
Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

City of Corona ◇ *City of Hemet* ◇ *City of Lake Elsinore* ◇ *City of Moreno Valley*
City of Murrieta ◇ *City of Perris* ◇ *City of Riverside* ◇ *City of Temecula* ◇ *County of Riverside*

MINUTES

Thursday, May 18, 2006 - 9:00 a.m.

Riverside County Administrative Center
4080 Lemon Street
Board Hearing Room – 1st Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

PRESENT: Ms. Robin Lowe, Chairperson – City of Hemet
Mr. Frank Adams, City of Moreno Valley
Supervisor Bob Buster, County of Riverside
Mr. Dom Betro, City of Riverside
Mr. Steve Brown, City of Temecula
Mr. Eugene Montanez, City of Corona

ABSENT: Mr. Bill Batey, City of Moreno Valley
Mr. Bob Schiffner, City of Lake Elsinore
Mr. Kelly Seyarto, City of Murrieta
Mr. Mark Yarbrough, Vice-Chair – City of Perris

STAFF: Carolyn Syms Luna, RCHCA
Gail Barton, RCHCA
Kristi Lovelady, RCHCA
Karin Watts-Bazan, County Counsel

GUEST: Dr. Ken Halama, Motte-Rimrock Reserve

1. ROLL CALL

Robin Lowe called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Roll call of the RCHCA Board of Directors showed six member agencies present with the Cities of Lake Elsinore, Murrieta, and Perris absent.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered.

3. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** Presented for Block Approval. Board Members have the option of

excluding discussion items from a master motion.

3.1 Minutes from the February 16, 2006, Meeting

The minutes from the February 16, 2006, meeting were presented for approval.

3.2 Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies

The Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Mitigation Fee Collection report for FY 2005/2006 was presented for review.

3.3 RCHCA Financial Report through April 2006

The fund balance as of April 30, 2006, is \$12,698,630.31.

MOTION for approval of items 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3: Eugene Montanez
SECOND: Frank Adams

Motion Approved
Ayes-6
None Opposed

4. POLICY CALENDAR:

4.1 Verbal Report on Status of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

Carolyn Syms Luna gave a report on the CVMSHCP. She stated that all agencies, with the exception of Desert Hot Springs and the City of Indio have agreed to sign-on with the plan. Neither Desert Hot Springs nor Indio has set a date in which to hear this item.

The Executive Committee for CVAG (the Council of Governments [COG]) is the lead agency on the CVMSHCP. They have been working diligently with the cities and we hope to know on June 1st if Desert Hot Springs and Indio will participate in the plan.

4.2 Approval of Seed Money for Motte-Rimrock Reserve Facility Improvements

Chairperson Lowe reminded the Board that at the last meeting there was a presentation by Dr. Halama regarding the Motte-Rimrock Reserve that is near Perris.

Kristi Lovelady reported that after Dr. Halama's presentation at the last meeting, several Board members expressed concern with the well-worn state of the facilities on the Reserve and suggested a one-time infusion of funds in which to upgrade the facilities.

Dr. Halama reported that for the past 25 years the Reserve has offered many teaching and research opportunities for students and faculty members in Riverside and surrounding counties. Much of the work that was done on the biology of the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat was done at the Motte-Rimrock Reserve.

Dr. Halama stated that staff would like to improve the facilities at the Reserve as they

have gone into a state of disrepair over the past several years.

Dr. Halama stated there are currently four primary funding sources for the Reserve: 1) an annual budget from UCNRS, for day-to-day operations (i.e., telephone bills, utilities, vehicle fuel); 2) the Motte Endowment, which provides enough money for minor capital improvements (i.e., a new truck or shed, etc.); 3) the RCHCA Endowment, which provides funds for managing for the SKR (i.e., fencing and supporting the monitoring effort); 4) fundraising, for major capital improvements (i.e., buildings and major vehicles). Dr. Halama stated that the fundraising is what the Reserve would like to focus on for the next year or so in order to raise money for improving the facilities on the Reserve. They envision a two-phase project. Phase one would be to develop a classroom building. The cost is anticipated to be between \$150,000-\$250,000. This would provide teaching space, house the Mayhew/Vassic Library (that is currently being house within the bunkhouse), and house the plant and animal specimens. Phase two would be an administrative building that would have office space for the staff, along with office space for any students and researchers that are working on the Reserve, and provide a small conference room for meetings, etc.

