

California Tahoe Conservancy  
Agenda Item 6a  
September 21, 2023

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**June 15, 2023**

**June 15, 2023 (9:30 a.m.) Board Meeting**

Staff drafted the minutes from the same-day audio recording and transcription, which Foothill Transcription Company prepared and then certified on June 30, 2023.

**Agenda Item 1. Roll Call**

Chair Adam Acosta called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m. The meeting was held in person at the Lake Tahoe Community College, South Lake Tahoe, and broadcast virtually via the Zoom Webinar platform.

**Members Present:**

Adam Acosta, Chair, Public Member  
Cindy Gustafson, Placer County  
Jay Hansen, Public Member  
Brooke Laine, El Dorado County  
Tamara Wallace, Vice Chair, City of South Lake Tahoe (City)

**Members Absent:**

Bryan Cash, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)  
Michele Perrault, California Department of Finance  
Erick Walker, USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (ex officio)

**Others Present:**

Jason Vasques, Executive Director  
Jane Freeman, Deputy Director  
Michael Steeves, General Counsel  
Danae Aitchison, Deputy Attorney General

**Agenda Item 2a. Consent Items**

- a. **Approval of February Minutes (action)**
- b. **Approval of March Minutes (action)**
- c. **Approval of California Department of Transportation State Route 28 Rehabilitation Project Right of Entry Agreement and Long-Term License (action)**

There were no Board or public comments. The Board considered the approval of Items 2a, 2b, and 2c together.

**Mr. Hansen moved for approval of Items 2a, 2b, and 2c and Ms. Gustafson seconded the motion. Resolution 23-06-01, Resolution 23-06-02, and Resolution 23-06-03 passed unanimously by voice vote.**

### **Agenda Item 3. Executive Director's Report**

Jason Vasques, Executive Director, presented Item 3.

Mr. Vasques commented on the extreme winter that occurred in the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) and presented a slide show of pictures of the winter and springtime cleanup. Mr. Vasques also noted the work of the California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) Forestry and Land Management staff, with the help of Tahoe Resource Conservation District crews, to remedy the damage from the heavy winter snow. Mr. Vasques also reported on the delay in opening some Conservancy properties due to lingering snow.

Mr. Vasques then invited Assistant Chief Brian Newman from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) Amador El Dorado Unit to speak about CAL FIRE operations during the winter and to share insights regarding the spring and summer outlook.

Chief Newman spoke about the emergency response team that CAL FIRE created to help with risk and damage to critical infrastructure during the past season. Chief Newman anticipates a delayed, but normal, fire season due to the amount of snowfall and late spring. Chief Newman noted that the delay will allow CAL FIRE and others time to catch up on fuel reduction projects.

Mr. Vasques then introduced Gary Whitehouse, the Director of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) Unit in Meyers to speak to the CCC's operations during the winter and spring. Mr. Whitehouse spoke about the CCC as a career pathway in natural resources. He also explained that this last season the CCC dedicated substantial hours to emergency response to winter storm incidents, which delayed other projects.

Mr. Hansen asked a question about the funding sources for the CCC and methods of recruitment. Mr. Whitehouse explained that the CCC is funded with about 50 percent from the State and 50 percent from contracts with organizations such as the Conservancy, and that there are many techniques for recruitment (social media, schools, libraries), which are handled by the Sacramento office.

Mr. Vasques then spoke about the Governor's proposed Budget. Mr. Vasques welcomed new staff and provided staffing and personnel updates that have occurred at the Conservancy since the last Board meeting.

Mr. Vasques explained the new Conservancy media project to help increase visibility and education for the public on Conservancy employees and what they do. The Conservancy is posting the videos to its website and social media accounts. The Board and attendees watched a short video featuring Aimee Rutledge, Acquisitions Specialist.

