

California Tahoe Conservancy
Agenda Item 2a
June 25, 2020

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
March 12, 2020

March 12, 2020 (9:00 a.m.) Board Meeting

Staff prepared the minutes from the same-day audio recording and transcription by Foothill Transcription Company, which were certified on March 27, 2020.

Agenda Item 1. Roll Call

Chair Sue Novasel called the meeting to order with a 9:00 a.m. roll call at the California Secretary of State Offices, in Sacramento, California.

Members Present:

Sue Novasel, Chair, El Dorado County
Cindy Gustafson, Vice Chair, Placer County
Gayle Miller, California Department of Finance
Tamara Wallace, City of South Lake Tahoe
Elizabeth Williamson, California Natural Resources Agency
Danelle Harrison, USDA Forest Service (ex officio)

Members Absent:

Adam Acosta, Public Member
Lynn Suter, Public Member

Others Present:

Patrick Wright, Executive Director
Jane Freeman, Deputy Director
Mike Steeves, Chief Counsel
Danae Atchison, Deputy Attorney General

Agenda Item 2. Consent Items

a. Approval of Minutes (action)

The Board considered the minutes from the December 12, 2019 meeting.

b. Approval of Board Agenda (action)

The Board considered the agenda for the day's meeting.

c. USDA Forest Service Meyers Landfill Monitoring Well Long-Term License Agreement (action)

The Board considered authorization of a long-term license agreement for a USDA Forest Service monitoring well located on California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) land.

d. Environmentally Sensitive Lands Acquisitions (action)

The Board considered authorization of two parcel acquisitions.

Vice Chair Gustafson moved to approve the four consent items. Resolutions 20-03-01, 20-03-02, 20-03-03, and 20-03-04 passed unanimously, with Ms. Wallace abstaining from voting on resolution 20-03-01 (approval of minutes).

Agenda Item 3. Chair's Report

Chair Novasel did not have a Chair's Report.

Agenda Item 4. Executive Director's Report

Patrick Wright, the Conservancy's Executive Director, began by introducing three new employees: Jessica Wackenhut (Tahoe Strategic Growth Program Manager), Chris Mertens (North Shore Liaison), and Sara Cutuli (Staff Attorney).

Mr. Wright then provided an update regarding the Conservancy's ongoing work with the Department of General Services (DGS) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to solicit developer interest in Conservancy-owned asset lands in South Lake Tahoe, as well as related progress on development proposals for other Conservancy asset lands.

Agenda Item 5. Welcoming Remarks from Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency

Secretary Crowfoot provided brief welcoming remarks in which he expressed appreciation for the Conservancy's work over the past year. The Secretary also cited several goals and initiatives about which he is excited, including deeper partnerships with the State of Nevada and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), efforts to place a climate resilience bond on the November 2020 ballot, ongoing work with the Tahoe Science Advisory Council, and an ongoing state leadership presence in the annual Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit.

Mr. Wright thanked Secretary Crowfoot for his engagement on Tahoe and Conservancy matters.

Agenda Item 6. Climate Change Items

a. Climate Change Action Update (discussion only)

Dorian Fougères, Chief of Natural Resources with the Conservancy, presented Item 6.a.

Mr. Fougères introduced the panelists, which consisted of Kate Gordon, Director of the California Office of Planning and Research, Chair of the Strategic Growth Council (SGC), and the Governor's senior advisor on climate; Ellery Stahler, Deputy Administrator for the Nevada Division of State Lands; Steve Frisch, President of Sierra Business Council (SBC); Lauren Sanchez, Deputy Secretary for Climate Policy and Intergovernmental Relations with the California Environmental Protection Agency; and Bill Craven, formerly with the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water.

Mr. Fougères next turned the discussion over to the panelists, who each provided topical remarks.

Ms. Gordon discussed, among other topics, the climate budget and challenges associated with regionally-focused climate grants.

Ms. Stahler discussed the current developments in climate change policies and regulations in the State of Nevada.

