



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-25-165
Meeting 25-32
December 10, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 9

AGENDA ITEM

Approve an Agreement to Exchange Interests in Real Property between Jikoji, a non-profit corporation (Jikoji), and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District). District to receive a formal public trail easement for two existing trails that are currently open to the public and managed by the District, an access easement over all existing roads on the Jikoji property for patrol and maintenance purposes (no public access), and a 5-year license to conduct wildlife and plant studies along portions of Jikoji property (Santa Cruz County APNs 088-011-08 and 088-011-09) in exchange for District quitclaiming an unused roadway easement (where no roadway currently exists nor is needed) on Jikoji property

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Determine that the recommended actions are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as set out in the report.
2. By a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors, adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager or other appropriate officer to execute the Agreement to Exchange Interests in Real Property between the District and Jikoji, the easement and deeds referenced therein, license and related documents.
3. Amend the Use and Management Plan for Long Ridge Open Space Preserve to include the access and public trail easements to be acquired by the District.
4. Withhold dedication of the public trail easement and access easement to be acquired by the District as public open space at this time.

SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends entering into an Agreement to Exchange Interests in Real Property (Exchange Agreement) with Jikoji for an exchange of easement rights that provides net benefits to both parties. The exchange will perfect the rights to two existing public trails on two separate portions of the Jikoji Property, the Peters Creek Trail and Ward Road (Trail), both adjacent to Long Ridge Open Space Preserve (Preserve) and provide the District with access rights over all existing roads on the Property for patrol and maintenance access (no public access). In addition, the District will receive a 5-year license to complete plant and wildlife surveys on portions of the Jikoji Property to support robust natural resource management evaluations that include the pond and surrounding lands. In exchange, the District will quitclaim

its rights to a 60-foot-wide unutilized access road easement, which traverses the Jikoji property upon which no road is currently built (Attachment 2). This exchange of easement rights is at no cost to the District. The following report presents a description of the proposed exchange in real property interests, an amendment to the Preserve Use and Management Plan, the environmental review findings, and terms. The Exchange Agreement has no immediate fiscal impact.

DISCUSSION

Background

Jikoji owns two parcels totaling approximately 13.5-acres (Jikoji Property) that are adjacent to the Preserve. Jikoji has requested that the District quitclaim a 60-foot-wide road easement (District Easement) to facilitate Jikoji's construction of a new septic system, which will be installed in a portion of the District Easement. The District Easement, which is appurtenant to, or runs with, the land, was originally owned by Long Ridge Ranch and came under District ownership when the property was purchased in 1978.

The District purchased the properties surrounding the Jikoji Property in two separate transactions. The first transaction was a fee acquisition, and the second transaction included an exchange, creating the top half of the oblong oval shape of the Jikoji Property. First, the District acquired the 390-acre Long Ridge Ranch property on August 25, 1978 ([R-78-15](#)), which included the pond and surrounding area near Skyline Boulevard. On September 15, 1982 ([R-82-33](#)), the District purchased from Bodhi (the predecessor in title to Jikoji) a portion of their land holdings totaling 36.5 acres directly south of the Long Ridge Ranch property. As part of that transaction, Bodhi retained a 9-acre inholding making up the bottom half of the oblong oval shape of the Jikoji Property and received from the District the pond and surrounding area, an addition of approximately 4.5 acres of land.

Shortly after the exchange, in October 1982, Bodhi granted the property to the current owner, Jikoji, and the property became a Zen Buddhist retreat center. As part of the Bodhi deal, the District and Bodhi executed a Covenants, Conditions, Restrictions and Reversion Running with the Land Agreement (CC&Rs) which was recorded against and burdens the Jikoji Property with various restrictions against subdivision and development. The CC&Rs also give the District the right to approve the design of improvements and for District employees to use existing roads on the Jikoji Property, among other rights and conditions.

The former Long Ridge Ranch property was formally dedicated as open space on February 14, 1979 (M-79-34)), and the former Bodhi property was formally dedicated as open space on January 22, 1986 ([R-86-08](#)). Upon dedication as public open space, a property effectively becomes permanently protected, and the District restricts its ability to sell or otherwise convey any real property rights on, under or over the dedicated property. California Public Resources Code section 5540.5 ("Section 5540.5") empowers the Board of Directors (Board), by unanimous vote of all seven members, to approve an exchange of real property rights on dedicated open space property when the Board determines the exchange to be of equal or greater value and necessary for park or open space purposes. Such exchanges are limited to 40 acres per calendar year. This transaction is such an exchange, as the value of perfecting public access over existing segments of Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail, which are both integral to the preserve's trail system, and perfecting access rights over existing roads on the Jikoji Property in

connection with these rights are together significant, and the easements to be conveyed to the District by Jikoji will be used for park purposes. Furthermore, the proposed property exchange will not result in the District exceeding the 40-acre per year exchange limit. The exchange quitclaims rights on an unbuilt road easement that the District has no plans to develop or activate as a road.

