



County of Santa Cruz

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE & CULTURAL SERVICES

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JEFF GAFFNEY
DIRECTOR

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 12th, 2025
5:00pm – 7:00pm
Regular Meeting

Simpkins Family Swim Center
Community Rooms
979 17th Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Introductory Items

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL Meeting called to order at 5:03PM.

Present: Nick de Sieyes (District 2), Jeremy Sanford (District 3), Elizabeth Hernandez (District 4)

Absent: Alexis Konevich (District 1)

Vacant: District 5

Staff: Jeff Gaffney, Rob Tidmore, Juan Perez Alvarez, Alexis Rodriguez-Rocha

2. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS No modifications.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS Three members of the public.

Jean Brocklebank: Represented Friends of Corcoran Lagoon Beach and provided an overview of their work. Expressed appreciation for the Coastal Lagoons and E. Cliff Drive Resiliency Study grant. Highlighted educational outreach and ambassador efforts during nesting season. Invited commissioners to visit the group's website for more information.

Mariah Roberts, Executive Director of County Park Friends: Shared that CPF just completed their Strategic Plan and invited the commission to review it on their website and share it with others. Thanked the commission for their help last year spreading the word about CPF's end-of-year campaign. Through all the sharing and communication, they were able to raise \$70k for their access grant scholarship program.

Lynn Dunn: Spoke about concerns regarding ADA compliance in the Live Oak Library Annex and the study room reservation system. Addressed her findings and actions she's taken to work with staff to resolve the issues.

4. ACTION ON CONSENT AGENDA (items 9-10)

Motion to approve: de Sieyes/2nd: Hernandez/All in favor.

Regular Agenda

5. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

District 1: Absent.

District 2: Met with Supervisor De Serpa and some members of the public at a small piece of property that is part of the Aptos Village Project. Got to talk about what they would like to see the park become that could better the community.

District 3: Quiet, nothing to report.

District 4: There was a coastal clean-up in District 4. While she was not able to attend, there was great community turnout and help from many organizations like Ecology Action, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, and Supervisor Hernandez.

District 5: Vacant.

6. PARKS DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Parks has had several recent successes, despite ongoing County government tensions. Over 500 kids participated in Spring Break programs, and a new Outdoor Education Center quietly opened at Quail Hollow Ranch. In partnership with County Park Friends and the Coastal Conservancy, the Hidden Beach County Park Restroom Project was completed, improving accessibility to the park and beach. A Feasibility Study at the Coastal Lagoons is also underway in collaboration with the Coastal Conservancy.

7. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discussion on Water Quality Issues at Pinto Lake County Park

Rob Tidmore, Parks Principal Planner, reported that Pinto Lake contains microsystem algae, which produces a neurotoxin harmful to animals in high doses. Algae levels rise in warmer months, limiting recreation. The Regional Water Control Board has set a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the lake, as nutrient runoff from nearby agriculture may be fueling the algae growth. Parks has contracted BlueWater Science to review past studies and identify data gaps for further action.

- **Commissioner de Sienes** asked for clarification if phosphorous was the contaminant of concern. Phosphorous and Nitrogen are contributing to large amounts of microalgae.
- **Commissioner Hernandez:** *Can the neurotoxin created by the microsystem algae affect people and how is it toxic (touch, consumption, etc.)?* The neurotoxin poses a danger, if consumed.

b. Oral Presentation on the ongoing projects at Moran Lake County Park.

Rob Tidmore, Parks Principal Planner, provided an update on ongoing projects at Moran Lake County Park. These include the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan (MBHMP) update, tree trimming, native tree planting, and drainage improvements. The MBHMP update process, which began in 2022, involved collaboration with stakeholders, consultants, and monarch experts, resulting in a public draft released in Summer 2024. The wind study examined how the tree canopy impacts wind protection for monarch overwintering sites and recommended tree management actions to reduce tree failure risk while preserving monarch habitat. Funding from County Risk Management and the wind study findings will support tree work starting in late May. The continuation of native tree planting and drainage improvements from last year will also proceed.

