



SPECIAL MEETING

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

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

*The Board of Directors conducted this meeting in accordance with
California Government Code section 54953.*

DRAFT MINUTES

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

President Kishimoto called the special meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to order at 9:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jed Cyr, Craig Gleason, Karen Holman, Yoriko Kishimoto, Margaret MacNiven, and Curt Riffle

Director Holman announced that she is participating in the meeting via teleconference using the AB 2449 the “just cause” exemption due to illness.

Members Absent: Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

Staff Present: General Manager Ana Ruiz, General Counsel Hilary Stevenson, Controller Mike Foster, Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan, Assistant General Manager Brian Malone, Chief Financial Officer/Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak, District Clerk/Assistant to the General Manager Maria Soria, Executive Assistant/Deputy District Clerk Loana Lumina-Hsu, Budget & Finance Manager Rafaela Ocegüera, Engineering & Construction Manager Jason Lin, Grants Program Manager Deborah Hirst, Human Resources Manager Candice Basnight, Information Systems & Technology Manager Casey Hiatt, Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart, Natural Resources Manager Kirk Lenington, Planning Manager Jane Mark, Procurement Program Manager Sarah Araya, Public Affairs Manager Kori Skinner, Real Property Manager Allen Ishibashi, Chief Ranger/Visitor Services Manager Matt Anderson, and Finance Supervisor Miranda Shum

President Kishimoto announced this meeting is being held in accordance with Government Code section 54953. The public has the opportunity to comment on the agenda, and the opportunity to

listen to this meeting through the internet or via telephone. This information can be found on the meeting agenda, which was physically posted at the District's Administrative Office, and on the District website.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0 (Director Kersteen-Tucker absent.)

President Kishimoto stated that the FYI memo on the Progress Update on Measure AA Commitments will be heard ahead of Agenda Item #2.

BOARD BUSINESS

1. 2023 Environmental Scan and Fiscal Year 2024-25 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives (R-23-140)

General Manager Ana Ruiz provided opening remarks stating that annually in December, staff engages with the Board of Directors to think strategically and review challenges, opportunities, and emerging issues for the upcoming fiscal year. The discussion begins with an environmental scan, collaboratively prepared by staff, that then leads into a review and refinement of the strategic plan goals and objectives to ensure optimal positioning for the year ahead.

Chief Financial Officer Director of Administrative Services Stefan Jaskulak presented the Environmental Scan Report and described the purpose and process used to develop the annual environmental scan. Mr. Jaskulak described the key themes of the environmental scan, which area: operations and staffing; economy and finances; society, politics and environmental/regulatory; and technology and innovation. He proceeded to analyze each category providing a comprehensive review of the strengths, challenges, and the opportunities.

Director Gleason commented that the environmental scan summary states the importance of creating intentional opportunities for staff to connect with the mission and purpose of their work. He inquired what measures are already in place to facilitate this connection, and what additional ideas can be explored to enhance it in the future.

Ms. Ruiz stated that there are efforts such as "joint workdays" where staff from various offices collaborate on outdoor field projects. Additionally, there have been hiking events for both office and field staff, fostering a connection with the land and promoting team building. Events like Staff Recognition Day and Volunteer Recognition Day celebrate the team's efforts. Furthermore, staff are also invited to engage in community events to connect with both the community and to raise awareness of the District's mission. To build on these, existing initiatives can be enhanced such as through the expansion/continuation of lunch-and-learn events. In addition, to support wellness and mental health, new mental health benefits can be explored, such as providing subsidies for out-of-work activities that promote physical and mental well-being.

Director Gleason suggested that staff should explore the District's open spaces, as well as other open spaces as a user and bring back ideas on how to enhance offerings and learn from other agency experiences and practices.

Land & Facilities Manager Brandon Stewart stated that his staff annually visit new trail construction projects that occur on sister agency lands. Additionally, as part of the winter storm preparation, they conduct thorough trail checks where staff adopts a visitor's perspective. The goal is to experience the trails as users do to foster a deep understanding of how our trail work is experienced by our preserve visitors.