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In spring of 2025, the County of Santa Cruz flagged the removal of the 60-foot-wide District Easement as part of a permit requirement to upgrade Jikoji's septic system. Jikoji contacted the District requesting abandonment of the District Easement through their Property to allow the installation of a new leach field along the area partially overlaying the District Easement. In fall of 2025, District staff visited Jikoji to walk the District Easement and the portions of Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail on Jikoji Property. The District Easement begins in the Preserve and runs just outside the boundary of the southern portion of the Jikoji Property before crossing into the Jikoji Property for roughly 600 feet through forested, uneven terrain, bending left and through the existing Ward Road and up a steep slope towards the County right-of-way before ending at Skyline Boulevard.

After ground-truthing the District Easement's location and confirming lack of use and lack of desire for future use, the District proposed completing an easement exchange in which the District would quitclaim the unused District Easement in exchange for (1) formal public trail easements over the portions of Peters Creek Trail and Ward Road (Trail) that currently cross over the Jikoji Property, (2) expanded rights for the District to use existing roads on the Jikoji Property, and (3) a 5-year license to conduct wildlife and plant surveys on portions of the Jikoji Property. The public trail easement would be thirty (30) feet wide to allow for potential future realignments, and appurtenant to the District's Long Ridge Open Space Preserve. The new easements and license would be in addition to, and would not change or diminish the District's rights under, the CC&Rs. Pursuant to the CC&Rs, Jikoji would continue to be responsible for maintaining all roads within the Jikoji Property.

Descriptions of Exchange Properties

Jikoji to District: Under the Agreement, Jikoji would convey a 30-foot-wide public trail easement to the District over two portions of the Property on which the existing Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail cross (approximately 1,019 linear feet and 0.23 acres, or 10,019 square feet). Jikoji would also convey an access easement to the District over all existing roads within the Jikoji Property for patrol and maintenance access totaling approximately 1.40 acres, or 60,984 square feet.

District to Jikoji: Under the Agreement, the District would quitclaim an unutilized access easement for the purposes of the construction and maintenance of a roadway over the Jikoji Property. The access easement contains approximately 3.21 acres, or 139,827 square feet of area.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Amendment of Use and Management Plan

The proposed exchange of interests in real property requires an Amendment to the Use and Management Plan for the subject property that is a part of Long Ridge Open Space Preserve. Amendment of the Use and Management Plan to incorporate the easement exchange with Jikoji would take effect at the close of the transaction and remain effective until further amended. The proposed amendments to the Use and Management Plan are shown in underlined text below and includes the following elements:

Name:	Designate the trail easement acquired as an addition to Long Ridge Open Space Preserve.
Dedication:	Withhold Board dedication of the public trail easement at this time.
Signs and Site Security:	Install private property and preserve boundary signs where appropriate.
Fences and Gates:	To be placed at appropriate entries to prevent illegal pedestrian access.
<u>Public Access:</u>	<u>Public uses allowed on the existing Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail within the trail easement will continue (hiking, biking and equestrian use) under District management.</u>
<u>Easement Monitoring:</u>	<u>Conduct regular inspections of the easement area to ensure compliance with the terms of the exchange.</u>
<u>Resource Management:</u>	<u>Conduct plant and wildlife surveys on the Jikoji Property during the 5-year license period.</u>

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Project Description

The project consists of an Agreement to exchange interests in real property between Jikoji and the District as permitted under Section 5540.5. Per the terms and conditions of the Agreement, the District will quitclaim an access easement totaling approximately 3.21 acres, or 139,827 square feet, at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve to Jikoji. In exchange, Jikoji will convey to the District access rights over all existing roads totaling approximately 1.40 acres, or 60,984 square feet and public trail rights over Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail totaling approximately 0.23 acres, or 10,019 square feet. The easements to be conveyed to the District are of equal or greater value and will be used for park purposes.

CEQA Determination

The District concludes that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment. The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Article 19, Sections 15301, 15306, and 15325 (f).

Section 15301 exempts the operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The proposed project formalizes public trail access over existing trails and provides the District with access over existing roads. While the rights are being formalized there is negligible or no expansion of the existing use.

Section 15306 exempts basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and are strictly for information gathering purposes. Plant and wildlife surveys on the Jikoji Property during the 5-year license period will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and are strictly for information gathering purposes.