Mr. Frisch discussed the need to seed cultural change in the private sector to help promote climate investment and adaptability.

Ms. Sanchez discussed how climate-related efforts in government have moved beyond emissions reduction to incorporate a broader array of challenges and issues.

Mr. Craven focused his comments on climate-related bond proposals.

Following the panelist discussion, Mr. Fougères asked if there were any comments from the Board.

Vice Chair Gustafson asked Mr. Frisch how local agencies can further a cultural change in government to better demonstrate the community benefits of climate adaptation and resilience. Mr. Frisch highlighted the need for governments to focus on the values of people who are affected in order to increase the political will to support climate initiatives. Ms. Sanchez noted that government entities in Tahoe are pioneering responses to climate issues.

Mr. Wright thanked the panelists. He then noted his perspective that bonds tend to be earmarked for regional priorities and often lack connections to state frameworks like the water resiliency portfolio or the Forest Carbon Plan. Ms. Gordon and Mr. Craven engaged in a discussion responding to Mr. Wright's comment.

Mr. Craven and Ms. Gordon next responded to a question from Chair Novasel about aligning local strategic plans with larger state funding mechanisms. Mr. Frisch and Ms. Stahler also provided responses.

Ms. Harrison asked the panelists how a Tahoe-specific team to address climate issues could be used. Ms. Gordon responded that this idea is of particular interest to SGC, and SGC is building its capacity to focus more on this topic. Mr. Wright explained how the Conservancy is helping coordinate state goals with regional priorities. Ms. Gordon appreciated the point and responded that SGC is interested in building capacity at a regional level rather than dictating top-down solutions. Mr. Frisch added that a regional climate team could help improve strategic efforts, including leveraging private investment and workforce development.

Ms. Miller asked the panelists to explain, in their view, what "leveraging" looks like. Mr. Craven acknowledged some limits of bond funding and identified private sector fund matching as an example. Vice Chair Gustafson echoed the role of government to inspire private sector investment. Mr. Frisch cited the Conservancy's biomass feedstock assessment as an example of a government initiative that provides valuable information needed to spur private sector investment.

Mr. Fougères asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

b. Proposition 68 Climate Grants (action)

Jason Vasques, Landscape Forestry Supervisor with the Conservancy, presented Item 6.b. Following the presentation, Vice Chair Gustafson asked whether the grant to the South Tahoe Public Utility District (STPUD) funded an assessment of STPUD's own infrastructure or a larger vulnerability source assessment, and suggested further consideration of the latter. Mr. Vasques responded that the grant funded an assessment of STPUD's own infrastructure. Mr. Wright acknowledged Vice Chair Gustafson's suggestion and said staff would speak with STPUD about possibly expanding the scope of the assessment.

Vice Chair Gustafson moved to adopt resolution 20-03-05.1 and Ms. Wallace seconded the motion. Resolution 20-03-05.1 passed unanimously.

Ms. Williamson moved to adopt resolution 20-03-05.2 and Vice Chair Gustafson seconded the motion. Resolution 20-03-05.2 passed unanimously.

Ms. Wallace moved to adopt resolution 20-03-05.3 and Vice Chair Gustafson seconded the motion. Resolution 20-03-05.3 passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 7. Sustainable Communities Update (discussion only)

Kevin Prior, Chief Administrative Officer of the Conservancy, presented Item 7.

Mr. Prior then introduced the panelists, which consisted of Jonathan Heim with the Asset Enhancement Group of DGS; Zack Olmstead, Deputy Director of Housing Policy and Development at HCD; and Louise Bedsworth, Director of SGC.

Mr. Olmstead provided remarks in which he identified several important principles of sustainability, including infill projects and affordability. He discussed the need to consider proximity to jobs, transit, schools, and other amenities when evaluating potential housing sites. He also stressed the need for local, state, and in some cases, federal collaboration.

