

DRAFT



Parks Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee Draft Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, June 6, 2023
500 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Sonoma County Regional Parks
2300 County Center Dr.
La Plaza-A Building, Rm. 212
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

- 1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement** – Melanie Parker, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks took note of the following Land Acknowledgement Statement:

“The County of Sonoma recognizes that we are on the ancestral lands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo who are the original caretakers of this area. We respectfully acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have been stewarding and maintaining relationship on this land as knowledge keepers for millennia. The County of Sonoma is dedicated to understanding and educating the public about historical and ongoing connections between land conservation and social inequities. This includes the histories of genocide, forced removal and displacement, and broken promises with Indigenous peoples as a part of American history. Indigenous people are not just in our histories. We strive to optimize Indigenous voices to share their own history, as to not perpetuate another form of being silenced. While recognizing the past, we honor the resiliency of Native people still in their ancestral territories in relationship with their land and culture.

This acknowledgement does not take the place of authentic relationships with Indigenous communities but serves as a gesture in respect to the land we are on.”

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting started at 5:08 p.m. Chair Meredith Rennie called the meeting to order.

Committee Members Present: Meredith Rennie, Carol Eber, Leslie Graves, Justin Lindenberg, John Mills, and Chris Borr.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Committee Seats Vacant: There is one “at large” appointment vacant on the Committee.

Staff Present: Bert Whitaker, Director; Melanie Parker, Deputy Director; Robert Gonzalez, Fiscal and Administrative Officer.

All Committee Members and staff introduced themselves.

2. Comments from the Public – Public may address the Committee on matters that are not on the agenda

Members of the public wishing to suggest an item for a future Committee agenda may do so during this Public Comment period. The Ralph M. Brown Act (the State local agency open meeting law) prohibits the Committee from acting on any matter that is not on the agenda. Speakers are limited to three minutes each, however, the Commission Chair may adjust the time limit in light of the number of anticipated speakers.

Chair Meredith Rennie called for any comment from the public. There was none.

3. Approval of the Minutes – of the February 28, 2023 meeting of the Parks Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee meeting.

VOTED to approve the minutes of the, February 28, 2023 meeting, as follows:

MOTION:	Committee Member Carol Eber	AYES: 6	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Committee Member Meredith Rennie	ABSENT: 0	VACANT: 1

Committee Member Leslie Graves noted a correction to the minutes of the February 28, 2023 meeting. She observed that she was not present at the November 15, 2022 meeting and abstained on February 28, 2023 from voting on approval of the minutes of the November 15, 2022 meeting. A correction was made to the minutes of the February 28, 2023 meeting.

4. Reports and Updates: External Auditor Report Summary; Review of the Quarterly Revenue Report; Presentation by Robert Gonzalez, Administrative Services Officer, Melanie Parker, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks, and Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks.

- Robert Gonzalez provided a brief summary of the External Auditor’s Report provided by consultant firm Eide Bailly. He noted that the report included five areas of review, including deposit of California Department of Tax and Fee Administration trust funds, accurate and complete deposit of Measure M funds, review of allowable expenses, review of appropriate allocation and disbursements to Measure M programs, disbursement to Cities, and disbursement to the County. He reported that the consultants found complete compliance in every area.

Committee Member Meredith Rennie asked if there were any changes to the agreed-upon procedures that were performed.

Robert Gonzalez responded that there were no changes, and the same process was carried out as in previous years.

Committee Member Justin Lindenberg asked if there will be another audit report at a future meeting this year.

Robert Gonzalez reported that the auditor report is done annually, and that the next one will be released in early 2024.

- Robert Gonzalez reported on the Quarterly Revenue Report, noting that this report is for the third quarter. He stated that the total amount for the third quarter coming into the County is 3.9 million in revenue, of which 2.63 million goes to Sonoma County for parks, and 1.3 million is disbursed to the nine cities in the county. An estimated 11 million dollars was received in interest as well.

Chris Borr asked how much fluctuation occurs with these revenues, quarter to quarter.

Robert Gonzales responded that there generally there is not great fluctuation but there can be variance due to interest rates and spending.

Melanie Parker observed that the sales tax has been steadily increasing, but there is a flattening trend.

Committee Member Leslie Graves asked when the Measure M ordinance will sunset and when there will be an electoral push prior to that date.

Deputy Director Melanie Parker responded that the ordinance will sunset in April of 2029.

Director Bert Whitaker stated that the Board of Supervisors has mentioned 2026 as a year to begin preparing for a potential renewal.