Director Gleason inquired if biodiversity should be included as a key topic of discussion.

Ms. Ruiz responded that it can be added.

Director Riffle requested an updated on the District's progress in attracting talent, whether it is improving or facing concerning challenges, as well as how competitive the District is in attracting new talent as compared to other conservation agencies and non-profits.

Director Riffle emphasized the need for further discussion on how to improve the District's political influence, and raised the question of how the District can drive its own future rather than depend on others. He also acknowledged the importance of partnerships, noting that partnerships are crucial for success, stating that he sees these as both opportunities and challenges.

President Kishimoto commented on the need to improve the connection between administrative office staff (AO) and field staff. She suggested regular quarterly interactions to foster connections, suggesting in-person brown bag lunches where field staff can also present to AO staff on topics that relate to field operations.

President Kishimoto suggested updating the Strategic Plan, which was established in 2011, to reflect District priorities. She noted that the current discussion has highlighted the consideration for a greater emphasis on public enjoyment and education.

Mr. Jaskulak stated that in 2018, staff revamped the Strategic Plan categories into four. This restructuring aligns with the four capital programs outlined in the budget book, establishing a direct connection between the Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives and the Action Plan. This allows for direct tracking of goals, objectives, and projects, and demonstrates that the projects are indeed reflecting and furthering the approved goals and objectives.

Controller Mike Foster suggested considering partnerships as not just in terms of what others can do for the District, but as opportunities to support others through financial contributions to expand the District's impact and goals. While time and staff resources may be limited, leveraging available funds could be a strategic approach.

Director Gleason inquired about the process to expand the Grantmaking Program, expressing interest in making it more substantial. He mentioned Mr. Foster's suggestion of assisting smaller partners and emphasized the potential positive impact of expanding the program.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the Grantmaking Program will be brought to the Board as a Study Session next year or early the following year, with a focus on potential improvements, enhancements, changes, including funding contributions, cycles, and outreach.

Public comment opened at 10:19 a.m.

District Clerk Maria Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 10:19 p.m.

Assistant General Manager Brian Malone reviewed the process used to develop the District's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan goals are structured around broad categories. The Capital Improvement and Action Plan is structured to be aligned with these categories. The Strategic Plan goals provide direction on the projects, and projects are directly linked with the Strategic Plan objectives. Mr. Malone reviewed the draft FY24-25 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives and suggested staff changes.

Director Riffle stated that the current structure of the Strategic Plan aligns well with the District's mission and appreciates the reorganization efforts made by staff a few years ago, and while he is open to refinements, he is generally comfortable with the existing structure.

Director Cyr echoed Director Riffle's sentiments regarding the structure of the Strategic Plan. He emphasized that making annual edits allows the plan to respond to changes observed over time.

Director Gleason commented that his intention is not to change the language in Goal 1, but suggested keeping an open mind for creative discussions and exploring whether there might be missing partners in certain cases.

Director Holman agreed with Director Gleason on the importance of developing new partners and expressed that the District is seen as an organization that can provide funding support. She also highlighted the diverse collaborative roles that different organizations can play.

The Board provided edits to the FY24-25 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.

Public comment opened at 11:48 a.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 11:48 a.m.

The Board recessed at 11:49 a.m. and reconvened at 12:17 p.m. with all Directors present, except Director Riffle.

Director Riffle returned to the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

Mr. Malone reviewed the proposed edits to the FY25 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.

Public comment opened at 12:33 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 12:33 p.m.

Motion: Director Riffle moved, and Director MacNiven seconded the motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25) Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives, as modified below.

Goal 1

Objective 3 - Take a leadership role in advocating for environmental protection goals by building and strengthening relationships with legislators and other elected officials.

Goal 2

Protect the positive environmental and biodiversity values of open space and agricultural lands.

