Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

LEGISLATIVE, FUNDING, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

R-26-157
October 27, 2026

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Consideration of an Update to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Forward the proposed updates to Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* to add a new type of recognition for large monetary public donations.

SUMMARY

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) gift recognition program acknowledges unsolicited cash gifts from individuals or groups. Section II, paragraph A of Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* establishes a tiered framework of recognition that corresponds to the amount of the contribution. Currently, for the highest tier of contribution ($10,000 or more) the District will offer a Resolution, framed preserve photograph and mention in a District publication. This language dates to the 1990s when the District was receiving small public donations of funds. In recent years, there has been interest by members of the public to donate large monetary contributions to support the District, with a desire for a physical recognition on District lands. It is highly likely that the number of individuals interested in this type of donation and recognition will increase given the number of philanthropic and high-earning individuals in the Bay Area.

With this in mind, the General Manager (GM) has explored new tiers of recognition for large monetary public gifts to the District. The proposal discussed in this report would apply to unrestricted gifts of $75,000 or more and preserve-restricted gifts of $100,000 or more. In recognition of the large gift, donors would be offered a small recognition plaque to be placed on an existing non-bench/non-picnic table facility, subject to review and approval of the General Manager. Plaques would be restricted to only existing infrastructure to align with the District's commitment of keeping preserves in a natural state, and reserving dedications of benches for other purposes. This recommended change was carefully reviewed and is supported by the Grants Program Manager, Chief Financial Officer, and the Public Affairs Department.

DISCUSSION

Board Policy 5.01 – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition* includes a tiered framework for unsolicited cash gift recognition, with the form of acknowledgement corresponding to the amount of the contribution. Current forms of recognition range from a thank you letter (up to $1,999.99) to a resolution ($10,000 or more). The policy language dates to the 1990s, reflecting

small levels of public cash donations. In recent years, the District has been approached by members of the public with interest in donating large monetary contributions to support the District's mission, with a desire for some type of physical recognition on District lands. With the level of philanthropy and high-income earners in the Bay Area, it is highly likely that the number of individuals interested in this type of donation and recognition will increase over time. The proposed tier would address a gap in the existing policy by providing an additional form of recognition for substantial financial contributions; and offer a consistent and transparent process for considering donor-initiated requests for recognition plaques.

Proposal for Large Monetary Gifts

Recognizing the growing interest for large public donations to the District, the General Manager (GM) has explored new tiers of recognition for large monetary public gifts. The proposal would apply to unrestricted gifts of $75,000 or more and preserve-restricted gifts of $100,000 or more. An unrestricted gift is a donation with no donor conditions, allowing the District to utilize the funds to support general operations. A preserve-restricted gift is a donation for the purpose of supporting ongoing operations, maintenance and management of a specific preserve. The District would utilize its existing grant/gift/commemorative tracking system to account for unrestricted and preserve-restricted gifts.

In recognition of the large gift, the donor would have the option of requesting a small recognition plaque to be placed on an existing non-bench/non-picnic table facility. Under this proposal, a plaque would be restricted to only ***existing infrastructure*** to align with the District's commitment of keeping preserves in a natural state, while reserving dedications of benches and picnic tables for other purposes. The recognition plaque would be no larger than 6 inches by 4 inches and placed in such a way to be set within the infrastructure (e.g., plaques on trail signposts would be sized and placed to remain flat against and fully within the edges of the wooden signpost). Viable options of existing infrastructure for this type of donor plaque include bridges, puncheons, boardwalks, retaining walls, and trail signposts. The donor would work with staff to confirm the selected facility on which the plaque would be installed. The language on the plaque and selected location would be subject to review and approval by the General Manager to ensure consistency with this policy and District practices. Character limit is planned for approximately 150 characters. Each donor plaque would remain installed onsite for 20 years, to reflect the general average lifespan of preserve infrastructure. After the 20-year timeframe ends, the District has the option to offer the location to the same or a new donor for a similar future donation.

The proposed two new tiers as shown in tracked edits below would address a gap in the existing policy by providing recognition for substantial financial contributions while offering a consistent and transparent process for considering donor-initiated requests for recognition plaques. The table below summarizes the existing gift-recognition tiers and the corresponding forms of recognition, and the proposed addition of two new tiers:

Up to $1,999.99	Thank you by email or letter
$2,000 to $4,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of District gift item (note cards, etc.)
$5,000 to $9,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of framed photograph of favorite District preserve

$10,000 to $74,999	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication
$75,000 or more (unrestricted)	*If a recognition is requested, the District will offer a small recognition plaque (no larger than 6"x 4", 150 characters) on an existing non-bench/non-picnic table facility (e.g. bridges, puncheons, boardwalks, trail signpost) for 20 years, subject to the review and approval by the General Manager.
$100,000 or more (restricted to preserve)	*If a recognition is requested, the District will offer a small recognition plaque (no larger than 6"x 4", 150 characters) on an existing non-bench/non-picnic table facility (e.g. bridges, puncheons, boardwalks, trail signpost) for 20 years, subject to the review and approval by the General Manager.
*These items will be provided only if desired by the donor. All gifts will be recognized annually on the District website.	

