

**MARIN COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
MARIN CIVIC CENTER, PLANNING CHAMBERS (ROOM 328), SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA
MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 03, 2013**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Raphael Durr
 Larry Kennings
 David Ross
 Dennis Scremin
 Greg Zitney

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Gretchen LeBuhn
 Shelly Scott

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Greg Zitney.

II. OPEN TIME

No member of the public came forward to speak at this time.

III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Main County Parks Director and General Manager, Linda Dahl, reported that the Marin County Board of Supervisors is seeking volunteer members to fill five openings on the Measure A Community Oversight Committee. Ms. Dahl briefly reviewed applicant qualifications, committee member responsibilities, and the approximate amount of time each member will be expected to commit to the committee each year.

IV. COMMISSION MATTERS

Deputy Director Ronald Miska reported that two Parks and Open Space Commission members will serve on the Measure A Community Oversight Committee along with the five Board of Supervisor appointees, as required by a Board resolution passed on January 15, 2013.

After asking for volunteers, Chair Greg Zitney appointed Commissioners Kennings and Durr to serve on the Measure A Community Oversight Committee for 2014.

Commissioner Durr absent 6:10 p.m.

Commissioner Zitney read a brief eulogy about former Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services Commissioner Nancy Helmers, and reported that at the Board of Supervisors meeting today Commissioner Helmer's many contributions to the county, including her strong advocacy for additions to the Cascade Canyon, Gary Giacomini and White Hill Preserves, were acknowledged. This commission meeting will be adjourned in her memory.

Commissioner Durr present 6:14 p.m.

V. PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR VEGETATION AND BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN TIERED PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Mischon Martin, Chief of Natural Resources and Science, briefly discussed the time frame in which the Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan (VBMP) was developed, and then introduced consultant Bob Berman. Mr. Berman reminded commissioners that due to the holidays, the public scoping process was extended to January 21, 2014. He gave a brief visual presentation about the Vegetation and Biodiversity Management Plan's Tiered Program Environmental Impact Report reviewing terminology, the public scoping process, explaining what a "Program EIR" is, guidance documents, policies and regulations that impact the process, a brief CEQA overview, elements of a TPEIR, issues evaluated in the TPEIR, and how members of the public can comment on the document.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Nona Dennis, a representative of the Marin Conservation League, called this a "spectacular plan" that it is "incredibly thorough", but advised that all of the issues have not yet been identified. All unexplored issues should be brought out into the open and dealt with in the draft EIR. Areas of concern are:

- Add an "esthetics" section to the plan. Esthetics make a difference in how open space preserves are experienced.
- Add biological resources, such as native wildlife that occupy "wildland", as a topic. Recreation can have an impact on both vegetation and biodiversity.
- Fuel management removes a great deal of ground vegetation that is important native habitat for ground dwelling species in our open space preserves. Ms. Dennis suggested that staff consider the importance of chaparral as both vegetation and a type of habitat for ground dwelling animals and both prey species and predators.
- Consider the use of herbicides and their effect on non-target species, including plants and animals.
- Hydrology/water quality: fuel management and flood management are related, and should be so referenced and discussed. Fire fuel management can cause downstream flooding, and should be addressed. There is a "disconnect" with respect to fuel management and recreation in the plan which should also be addressed.
- The plan should acknowledge how recreation on open space preserves affects vegetation and how vegetation in the preserves will be managed and protected. Recreation may have an impact on vegetation and the biodiversity of the open space habitat.

A Fairfax resident, who is also a horticulturist, expressed concern that:

- The VBMP shows "pockets of legacy vegetation" but the EIR doesn't list or name all of the pathways and trails near such vegetation pockets.

- Strongly disagrees with information noted on page 2-11 that refers to bike trails and vegetation management challenges in Cascade Canyon bottom lands, disputes the finding that there are mature fish in Cascade Creek (as noted in table 2.1), and feels that there is no proof of fish being present “below a mile from the open space preserve boundary”. The concern is that a finding of fish will color the ability to use mountain bikes in that area. Recreation in Cascade Canyon should be looked at more closely, with the goal of opening more areas to mountain biking.
- Requested that Wagon Wheel Trail in Cascade Canyon Open Space Preserve be “rezoned as park land” so that it can be used for bicycle races.
- Fire hazard reduction is critical on open space. The draft EIR offers the opportunity to address the beneficial effects of controlled burns as a tool for maintaining native habitat on open space preserves. Trails can be used as mini fire breaks.

VII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Ross noted that the recreation component was brought up today in two different perspectives: (1) the idea that recreational use could have an impact on the vegetation and biodiversity of the areas, and (2) that potentially, the plan itself could have an impact on recreation. The format for the initial report should include language to touch on both of these issues. Commissioner Ross also noted that the title and content of the VBMP plan doesn't give the lay person a quick understanding of its impacts like the Road and Trail Management Plan does. There should be serious consideration about all the impacts the VBMP may have, and a discussion about what the public might object to because of how it affects them “on a day-to-day personal basis”.

Commissioner Kennings briefly commented on today's comments and thanked Mr. Berman for his expertise and help in drafting the report.

Commissioner Scremin both congratulated and thanked staff for “putting together a fantastic report.” He values the opinion of Ms. Dennis, and found her comments to be very accurate. Speaking about a low public turnout for the meeting, he stated that it doesn't mean that others aren't involved in the process, and asked staff what the plan is for being able to raise the level of public involvement in this plan. The traditional approach of public forums and written comments may not work well as methods of public outreach. There is a need to get out into neighborhood groups and to meet with those individuals that are already starting to form public opinion is critical.

In response to Commissioner Scremin's comments, Ms. Dahl stated she believes that people are aware of the plan and trust that the department is on the right track, but may be waiting to see the EIR before they comment. There has been a great deal of publicity about the plan and a lot of conversations with individual groups, the fire community, and with neighborhood members who have had concerns about modifications and eradication methods. Parks staff have gone door to door in neighborhoods and spoken with neighbors on a one to one basis about what is happening, how they (public) will be affected by it, and also talked about other entities that are participating in the process, such as County Fire. Ms. Dahl also discussed the many notes and comments she has received that express support for this project.

Commissioner Zitney stated that he supports including esthetics as an EIR subject noting that there is an issue of perception. He also supports Nona's comments, is impressed with the plan itself, and is pleased with what he saw with regard to the initial study and where the EIR seems to be going.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Dennis asked staff not to confuse the turnout for this scoping session for "what is happening on the ground". She commented that members of the public generally don't attend scoping sessions--they come out later, more toward the end of the process. "It is difficult to get people out and issues on the table. Don't let this meeting be an indication that nobody knows about it."

No other members of the public came forward to speak.

Chair Zitney reminded all that written comments are due by January 21, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m. in memory of former Commissioner, Nancy Helmers.