Objective 2 - Protect and restore the natural environment and implement wildlife corridors to preserve healthy natural systems and biodiversity.

Objective 3 - Lead by example to reduce the impact of climate change; implement the Climate Action Plan to reduce operational emissions, expand regional landscape resiliency through partnerships, protect the capacity for long-term carbon storage of open space lands, and pursue climate change adaptation strategies to protect viable populations of local native species.

Goal 3

Connect people to open space and agriculture lands, and a regional environmental protection vision.

Objective 2 – Implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies to build and strengthen partnerships, increase broad and inclusive public outreach and engagement, engage tribal groups in the District’s work, and instill DEI values across all levels of the organization.

Objective 3 – Expand opportunities, including multimodal options, to equitably connect people to their public open space preserves and enhance the visitor experience in balance with the protection of natural resources.

Objective 4 – Develop strategies to reflect the diverse communities we serve in the District’s visitors, staff, volunteers, and partners.

Goal 4

Objective 1 – Provide the necessary resources, tools, training, staff facilities, and infrastructure, including technology upgrades and capacity building.

Objective 2 – Effectively and efficiently deliver Vision Plan projects and priority initiatives by implementing recommendations in the updated 2023 financial and operational sustainability model to guide operational growth and areas of focus.

Objective 6 – Ensure the District remains competitive in the labor market and able to recruit, develop, and retain diverse and talented staff to implement the mission. Pursue opportunities to enhance professional development training and career ladders to strengthen our organizational capacity and succession planning efforts.

ROLL CALL VOTE: 6-0-0 (Director Kersteen-Tucker absent.)

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDA

- Progress Update on Measure AA Commitments

Assistant General Manager Susanna Chan provided an update on the Progress of the Measure AA (MAA) Commitments. Ms. Chan stated that the District started using MAA funds in 2014 and this year marks the completion of the ninth year of funding. She stated that there are two

ways to assess the progress through project delivery and to review the expenditures. The portfolio completion range is estimated between 40.1% and 46.1%. The net bond spend is between 29.0% and 29.2% or between 36.81% and 39.40% if grants and interest income are excluded. Ms. Chan stated that this aligns well with the 9-year span reflected in the analysis through end of the FY23, through the 30-year MAA timeframe. Ms. Chan indicated that the District is meeting its commitments. Out of a total 53 projects, 17 projects have been completed, and 33 are currently in progress, 2 projects have been deferred due to external factors beyond the District's control, while one project has been canceled as it was no longer necessary. Ms. Chan continued to review the related accomplishments since MAA's inception in 2014.

Director Gleason inquired of the 31.4 miles of trails that were built, how many of those miles were built by staff.

Ms. Chan stated that she did not have the information readily available but will follow-up with those details.

President Kishimoto expressed that she would like to see more of the fish passage projects and the rerouting of the quarry trail in Rancho San Antonio added to the optional projects list.

Ms. Chan commented that the rerouting of the quarry trail was not listed as optional but would confirm.

2. Informational Discussion of the Following Two Board-Selected Topics

Ms. Ruiz reported that during the Special Board Meeting on November 14, 2023, the Board of Directors expressed interest in eight topics for potential future discussion. Directors were then given the opportunity to rank these topics, and based on their preferences, the top two choices were selected for today's meeting. The first topic centers on options and considerations for expediting project delivery, and the other topic is a discussion on the highest Financial and Operational Sustainability Model (FOSM) Refresh priorities for the agency.

Ms. Ruiz proceeded with reviewing the options and considerations for expediting project delivery.

Director Cyr spoke in support of summarizing reports when they have been reviewed by a Committee, he finds that the duplication of a lengthy report to be both labor-intensive for staff and potentially ineffective. He suggested a more efficient approach: providing a detailed report to the committee and a summarized version to the full board, with the complete report accessible online for the Directors to review.

