




DATE: February 9, 2022

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager 

FROM: Jennifer Woodworth, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager

SUBJECT: Suggested Topics for the February 16, 2022 Board Retreat

In preparation for the Board of Directors' strategic planning retreat in December 2021, the Board President conducted a survey of fellow Board members to gauge interest for a half-day working session to discuss topics of interest. The Board supported this suggestion and appointed an ad hoc committee to review and select topics for the working session. The Board also directed staff to suggest additional topics for Board consideration. The ad hoc committee met in January 2022 to review and discuss the suggested topics and selected two topics for discussion at a Board retreat on February 16, 2022. This memo provides updates and additional information on the topics not selected by the ad hoc committee to explain how these other topics will be separately addressed through Board FYIs, separate informational presentations, or by Board Committees.

Continuation/addition of new operational practices generated by COVID

1. Reduction of Paper Use/Paper Products (including brochures) – *referred to the Legislative, Finding, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) for discussion.*
2. Format for public meetings (including how comments are taken/use of raised hand) – *to be discussed in March when in-person public meetings may resume, depending on the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic in the area.*
3. Innovative technology at the new AO to improve Board function and public engagement – *a Board FYI will be prepared once staff is further experienced with the use of the new technology in the new Administrative Office located at 5050 El Camino Real.*

District Housing

1. Housing opportunities for staff – *the District's Housing Policy was revamped in 2018, doubling the number of staff in District housing. Additional information on this topic will be presented at the February 23, 2022 Board meeting.*
2. Support of Farm Worker Housing; leasing of District property for farm worker housing with housing funded and built by other organizations, such as SMC – *this topic is*

expected to be addressed as part of Agricultural Policy project, currently scheduled for completion in FY22.

Regional Role – Topics 1 and 2 below will be addressed at the February 16 Board Retreat.

1. Leadership in conservation, resource/environmental protection
 - i. District as an important regional player, no longer an unknown agency
 - ii. Continued education to public and agencies about the importance of enhancing, restoring, creating safe migration paths for wildlife

2. Level of active engagement in nontraditional regional issues that indirectly may affect Midpen goals and interests
 - i. Insufficient staff capacity to maintain high level of engagement in nontraditional regional issues; concerns about impacts to core District work and projects --- understanding level of priority for this work will inform the need for additional staffing to conduct this work
 - ii. Regional housing: SB9 and higher densification of communities and housing
 1. State housing mandates may add pressure to locate housing in unincorporated, rural areas, impacting goals for a continuous open space greenbelt and sustainable wildlife corridors and habitat ranges
 2. Advocacy for concentrating housing in developed urban/suburban areas to preserve surrounding open space greenbelt/ecosystem services
 3. Increased housing expected to bring higher use and demands on open spaces and the potential for greater impacts on natural resources and wildlife habitats, and therefore may require new/revised policies to carefully manage use and protect sensitive resources
 - iii. Regional solutions and trends that support multi-modal access to recreational destination points, including parks/open spaces; engagement in regional transportation and transit plans
 1. Solutions require nonconventional partnerships and may be most effective if a diverse coalition is created that pursues common goals and objectives, with transit/transportation agencies leading the implementation actions
 2. Midpen's role in working with transportation agencies and local jurisdictions in transit to trails (e.g., community shuttles, micro-transit, bikeway systems, etc.)

3. Regional Trails --- has priority for this work changed? – *this priority has not changed, and the District continues to take a lead and/or partnership role in supporting these and other regional trails.*

Mission Driven Activities

1. Challenges in balancing natural resource preservation and public access – *the Board of Directors continues to address this issue while understanding that tension between the protection of natural resources and allowing for and increasing public access will be an ongoing topic to be addressed on a case-by-case basis for new and continuing projects and acquisitions.*

2. Incorporating latest Science Advisory Panel (SAP) findings to continue responsibly managing visitor use/capacity in open space lands – *District staff will continue to incorporate best practices recommended by the SAP into their work and projects. The information learned from the SAP informs recommendations and decisions on an ongoing basis.*
3. The District’s role in combatting climate change – droughts, flooding, soil health, wildfire, high temperature, infestations/invasive, changing eco-system; should the District expand work beyond District lands? – *expanding the District’s role in combatting climate change beyond its boundaries would require additional staffing to avoid impacts to core projects, programs, and functions. The ad hoc committee recommends focusing on current partnerships, such as with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, POST, FireSafe Councils, etc.*
4. Calculating carbon sequestration of District lands (understanding and communicating climate resiliency benefits of District lands) – *this item will be addressed with an informational memo from staff.*
5. Environmental management/herbicide concerns – *this item will be addressed as part of next Integrated Pest Management Annual Update, currently scheduled for Summer 2022.*
6. District’s role in protecting the Baylands area of the District (specifically former Cargill property); should the District expand further land holdings/expertise/resources/management in the baylands area or support existing partners who are focused on these areas? – **this topic will be addressed at the upcoming February 16 Retreat.**
7. Use of multimodal options to equitably connect people to open space – *the District is currently pursuing multimodal options for public access as part of two pilot projects – Rancho San Antonio and Purisima Creek Open Space Preserves. Additional information on this topic will be provided to the Board as part of those projects.*
8. Development of metrics for implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives – *A staff team to support DEI initiatives is scheduled to be assembled in early 2022 and will be tasked with developing measurable DEI metrics, tracking progress, and reporting back on the results.*

Operational Enhancements

1. Streamline planning, permitting and construction processes to increase efficiency – *this is an ongoing effort happening at various levels of the organization. Current work includes securing a programmatic permit with Resource Agencies for maintenance work and small-scale projects; negotiating a Master Permit with San Mateo County for standard, small-scale, noncontroversial District projects; and maximizing temporary CEQA exemption for habitat restoration projects.*
2. Numbering District trail junctions to assist with wayfinding – *a trail junction numbering system was implemented as part of a pilot project in lower La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve and Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. District staff plans to continue this work and expand to other preserves.*

3. Interest in understanding engagement and outreach plans and timeframe/tools/activities; importance of increasing public awareness (both on the bayside and coastside) of the District's role in coastside protection and of the District's mission there; desire to improve and grow the District's relationship with Coastal communities – *the General Manager and Public Affairs Manager will be holding brainstorming session(s) with Directors Riffle and Kersteen-Tucker and include Peninsula Open Space Trust's Chief Marketing Officer to explore opportunities for engagement and outreach and areas where the organizations can partner on new engagement efforts.*
4. Opportunities to build awareness/recognition and improve engagement with urban communities on the bayside and peninsula (Cities of East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Redwood City, Sunnyvale, San Carlos, Unincorporated North Fair Oaks area, etc.) – *the District's 50th anniversary program and community events are expected to create extensive awareness among community members and increase engagement throughout the region. These opportunities will provide staff with lessons learned including new engagement tools and tactics that may be replicated in future years.*

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