The proposed update would provide guidance on how to acknowledge significant unsolicited monetary gifts while establishing clear, consistent guidelines for evaluating donor requests for recognition plaques. If supported by the Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC), this proposal would be forwarded to the full Board of Directors for their consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

None

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

If supported by the LFPAC, this proposal would be forwarded to the full Board of Directors (Board) for their consideration. If approved by the full Board, the policy amendment would take effect immediately.

Attachment
1. Revised Board Policy – *Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition*

Responsible Department Head/ Prepared by / Contact person:
Lori Low, Public Affairs

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Site Naming, Gift, and Special Recognition	**Policy 5.01** **Chapter 5 – Historical/Cultural**
Effective Date: 8/25/93	Revised Date: 8 /12/26
Prior Versions: 8/25/93, 9/14/94, 6/24/98, 9/12/01, 10/8/08, 1/13/10, 10/27/10, 11/13/13, 12/12/18, 5/24/23	

I. SITE NAMING

All District site names and signs should be kept as simple and functional as possible. When a property is acquired, either as an addition to an existing preserve or for the establishment of a new preserve, a name will be recommended in the Preliminary Use and Management Plan. In most cases, "open space preserve" is appropriate as part of the name; however, there may be circumstances when another designation may be used. In some cases, a temporary name may be retained until the next Comprehensive Use and Management Plan review.

A. Open Space Preserves

The name given to each open space preserve should be general enough to remain suitable if the site is enlarged, but specific enough to give its location some significance. Properties added to an open space preserve may not always be contiguous with that preserve.

1. Preserves shall be named after:

a) Geographical features of broad, general significance to the preserve;

b) Historical persons, cultural names, uses, or events broadly associated with the locale.

2. Preserves shall not be named after any individuals other than historical persons as noted above.

B. Preserve Areas, Trails, Site Improvements, Historic Sites and Unnamed Natural Features

This designation refers to specific locations, land formations, trails, natural and physical features, staging areas and other site improvements, and areas of significance within open space preserves. Recognition of significant land gifts, including "bargain" purchases, will be negotiated at the time of the gift or bargain purchase.

1. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements including benches and bridges, historic sites and previously unnamed natural features shall ordinarily be named

after:

a) Geographical, botanical or zoological identification;

b) Historical persons, uses, or events associated with the site, or persons and organizations listed in Section III: "Special Recognition".

2. Preserve areas, trails, site improvements, historic sites and unnamed natural features may in rare instances be named after a living individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the District, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

II. GIFT RECOGNITION

The purpose of the gift recognition policy is to provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and commend individuals or groups that have made significant contributions of cash, equipment, materials, goods or professional services toward the enhancement of the District, its programs, and its facilities.

A. Unsolicited Cash Gifts:

Up to $1,999.99	Thank you by email or letter
$2,000 to $4,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of District gift item (note cards, etc.)
$5,000 to $9,999.99	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of framed photograph of favorite District preserve
$10,000 to $74,999	*Thank you by email or letter with offer of Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication
$75,000 or more (unrestricted)	*If a recognition is requested, the District will offer a small recognition plaque (no larger than 6"x 4", 150 characters) on an existing non-bench/non-picnic table facility (e.g. bridges, puncheons, boardwalks, trail signpost) for 20 years, subject to the review and approval of the General Manager.
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*These items will be provided only if desired by the donor All gifts will be recognized annually on the District website.	

III. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee (LFPAC) shall be the committee designated to discuss all requests that meet the criteria of the policy for special recognition made by members of the Board of Directors, and after deliberation shall forward a

recommendation to the full Board for a vote.

The General Manager or his/her designee will review constituent bench dedication requests to determine eligibility based on the policy guidelines outlined below in Section III D.

Constituent bench requests may be brought to LFPAC if there exists ambiguity regarding whether the request meets the requirements below.

The District places benches in its preserves for three distinct purposes:

A. District Rest Benches

These benches provide constituents with a place to rest. District staff places these benches without involving a District committee or the full Board. Regular benches must be either a backed or a backless standard bench as described in Section V below.