Dr. Halama stated the project would be phased and each phase would depend on the amount of money that could be raised. The classroom building would be the top priority. Any additional monies would go towards the administrative building. He stated there are two ways in which they can approach the construction of the buildings: 1) acquire an architect to design a floor plan and draw a rendering. This is expensive, but donors usually like to be able to see what their money will be used for; 2) acquire a modular building, possibly from a surplus yard, that could be used for a classroom.

Ms. Lovelady stated that the proposal to the Board today is to earmark approximately \$100,000 in the FY 2006/2007 budget to be used as a one-time facility improvement at the Motte-Rimrock Reserve. UCR would be allotted one year to identify matching donors for the project. RCHCA would release the funds to UCR once they have identified the matching donors.

Chairperson Lowe suggested that the Board approve the early release of up to \$20,000 (with a total overall donation of \$100,000) to allow the Reserve to develop a site plan for the capital improvement program and assist with marketing the project to donors on the UCR side.

MOTION for approval of item 4.2: Frank Adams
SECOND: Dom Betro

Motion Approved
Ayes-6
None Opposed

4.3 Approval of RCHCA Audits for FY 2003/04 and FY 2004/05

Ms. Lovelady presented in draft form the June 2004 and June 2005 audits. They have been concluded and the auditor has provided us with a client representation letter which includes their findings and recommendations, the audit differences, their audit report, their new feature ("The Management Discussion and Analysis", which is required by the new GASB 34), and the financial statements and supplemental

information.

Ms. Lovelady stated that generally, the auditor found the RCHCA documents were fairly stated. There are a few items that staff will follow-up on, namely keeping a capital asset listing and talking with the Auditor-Controller about the postings. The auditor also recommended an audit of the development mitigation fees collected by the RCHCA member agencies, primarily because they noted in both years that sometimes the fees were turned in very late, resulting in the RCHCA not realizing the revenue and also the interest.

Ms. Lovelady requested that the Board approve the two fiscal year audits, direct staff to work with the auditor to finalize the audits, and direct staff to initiate member agency mitigation fee collection audits.

MOTION for approval of item 4.3: Eugene Montanez
SECOND: Steve Brown

Motion Approved
Ayes-6
None Opposed

Chairperson Lowe asked if the RCHCA is pursuing the BLM land situation. She asked if this was part of the audit.

Ms. Lovelady stated that this was not addressed in the audit.

Chairperson Lowe asked that we include this in a future meeting for discussion.

4.4 Approval of the RCHCA Budget for FY 2006/07

Ms. Lovelady reported that the FY 2006/07 budget is in large part a roll-over from previous years; however, there are several features in which to point out.

- 1) Staff recommends extensive fencing as part of a reserve management priority on RCHCA lands that either have not had fencing in the past or have some very poor fencing where we are seeing illegal trespassing by OHV riders and dumpers.
- 2) Staff proposes a stronger law enforcement presence at Lake Mathews. The budget reflects a \$75,000 line item for this effort.
- 3) The budget contemplates a \$500,000 line item for management of the lands at Lake Mathews and Steele Peak. That is in anticipation of the completion of DUDEK's work on the SKR Management and Monitoring Plan.
- 4) Staff recommends a \$25,000 augmentation as it has become apparent that the RCHCA will need to do additional weed abatement at the Lake Skinner Reserve.
- 5) Staff proposes a \$30,000 public outreach program that would address the programs the RCHCA has provided to home schoolers and a new "Teach the Teachers" event that staff has discussed with UCR. Teach the Teachers would be a multi-day symposium for local science teachers at the Motte-Rimrock Reserve which would allow UCR professors to offer an in-depth presentation on our local

science and natural history.

