Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-26-146
Meeting 26-25
October 14, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA ITEM 1

AGENDA ITEM

Consideration of a Commemorative Bench in honor of Jean Rusmore at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Approve a request to recognize Jean Rusmore, open space advocate and significant supporter of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, with a commemorative bench on Anniversary Trail at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve.

SUMMARY

Jean Rusmore was an influential figure in protecting the San Francisco Bay Area public lands and shaping the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District). To show appreciation for her significant impact on the District, Director Margaret MacNiven has requested that the joint proposal originated by the Rusmore family and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council to recognize Ms. Rusmore with a commemorative bench be considered by the Board of Directors (Board) for approval. The recommendation is consistent with Board Policy 5.01 *Site Naming, Gift and Special Recognition*.

DISCUSSION

Background

Past Significant Supporters
In the past, significant supporters have been recognized with a commemorative bench based on their impact to the District. The dates listed represent the year benches were approved:

- Vince Garrod (2018): Nob Hill, Fremont Older Open Space Preserve
- State Senator Jim Beall: (2020): Aquinas Trail, El Sereno Open Space Preserve

Jean Rusmore's Accomplishments
As an open space advocate and author, Jean Rusmore helped shape District history and public reach. Her many accomplishments include:

- Served as the San Mateo County Advocate for the Committee for Green Foothills in the 1960s, an organization instrumental in protecting the Skyline and coastal areas, including lands that have become part of the District's open space preserves. Jean Rusmore, with Committee for Green Foothills, was also a strong advocate for the formation of the District in 1972.

- Established the "Walkie Talkies" hiking group in the early 1970s to connect community members with local public lands, with countless hikes and community building occurring on District lands.
- Co-authored three definitive regional guidebooks between 1982 and 2008, including "Peninsula Trails," one of the early guides to District trails that raised public awareness of District lands; her other books include "South Bay Trails" and "The Bay Area Ridge Trail", with the former highlighting important Ridge Trail segments that extend through District lands along the Skyline corridor and into Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve.

Proposed District Bench Dedication
The request for a bench dedication originated from the Rusmore Family and Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, with Director Margaret MacNiven opting to move the proposal forward with her endorsement, requesting full Board consideration and approval. A commemorative bench dedication is consistent with Board Policy 5.01 *Site Naming and Special Recognition* (attachment 3), which includes the following criteria:

> III. SPECIAL RECOGNITION
>
> C. <u>District Bench Dedications</u>
> 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) The Legislative, Funding, and Public Affairs Committee (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. <u>Founders, Significant Supporters, and Volunteers</u>
> "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.

If this recommended action is approved by the Board, the language on the plaque would be developed in consultation with Director MacNiven and the commemorative bench requestors: Ms. Rusmore's family and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

As a proposal initiated by a Board Director, this request qualifies as a District-sponsored bench. While there is sufficient funding in the Public Affairs FY27 budget to cover the cost of the recommendation, the Rusmore family has offered to make a $5,000 donation to cover the purchase and installation of the bench and plaque if approved.

PRIOR BOARD OR COMMITTEE REVIEW

The request was discussed previously with Director MacNiven who represents the ward where Ms. Rusmore resided and where the bench is proposed to be located. Director MacNiven is not currently serving on the LFPAC Committee, so the most efficient way of having Board consideration and approval without creating the appearance of a Brown Act problem is for the item to be brought to the full Board.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The proposed installation of a bench at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve is exempt in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures).

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the Board, Public Affairs staff would move forward with the assistance of the Land, Stewards & Trails Department to implement the request.

Attachments
1. Original electronic constituent bench request – Director Margaret MacNiven (July 5, 2026)
2. Map of Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and the current bench location
3. Board Policy 5.01 *Site Naming, Gift and Special Recognition*

Responsible Department Head:
Lori Low, Public Affairs Manager

Prepared by/contact person:
Gabi Navarrete, Public Affairs Administrative Assistant

Gabi Navarrete

From: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District <no-reply@wufoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 5, 2026 7:29 AM
To: General Information
Subject: Commemorative Bench Request [#22]

External email

Name of individual to be commemorated *	Jean Rusmore
Is the individual a significant supporter or volunteer? *	Yes