Director Riffle concurred with Director Cyr, advocating for streamlining the processes following committee reviews. Additionally, he agreed with all the considerations to expedite project delivery.

Director Riffle suggested that in the short-term, the General Manager can proceed with expanding the contingency amounts, and in the long-term, increasing the General Manager's purchasing authority. He also suggested revisiting the latter, if necessary, in the future.

Director Riffle suggested in terms of implementation to consider creating a chart to prioritize actions based on their impact. Identify the initiatives with the highest impact, possibly two or three, and focus on executing those first.

Director Riffle suggested decentralizing decision-making within the organization, assessing if it is possible to delegate decision-making to lower levels within the hierarchy. This could reduce the need for decisions to ascend to higher levels. Furthermore, he stated that this suggestion is also recommended by the FOSM.

Director Holman expressed her concerns about the consideration for greater reliance on Committee reviews and recommendations, highlighting the need for clarification. She expressed concern that the approach is too prescriptive and inquired whether a simple cover sheet is limited to one page and how that would accommodate a complex matter. Additionally, she asked if the Committees motions or direction would be included in the report or cover sheet, suggesting that this consideration needs more thorough development.

Director Holman expressed her concern about the consideration to streamline Board contract approvals, commenting that it is too prescriptive and that a one or two-page report may not be suitable for complex projects. She requested further clarification and development to ensure effective Board oversight. Furthermore, she commented that the consideration to explore the District's self-governing authority is vague and needs to be further described. The consideration to defer public engagement to the design phase (versus feasibility phase) also needs further clarification as it may depend on the sensitivity of the project.

Director Holman commented she prefers maintaining the current contingency amounts and not increasing the amount.

Director Gleason suggested utilizing past public input and input from other agencies, especially in a broader, more generic context. He emphasizes the potential value in tapping into existing public input, believing that it could offer valuable insights for decision-making process.

Director Gleason suggested revisiting Director Holman's comment about the Beatty parking lot and the newts as a case study with the goal of determining whether issues like the newts would have surfaced in the new process of deferring public engagement to the design phase. Furthermore, he spoke on the greater reliance of Committee reviews and recommendations and suggested having stricter or tighter language on the motions if the item will be placed as a consent item for Board approval.

Director MacNiven expressed her concern about moving a project too quickly and emphasized the importance of public input.

President Kishimoto inquired if Ms. Ruiz attained enough feedback on the considerations to expedite project delivery.

Ms. Ruiz stated that she received sufficient feedback and that she will move forward with the considerations, acknowledging Director Holman request for clarification and emphasized the importance of keeping things simple for effective implementation.

President Kishimoto requested that as these considerations are moved forward, to ensure that the Board is informed in advance so that they are not taken by surprise with changes in the agenda reports.

Ms. Ruiz requested that if there is anything that does not feel right to the Board, to please inform her and she will make necessary adjustments.

The Board recessed at 1:58 p.m. and reconvened at 2:07 p.m. with all Directors present.

Mr. Jaskulak provided the staff presentation on the FOSM. He commented that the FOSM refresh was introduced to the Board on November 14, 2023, and the final report will be presented in January. Ms. Jaskulak proceeded to provide background information on the original 2015 FOSM implementation. The 2023 FOSM refresh introduces 49 recommendations, with one major organizational change being the creation of a new department with certain functions shifted from the Land and Facilities Department (new Central Services Department). Also, the refresh addresses position catch-up needs and outlines a 10-year growth plan. Mr. Jaskulak reviewed the proposed recommendations along with the position requests through FY24-27.

Director Riffle inquired why the Central Services Department would not be created until FY26.

Mr. Malone stated that in order to prevent complications, staff will take the next year to outline a solid departmental structure before adding new positions. In discussions with his team, they advocate for a thoughtful planning process, noting that rushing could lead to problems.

Director Gleason commented that extending the Volunteer Program was a high priority for the Board and sought clarification on the placement in the hiring process.