- 6) This budget identifies the \$100,000 one-time donation to the Motte-Rimrock Reserve for facility improvements as discussed earlier in the Board meeting.
- 7) Staff recommends that the RCHCA set aside an additional \$15,000 in order to comply with the auditor's recommendation to audit the SKR mitigation fee collections.
- 8) Staff has identified a three-year operating reserve fund that would allow for the RCHCA to continue in its basic administrative functions for a period of three years in the event that there is a down-turn in the economy and the SKR mitigation fee collections aren't as strong as they are at present. The three-year reserve fund is included in the budget at \$4.5 million.

Ms. Lovelady asked that the Board approve the proposed budget for FY 2006/07.

Mr. Betro stated he would rather we not have a deficit budget if we can rearrange some monies to keep it positive.

Ms. Lovelady stated that the budget includes an \$800,000 amount in the Land Acquisition item that is a carry-over from the previous year. Mr. Betro and staff discussed the \$500,000 allocated for consultant services. Staff noted that in FY 2005/06, the DUDEK contract was delayed and some of the costs anticipated would carry over to FY 2006/07. The remainder of the funds would be set aside for anticipated ongoing management and monitoring of RCHCA lands at Lake Mathews and Lake Skinner.

Ms. Luna stated that with respect to the core acquisitions, the RCHCA has met its acquisition obligations. What has happened is that there have been strategic parcels next to the RCHCA reserves where we can build upon the reserve. Such opportunities are rare and unpredictable. They can range anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1.2 million. The Board has had the practice of putting more money in that account so as to allow for land acquisitions, should they arise.

Ms. Luna stated that we can reduce the amount in the land acquisition budget in order to have a positive net operating budget. It is at the Board's discretion.

Chairperson Lowe stated she felt Mr. Betro's concern with approving a deficit budget is well taken. She would like to see the RCHCA rearrange some monies so that the proposed budget for FY 2006/2007 is a positive budget. She suggested that over the next month or so, RCHCA staff work to project a three-year plan for land acquisitions. She would like to see what impact that would have on the reserves.

Ms. Luna stated that it is very difficult to determine how much money will be spent on land acquisitions or even when lands will become available for possible purchase. Therefore, she recommended that we decrease the \$800,000 set aside for land acquisitions down to \$400,000 so that we can have a net positive budget. She stated that we could schedule a special Board meeting should we need additional monies for a land purchase.

MOTION for approval of item 4.4 with the reduction of \$400,000 for land acquisitions to allow a positive budget for FY 2006/2007: Dom Betro

SECOND: Eugene Montanez

Motion Approved

Ayes – 6

None Opposed

4.5 Consideration of Replacement of Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (SWRCMSR) Office at Lake Skinner

Gail Barton stated that she recently visited the SWRCMSR. After that visit, she asked the Reserve Manager to provide her with some pictures of the Reserve office. Ms. Barton shared the pictures with the Board. She reported that it was obvious that there were structural problems (i.e., eave failure, doors not closing properly, and roofing problems). There are also safety issues (i.e., broken window, broken screens, carpeting in need of repair, electrical problems, and uneven floor). There are also health issues due to rodents being in the building.

Ms. Barton recommended that the RCHCA Board approve the revised staff recommendation which is to authorize RCHCA staff to attend the next RMC meeting and request the following: 1) the Reserve Manager move immediately to the Alamo School; 2) ask that the RCHCA explore cost sharing with other members of the RMC to make the schoolhouse ADA compliant and to provide the necessary partitions and office equipment to make this work.

Ms. Barton stated that that Alamo School is a historical building that has been restored. She stated that there is an ADA issue with the facility; however, it is not monumental.

MOTION for approval of item 4.5: Eugene Montanez

SECOND: Steve Brown

Motion Approved

Ayes–6

None Opposed

Mr. Betro asked how we are going to augment the budget for FY 2006/2007 to assist with the financial aspect of this move.

Ms. Barton stated that she has been attending the RMC meetings for several years and that they have money in their budget to pay for the ADA ramp that will need to be constructed. She doesn't believe there will be any major expenses associated with this relocation.

5. CLOSED SESSION

No items were scheduled for closed session.

6. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m. The next meeting will be held on August 17, 2006.