- Deputy Director Melanie Parker invited city representatives to report on projected projects for fiscal years 2023-2024.
- Jen Santos, representing the City of Santa Rosa reported that ongoing programs include a system-wide condition assessment of all parks in the city. She additionally noted that fire damage projects are concluding this year, and the park maintenance volunteer trailer continues to spread the word about Measure M funding and volunteering. She said that new projects are projected at Jacobs

Park, Rincon Valley Community Park, Jennings Park, Howarth Park, and Galvin Community Park as well. She said additional projects include increasing seasonal staffing and replacing sand volleyball courts.

- Drew Halter, representing the City of Petaluma, observed that Measure M inspired Petaluma to consult and engage with the community some years ago and identified what areas could be improved for Petaluma Parks. He said that ongoing and future capital improvement projects include the swim center which needs re-plastering, a new baseball field off East Washington, restroom improvements at Prince Park, and a new amphitheater at Schollenberger Park. He said additional funds will go towards seasonal staffing including one full-time position and two part-time positions; and an additional catch-all fund will include a small amount for parks amenities.

Committee Member Justin Lindenberg asked about Transit Occupancy Tax funds in light of Measure M funding. Drew Halter replied that the City of Petaluma has utilized most Transit Occupancy Tax funds for critical general services, but Petaluma has leveraged Measure M funding with other funds to get projects done which has been very effective.

- Nelle Herman, representing the Town of Windsor, said that projected projects in 2023 and 2024 include new pickleball parks in Hiram Lewis Park, and the design phase of a new accessible playground at Pleasant Oak Park including a new ADA-compliant restroom and expanding ADA-compliant parking. She reported that Measure M funding will also include more scholarships in the coming year.

Committee Member Carol Eber asked about any recent past projects in Windsor.

Nelle Herman responded that a new senior center was recently completed, and included increasing restroom access from the pool area, and a new lounge and coffee bar.

- Mark Themig, representing the City of Healdsburg, reported that Measure M proceeds have been largely dedicated to Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve. He explained that Measure M funding, along with State Proposition 68 funds, Coastal Conservancy funding, as well as city funding all are contributing to improvements at Fitch Mountain. He reported that another project includes design work for the re-development of Badger Park.
- Oriana Hart, representing the City of Sonoma, reported that Measure M funding in that community has funded improvements in the Montini Open Space Preserve and Olsen Park as well as community online surveys and meetings. She also reported that a park in Sonoma Oaks will be a focus of future efforts, including a new design for a playground.

Committee Member Leslie Graves asked where she could find the online survey that Oriana Hart described. Oriana Hart replied that she will send it on to staff member Kathleen Culhane, who will forward it on to Committee Members.

- Hector Galvan, representing the City of Cloverdale, reported that Measure M funding for future projects will include vegetation management, increased maintenance of trails, increased staffing, and improved facilities including playgrounds.
- Director Bert Whitaker reported that future projects funded by Measure M include the areas of deferred maintenance, capital projects, staffing, equipment, and vegetation management. He noted that Measure M allows Regional Parks to leverage other funds to make improvements and new staffing possible. He gave the examples of Maxwell Farms, where a very large redevelopment project has begun, and Larson Park, which will be seeing renovations in coming years. He said Spring Lake Park has seen new improvements in light of that park's fiftieth anniversary; Taylor Mountain will continue to see an expansion and trail improvements; and Mark West Creek, Russian River Parkway, Carrington Ranch, Stewarts Point, Helen Putnam, and Tolay Parks are other examples of parks that will also benefit from improvements due to Measure M funds.

Committee Member Carol Eber asked about the 121 access-point to Tolay. Director Bert Whitaker responded that it is indeed part of the master plan for Tolay and will be contemplated in the future.

Committee Member John Mills asked about the increased cost of grazing and how that impacts park plans, and whether those contracts are monthly or annual. Director Bert Whitaker replied that they are annual contracts.

Committee Member Leslie Graves commented that new signs, improvements, and grazing at Spring Lake Park are energizing and well-received.

Committee Member Justin Lindenberg asked if the reported railroad right-of way is related to the Great Redwood Trail. He also asked where the optic grid bathrooms will be.

Director Whitaker replied that the right-of-way is actually a SMART train plan, and the restrooms will be located in Sonoma Valley Regional Park.

Committee Member Carol Eber reported that people are thrilled with the improvements at that park but are asking when there will be permanent restrooms installed.

Director Bert Whitaker said he did not know but would find out.

Chair Meredith Rennie asked about the cemetery at the edge of Shiloh and whether it could be improved and be made more accessible.

Director Bert Whitaker responded that it is not county property.

Chair Meredith Rennie asked for any public comment at this point in the meeting. There was none.

5. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen Culhane, Executive Assistant
Sonoma County Regional Parks

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