

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

DATE: July 01, 2020
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Rafael Payan, General Manager
SUBJECT: Staff Reports

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Board accept and file this report.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Not applicable. This report is for information only.

FUNDING SOURCE:

Not applicable.

FUNDING BALANCE:

Not applicable.

DISCUSSION:

The following summarizes some of the key tasks and projects MPRPD's personnel undertook from mid-May through the end of June 2020 in addition to performing the District's regular business. By concurrently providing this information to the Public and Board transparency is assured regarding these matters.

Staff reports are listed by Division. Division Leads will gladly respond to the Board's questions.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

- 1. All Staff Meeting:** MPRPD conducted an All Staff Meeting to align everyone with the latest information regarding the pandemic, the re-opening of MPRPD's and our partners' properties and facilities, and other important information.
- 2. Auditing Services:** Staff issued an RFP for auditing services April 30, 2020. Staff received six (6) proposals from firms throughout the State of California, representing a wide range of firms from very large to very small. Proposals were reviewed and rated by Staff and the General Manager. All proposals were under the \$40,000 Board approval required threshold. White Nelson Diehl Evans LLP (WNDE) was selected as the most qualified firm. WNDE was the firm with the most experience in governmental auditing. WNDE's proposed \$27,500 fee was less than the next most qualified firm. The Audit Partner will be Mr. Robert J. Callanan with 29-years of government experience. The Audit Manager will be Mr. Robert Perl with 14-years of government auditing experience.

3. **Ballot Measure Meetings:** MPRPD's General Manager continued discussion with TBWB regarding potential options to explore a multi-jurisdictional Capital Improvement General Bond ballot measure in 2021 or 2022.
4. **Budget:** Staff continues working on Budget development for Fiscal Year 2020-21.
5. **City of Seaside and FORA Properties:** Staff continued discussions with the City of Seaside's City Manager and FORA Officials to optimistically transfer properties adjacent to MPRPD's Frog Pond Wetland Preserve in the very near future. This item was previously presented to MPRPD for its review and consideration and was favorably received.
6. **FEMA:** Staff continues to work with FEMA on close-out of 2017 Winter Storm Damage claims. FEMA is very busy with non-stop disasters and staff turnover and is very behind on processing and closing out claims. The District will be paying back monies to FEMA for event FEMA-4301-DR-CA. The reason for this payback is that ultimately were covered by our insurance carrier. However, when inquiries were made as to when the District can expect the bill, Staff is informed it could be 6-months to a year or more before they can get to it. Staff expects to be paying back up to \$55,380 for event FEMA-4301-DR-CA. In the meantime, Staff is contacted repeatedly by FEMA each time they have a staff turnover. MPRPD promptly resends copies of all the documents to ensure their new staff can more easily process the claim.
7. **Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve:** The County approved Staff's construction drawings and required documentation as submitted. Materials were purchased and construction of the sign was promptly begun. As of this report's writing:
 - A. Staff and County were calendaring an on-site meeting to confirm the sign's location so that the concrete foundation could be placed.
 - B. A date for construction completion and installation was in process of being identified. This is a priority assignment and will be completed ASAP – ideally by mid-July, if not sooner.
 - C. Upon identification of realistic completion/installation dates, a Dedication Ceremony date will be coordinated with Ms. Stevens, MPRPD's Board, Monterey County, VIPs, and Staff.

