



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

R-14-151  
December 2, 2014

### AGENDA ITEM 2

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Bear Creek Stables Site Plan Concept and Tenant Selection Process

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "G.M.", is written over the end of the "GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS" heading.

1. Review the proposed Bear Creek Stables Site Plan Concept and provide feedback to guide the development of the final Bear Creek Stables Site Plan, which will be subject to review and approval by the full Board of Directors.
2. Confirm the solicitation of proposals from interested parties through a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a Stables tenant operator and partner to develop lease terms for review by the full Board of Directors.

#### SUMMARY

As part of a Measure AA Project (#21-4), a Bear Creek Stables (Stables) Site Plan would guide the implementation of improvement standards, management standards, public access programs, and maintenance and operations projects for the Stables area of Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. A focused Site Plan for the Stables is necessary prior to entering into a long-term lease with a tenant operator to ensure that the Stables' operations and land management are consistent with the District's resource management and public access policies and goals for the property. A long-term lease will allow a tenant to invest in the facility by implementing infrastructure improvements and a safe and feasible public access program. With the Committee's direction, staff will fully develop the proposed Site Plan and confirm next steps for selecting a long-term tenant. The Site Plan is a key document as it will serve as the project description for CEQA purposes to conduct an environmental analysis of the proposed site improvements and also become part of a future long-term lease with a Stables tenant. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2014-15 Midyear Budget includes \$25,000 to complete the environmental analysis this fiscal year.

#### BACKGROUND

In 2000, the District acquired a 260-acre property as an addition to Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (BCR Preserve) that included a 5-acre equestrian stable. The Preliminary Use and Management Plan for the property called for the continued operation of the Stables. Subsequently, the District entered into a month-to-month lease with Glenda Smith, a long-time boarder of the Stables. Ms. Smith has operated the Stables on a month-to-month basis since that time, and currently boards approximately 70 horses at a relatively low cost to the boarders. Ms.

Smith has, for some time, requested a long-term lease to allow for greater economic investment and viability of the Stables operation. The District is also interested in entering into a long-term lease to facilitate the investment of long-term site improvements to better protect the surrounding natural resources and extend the life of the existing lease structures. Prior to executing a long-term lease, a well-developed Site Plan that is based on the District's resource management and public access goals is needed.

## DISCUSSION

On August 27, 2013, the following three overarching goals for the Stables Site Plan were presented to the PNR Committee (Attachment A, PNR Memo):

- 1) Emphasize the protection of the site's natural resources;
- 2) Maximize public benefits by broadening public access and use of the facility, and;
- 3) Develop a viable plan that is financially feasible for both a tenant and the District.

Using these goals as guidance, staff has developed preliminary site management guidelines and improvement standards that, if approved by the full Board of Directors, would be required as part of a future, long-term lease. These preliminary recommendations are presented to the Committee in conceptual form for confirmation as the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan Concept.

### Proposed Bear Creek Stables Site Plan Concept

The Bear Creek Stables Site Plan is currently in concept form. Staff is seeking Committee review and confirmation of the following elements, which would become the foundation of the final Site Plan. Once confirmed, these elements will be fully developed and brought back to the full Board of Directors for review and approval prior to the initiation of the environmental review process.

#### 1. Bear Creek Stables Improvement Standards

The tenant would be required to address erosion and sedimentation issues through a series of site improvements to be completed within an agreed-upon timeframe.

#### 2. Bear Creek Stables Management Standards

The tenant would be required to integrate specific site management actions as part of their ongoing management and operations of the Stables. These include:

- Develop and implement a safe, welcoming, and inclusive public access and education program that includes signage, Stables tours, guided rides, and horseback riding lessons, with unrestricted public access allowed within specific Stables areas;
- Implement a manure management program that establishes guidelines for the cleaning, storage and composting of manure;
- Implement health, safety and emergency measures, including regular inspections by a qualified husbandry practitioner, presence of onsite caretaker, basic medical provisions and emergency land line phone, and development of an emergency evacuation plan.

#### 3. District Capital Improvement Projects

The District would implement capital improvements at the Stables property, including major road repairs, structure repairs, and water storage improvements. The District would also provide public access infrastructure such as a restroom, signage, and fencing, as well as construct a parking area (to be located elsewhere on the Preserve) and connecting trail that can be used by the general public to access the Stables area.