Section 15325 (f) exempts the acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve open space or lands for park purposes. The easement exchange preserves the existing trail use and is a transfer of land for open space or park purposes.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

As part of the proposed Agreement, the District and Jikoji agree to convey the property interests to each other at no cost to either party. The easement exchange is of equal or greater value to the District and the public it serves as it perfects current public trail access over both Ward Road (Trail) and Peters Creek Trail and provides expanded access rights to the District in connection with the public trails. Therefore, the exchange is determined to be in accordance with the District's enabling legislation set out in Section 5540.5, pending unanimous vote by the Board.

FISCAL IMPACT

This reciprocal, no-cost exchange of easements has no immediate fiscal impact.

PRIOR BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

None

PUBLIC NOTICE

Property owners of land located adjacent to or surrounding the project site have been mailed a copy of the agenda for this meeting. Accordingly, all notice required by the Brown Act and District policy has been provided.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the General Manager will execute the Exchange Agreement, Access Easement, Trail Easement, Plant and Wildlife Survey License and Quitclaim Deed, and staff will record the Access Easement, Trail Easement and Quitclaim Deed with the County of Santa Cruz.

Attachments:

1. Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of Exchange Agreement, Authorizing General Manager or Other Officer to Execute Easement and Quitclaim Deeds, Authorizing General Manager or Other Officer to Execute Certificates of Acceptance of Grants to District, Authorizing General Manager and General Counsel to Approve Minor Technical Amendments to the Foregoing Documents (Long Ridge Open Space Preserve)
2. Overall Project Location Map

Responsible Department Manager:

Allen Ishibashi, Real Property Manager, Real Property Department

Prepared by:

Jasmine Leong, Real Property Specialist II, Real Property Department

Graphics prepared by:

Nathan Greig, Senior Technologist, Information Systems & Technology Department

RESOLUTION NO. 25-__

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF EXCHANGE AGREEMENT, AUTHORIZING GENERAL MANAGER OR OTHER OFFICER TO EXECUTE EASEMENTS AND QUITCLAIM DEEDS, AUTHORIZING GENERAL MANAGER OR OTHER OFFICER TO EXECUTE CERTIFICATES OF ACCEPTANCE OF GRANTS TO DISTRICT, AUTHORIZING GENERAL MANAGER AND GENERAL COUNSEL TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL OTHER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE TO CLOSING OF THE TRANSACTION (LONG RIDGE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE).

The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Board) does hereby resolve as follows:

SECTION ONE. The Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) does hereby accept the offer contained in that certain Exchange Agreement (Agreement) between Jikoji and the District, a copy of which Agreement is attached hereto and by reference made a part hereof, and authorizes the President of the Board of Directors, General Manager, or other appropriate officer to execute the Agreement and all related transactional documents on behalf of the District to acquire and exchange the real property described therein.

SECTION TWO. The General Manager, President of the Board of Directors, or other appropriate officer is authorized to execute the easements and license and quitclaim deed to the District and Jikoji, respectively.

SECTION THREE. The General Manager, President of the Board of Directors, or other appropriate officer is authorized to execute Certificates of Acceptance for the easements to the District.

SECTION FOUR. The General Manager or the General Manager's designee (Real Property Manager) is authorized to provide notice of acceptance to Jikoji, execute all title and escrow documents, and to extend escrow if necessary.

SECTION FIVE. The Board of Directors finds and determines that, pursuant to Section 5540.5 of the California Public Resources Code, the granting and acceptance of the easement interests are consistent with Public Resources Code 5540.5, and that the real properties being acquired by the District are of equal or greater value than the real property being transferred to Jikoji, and are necessary to be acquired for open space purposes.

SECTION SIX. The General Manager and General Counsel are further authorized to approve any technical revisions to the attached Agreement and documents, which do not involve any material change to any term of the Agreement or documents, which are necessary or appropriate to the closing or implementation of this transaction.

