into the record.

George Stromeyer provided comments in support of sustainable grazing to control the growth of invasive plants and brush. Additionally, Mr. Stromeyer inquired regarding the planned use for the preserve as a family destination or for higher use by equestrians, cyclists, and dog owners.

Public comment closed at 3:15 p.m.

Ms. Ruiz stated additional language in the conservation easement does allow for recreational use and trails so long as the conservation value of the property is protected.

Director Holman expressed concern regarding the narrow vision for the working group and suggested the membership should also represent other stakeholders, such as related to fire protection, natural resource protection, etc., in order to have a more integrated recommendation from the working group. Director Holman suggested the committee look at the purpose and membership of the working group again prior to the Board's discussion on the topic.

Director Kishimoto commented additional work may be needed before the working group is created because the use for the Hawthorns Area has not yet been determined.

Ms. Ruiz suggested that the Committee can review and confirm the vision and goals to determine if they are ready to be forwarded to the Board of Directors for approval since this step is separate from the working group discussion. The timing for a proposed working group can be deferred to later in the planning process until after staff brings forward recommendations for the use and management of the Hawthorns Area as a whole. The working group could then be formed at later time to inform the public access element of the Hawthorns Area Plan.

Director Kishimoto suggested a working group could be created to focus on both natural resource protection and public access.

Director Kersteen-Tucker expressed concern related to creating a working group to address natural resource protection because this is typically the role of staff. By keeping the working group focused on public access, it follows the template set by the La Honda Public Access Working Group.

Ms. Ruiz suggested forwarding the revised Hawthorns Area Plan vision and goals, with any final adjustment by the Committee, to the full Board of Directors for their consideration and direct staff to return to the Committee at a future meeting with a revised process and timeline for the working group. Ms. Ruiz stated District staff with subject matter expertise work closely with consultants to address and recommend natural resource protection priorities for District lands, including the protection of and enhancements to wildlife corridors, invasive weed management, fuel management, etc.

The Committee discussed and revised the Hawthorns Area vision and goals.

Motion: Director Kishimoto moved, and Director Holman seconded the motion to forward the revised Hawthorns Area Plan vision and goals to the full Board of Directors for their consideration. The revised vision and goals read as follows:

Vision

The Hawthorns Area offers picturesque views of rolling oak grasslands and the Santa Cruz Mountains, provides important wildlife refuge, and reflects the region's natural, agricultural, and social history. The District will protect and manage natural, scenic, cultural, and open space resources at the Hawthorns Area and provide ecologically sensitive public access consistent with the District's mission and the allowable uses outlined in the property's conservation easement.

Goals

1. Protect and restore native habitat and manage for ecological resiliency of aquatic and terrestrial habitat, wildlife connectivity, and other natural resources.
2. Open the Hawthorns Area to low-intensity public access, provide an internal trail system, and provide multi-modal access to the property.
3. Connect to adjacent public trails and explore opportunities for trail connections to regional open space lands.
4. Interpret the rich natural, cultural, and historic features and pursue partnerships to manage the property's natural and cultural history.

5. Highlight scenic viewpoints and design recreational amenities while protecting scenic viewsheds.
6. Manage the property for safe public access in a fiscally sustainable manner that promotes ongoing public support and appreciation with ongoing public engagement and consistent with the District's Good Neighbor Policy.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

Director Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the meeting of the Planning and Natural Resources Committee at 4:11 p.m.

Jennifer Woodworth, MMC
District Clerk