### **Tenant Selection Process**

As part of this Agenda Item, the Committee is asked to confirm the recommendation to proceed with a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit interest in a long-term lease of the Stables. The Request for Proposals (RFP) process allows for a transparent tenant selection process that is based on specific criteria to select a potential tenant that can best deliver the District's goals for the property and provide the greatest benefit for the public. At this time, the District is aware of two different parties who are interested in submitting proposals for the long-term lease and management of the Stables. The District, at the request of the Friends of Bear Creek Stables (Friends), has met with the Friends to become acquainted with this group and to preview a draft proposal. The current Stables tenant, Glenda Smith, is not part of the Friends group, but has indicated her support of their efforts and a willingness to work with them should they be selected to manage the long-term Stables lease. The District has not formally met with the second group, who includes Ferenc (Frank) Bakonyi, but has become more familiar with Mr. Bakonyi who has attended several Board and Committee meetings recently and has also sent and received correspondence in the past regarding that group's interest and goals for the Stables.

The District is aware that the larger Stables community is keenly interested in the long-term viability of the Stables and that many strongly support Glenda Smith's continued involvement. It is also clear that there are varying opinions amongst different boarders of how best to run and manage the facility. Ideally, the various Stables groups would come together given their common interest in improving the Stables facility to pool their resources to submit one unified proposal. As an alternative, the Committee may wish to express their interest in having the District serve as facilitator to encourage such an outcome. Note, however, that this would require both parties to come together and arrive at a joint agreement.

In the mean time, the District will continue to work with the current lessee to ensure uninterrupted management and continuation of established practices and processes.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The FY2014-15 Midyear Budget, anticipated for approval at the December 17, 2014 Board meeting, includes \$25,000 to complete the CEQA analysis of the Site Plan this fiscal year. Additional funds will be needed next fiscal year to complete the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan.

Capital improvements associated with this project are eligible for Measure AA funding. Development of the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan and initial improvements were included in the Board-adopted five-year Measure AA Project List (#21-4).

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

The planning process for developing a long-term Site Plan and lease for Bear Creek Stables was presented to the Planning and Natural Resources Committee on August 27, 2013.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Property owners of land located adjacent to or within 300 feet of Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve and interested parties have been mailed written notices of this Agenda Item. Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE**

CEQA analysis would begin after the full Board of Directors approves the Stables Site Plan Project Description, which is scheduled for April 2015.

**NEXT STEPS**

The following are the next steps needed to proceed with the Stables Site Plan project:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date</b>
Finalize the Bear Creek Stables Site Plan	Winter 2014-15
Board of Directors considers approval of the Site Plan as the CEQA Project Description for purposes of the environmental review	April 2015
Conduct CEQA Review	Spring 2015
Release Request for Proposals	Summer 2015*
Board of Directors considers approval of the Site Plan, adoption of the CEQA Findings and Lease Agreement	Fall 2015

\*Could be concurrent with CEQA process

While the Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan is proposed to be added to the Action Plan as a new key project during the FY2014-15 Midyear Action Plan and Budget process, the two planning processes will proceed on separate tracks to avoid potential delays to the Stables Site Plan.

## Attachments

1. Planning & Natural Resources Committee Memo, August 27, 2013

Responsible Department Head:

Jane Mark, AICP Planning Manager

Prepared by:

Gretchen Laustsen, Planner II, Planning Department

Lisa Bankosh, Planner III, Planning Department

Elaina Cuzick, Real Property Specialist, Real Property Department

Contact person:

Gretchen Laustsen, Planner II, Planning Department



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# Memorandum

DATE: August 27, 2013

TO: Planning and Natural Resources Committee

THROUGH: Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager

FROM: Michael Williams, Real Property Manager  
Elaina Cuzick, Real Property Specialist

SUBJECT: Planning Process for Developing Long-Term Plan and Lease for Bear Creek Stables

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## Meeting Purpose

Over the past three years, District staff and a planning consultant have been conducting a planning study at Bear Creek Stables, located on the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space, to inform the development of a long-term plan and lease for the facility. For the August 27 Committee meeting, staff will present project goals, existing site conditions and use activities at Bear Creek Stables, and comparative operational plans of three other stables located on Bay Area public parklands.