* * * * *

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on December 10, 2025, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Zoe Kersteen-Tucker, Secretary
Board of Directors

Jed Cyr, President
Board of Directors

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

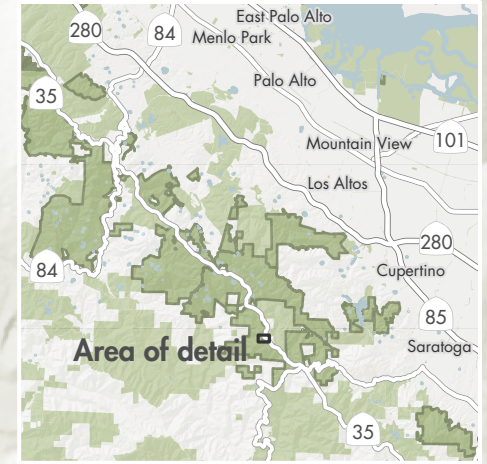
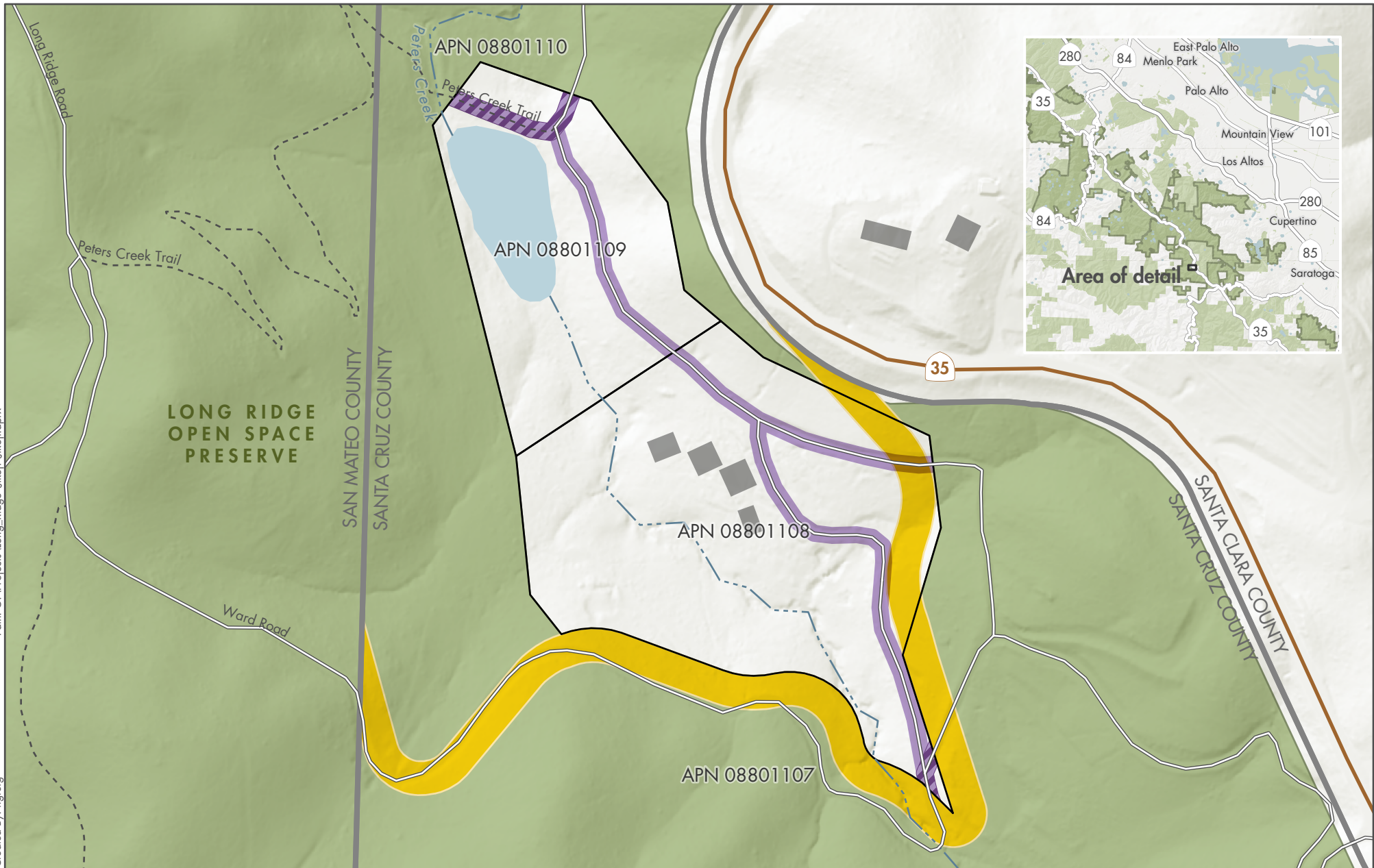
Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

Maria Soria, District Clerk

Path: G:\Projects\Long_Ridge_Vikoj\Jikoji.aprx

Created By: ngreig



Jikoji Easement Exchange

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Midpen preserves | Quitclaimed 60-foot wide easement | Structure |
| Jikoji property | Patrol access easement | |
| County boundary | Public trail easement | |

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
9/25/2025



Feet
0 150 300

While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.