



SPECIAL MEETING

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

Saturday, December 10, 2022

DRAFT MINUTES

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA
REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT**

President Kersteen-Tucker called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 11:04 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Larry Hassett, Karen Holman, Yoriko Kishimoto, Curt Riffle, and Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

Members Absent: Pete Siemens

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Acting District Clerk Maria Soria, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, Real Property Manager Mike Williams, Senior Real Property Agent Allen Ishibashi, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Public Affairs Kori Skinner, and Chief Ranger Matt Anderson

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0

BOARD BUSINESS

1. Proposed phased purchase of the Peninsula Open Space Trust - Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties, located along Cloverdale, Gazos Creek, Bean Hollow and Pescadero Roads and the Cabrillo Highway, in unincorporated San Mateo County, to create Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve (involves San Mateo County Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 086-280-320,086-300-200, 086-300-210, 086-310-010, 086-320-020, 086-320-040, 086-320-050, 086-330-060, 086-330-080, 086-050-030, 086-290-010, 087-190-080 and 087-

220-050, 086-041-030, 086-041-040, 086-080-020, 086-080-030, 086-080-040, 086-080-050, 086-270-010, 086-270-020, 086-290-060, 086-290-090, 086-201-070, 086-340-010, 020, 030, 040, 050, 070, 080, 090, 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 230, 240, 280, 300 and 320) (R-22-140)

President Kersteen-Tucker stated today's events are historic as the Directors will consider approving the proposed purchase of the Cloverdale Ranch, which is rich in natural resources and immersed in the rural and agrarian history of the coastside. President Kersteen-Tucker thanked staff for their hard work and noted the President of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) Walter Moore was in attendance and along with many members of the community.

Real Property Manager Mike Williams provided a presentation of the proposed purchase of 6,300-acres of Cloverdale Ranch from POST, with POST retaining 400 acres of farmland. The property is located at the southern end of the Town of Pescadero. Purchase of the property would result in the creation of a new preserve, the Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve. The property is surrounded by over 31,000-acres of open space and park land. The property is bounded by Pescadero Road to the north, Cloverdale Road to the east, Gazos Creek Road to the south, Highway 1 and Bean Hollow Road to the west. The proposed purchase supports new trail connections, conservation grazing, and the protection of large contiguous grasslands. Mr. Williams outlined the geographical features of the area, habitat and resource values of the property, community engagement/outreach efforts, outlined the timeline, terms and conditions of the proposed purchase, including a two-phased purchase approach, and an option agreement to enter into an option agreement with a \$500,000 option fee with POST to purchase the western 1,200-acre uplands area in 2025/2026. The option would provide time for the District and POST to work with the farmer shareholders of the Lake Lucerne Mutual Water Company to address needed water infrastructure improvements, and better define the ongoing maintenance responsibilities and liabilities between the water users and the fee property owner.

Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington provided information on the water, natural resource values, and on the flora and fauna on the Cloverdale Ranch that support the diverse ecology and provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including several special status species such as the San Francisco garter snake, California red-legged frog, western pond turtle, American badger, and the California coast steelhead.

Director Riffle inquired about the future plans and how long staff envision to start the public planning process.

Planning Manager Jane Mark stated that recent community engagement processes on the coastside through local projects, such as the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area project, have allowed staff to establish solid relationships with coastside communities. Ms. Mark stated the public planning process for Cloverdale will start in about three-to-five-years once staff understand what the site conditions and constraints of the area are before identifying potential public access points.

President Kersteen-Tucker inquired if the proposed purchase of this property is approved, what is the phased approach to have ranger and staff presence on the property.

Mr. Williams commented a ranger has been living in the Cloverdale residence and if the proposed purchase is approved, the ranger will commence to patrol the area. Additionally,

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone explained the Cloverdale Ranch property would be incorporated into the District's Coastal Patrol Area and will be actively patrolled; also the field staff and maintenance crew would have a presence at the property and become acquainted with the property.

Director Kishimoto requested that the PowerPoint presentation be forwarded to the Board members because some of the financial details were not provided previously.

President Kersteen-Tucker inquired what portion of the project would be funded from Measure AA (MAA) funds versus general fund dollars.

General Manager Ana Ruiz explained that the staffing and operational costs would be funded by general funds and capital cost such as repairs, new infrastructure, and public access in the future would be funded by MAA funds.

Director Riffle mentioned there are several POST staff attending the meeting and stated that the proposed purchase would not have been possible without the partnership of POST and suggested providing an opportunity for POST to speak and provide background information on the project.

Mr. Moore expressed gratitude for the proposed purchase and stated the project is not only possible because of the District's financial resources, but also because of the District's remarkable staff. Mr. Moore also expressed gratitude towards POST supporters who made this purchase possible and highlighted that this was originally the foresight of Audrey Rust and John Wade, whose vision has enabled this proposal to be in front of the Directors for consideration.

Public comment opened at 12:09 p.m.

Max Cohen provided comments on the importance of public access and stated there are very few access trails in central Pescadero where the public can walk, run, or ride their bikes safely citing concerns with having to share the roads with vehicles. Mr. Cohen mentioned public access will be limited in 2024 with a permit; he inquired if the general public access could be expedited.