- 8. Rancho Canada Unit (RCU) Roof Condition Assessment:** Staff is working with RGS consultant to competitively locate a qualified roofing company to provide evaluation of the RCU roof and assist in the development of a competitive bid package. The Board authorized issuance of an RFB for a re-roof at the June 3, 2020 Board Meeting. After development of the bid package, it will be advertised and brought to the Board for award. Staff will also be seeking assistance of the selected roofing evaluation company to address numerous leaks in the ballrooms if the re-roofing project is not completed prior to the coming rainy season.
- 9. Former Clubhouse Termite Damage Assessment:** Staff completed a walk-through of the RCU clubhouse with Wedgewood representatives. Staff is currently working with a termite treatment company to address on-going termite damage throughout the complex.
- 10. Foundation:** Director Potter has vast experience with financial assistance foundation development. Director Potter will explore MPRPD's development a Foundation and/or endowment. This financial support would help MPRPD with its near and long-term financial opportunities. An initial meeting has been scheduled with Eastbay Regional Park personnel to learn more about their foundation and to determine if their model can be applied to MPRPD, and if so, how.
- 11. Projects A and B:** Staff worked with RGS and Project A and B consultants to bring Professional Services Agreements to the Board at the June 3, 2020 meeting. Staff is finalizing all the documents and Agreements required for the consultants to begin work on Phase II of both projects. Phase II entails design development through construction drawings and specifications. Phase III will entail the projects' construction.

During the July 01, 2020 Board meeting, Staff will provide a summary of these projects, their funding sources, and the nexus these projects have to the Palo Corona Regional Park General Development Plan.

- 12. Rancho Canada Unit Habitat Restoration Plan:** The California Coastal Conservancy (SCC) Board was provided a presentation showcasing the innovative partnership the SCC and MPRPD have entered for this important habitat restoration project. The SCC's Board enthusiastically embraced MPRPD's novel approach to this project and partnership.
- 13. Sherar Property Appraisal:** Staff worked with a local appraiser to obtain a new appraisal of the Sherar property, consisting of two vacant 40-acre parcels, coterminous with Garland Ranch Regional Park in Carmel Valley. The properties

were valued at \$1.2M in 2008 when the District entered a Lease with Option to Purchase Agreement with Robert and Margaret Sherar.

Staff is applying to the State of California for use of residual Prop 117 Habitat Conservation Funds to pay-off this property. After paying-off the Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve there was \$550,000 remaining of the FY19-20 allocated grant.

The original 2006 appraisal for the Sherar property was deemed inadequate by the State, as it relates to MPRPD's request to use these residual funds, and a new appraisal was required to verify the agreed upon purchase price represented fair market value, and that the District was not paying more for the property than it's appraised value.

In addition to the new appraisal, staff has obtained an appraisal review by yet another independent appraiser to certify the method and price, another requirement by the grantor. The appraised value in June of 2020 was \$1,425,000. Staff is seeking the grantor's approval of this project before June 30, 2020, because MPRPD is attempting to get reimbursed for payments made in FY2019-20 on the property, as well as for the appraisal work. Whether or not this can be approved by June 30, 2020 remains to be seen.

14. Staff Training: Staff participated in numerous trainings, throughout May and June, including training related to Mechanics Bank to successfully navigate the merger of Rabobank and Mechanics Bank. Staff also participated in numerous trainings and briefings on COVID-19 applications and continued to review and compile District costs for its response.

15. Unfunded Pension Liabilities: Staff worked with CalPERS to make Additional Discretionary Payment on unfunded pension liabilities. Payment of \$101,000 was authorized by the Board on June 3, 2020. This payment utilizes funds that had been budgeted for a contribution to the CERBT account for unfunded OPEB liabilities but was determined to better serve the District by saving 7% interest on unfunded pension liabilities. This payment will save the District \$107,050 in interest costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & OUTREACH DIVISION

1. Storybooks and Exhibits:

A. California Condor Storybook: This storybook is designed in part to assist in the development of a greater in-depth condor exhibit and will debut on MPRPD's website following the closing of the 21st annual Wildflower Show. Special

appreciation is extended to the Ventana Wildlife Society Staff for their peer review of the storybook content. A preview to the storybook is attached **(ATTACHMENT 1)**.

B. California Grizzly Bear Storybook and Exhibit: Staff is designing this storybook to assist with the development of a greater in-depth grizzly bear exhibit.

C. Carmel River Watershed Storybook and Exhibit: Exhibit and storybook research for the Palo Corona DC has been underway to prepare for new exhibits and virtual access to exhibits. The Carmel River has a rich and varied history, including being named one of America's most endangered rivers in 1999, lending stories to be told in multiple storybooks including geology, wildlife, and cultural history.