Mr. Hansen asked about the Conservancy budget process, and the role of the Board. Mr. Vasques explained that the Conservancy submits a proposed budget to CNRA, who meshes that with the overall state budget. Mr. Vasques then stated that he sees the Board's role as providing oversight to ensure the expenditures are meeting the Conservancy's mission and are fiducially responsible and appropriate. Mr. Steeves further explained that the role of the Board is generally through project specific authorization, through the Strategic Planning process, and through identifying priorities in the one-on-one meetings with Mr. Vasques. Mr. Vasques also discussed the Budget Change Proposal Process, which the Conservancy can use to align funding. Ms. Gustafson added that she attended the California Tahoe Alliance lobbying day in Sacramento and used that venue to advocate for funding. Ms. Gustafson further noted that the Board can play an even stronger role in advocating with legislators and others to keep the Conservancy budget whole.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Public Comment Not on the Agenda**

Chair Acosta asked for any public comments not on the agenda.

Mr. Damian Sowers handed out copies of a photograph to Board members, and commented that his property was flooded from December 31 to March 21 and is now uninhabitable. He stated that he believes the Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Project caused the flooding. Chair Acosta allowed some additional speaking time and thanked Mr. Sowers for his comment. As Item 5 commenced, Ms. Gustafson acknowledged that the Board had been briefed on the situation.

There were no additional public comments.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Tahoe Valley Stormwater and Greenbelt Improvement Project License Agreement Amendment and Implementation Grant (action)**

Scott Cecchi, Associate Environmental Planner, presented Item 5.

Ms. Laine asked for clarification on daylighting of the creek. Mr. Cecchi explained that the Tahoe Valley Creek would be brought to the surface on the Conservancy's Urgent Care and Smoke Shop parcels, as it is now piped underneath them, but that it would be piped again downstream under U.S. Highway 50. Ms. Laine then complimented the City in taking on these types of projects, as they often rely on agencies like the Conservancy to implement them.

Vice Chair Wallace directed a question to Mr. Anush Nejad or Mr. Stan Hill from the City. Vice Chair Wallace asked if during the City's update to the Tahoe Valley Area Plan, the

entirety of the project would be brought within the Area Plan. Mr. Nejad, the City's Director of Public Works, answered that in consultation with the City's Development Services, the project would be brought within the Area Plan.

Ms. Gustafson asked what the plans were for the deficit in funding. Mr. Nejad explained that the City was in the process of applying for funding and that hopefully the City could also provide funding from the Capital Improvement Program. Mr. Hansen asked if the project could begin without the entire funding in place. Mr. Nejad explained that the project has been divided into phases. Mr. Nejad stated that Phase I was fully funded and the contract has already been awarded, however the entire additional funding would be needed to bid and award Phase II of the project.

Chair Acosta called for public comment.

Laura Patten, Senior Science and Policy Analyst with the League to Save Lake Tahoe, spoke in support of the project, particularly because its environmental benefits directly align with the League to Save Lake Tahoe's values.

There were no further Board or public comments.

**Vice Chair Wallace moved for approval of Item 5 and Ms. Laine seconded the motion. Resolution 23-06-04 passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**Agenda Item 6. Country Club Heights Erosion Control Project – Elks Club Water Quality and Accessibility Improvements (action):**

Jen Greenberg, Associate Environmental Planner, presented Item 6.

Mr. Hansen asked if the Conservancy owns the whole site. Ms. Greenberg indicated on the map the two parcels that are owned by the Conservancy and explained that a small portion of the project is on the El Dorado County right-of-way, with whom the Conservancy has been working closely.

Mr. Hansen then asked who makes the hundred-year-floodplain designation. Ms. Greenberg stated that the Federal Emergency Management Agency made those designations. Mr. Hansen questioned whether those designations keep up with climate change and if there needs to be new or more frequent designation.

Mr. Hansen asked if the site was appropriately advertised for recreational use and how the public is informed of recreational opportunities. Ms. Greenberg explained that the spot is well known to the public. Mr. Vasques also identified the Outdoors for All draft strategy from the CNRA, which aims to provide information on recreation opportunities.

Vice Chair Wallace and Mr. Hansen commented that the County would need to help discourage parking in the right-of-way.

Vice Chair Wallace and Chair Acosta asked about potential bathroom facilities. Ms. Greenberg explained that the Conservancy considered the option for future bathroom facilities, but was unsure of the cost. Mr. Vasques further explained that the Conservancy will evaluate the bathroom facilities holistically with other projects as part of the Conservancy's Land Management Strategy.

Chair Acosta and Mr. Vasques then discussed the possibility of a site tour for the Board members during the upcoming September Board meeting or at another time.

