



Sonoma County
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission
DRAFT Minutes of the January 23, 2023 Meeting

DATE: Monday, January 23, 2023

PLACE: Virtual Zoom Meeting

1. Welcome & Land Acknowledgement Statement

The meeting started at 5:03 pm.

Sonoma Regional Parks Director Bert Whitaker read the 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.”

2. Call to Order

Commissioners Present: Arsel Perez, Beth Steffy, Luis Gonzalez, Carol Eber, Herman Hernandez, Fernanda Álvarez.

Commissioners Absent: Karen Collins

Regional Parks Executive Leadership: Director Bert Whitaker and Deputy Director Melanie Parker

Chair Arsel Perez called the meeting to order and read the mission of the Commission: to act in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in promoting and encouraging public recreation; to act in an advisory capacity to the Director of Regional Parks in the maintenance, development, and operation of recreational areas and facilities serving the residents of the county; and finally, to establish procedures to carry out the purpose of the Advisory Commission.

3. **Approval of the minutes of the November 14, 2022 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission**

Chairman Perez requested a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2022 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

VOTED to approve the minutes of November 14, 2022 as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Eber	AYES: 6	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Steffy	ABSENT: 1	VACANT: 0

4. **Comments from the Public**

Public may address the Commission on matters that are not on the agenda.

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

There were no public comments.

5. **Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Gonzalez reported that a park employee conveyed that Regional Parks was experiencing difficulty in recruiting new staff.

Director Whitaker responded that Regional Parks is indeed having difficulty recruiting new staff and that this is a county-wide issue. He noted that labor negotiations are ongoing, and that the Regional Parks planning unit has had three individuals leave in the last six months.

Commissioner Beth Steffy reported a visit to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail; a conversation with Regional Parks Program Supervisor John Ryan concerning maintenance at the local cemetery; and interest in the Spring Lake fiftieth anniversary.

Commissioner Álvarez reported leading nature walks for kids at Maxwell Farms Regional Park. She noted the need for additional maintenance along the trail and better trail marking signs.

Commissioner Eber reported a visit to Tolay Regional Park, where she documented the impact of rainfall on the trails. She noted that a park visitor conveyed to her an interest in guided hikes at Tolay.

Commissioner Perez reported visiting the Laguna de Santa Rosa Trail and seeing a trail closure due to flooding, without any sign indicating the closure. He noted that Regional Parks internships have been posted and he encouraged students to apply.

6. **Director's Report – Sonoma Regional Parks Director Bert Whitaker**

Director Whitaker reported the following updates:

- In-person meetings for the Commission are on track for March 2023.
- Regional Parks will host a Brown Act Training for commissioners on February 27, 2023 via zoom.
- Regional Parks upcoming board items include a focus on climate action and resiliency; a renewed contract with Mark West Youth Little League, a park fees board item, and an item seeking board approval of the Parks Measure M Annual Report.

7. **Presentation of the Parks for All Measure M 2021-2022 Annual Report- Melanie Parker, Deputy Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks**

Deputy Director Melanie Parker presented the Parks for All Measure M 2021-2022 Annual Report and noted the following highlights:

- This is the third annual report, and the report focuses on the value of parks in Sonoma communities and the Parks Measure M funding that makes parks and park programming possible.
- Financial accounting for the fiscal year is included in the report.
- Regional Parks projects that benefitted from funding include shaded fuel breaks in several parks, new bilingual staffing in community programming, youth crew funding, structural improvements to parks, vegetation management and fire prevention.
- Cities in Sonoma County used funding for projects including vegetation management, dog park improvements, maintenance improvements, community events and added staffing.

Commissioner Hernandez asked if there is any minimum that a jurisdiction must spend in Measure M funds. Deputy Director Parker responded that there is no minimum annual expenditure.

Commissioner Steffy inquired about the role of the Parks Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee in creating the report.

Commissioner Eber responded that the Committee, of which she is a member, goes over the report and hears from the cities that receive funds.

Commissioner Eber observed that programming for Hispanic communities is robust and reminded that there should be increased programming for other ethnicities and races, and in particular for Sonoma’s Black communities.

8. **2023 Meeting Schedule of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (Discussion Item) – Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks**

Director Bert Whitaker presented a template of proposed meeting agenda topics for the Commission, and asked Commissioners to contact him with any feedback or suggestions for future meeting agendas.

9. **Election of Officers (Action Item)**

Arsel Perez was nominated for Chair and Beth Steffy was nominated for Vice-Chair.

VOTED, to approve the nomination of Arsel Perez as Chair, and Beth Steffy as Vice-Chair.

MOTION:	Commissioner Hernandez	AYES: 6	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Eber	ABSENT: 1	VACANT: 0

9. **Adjournment – Commission Chair**

Meeting adjourned at 6:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen Culhane, Executive Assistant