

Draft Minutes for the February 5, 2025, Parks & Recreation Advisory Meeting

1. Welcome & Land Acknowledgement – Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks

- Bert Whitaker provided the Land Acknowledgement at 5:30pm

2. Call to Order & Duties of the Commission – Commission Chair

1. To act in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in promoting, aiding and encouraging public recreation, including the development of recreation, park and open space facilities;
2. To act in an advisory capacity to Regional Parks Director in the maintenance, development and operation of recreation areas and facilities serving the residents of the county;
3. To establish general procedures to carry out the purpose of the advisory commission.

- Chair Beth Steffy called the meeting to order at 5:32pm and reviewed the duties of the Commission stated above.
- Committee members present: Chair Beth Steffy, Vice-Chair Luis Gonzalez, Commissioner John Roney, Commissioner Carol Eber, Commissioner Nathan Junge. Committee members absent: Youth Commissioner Amara Galvan, Youth Commissioner Tomas Mercado

3. 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 or Vice-Chair may adjust the time limit in light of the number of anticipated speakers.

- No comments from the public were received in-person nor submitted via email prior to the meeting. No members of the public present.

4. Approval of the Minutes (Action Item) - of December 9, 2024, meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission

- Chair Steffy suggested a motion to approve the minutes.
- Commissioner Carol Eber motioned to approve the minutes of the Dec 9, 2024 Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission meeting. Commissioner John Roney seconded the motion.

VOTE

In-favor: 5 (Steffy, Gonzalez, Roney, Eber, Junge)

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: 2 (Galvan, Mercado)

5. Commissioner Reports (Informational) – Commission Chair

- Vice-chair Gonzalez reported he hadn't had the chance to get out to the Parks much since the last meeting.
- Commissioner Roney reported visiting Spring Lake Park and noted the abundance of water onsite.
- Commissioner Eber reported several hikes at Tolay Regional Park. She shared photos of areas of concern and suggested drainage work. Commissioner Eber reported a great turn-out for a guided bird-watching outing at Tolay. She noted that the Crane Creek trails are affected by horseback riders, especially during the wetter conditions. Commissioner Eber reported many of the small flags denoting plantings along the streambed have fallen over and are either slanted or lying completely flat against the ground.
- Commissioner Junge reported going to Spring Lake and Taylor Mountain.
- Chair Steffy reported a trip to Doran Beach, beautiful beach. Car changer appears to be down/out of commission. Martin Luther King volunteer day – positive acknowledgment for John Ryan and staff.

6. Director's Report (Informational) - Bert Whitaker, Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks

- Brief introduction of Danielle Poole, Regional Parks Executive Assistant.
- Distribution of Parks pins and stickers to Commissioners
- Overview of recent, past board items: Recognition of Karen Collins; now approved for Hudeman Slough boat launch (2.3 million dollar project); Cleaner California Coast Initiative – 3 county partner effort between Sonoma County, Marin County and Mendocino County going into its 3rd year and ramping up; Larson Park bid award approved, navigating pickleball courts accessibility at Maxwell and at Larson; Mark West Park, will begin offering intermediate or interim level of access to the public; and Maddux Ranch Regional Park received an infusion of community investment funds (~500,000) from D4/Supervisor James Gore, with some of this funding going directly to Community Soil, the Park’s partner providing the Larkfield Community Garden.
- Updates: Parks hang-tags have been updated. New logo. Golden years pass used to be yellow; disabled pass was blue. Took feedback into account and now all passes are the same color – green.
- Question from Junge: How are parks pass sales going? Response by Whitaker: Approx 30,000 park members currently. Working on developing a more comprehensive parks membership for Veterans.
- Question from Roney: Retention rate of Parks passes? Response by Whitaker – don’t have data on this. New point of sales system- doesn’t answer these questions as we thought it would. Working on rectifying this.
- Question from Eber: Any updates on the Kelly Creek addition to Helen Putnam? Response by Whitaker: We’re continuing to work closely with Greg Colvin and Kelly Creek Protection.

7. Election of Officers (Action Item) – Commission Chair

- Commissioner Carol Eber nominated Commissioner Nathan Junge for Chair of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission. Commissioner Roney seconded the nomination. Nathan Junge accepted the nomination.

VOTE

In Favor: 4 (Steffy, Gonzalez, Roney, Eber)

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 1 (Junge)

Absent: 2 (Galvan, Mercado)

Effective next meeting – April 2, 2025.

- Commissioner Carol Eber nominated Commissioner Luis Gonzalez to continue his role as Vice-Chair, for a second term. Commissioner Luis Gonzalez accepted the nomination.

