

DRAFT



Parks Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee Draft Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, May 17, 2022
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Meeting held virtually via Zoom

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement – Melanie Parker, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks

Sonoma Regional Parks Deputy Director Melanie Parker read the Land Acknowledgement Statement in its entirety:

“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 5:02 p.m. Chair Meredith Rennie called the meeting to order.

Committee Members Present: John Mills, Karen Collins, Rhonda Ahanotu, Meredith Rennie, Maria Membrila, Carole Eber, and Dan Condron.

Committee Members Absent: None.

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

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.

“N” , a member of the public, expressed his frustration at the delay in a total re-opening of Hood Mountain Regional Park. He noted that the lack of visitors at Hood Mountain represents a loss of revenue for Regional Parks.

Committee Member Carol Eber asked if speakers need to provide their real name. Staff member Kathleen Culhane responded that while members of the public are encouraged to state their names, there is no strict requirement. Director Bert Whitaker concurred, and also noted that Hood Mountain Regional Park’s Los Alamos entrance will be opened by Memorial Day weekend.

3. Approval of the Minutes – of the February 15, 2022 meeting of the Parks Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee meeting.

Vice Chair Rhonda Ahanotu noted the following minor errors or typos in the minutes from February 15, 2022: 1) John Mills name is misspelled; and 2) the word youth on page four is also misspelled.

VOTED to approve the minutes, with the above corrections, of the February 15, 2022 meeting, as follows:

MOTION:	Committee Member Karen Collins	AYES: 7	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Committee Member Dan Condon	ABSENT: 0	VACANT: 0

4. Reports and Updates

- Quarterly Revenue Report; The 2022-2023 Measure M Revenue Update, and Report on Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Project Plans: Presentation by Daniel Castillo, Sonoma Regional Parks Fiscal and Administrative Manager, and Melanie Parker, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks.

Daniel Castillo provided a brief recap of the latest quarterly sales tax collection and disbursement figures. He noted that the total disbursed to the County and the nine cities was 3.9 million dollars, and this represents an 18.8 percent increase when compared to

the same three-month period from the prior year. He added that, when comparing the past year's proceeds to the previous twelve-month period, a twenty-two percent increase is evident. He noted that this quarterly distribution represents the second largest quarterly proceeds since the inception of the Measure. He further noted that the largest tax proceeds came from two industry groups: the restaurants and hotel industry group in which tax proceeds are up by eighty percent when compared to the same period last year, and fuel and service station industry group proceeds are up by fifty-five percent when compared to the same period last year.

Daniel Castillo then reported on estimated revenue for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. He noted that estimates from consultants HDL Companies project a 2.4 percent increase over the current fiscal year. These estimates assume that businesses will remain open and will adapt to COVID ebbs and flows. Daniel Castillo further explained that the estimates consider factors such as inflation, interest rates, and workforce constraints.

Committee Member Carol Eber asked about a potential decrease in gas taxes and what, if any, impact such a decision may have on Measure M funding. Daniel Castillo responded that it likely would not have a significant impact given that proceeds are layered onto the cost of gas itself.

Deputy Director Melanie Parker introduced the topic of Reports by Sonoma County Regional Parks and Cities on Project Plans for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. She encouraged Committee members to ask any questions.

Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks Bert Whitaker discussed Sonoma County Regional Parks' project plans. He stated that Measure M represents critical support for parks, and fifty percent of the funds for ongoing costs at Sonoma County Regional Parks is dedicated to staffing. He said that two positions are currently contemplated with Measure M funding and which will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their approval: one is in the Planning division, and the other is a Parks Program Assistant to assist with the volunteer program at Sonoma County Regional Parks. He said the rest of the funds are dedicated to capital projects, and in turn this is divided between new projects and deferred maintenance. He noted that leveraging Measure M with other funds and grants is particularly important given inflation and increased costs. He said that future projects will include continued erosion-repair work on Hood Mountain and a new sewage pump at Spring Lake Park. He added that the fiftieth anniversary of Spring Lake will happen in 2023, and new investments will mark the occasion with improvements to restroom facilities, pavement repairs and new signage. He stated that repairs at coastal parks include a water line replacement and vehicle chargers at West County Trail as well as Ragle Ranch soccer field improvements and repairs to the access point at the Sea Ranch Coastal Trail. Finally, he said that Maxwell Farms will receive Measure M funds in the next fiscal year for critical improvements and funds will be used for new acquisitions, including one near Wohler Bridge.