B. Constituent Bench Dedications

These are benches which have been requested by constituents in order to honor or memorialize a member of the public and are funded by the requestors who must pay $5,000 for a 10-year term. Requests must be in reference to a significant supporter or a volunteer, as defined in Section III D below. The General Manager or his/her designee reviews requests to determine if they meet the eligibility definitions. Requests that are administratively declined because they do not meet the eligibility definitions may be appealed to the General Manager for a second review. Eligible requests will be administratively implemented.

a) Constituent bench dedications shall only be selected from and placed in locations that have been pre-determined by the District and/or approved by the Planning and Natural Resources Committee and/or by the full Board of Directors.

b) If a request for a constituent bench meets the eligibility requirements, the requestor(s) shall pay for the cost of constructing, installing and maintaining a bench and plaque by contributing $5,000 to cover the 10-year dedication term of the bench.

c) Bench plaques will be 2 x 6 inches in size.

d) Benches must be one of the two District standard bench designs.

e) Constituent bench dedications will have a term limit of 10 years. After 10 years, the original donor will have the option to contribute an additional $5,000 donation for each additional 10-year term. Should the original donor decline to renew an existing bench, the bench will be offered to the public for re-dedication.

C. District Bench Dedications

These are benches which are installed by the District in response to requests by members of the Board of Directors to honor "Founders," "Significant Supporters", and “Volunteers”.

a) LFPAC can initiate a bench request and refer a decision to the full Board or individual Board members can initiate a bench request which will be referred to LFPAC for discussion before it is referred to the full Board for a final decision. Honorees must be "Founders", "Significant Supporters", and “Volunteers” (per policy Section III D below).

b) For these benches there are no design specification limits or limits on their location. The District will pay for the lifetime cost of the bench.

D. Founders, Significant Supporters, and Volunteers

"Founders", "Significant Supporters", and “Volunteers” are eligible for special recognition, including memorials.

"Founders" shall be defined as an individual or group of individuals who participated in the formation of the District, or were significant supporters of the formation of the District.

"Significant Supporters" shall be defined as individuals or group of individuals who have shown conspicuous or noteworthy support for the District through extraordinary contributions of time and effort to the advancement of the goals, philosophy and mission of the District.

“Volunteers” shall be defined as individuals or groups of individuals who donated a minimum of 500 volunteer hours and 20 years of service to the District by working for the District’s docent or volunteer program.

IV. RECOGNITION OF HISTORIC SITES

A. A recognition monument, normally in plaque form, may be considered by the Board if it is in relation to a specific existing building or other remaining structure of significant historic value. In such cases, the plaque will be affixed or in close proximity to the structure itself. If there is no structure, then recognition may he considered for inclusion on District informational materials or trail signage. Such a site, in the absence of a building or structure, will ordinarily not be physically marked except as determined by the Board on a case-by-case basis as part of the Use and Management planning process for the corresponding open space preserve.

Any Board-approved memorial names shall be included in site brochures, maps, or other informational materials.

V. STANDARD BENCH DESIGN SPECIFICATION

A. District Rest Benches and Constituent Bench Dedications, described in III (A) and (B) above, are limited to either of the two following standard bench designs:

Backed bench:
Dumor - Bench 88, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports (color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)
6’ or 8’ lengths

Backless bench:
Dumor - Bench 103, recycled plastic slates (color: CEDAR), steel leg supports (color: BLACK, IMBEDDED)
103-60PL 6' long, 3 supports
103-80PL 8' long, 3 supports

B. The General Manager or LFPAC can at any point bring designs to the Board that differ from the District's standard bench designs.

VI. PARTNER RECOGNITION SIGNBOARD

Partner recognition signboards provide an opportunity for the District to recognize and acknowledge significant partners who have made conspicuous or noteworthy contributions of cash, land, and/or time that were instrumental to the conservation, restoration, management, and/or public opening of a preserve. Partners may include agencies, organizations, or individuals. Partner Recognition Signboards may also be used to satisfy recognition requirements specified in grant, purchase, or other funding agreements.

Excluding recognitions previously approved by the Board (e.g. recognitions required in Board-approved agreements and resolutions), LFPAC shall review and forward for Board approval the list of partner(s) to recognize on the Partner Recognition Signboard. Following Board approval, the General Manager or his/her designee will follow the guidelines and specifications listed below.

a. Guidelines and Specifications:
    a) Partner Recognition Signboards shall be standalone signboards that follow the same design specifications as the District's standard trailhead signboards to maintain District branding and visual cohesiveness.
    b) Partner Recognition Signboards shall normally be placed directly adjacent to existing preserve signboards to consolidate trailhead information and signboard placement.
    c) Recognition content shall include logos and/or names.
    d) The District will review recognition content with each partner for accuracy and completeness.
    e) The General Manager or his/her designee will approve the final recognition content.
    f) Exceptions to these guidelines and specifications will be forwarded to LFPAC for review and to the full Board for consideration of approval.