## Background

The District acquired Bear Creek Stables (Stable) in 2000 and later entered into a month-to-month lease with a tenant (former boarder at the Stable) who requested a long-term lease.

As part of the Master Planning process for Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve, the Stable site was designated for continued equestrian use in the Plan's current draft.

In the fall of 2009, a planning consultant was hired to study the Stable site and assist staff with developing a long-term plan and lease.

## Long-Range Plan Goals for Bear Creek Stables

The long-range plan for the Stable incorporates the following three goals which are consistent with the District's Mission Statement objectives to "protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education":

- 1) Emphasize the protection of the site's natural resources;
- 2) Maximize public benefits by broadening public access and use of the facility, and;
- 3) Develop a viable plan that is financially feasible for both a tenant and the District.

These goals were formulated over the course of two years while examining existing conditions and activities at the Stable site and other public stables in the Bay Area.

## Process for Investigating Other Public Stables

Based on the three goals of natural resource protection, maximizing public benefits, and financial feasibility, staff investigated other similar stables around the Bay Area that might offer valuable insight into the possibilities for Bear Creek Stables. To help decide which stable sites might provide the most useful and pertinent information, a list of criteria was developed and is included in the next section of this report. Based on these criteria, three Bay Area public agencies were contacted and three stable sites were selected; East Bay Regional Park District's Chabot Riding Stables, San Mateo County's Historic Folger Stable, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area's Miwok Livery Stables. Although each facility is

different in many ways, each brings sufficient similarities, relevant past experiences, and innovative approaches to assist the District in exploring enhancement opportunities at Bear Creek Stables. It is important to note that the three sites were not chosen to ultimately serve as a model for Bear Creek Stables, but rather provide lessons learned and tools for moving forward with the District's long range planning effort.

### **Selection Criteria for Stables Outreach and Research**

The following are the criteria used in selecting which Bay Area public stables to outreach and research. It was desirable to find stables with experience and insight into the following:

1. Balancing equestrian facility use with natural resource protection within the site and the surrounding area.
  - a. Experience with improving onsite drainage to reduce erosion and sedimentation loss.
  - b. Methods of reducing sedimentation and contamination from concentrated use in and around paddocks.
    - i. Solutions for manure management and soil stability.
  - c. Experience dealing with negative impacts resulting from pasture grazing on steep slopes.
2. Maximizing public access and use of facilities that serve a broad spectrum of the general public.
  - a. Ways to increase public awareness of a stable and its public programs.
    - i. Use of signage, brochures, websites and other creative approaches.
  - b. Integration of public trails that introduce parkland visitors to equestrian activities.
    - i. Connecting the public to culturally interesting farm and equine settings.
  - c. Experience with outreach programs that invite participation in equine activities.
    - i. Examples such as programs offered through school, non-profits and other organizations.
  - d. Methods of inviting the general public to have direct access to equestrian experiences.
    - i. Riding lessons, guided trail rides, summer or weekend camps for youth.
3. Viable and financially sound partnerships between public agency and private stable operators.
  - a. Leases based on the premise that the facilities are to be used for the benefit of the general public as well as those that may have opportunities to own horses.
  - b. Examples of good husbandry practices that provide a healthy environment for horses, riders and general public.
  - c. Innovative approaches to improving, managing, and funding public stables.
  - d. Examples of a financially feasible arrangement where facilities and land use are improved over time while, at the same time, offering a wide range of public access opportunities.

### **Next Steps in Planning Process**

Staff, with the assistance from the consultant, will draft a lease that includes a site plan and parameters for a tenant to base their proposals on for entering into a 5 year lease arrangement for the operation of a public stable at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. The parameters will describe desirable management, as well as operational and public activities that the District would like to see addressed in a proposal. A draft lease and site plan will be included in the 2014-15 Action Plan, and these documents will come back to the Committee to discuss whether or not the Committee wants to seek only a proposal from the current tenant, open the process for public proposals, or a combination involving the current tenant and potential partners who can provide additional resources. A recommendation will be presented to the Board for their approval prior to soliciting any proposal.