D. Mountain Lion Storybook and Exhibit: Staff is designing this storybook to assist with the development of a greater in-depth mountain lion exhibit.

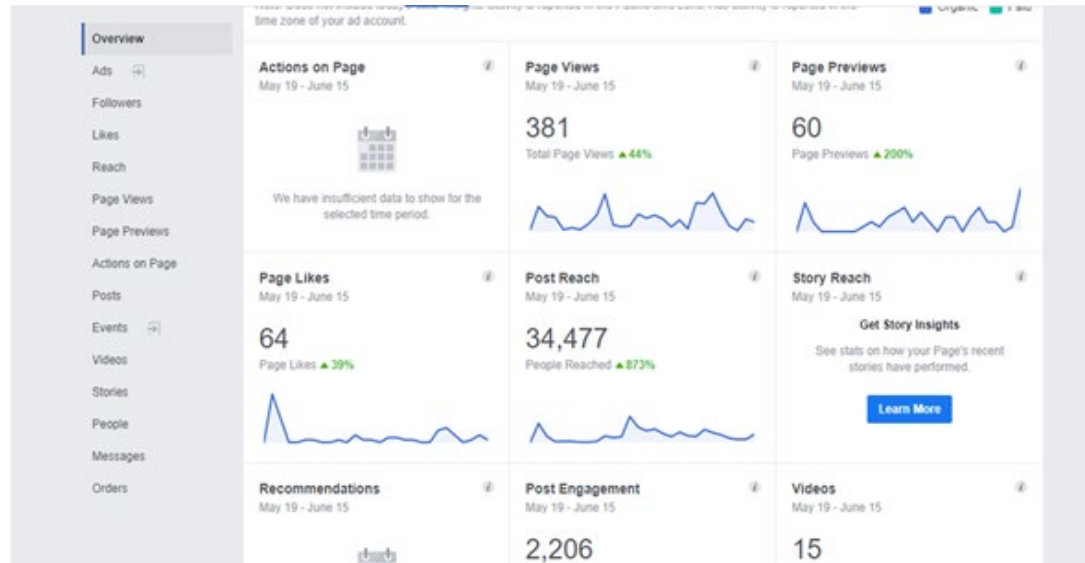
2. Palo Corona Regional Park Interpretive Master Plan: Staff finalized the "audience profiles" and "parameters" for this plan.

3. Signage: EECO and Ops staff worked together to update warm-weather tips information signage. Information will be posted at trailheads and online to educate visitors on being prepared for our parks' seasonal conditions.

4. Social Media: Engagement with the public via social media outlets continue to increase. Targeted campaigns included social distancing, preparing for outdoor adventures, and warm-weather hiking tips. These social media posts are also an effective platform to update to our visitors on the status of park uses.

A. COVID-19 Campaign, *Know Before You Go!*: Posts on Facebook have been created to keep our visitors prepared to go outside during the pandemic.

B. Posts Data: The table (below) shows MPRPD social media posts are reaching a larger audience with great public interactions, especially following the virtual Wildflower Show. Staff is providing a summary of social media trends MPRPD platforms from mid-May to mid-June **(ATTACHMENT 2)**.



5. **Return of the Natives:** Staff and CSUMB's *Return of the Natives* program are in discussion of an agreement to develop and begin a three-year restoration project at Marina Dunes Preserve focused on native plant seed collection, propagation, and plantings.
6. **School Year 2020-21 Environmental Education:** In preparation of the 2020-21 school year, Staff met with Partners from MEarth, Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, and the Carmel River Watershed Community to develop new programs in response to the COVID-19 constraints. Staff reached out to the Community Partnership for Youth to discuss ways to reach out to the youth of Seaside.
7. **Special Use Permit Process Updated:** MPRPD's Special Use Permit form and logging process has been undergoing an update to create more efficient recording and a more user-friendly process.
8. **Wildflower Show:** The Garland Ranch Regional Park Virtual Wildflower Show, run on the Google Sites platform, was launched in collaboration with Montereywildflowers.com to provide an online show during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff developed and maintained the three-week show with print and online advertisements. GRRP celebrated the 21st annual Wildflower Show using this new online platform. The show was held from June 6-June 21, 2020. Staff has provided the Directors a summary (**ATTACHMENT 3**).
9. **Volunteers:** Volunteers and Staff were given a "sneak peek" of the summer wildflower show days before it was publicly launched. This was the first virtual volunteer enrichment with 20-volunteers joining the meeting. Staff continues to develop opportunities to engage our volunteers during the pandemic. The June-July 2020 Volunteer Newsletter was forwarded to all volunteers and staff during the week of June 21-28, 2020.

