



**Sonoma County
Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission
DRAFT Minutes of the March 13, 2024 Meeting**

DATE: Wednesday, March 13, 2024

PLACE: In Person at the Rohnert-Park-Cotati Regional Library, 6250 Lynne Condé Way, Rohnert Park, California 94928

1. Welcome & Land Acknowledgement Statement

The meeting started at 5:10 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: Beth Steffy, Luis Gonzalez, Carol Eber, Herman Hernandez, Julia Sand-oval.

Commissioners Absent: Karen Collins

Vacancies: There is one youth commissioner vacancy.

Regional Parks Executive Leadership: Director Bert Whitaker

3. Approval of the minutes of the November 14, 2023 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

Vice-Chair Beth Steffy requested a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2023 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

VOTED to approve the minutes of November 14, 2023 as follows:

MOTION:	Commissioner Eber	AYES: 5	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Gonzalez	ABSENT: 1	VACANT: 1

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.*

The Vice-Chair asked for any comments from the public. There were none.

5. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Carol Eber reported conversations with Sonoma County Regional Parks Park Manager David Robinson about a new assistive device for aiding people to get into kayaks. She also reported flooding on trails at Tolay Park.

Commissioner Julia Sandoval reported visits to local park Sonoma Plaza and Regional Park Taylor Mountain, noting that Taylor Mountain trails were muddy but passable.

Commissioner Herman Hernandez stated he had no report for this meeting.

Commissioner Luis Gonzalez reported that he visited Calabazas Creek Park, and the new gathering area at Foothill Regional Park. He additionally reported that he is working with Community Engagement Director on a high school program in parks.

Vice-Chair Beth Steffy reported that she visited Andy's Unity Park for the first time, and Watson School historic park, and noted the diversity in park sites in Sonoma County. She additionally reported efforts to help the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation in fundraising for Regional Parks.

6. **Director’s Report –Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma Regional Parks**

Director Whitaker reported the following updates:

- Targeted grazing services at Regional Parks have been funded up to \$200,000 per year. Regional Parks currently uses four different vendors for these contracts.
- Regional Parks continues to be an active partner of the Cleaner California Coast initiative.
- Regional Parks is working to purchase the 253-acre McCormick Ranch.
- The Mark West Creek restoration planning project recently received a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board.
- Construction is underway for the Tolay Lake Gathering area.

7. **Presentation of the Parks Measure M Citizens Annual Report 2022-2023 (Informational Item) - Presented by Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks**

- The report reminds the voters about what Measure M is – a sales tax with the purpose of funding parks.
- Regional Parks invested in hiring a new Accessibility and inclusivity Manager as well as the fiftieth anniversary of Spring Lake and investments in that park.
- Cloverdale continues to invest in park maintenance and vegetation management as well as renovating playgrounds and dog parks.
- Rohnert Park invested in their community engagement programs.
- Santa Rosa has assessed the condition of their parks and has renovated existing projects
- Sebastopol has focused on the expansion of their parks and trail projects.
- Sonoma has invested in upgrading Depot Park and other facilities.
- Windsor has focused on renovating parks and the Senior Recreation Center.
- Healdsburg has worked on diverse projects with a focus on improved access to Fitch Mountain.
- Petaluma has expanded their maintenance and improvement in many parks and engaged the community on areas of focus.

8. **Commission Plan for 2024 (Informational Item) - - Presented by Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks**

Director Bert Whitaker discussed potential by law changes for the Commission including new term limits, a change in the number of Commission meetings per year, and website information about Commission members. Commissioner Steffy stated she supported the changes. Commissioner Hernandez stated that term limits were overdue, and support equity on the Commission and for the community. Commissioners Steffy and Gonzalez stated that more training for commissioners would be valuable. Commissioner Sandoval stated her support of the proposed changes.

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

VOTED to approve the nomination of Beth Steffy as Chair of the Commission.

MOTION:	Commissioner Eber	AYES: 5	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Hernandez	ABSENT: 1	VACANT: 1

VOTED to approve the nomination of Luis Gonzalez as Vice-Chair of the Commission.

MOTION:	Commissioner Steffy	AYES: 5	ABSTAIN: 0
SECOND:	Commissioner Eber	ABSENT: 1	VACANT: 1

Vice-Chair Beth Steffy asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

10. Adjournment – Commission Chair

Meeting Adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen Culhane, Executive Assistant