Ms. Bedsworth discussed SGC's role in affordable housing and highlighted SGC's partnership with the Conservancy as a unique opportunity to link a regional vision with the Governor's prioritization of affordable housing.

Mr. Heim then discussed DGS's effort to implement the Governor's Executive Order on affordable housing, including DGS's and HCD's partnership with the Conservancy.

Mr. Fougères then asked for comments or questions from the Board. Ms. Wallace began by asking about the timeline for the affordable housing project in the City of South Lake Tahoe (City) that is the focus of the Conservancy's partnership with DGS and HCD. Mr. Heim noted that DGS is currently working on the imminent release of a request for proposals. Mr. Prior added that the Conservancy has also been working with officials from the City and TRPA and would continue to do so going forward.

Chair Novasel said she is excited to see multi-agency collaboration. Ms. Bedsworth responded that she believed the key to success with many affordable housing projects is strong collaboration between local transit agencies, housing developers, and local governments. Chair Novasel echoed the importance of involving transit agencies and considering transit-related issues, which is especially important in the Tahoe region.

Vice Chair Gustafson added her view that the shortage of affordable housing is a statewide crisis that the Tahoe area began experiencing even earlier than most other areas of California. She commended the Conservancy and its partners for working on the issue.

Ms. Bedsworth stated that she is hopeful SGC's collaboration with the Conservancy will serve as a model for SGC's work with other regions.

Chair Novasel commented that the north and south shore housing needs assessments are valuable information.

Mr. Olmstead noted the importance of robust funding, including planning grants. Mr. Wright stated that he hopes the Conservancy's joint position with SGC will help address the challenge of pairing funding for individual projects with regional strategies.

Mr. Fougères then invited public comment. Jean Diaz, Executive Director for the St. Joseph Community Land Trust, commended the State's efforts to incentivize affordable housing but encouraged greater consideration of who benefits most from the incentives. He stated his position that the Governor's Executive Order and the 99-year ground lease model inadvertently preclude affordable ownership. Mr. Diaz stressed a need for greater flexibility and consideration of other models in future projects.

Chase Janvrin, Program Manager for the Tahoe Prosperity Center, thanked the Conservancy for its commitment to addressing affordable housing issues.

Mr. Wright noted that the 99-year ground lease model for the Conservancy's 10-acre asset land in South Lake Tahoe is not necessarily the model that will be used for the Conservancy's other asset land parcels.

Chair Novasel also noted that it is important to consider the issue of homelessness along with affordable housing.

Agenda Item 8. Landscape and Community Forestry Action Update (discussion only)

Mr. Vasques presented Item 8.

Mr. Fougères then introduced the panelists, which consisted of Mr. Craven; Jay Ziegler, Director for External Affairs and Policy at The Nature Conservancy; Angela Avery, Executive Director of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC); Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary for Forest Resource Management at the California Natural Resources Agency; Anthony Scardina, Deputy Regional Forester at Region 5, Pacific Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service; and Helge Eng, Deputy Director of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Mr. Eng provided remarks in which he discussed forests as carbon sinks, stated that forest management requires holistic approaches rather than just prescribed fire and forest thinning, and noted how forest management activities inevitably have impacts and tradeoffs (e.g., prescribed fire has health/smoke impacts).

Mr. Scardina discussed how agencies can work at regional landscape scales to better achieve collective outcomes.

Ms. Morse discussed what she identified as three layers of wildfire resilience: community, the wildland-urban interface, and the landscape. She discussed how the Governor's budget directs funding toward these areas. She also identified various structural challenges and provided thoughts on how we might better address them.

Ms. Avery discussed the SNC's Watershed Improvement Program and using the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative as a model approach for other regions within the SNC jurisdiction.

Mr. Ziegler focused his remarks around three recommendations: following the money and engaging the federal government as a full partner, particularly with regard to funding; showing progress and using the correct scientific metrics for community engagement; and chasing big-picture goals that will help drive the market for use of woody biomass more effectively in the long run.