VOTE

In-Favor: (Steffy, Gonzalez, Roney, Junge)

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 1 (Gonzalez)

Absent: 2 (Galvan, Mercado)

Consecutive term to begin next meeting - April 2, 2025

8. 2025 Meeting Schedule (Informational and Discussion) – Bert Whitaker

- June Meeting: before or after meeting – snacks/30-minute social gathering and a thank you to our youth commissioners.
- Upcoming meetings are also posted online at:
<https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/learn/about-us/regional-parks-boards-and-commissions/parks-and-recreation-advisory-commission/meeting-calendar?&year=2025>

Date	Time	Updates	Discussion /Action Items
February 5, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Park Construction Update	Election of Officers 2025 Meeting Schedule Shiloh Pond Restoration
April 2, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Trails Update	Equity Framework Career Pathways Program

June 11, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Parks Foundation Update	Parks Unit Grazing Program Climate Action Resiliency Plan
August 6, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Grants Update	Wildlife Friendly Infrastructure Park Membership
October 1, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Master Planning Update	Aquatics Programs (Lifeguards, Vamos a Nadar, Water Safety Patrol) Summer 2025 Park Trends
December 3, 2025 Location: 400 Aviation, Suite 100	5:30 p.m.	Environmental Education Update	Annual Report 2022-2025 Strategic Priorities

9. Shiloh Pond Restoration – Minona Heaviland, Sonoma County Regional Parks

- Refer to PowerPoint attachment posted online at <https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/meeting-feb-5-2025>

10. Park Construction Update– Kerry Larkin, Sonoma County Regional Parks

- Gualala Point Regional Park: contractors are completing some Accessibility and ADA upgrades to the campground, restrooms and parking area. This includes new concrete paths, accessible drinking fountains and camp site amenities.
- Steelhead beach Regional Park: will also be getting similar accessibility upgrades this spring with construction planned for April- June.
- Copeland Creek Trail at Crane Creek Regional Park: this project is currently out to bid with and aim for construction to start in May. Working closely with the City of Rohnert Park, This new Copeland Creek Trail is a 1 and a half mile trail with multiple steel bridges (1 90 LF, 2 16 ft bridges) that will eventually connect Crane Creek Regional Park to Petaluma Hill Road and Sonoma State University-- allowing

wider access to an entire network of creek trails located in Rohnert Park and Santa Rosa.

- Larson Park: well-loved neighborhood park in Sonoma. This spring renovations to the park's existing community garden and baseball field, and the addition of new playgrounds, pickleball and tennis courts, a soccer field, group picnic areas and more. This is a 4-million-dollar project with 7 different funding sources and will have a major impact on the community.
- Hood Mountain: work continues at Hood with several post-fire projects - Construction was just completed on a new water tank replacement at Cougar Landing, and replacing another water tank at Pythian going to bid this spring with an estimated construction for this summer.
- Joe Rodota Trail: the wood bridges 1 and 3 (on the east side of Sebastopol) are being replaced with steel bridges this summer. This is of course a heavily used trail and will be rerouted so that the entirety of the trail can remain in use.
- Mark West Creek Park and Preserve: the very rickety wooden Porter Creek Vehicle Bridge is being replaced this summer with steel-- to meet the fire code and allow a Class 1 fire truck to use it - a definitely upgrade for resiliency and neighborhood safety.
- Taylor Mountain: the most significant trail construction project in many years in the county - Eight miles of new trails were recently constructed at Taylor Mountain - opening 40% more of the park to the public increasing the trails available there from 5 – 13 miles. Designed for hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders - This will have multiple bike-in and walk-in access points -- it has 6 new bridges crossing various drainages in the park. These new trails should open to the public this summer.
- Helen Putnam: the Kelly Creek Phase 1 expansion is under construction now - this is the 44-acre park expansion on the east side

of Helen Putnam - include trails, parking lot and restroom and picnic areas. There is a 1/2-mile trail section adjacent that will link the 44 acres to Helen Putnam is slated for construction this fall.

- Tolay Lake Regional Park: The Gathering area is designed for a variety of uses – stage for large evenings, performance and tribal celebrations, with formal seating, and informal lawn seating. Smaller group teaching and learning areas are terraced up the hill beyond the stage. The shade structure portion of this project will be completed this summer. Native trees and plants to support wildlife habitat, and that are important to tribal culture (medicinally, nutritionally, and for basket weaving) were planted recently and are an essential element of the design.
- Monte Rio Open Space Preserve: currently open to the public, while in the Master plan process. Because of the existing social trail system on this park allowed us to do some interim park improvements while the park is in the Master Plan stages - a beautiful creek trail through the redwoods, along Dutch Bill Creek and a stunning 3 mile look the hillside were completed last year - and a small parking lot with temporary restrooms is slated to open next week.
- Hudeman Slough Boat Launch Improvement: starting this week- but the bulk of construction will happen this summer through fall. The boat launch improvements include the demolition of the existing boat ramp and dock, and reconstructing a new ramp, dock and gangway system. renovations and expansion of the existing parking lot, with accessible parking and concrete sidewalks. It also includes planting mitigation and wetland restoration.

11.Adjournment – Commission Chair

- Closing thoughts and future action items:
 - ◆ Commissioner Junge suggested a pitcher of water be provided and available during next meeting.
 - ◆ Chair Steffy inquired about the commissioner terms – confirmed 4 years by Bert Whitaker– and reported that her term expires at the end of this year.

- ◆ Commissioner Junge raised the question of form 700s and if they need to be updated by the Commissioners. Response by Bert Whitaker: Yes, Danielle will work on sending these out.
Note: After further discussion following the Feb 5 meeting, it has been determined that Commissioners of the Advisory Board do not need to complete and provide Form 700s to the County.
- Meeting was adjourned by Chair Steffy at 6:42pm.