- **Public comments:**
 - One member of the public expressed appreciation towards the updates to the MBHMP and restoration to County biological resources.
 - A Placer Street Resident shared concerns about tree trimming plans and the amount that has been done on Placer Street.
 - Another Placer Street Resident thanked the Parks Department for the work that they are doing in the Moran Lake area.
 - *One member of the public asked if the trimming that is beginning later this month, would reduce trees to 70' or 80' height.* Rob Tidmore clarified that the work is to reduce height and canopy volume to a safe height that reduces the possibility of the tree falling. The wind study

used the 70' measurement as a model, but that height may not be possible at this time because a large reduction to a tree's height could cause health concerns to the tree itself.

c. Informational Overview of the Santa Cruz County Parks Proposed FY2025-26 Budget.

Director Gaffney provided a brief overview of the Santa Cruz County Parks Department for Fiscal Year 2025-26. He explained the expenditures and revenues of the department, as well as some of the major changes in the different divisions that will be affecting the budget. Since the budget has not been presented to or approved by the Board of Supervisors, it may be subject to some changes prior to its finalization for the year.

- **Vice-Chair Sanford:** *With the concern expressed about water and field usage, have you considered the use of artificial turf?* The Parks Department has considered it over the years and recently revisited the potential. There is a benefit to making the change, but the initial construction costs are proving to be a barrier.
- **Commissioner de Sieyes:** *Were there any capital projects included in this budget?* No, the capital projects budget is still being worked through.
- **Public Comments:**
 - *One member of the public asked if the department received any of the impact fees that had been collected and where they are accounted for.* The impact fees have started to be collected, but some of the calculations are being reevaluated. There is a new statute that does not allow Parks to collect the fees until the entire project is signed off. The impact fees are being collected in one spending bucket, to increase the project possibilities.

8. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Select the name of the new South County Park for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Sarah Shea, Parks Superintendent, shared name options for the new South County Park. She explained that County Parks and County Park Friends worked with a naming committee and a youth Park Project Group to develop six potential names. Students at Alianza Charter School voted on them, and the top three were presented to the Commission for consideration:

“Pajaro Valley County Park” (Valle del Pajaro County Park)

“La Flor del Valle County Park”

“Valle Verde County Park”

- **Commissioner de Sieyes** asked for further clarification on what the students from Alianza School voted for. “Pajaro Valley County Park” was the name that was presented and the students expressed an interest in the name but translating it to Spanish. Staff then presented the name in Spanish as a fourth option and the students voted for it.
- **Vice-Chair Sanford:** *How binding is this name choice? Could a donor make a difference in the name choice?* The Commission is making a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to accept this as the park name. Donors would not have a final say in the name of the County Park.
- **Commissioner Hernandez** asked for more information on the history of the area. *Since this park is in the outskirts of town, is it still considered Pajaro Valley?* Yes, when the Spaniards arrived in the area, they saw a statute of a bird and chose to refer to this area as the Pajaro Valley.
- **Commissioner Hernandez** also voiced a concern for the name “Valle Verde” and its association with gangs in the area.

Motion to support “Valle del Pajaro County Park” as the name for the new South County Park located on Whiting Rd.: Hernandez/**2nd**: de Sieyes/All in favor.

- b. Review and accept the amended Parks Commission Work Plan 2024-25..... page 3.

Motion to approve the amended work plan: de Sieyes/**2nd**: Hernandez/All in favor.

Consent Agenda

Consent items include routine business that does not call for discussion. One roll call vote is taken for all items. Only a Commissioner may pull items from Consent to Regular Agenda. Members of the public must request that a Commissioner pull an item from the Consent Agenda prior to the start of the meeting.

- 9. **Approve minutes from April 14th, 2025**..... pages 4-6.
- 10. **Consider Reports:**
 - a. Aquatics Section Report..... page 7.
 - b. Arts and Cultural Services Report..... pages 8-9.
 - c. Maintenance Section Report..... pages 10-11.
 - d. Planning Section Report.....pages 12-15.
 - e. Recreation Section Report.....page 16.
 - f. Reservations Section Report..... page 17.
 - g. Volunteer Section Report..... pages 18-20.

Written Correspondence Listing

- I. Emails from Lynn Dunn expressing concerns and findings regarding ADA compliance in the Live Oak Library Annex.
- II. Copy of letter from Sierra Club California to the Senate Appropriations Committee in Support of AB 616.

Adjournment **Motion** to adjourn at 6:41PM: Sanford/**2nd**: de Sieyes/All in favor.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

5:00 PM Monday, August 11th, 2025

Simpkins Family Swim Center Community Rooms.