OPERATIONS DIVISION

1. **Additional Staff Needed:** MPRPD's Parks and Preserves continue to be busier than ever due to increased visitation following the "discovery" of MPRPD Parks during the COVID-19 closure of County, State, and Federal lands. The reopening of these partner agency lands has alleviated the impact to MPRPD to a degree, but not entirely. Staff believes this impact will be long-term and agrees that additional staffing will be necessary to properly manage and maintain MPRPD's current and future land holdings.
2. **Highway 1 Gate at PCRPD Reopens:** Staff prepared for the reopening of this popular entrance to Palo Corona Regional Park. Effective Monday June 20, 2020 walk-in permit holders were again allowed to gain entry to the park via this point of access.
3. **Marina Dunes Preserve and State Park (CSP) Patrols:** CSP and MPRPD are developing an agreement wherein CSP personnel patrol MPRPD's Marina Dunes Preserve on a fee basis. Details are being negotiated.

This partnership had previously been explored. Both parties are eager to advance this partnership. Details will be provided to the Board at a future Board meeting.

4. **Mowing and Brushing:** Mowing and brushing alongside MPRPD park's and open space trails were delayed due to COVID-19 but is now in full swing. Due to County Shelter-in-Place Orders, Gabilan inmate crews are unavailable thus, Rangers will be conducting the majority of the mowing/brushing in-house this year. This task consumes substantial amounts of Ranger time as MPRPD prepares for what appears to be developing as a very active fire season in the western United States.

Temporary workers were also deemed inappropriate due to inability to ensure social distancing while working with Ranger staff. This was especially a concern because temporary workers are rotated or frequently replaced by their respective employment agencies, increasing the potential for exposure. Mowing contractors have been utilized to mow the Rancho Canada Unit's open areas, Sherar Property, and behind the Carmelite Monastery. This year's late rains resulted in an inordinate amount of growth and regrowth late in the season.

5. **Seasonal Bridges Status:** Seasonal footbridges across the Carmel River and Garza's Creek will be installed once the County Shelter-in-Place Order has been lifted.
6. **Shelter-in-Place Orders:** In compliance with County Shelter-in-Place Orders:
 - A. **Ballfields Remain Closed:** DeDampierre ballfields and Cachagua Community Park remain closed until further notice. Signs remain posted advising the public of these closures, along with chain-link fencing being used to secure the

site. Staff continues to monitor these sites for incidents of vandalism and trespass.

B. Carmel River Beaches Reopen: Prohibitions against accessing the Carmel River beaches at Garland Ranch Regional Park and Palo Corona Regional Park have been lifted. Staff enacted this temporary closure to align with partnering agencies and the County's Shelter-in-Place Order. River points of access continue to be monitored for illegal activity.

7. Treefall: Several large trees fell onto MPRPD trails during the months of May-June, including one that fell at the Laidlaw-Apte property in Carmel Highlands, crushing a neighbor's fence. Rangers removed the tree from the neighbor's property and repaired the fence. Rangers have also been working with PG&E and Davey Tree Company to review proposals for trimming and/or removal of District trees adjacent to PG&E powerlines at the Kahn Ranch and Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [Condor Storybook Handout](#)
2. [Social Media Summary](#)
3. [Wildflower Show Summary](#)