Committee Member Carol Eber asked if Sonoma County Regional Parks will need funds allocated in the 2022-2023 budget for Helen Putnam Park if expansion happens. Director Whitaker responded that the budget prepared will be preliminary; in addition, Putnam improvements are still in a developmental phase and such budgeting will take several years to implement.

Daniel Castillo introduced city partners for their prospective plans.

Hector Galvan of Cloverdale noted that Measure M funds have in the past enabled playground repairs and trail improvement projects. He said that a part-time staff position will be added this year for vegetation management and fuel/fire suppression efforts.

Mark Themig of Healdsburg reported that access improvements at Fitch Mountain are underway for completion in the fall of 2022. He thanked the Committee for their work.

Drew Halter of Petaluma provided information on Petaluma's priorities which arose from a robust community outreach initiative in 2019-2020. The priorities include bike trails and access; playgrounds and sports courts; active recreation efforts; aquatics facilities upgrades; enhanced maintenance; natural areas and river enhancements and new parks; and special events and community programming. He said that Petaluma's future proposed projects including capital improvements at La Tercera, McNear and McDowell parks with improved safe access efforts, as well as improvements at Kenilworth Park and Prince Park. He added that smart meter readers and repairs to restroom facilities are other slated improvements.

Cindy Bagley of Rohnert Park reported that a new fulltime staff position will be added for park maintenance; this will enable staff to be dedicated to routes or zones. Other projects include converting tennis courts into pickleball courts and preventive maintenance at Magnolia Park tennis courts. She noted that emergency maintenance repairs are also funded with Measure M money. She added that a consultant will be hired with Measure M funds to update a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Finally, she noted that the Rohnert Park Parks and Recreation Commission requested that funds be dedicated to public art, and that will be implemented as well.

Committee Member Rhonda Ahanotu commented that while she is really happy with how things are going in Rohnert Parks, it would be nice to hire extra staff to get routes signed up.

Emily Ander of Santa Rosa reported that Park Planner Scott Wilkinson has joined their staff and will be providing Measure M updates in the future. She said that a new Parks Volunteer supply trailer was purchased with the funds. Other funded projects include construction contracts for fire-damaged projects and playground work. She said their Parks Prioritization Report will be presented to the Community Service Board and future community input will be provided. The list of capital projects and prioritization resulting from the community input process will be presented to the City Council.

Committee Member Dan Condrón said he appreciated the work being done on fire-damaged park projects and roads.

Terri Bladow of Santa Rosa reported on funding for the current fiscal year and announced that future years' funds will include on capital replacement projects, aquatics, recreation including tennis courts improvements and expanded park maintenance staffing.

Kari Svanstrom of Sebastopol reported that given that the City does not have a Parks and Recreation Department, Sebastopol funds nonprofits to operate parks, and other city departments provide maintenance and operations. She said that in the past year tennis courts have been re-surfaced, tree maintenance has been performed, and a creek hydrology study was undertaken. She stated that future projects include community center events including public art, a trail extension west of the Laguna, restrooms at Burbank farms, repair of short-term maintenance issues on pathways and improving ADA compliance.

Committee Member Rhonda Ahanotu commented that trip hazards are not trivial and maintenance and improvements are important for public safety.

Mike Berger of the City of Sonoma updated the Committee that current projects underway include the Depot Park enhancement project, capital improvement projects, and fire remediation on the Montini trail. He invited Committee members and listeners to attend the City Council meeting tomorrow night.

Jon Davis of Windsor reported that Kaiser Park will be expanded with Measure M funds. He noted that this expansion also includes a new Master Plan for the park, and a new community engagement strategy. In addition, he noted that a new parks maintenance staff position will be added, and new pickle ball courts will be added as well.

Director Whitaker announced that this will be the last meeting for Fiscal and Administrative Services Manager Daniel Castillo, as he has taken a new position with the Town of Windsor. Director Whitaker expressed his gratitude for Daniel Castillo's leadership on Measure M funding and wished him the best of luck in Windsor. Daniel Castillo thanked city partners and the Committee for their service and the invigorating work of Parks and Measure M funding.

5. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen Culhane, Executive Assistant
Sonoma County Regional Parks

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