Mr. Malone provided a brief explanation that the planning process is complicated and has to be balanced with preserving endangered species, neighbor concerns, and grazing. An interim plan has been developed for guided permit access. Wilbur's Watch Trail, a hiking trail, will also remain open. Staff will consider the possibilities for guided access to include bikes.

Nic Erridge expressed support for the project but expressed concerns about Wilbur Watch Trail being the first public access point and how visitation will be increased, and inquired if additional infrastructure, such as bathrooms, trash bins and parking security, would be added to this area.

Mr. Williams responded that Mr. Erridge's concerns will be carefully considered during the community engagement and planning phase of the project.

BJ Burns commented about the concerns from the Farm Bureau regarding the water diversion and water supply for farms, brush control for grazing, and suggested a pilot program for brush control. On a personal level, there are concerns about the leak in the pond that POST and the Resources Conservation District (RCD) built, which loses about sixty to seventy thousand

gallons a day. The pond should be fixed to stop the loss of water and before the property is transferred to the District. It is a big expense for the farmers to continue to pump water into a pond that leaks.

Mr. Williams explained that POST and RCD have addressed the issue of the leak by removing vegetation and re-compacting the base of the reservoir.

Mr. Lenington provided comments on brush control treatment efforts, acknowledged concerns, and stated ongoing efforts to actively manage brush.

Ashley D. Colin Bernal, an environmental high school teacher, inquired if staff foresees integration opportunities with local high school and middle school students to participate in the surveys and research to protect the biology and ecology of the Cloverdale property.

Mr. Lenington suggested Mr. Kowan speak to him after the meeting to discuss potential opportunities or ideas for the students to participate.

Cole Mazariegos-Anastassiou, a local farmer who leases land at Cascade Ranch, inquired if there will be leasing opportunities for younger farmers and leasing opportunities beyond what currently exists.

Ms. Ruiz stated staff is in the process of finalizing an agricultural policy, which addresses leases and opportunities for new farmers to lease. Ms. Ruiz encouraged Mr. Mazareques to join the District's notification list to receive updates of the policy and to reach out to Mr. Lenington to discuss the agricultural policy and Mr. Malone for leasing opportunity information.

Doniga Markegard commented she has been leasing at Cloverdale Ranch since 2008 and stated the reason there is such great infrastructure on this property is because of the great partnerships with organizations such as POST, RCD, and NRCS. Ms. Markegard expressed her concerns going forward that work will be stifled once the land is transferred from POST to the District. She shared her experience working with POST versus the District, with more accomplished leasing through POST. Additionally, Ms. Markegard expressed her desire to continue utilizing agricultural management techniques that the Markegards have been using through the years that have shown a positive impact on the resources and hopes that the District will allow the Markegards to continue to operate as they have been.

Ms. Ruiz responded the agricultural policy that is currently being finalized will address many of Ms. Markegard's concerns, such as facilitation, partnerships, funding, flexibility, sustainable practices, and conservation grazing.

Randy Vail inquired if the \$55,000 in tax revenue to the school district is correct as he believes the number is low.

Mr. Williams stated the agreement with the school district is not based on the price POST paid for the property but based on the price that the District purchases the property. There is no net loss, also the District is a tax-exempt government agency.

Public comment closed at 12:33 p.m.

Director Hassett thanked everyone involved in the monumental purchase of the property, which is the largest single acquisition in the District's history and a great way to celebrate the 50th anniversary and an honor for him to be part of the process as this is his last term serving on the Board. Director Hassett gave special recognition to Walter Moore, his staff, POST's Board of Directors, and District staff.

Director Holman stated the presentation was very informative on the incredibly complex arrangement and would only improve with public input. She thanked the public for attending and providing comments. Furthermore, she thanked POST for having the foresight twenty-five years ago to purchase the property and for the many improvements that have been made to the property. In addition, there has been a mutual focus on the importance of partnerships during the meeting, partnerships are critically important to the District. As a public agency, she asked for patience as the District moves forward with the project and the acquisition.

Director Riffle recognized POST for all their work, as this project would not be taking place if it were not for their efforts. Also, there has been comments about the proposed property size and location and how far it is located from the District's headquarters in Los Altos, but this may be the most well researched project that the District will be embarking on and thanked staff for their work. Lastly, partnerships, community engagement and public access is a priority for the District and agreed with Director Holman to be patient but also urged staff to look for opportunities to expedite the process so that the District can be an effective partner and steward.

Director Kishimoto thanked POST and RCD for their work on the project and stated she is open to creative thinking and suggested opening ranch roads to provide public access to the public so they have a place to walk and bike.

Director Cyr commented on how complex the project is and how much thought, work and foresight has gone into making this project possible, expressing gratitude to all of those involved, and supports the General Manager's recommendations.

President Kersteen-Tucker concurred with all of the Director's comments and stated she can not think of no greater gift in this season of giving than to have the District extend its extraordinary care and management and protection to these lands in perpetuity.

Motion: Director Hassett moved and Director Holman seconded the motion to adopt the phased purchase of the Peninsula Open Space Trust - Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties, located along Cloverdale, Gazos Creek, Bean Hollow and Pescadero Roads and the Cabrillo Highway, in unincorporated San Mateo County, to create Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve; and to adopt the General Manager's recommendation to enter into an option to purchase agreement with POST for the western property.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

President Zoe Kersteen-Tucker adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District at 12:44 p.m.

Maria Soria, CMC
Acting District Clerk