



**Sonoma County  
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission  
DRAFT Minutes of the May 22, 2023 Meeting**

DATE: Monday, May 22, 2023

PLACE: Virtual Zoom Meeting

**1. Welcome & Land Acknowledgement Statement**

The meeting started at 5:05 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, Karen Collins.

**Commissioners Absent:** Fernanda Alvarez, Herman Hernandez

**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.

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Director Whitaker noted a change in the order of the meeting agenda. He stated that Sheila Murphy will be speaking first, with Corbin Johnson to follow.

3. **Approval of the minutes of the January 23, 2023 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission**

Chairman Perez requested a motion to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2023 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

VOTED to approve the minutes of January 23, 2023 as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Eber	AYES: 6	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Steffy	ABSENT: 2	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 Luis Gonzalez reported visits to several regional parks and volunteer work in the parks.

Commissioner Beth Steffy reported that she has been in conversation with Regional Parks managers and staff about electric vehicle chargers at parks, accessible paths, and the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery.

Commissioner Karen Collins reported that she continues to work on the development of Larson Park and recently visited Calabazas Creek park. She also reported that the City of Sonoma now has a Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Arsel Perez reported that he has been in Andy's Unity Park and commended parks staff for cleaning up the graffiti in that park. He asked if it would be possible to install cameras at the park.

Commissioner Carol Eber reported visits to Tolay Park and positive reports from Petaluma residents about the parks.

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

Director Whitaker reported the following updates:

- Board of Supervisors actions included new funding for Cloverdale and Sonoma Schellville Trail, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian River Confluence group. Budget Hearings are scheduled for mid June.
- New park updates include the acquisition of Chanslor Ranch, the Putnam Expansion, and completion of Phase I development at Maxwell Farms.
- Regional Parks recently hired its first Accessibility and Inclusivity Manager.
- Regional Parks' Climate Action Resiliency Plan continues to proceed and includes key action plans in the areas of greenhouse gas emissions, boost electrification and reduce solid waste.

7. **Wildlife Management Update (Informational) – Sheila Murphy, Wildlife Management Technician, Sonoma County Regional Parks**

Wildlife Management Technician Sheila Murphy presented highlights of the Wildlife Camera Program and discussed collaborative research on mountain lions and black bears. She reported on fence removal efforts, surveys and modeling, and habitat mapping and enhancement. Additionally, she described the education and outreach efforts of her Natural Resources team.

8. **Spring Lake Park: Fiftieth Anniversary (Informational) – Corbin Johnson, Project Specialist, Sonoma County Regional Parks**

Project Specialist Corbin Johnson reported on park improvements at Spring Lake Park in honor of the parks' fiftieth anniversary. He noted that completed improvements include restroom and entry station remodeling. He added that upcoming improvements include upgrades to the boat launch parking lot, painting in all areas, concession area remodeling, bike path paving, and a new sewer ejection system replacement. He stated that signage replacement is also a major project in honor of the anniversary. He reported that fiftieth anniversary activities include a scavenger hunt, kayaking, a photography contest, and special hiking and birding events.

9. **Adjournment – Commission Chair**

Meeting Adjourned at 6:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen Culhane, Executive Assistant

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