Ms. Ruiz stated that she is aware of Board interest in that particular position and that the hiring process could occur early in the scheduled fiscal year. She stated that the positions are not numbered by priority within the fiscal year.

Director Riffle expressed gratitude for the comprehensive review. He emphasized the importance of considering the time and effort required for implementation in the context of the numerous tasks ahead in the next fiscal year, and that the Board will need to be mindful that it will be a significant effort.

Ms. Ruiz stated that the District will carefully evaluate projects and timelines to integrate new hires effectively. Balancing hiring, onboarding, and training with ongoing initiatives will require a focused organizational effort. She stated that in the coming years, a "go slow to go fast" approach will be adopted to ensure a smooth operation.

President Kishimoto expressed her thanks to staff for the extraordinary work plan and recognized the transformative changes since 2014, she acknowledged the substantial task ahead and provided words of appreciation for staff's commitment to making it happen once again.

Public comment opened at 2:41 p.m.

Ms. Soria reported there were no public speakers for this item.

Public comment closed at 2:41 p.m.

Ms. Ruiz commented that at the Special Board meeting held on November 14, 2023, the Board identified six additional topics to discuss (listed in order of next ranking): 1. Further discussion on steps to leverage self-regulatory authority; 2. Board role in enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiencies; 3. Role of Midpen Rangers; 4. Goals and metrics to guide/measure growth of the volunteer program; 5. Project deliver process – project handoff/sponsors versus lead; and 6. Creative ideas for streamlining public engagement and input. Ms. Ruiz raised the question on whether the Board would like to explore these topics further at a later time.

Director Riffle asked for confirmation if several of the topics have been included as part of the FOSM recommendations.

Ms. Ruiz confirmed that many topics are included in the FOSM recommendations and thus will naturally be discussed in the coming years. Additionally, she stated that these topics can be revisited next year to determine if any remain of interest.

Directors Holman commented that setting standards for parking lot design is not currently on the list, but it has been discussed at the Board level and inquired if this can be considered.

Ms. Ruiz stated that it has been identified separately and she plans to bring the item to the Board in the Spring of 2024.

Directors Holman inquired if it is for the Board to look at ideas or consider objectives.

Ms. Chan commented that the Planning Department will bring to the Board parking lot design guidelines for District parking areas in late March or April concurrently with another parking lot project for Board consideration and approval. This will allow the Board to examine the design guidelines and consider how they apply to the project.

Director Holman inquired if staff believes the Board has clearly defined the objectives to bring the item forward.

Ms. Chan stated that Board comments suggest a preference for design guidelines that align with the District's mission and practices, prioritizing the natural feel over strict urban design guidelines.

Director Holman commented that her particular interest in the design guidelines is to have standards to develop parking lots that keep within the open space characteristics.

Director Holman expressed an interest in discussion topic No. 4 at a future Board meeting. Mr. Malone stated that he would send out a link to the Volunteer Study for the Board to review.

President Kishimoto also expressed interest in discussion topic No. 4.

Director Riffle commented that of the six topics, five of the topics are already covered by the FOSM recommendation, but topic No. 2 was not listed and suggests bringing it back for future Board discussion.

Mr. Malone stated that based on earlier Board discussion regarding improvements for efficiencies, the comments received and the discussion also directly ties to how the Board conducts its business, such as delegating more to Committees. At least half of the identified efficiencies relate to the Board role. If there are any other strategies identified, staff can return to the Board for added discussion.

Director Riffle commented that what it comes down to is staff telling the Board what they can do to help, but that Mr. Malone stated that those are already defined by the efficiencies that the staff will carry forward.

Mr. Malone stated that it will not be easy for the Board, so leaning into keeping things simple as the General Manager mentioned, will enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

No Board motion taken.

ADJOURNMENT

President Kishimoto adjourned the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District meeting in memory of former Supervisor Don Horsley at 2:55 p.m.

Maria Soria, MMC
District Clerk