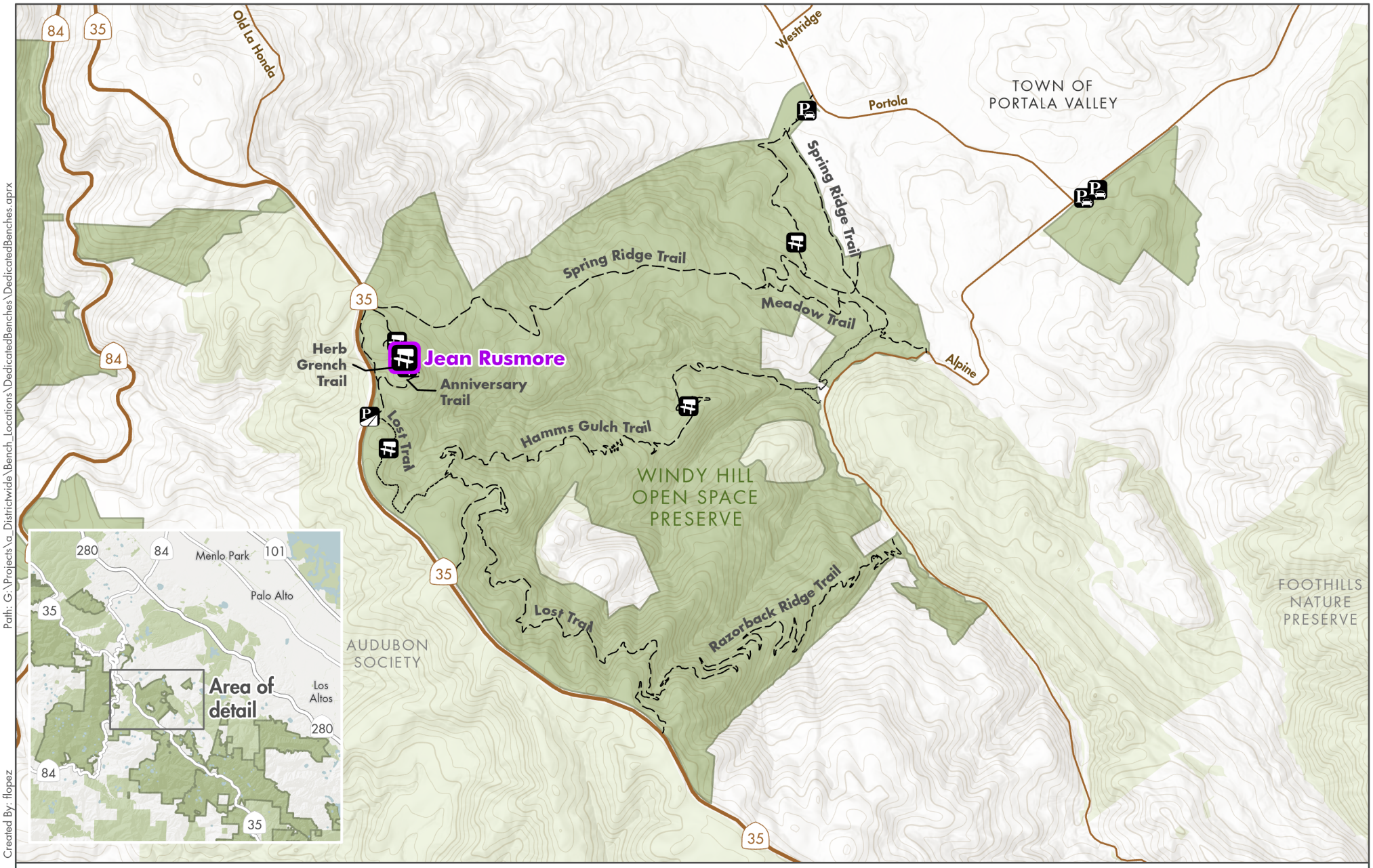
Please describe how the individual has made a significant contribution to the District or qualifies as a volunteer. *

Jean Rusmore was a 'walkie talkie'. Every Wednesday for many years during her long 101 year life she and a bunch of her chatty friends would meet somewhere in the hills above the bay to indulge in friendship and trail talk – and of course get some exercise while enjoying the beauty of the open spaces she had worked so hard to protect.

Jean did more than walk and talk. As a legislative advocate for the Committee for Green Foothills, she had played a major role in convincing decision makers to protect the Skyline around the San Francisco Bay. She melded her love for walking with her love for open spaces and played a major role in promoting the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which as its name suggests is a continuous trail around the San Francisco Bay. The first segment of the trail was dedicated back in May 1989 on Skyline's Midpen lands in San Mateo County, specifically Purisima Open Space Preserve. The trail is truly a remarkable collaborative achievement, today it has expanded to some 425 miles with an ultimate goal of 550.

Her book "Peninsula Trails" published in 1982 helped bring public awareness to Midpen's preserves and trails. I carried her other book, "Bay Area Ridge Trail: Hilltop adventures above the San Francisco Bay" with me while I hiked every mile of the Trail. Back in those days the trail was a mere 350 miles! It continues to grow. Fond memories.

Name *	Bay Area Ridge Train Council c/o Margaret MacNiven
Phone Number *	[redacted]
Email *	[redacted]
Address *	5050 El Camino Los Altos, CA 94022 United States
Relationship to Bench Recipient *	Admirer
Additional notes or comments: *	Commemorative benches are springing up in so many places. I will let you decide where you have room for another one, though the Skyline area would be appropriate.



Path: G:\Projects\a_Districtwide\Bench_Locations\DedicatedBenches\DedicatedBenches.aprx

Created By: flopez

New Commemorative Bench Location - Jean Rusmore

Midpen preserves

Other protected lands

New Jean Rusmore bench (dedicated)

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
8/25/2026

Miles 0 0.25 0.5

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.

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 or more*	Thank you by email or letter with offer of Resolution and framed photograph of District preserve and mention in a District publication

*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.