Mr. Craven discussed, with examples, how fire prevention has grown in importance to become almost co-equal with fire suppression in terms of CAL FIRE's strategic efforts.

Following the panelists' opening remarks, Chair Novasel, Vice Chair Gustafson, and Ms. Wallace engaged Mr. Craven, Mr. Eng, Mr. Ziegler, and Ms. Avery in a discussion of homeowner insurance in fire-prone areas.

Next, Vice Chair Gustafson and Mr. Wright began a discussion with Mr. Craven and Mr. Eng, each providing their perspectives on the proper balance between CAL FIRE's funding of shovel-ready projects versus more sustained long-term programs.

Vice Chair Gustafson then engaged Mr. Eng and Mr. Scardina in discussing the need for investing in workforce development.

Ms. Harrison provided remarks about wood supply and infrastructure, which prompted further comments from Ms. Avery, Mr. Craven, and Mr. Eng about biomass energy and infrastructure.

Mr. Fougères asked if there were any public comments. Carl Hasty, Manager of the Tahoe Transportation District, asked about biomass energy utilization. Ms. Morse and Mr. Scardina responded with examples of the ongoing thinking around the issue.

Ms. Harrison asked for panelist insight on smoke management issues related to prescribed burning. Ms. Morse, Mr. Ziegler, Mr. Scardina, and Mr. Eng each responded, citing generally the need for public education and transparency.

Another member of the public, Ms. Simone Cordery-Cotter with the SBC, asked about efforts to involve the environmental justice community in forest management issues. Ms. Morse and Mr. Eng gave examples.

Agenda Item 9. Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project Grant and License Agreement (action)

Stu Roll, Natural Resources Program Supervisor, presented Item 9.

There were no questions or comments from the Board or the public.

Ms. Williamson moved to adopt resolution 20-03-06 and Vice Chair Gustafson seconded the motion. Resolution 20-03-06 passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 10. Upper Truckee River and Marsh Restoration Project (action)

Mr. Roll presented Item 10.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

A member of the public, Mary McCall, asked the Board to postpone the Board's action on Item 10 until the next Board meeting. There were no further public comments.

Vice Chair Gustafson moved to adopt resolution 20-03-07 and Ms. Williamson seconded the motion. Resolution 20-03-07 passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 11. Board Member Comment

a. Potential Agenda Items for the June 25 Board Meeting

Ms. Freeman summarized the potential agenda items for the June 25 Board meeting.

Vice Chair Gustafson asked staff to consider taking as a future agenda item the potential use of a Conservancy land holding in Kings Beach to further affordable housing goals. Mr. Wright responded that Conservancy staff is reviewing the asset land guidelines and would like to evaluate the Kings Beach parcel along with several others. He stated that staff would like to present the Board with new potential asset lands as a batch rather than on a one-by-one basis.

Agenda Item 12. Board Committee Update

Chair Novasel, with no objections from other members of the Board, formed two Board Committees: a north shore housing committee and a south shore housing committee. The north shore committee consists of the representatives from El Dorado and Placer counties. The south shore committee consists of the representatives from El Dorado County and the City of South Lake Tahoe.

Ms. Williamson presented an update on behalf of the Board's legislative committee.

Agenda Item 13. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

John Moore provided a comment on behalf of the Mother Lode Chapter of the Sierra Club. He expressed concern about the Conservancy allowing development to occur through its asset land program. He also stated that the Conservancy should develop an open space plan for Conservancy-owned land.

Ms. McCall asked the Conservancy to consider addressing homelessness.

There were no further public comments.

Mr. Wright gave an update about upcoming guidance regarding the coronavirus.

Agenda Item 14. Adjourn

Chair Novasel adjourned the meeting at 3:49 p.m.

California Tahoe Conservancy
Resolution 20-06-01
Adopted: June 25, 2020

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the March 12, 2020 meeting of the California Tahoe Conservancy adopted on June 25, 2020.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 25th day of June, 2020.

Patrick Wright
Executive Director