Chair Acosta asked for public comment. Ms. Patten, from the League to Save Lake Tahoe, spoke in support of this project.

There were no further Board or public comments.

**Mr. Hansen moved for approval of Item 6 and Ms. Laine seconded the motion. Resolution 23-06-05 passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**Agenda Item 7. Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Program Authorization (action)**

Brent Coe, Director of Administration and IT, presented Item 7.

Chair Acosta asked if the authorization amount had changed from previous years and clarification on how the money would be spent. Mr. Coe and Mr. Vasques explained that there was a subtle decrease in the authorization amount this year and that this authorization is for program operations and that specific project authorizations would come before the Board individually.

Ms. Gustafson and Mr. Vasques discussed the use of the funds for the Land Management program and how some money comes through this authorization and some comes through the state budgeting process.

Mr. Hansen discussed the role of the Conservancy's open space parcels on property values and the importance of balancing expenditures on those parcels with improving access to recreation properties. Vice Chair Wallace and Ms. Laine stated that homeowners have fuel management concerns related to the Conservancy's open space parcels and discussed the defensible space requirements that homeowners must comply with on private parcels. Mr. Vasques spoke about the Conservancy's efforts to work with partners to streamline the implementation of fuel management projects. He also noted specific funding sources for outdoor access and recreation.

Ms. Gustafson thanked the Board and Conservancy staff for the conversation because the information will be beneficial to supporting the Conservancy work when in Sacramento. Mr. Vasques spoke about the role of the Strategic Plan and how that will

create further opportunities for Board involvement with Conservancy prioritization as well as a catalyst for similar conversations.

Chair Acosta and Mr. Vasques discussed the prospect of continuing these conversations about the Strategic Plan at the September Board meeting.

There were no public comments.

**Ms. Gustafson moved for approval of Item 7 and Mr. Hansen seconded the motion. Resolution 23-06-06 passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**Agenda Item 8. 2024-2029 Strategic Plan Development Update (discussion only)**

Erin Ernst, Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative Coordinator, presented Item 8.

Ms. Laine asked about the Conservancy's and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's mutually agreed focus areas. Ms. Ernst said that the focus areas are "Tahoe Living," recreation and access, and resilience and restoration.

Mr. Hansen asked about the updated mandates and priorities. Ms. Ernst explained that the Conservancy working group suggested those based on CNRA mandates and priorities. Mr. Hansen then spoke about the Conservancy's potential role in mitigating climate change. Mr. Hansen, Mr. Vasques, and Ms. Ernst discussed the Board involvement in the consultant contracting process for the Strategic Plan.

Chair Acosta and Mr. Vasques discussed the allocated dollar amount for the contract.

There were no public comments.

**Agenda Item 9. Chair's Report**

Chair Acosta asked Mr. Vasques to lead a discussion on Board committees.

Mr. Vasques explained the three existing committees: the Operations Committee, Local Government Committee, and Legislative Committee. Mr. Hansen and Chair Acosta discussed the work of the committees as well as the operation and meeting timelines. Mr. Vasques suggested using the committees as a tool for deeper discussions of appropriate topics as they come up rather than regular committee meetings. Mr. Hansen expressed his support for that approach and asked whether committees are subject to the Bagley-Keene Act. Mr. Vasques explained that because these committees have only two members, they are not typically subject to the open meeting requirements of the Bagley-Keene Act, but that committees should provide updates on their work at regularly scheduled Board meetings.

**Agenda Item 10. Board Member Comment**

Mr. Hansen commented that he would like to see demographic information on residents and visitors to the Basin on the Conservancy website. Mr. Hansen then announced that he had received his Tahoe license plates and encouraged others to purchase Tahoe plates.

Chair Acosta reiterated that he would appreciate some Board member site tours for the September Board Meeting. Mr. Vasques stated that staff is considering site tours and that the September Board meeting will likely be two days to include tours as well as another Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training and conversations about the Strategic Plan.

**Agenda Item 11. Adjourn**

Chair Acosta adjourned the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

California Tahoe Conservancy  
Resolution 23-09-01  
Adopted: September 21, 2023

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the June 15, 2023 meeting of the California Tahoe Conservancy adopted on September 21, 2023.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 21st day of September, 2023.

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Jason Vasques  
Executive Director