

MIDPINES PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES FINAL

(Approved as amended 9/11/24)

DATE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14th, 2024
TIME: 6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Midpines Community Center
Midpines Park, 6364 Highway 140
Midpines, CA 95345

1. Roll Call

Seeing a quorum, the regular meeting of the Midpines Planning Advisory Committee (MPAC) was called to order by Chair Francisco at 6:01 PM.

Present: Gary Francisco, Heather Huppe, Nancy Parke, Adam Ferguson, Charles Lammers, Candy O'Donel-Browne, Caroline McGrath, Rosemarie Smallcombe (Supervisor), Angela Heiss

Excused: Eileen Collins, Art Baggett (Planning Commissioner)

Staff: Polina Pivak, Steve Engfer

Guest: Michael/Marco (NorCal Carpenter's Union), Corey Casey, Kristina Rylands, Laura Wisdom, Angela (NorCal Carpenter's Union), Janette Gamble

2. Approval of Minutes:

a. Meeting of July 10th, 2024

By a unanimous vote, the MPAC approved a motion by Lammers, with a second by Heiss, to accept the minutes as presented.

Note: Caroline McGrath cannot vote because she was not present at the meeting.

Smallcombe pointed out an error in Section 5.a.: it is the property owner's responsibility to evict the squatters, therefore the sentence should be revised to remove, "and Corrina Miranda."

By a unanimous vote, the MPAC approved an amended motion by Lammers, with a second by Heiss to approve the minutes as corrected.

3. Public comments

Francisco stated that the Mariposa Friends of the Library, Mariposa Fire Safe Council, and Mariposa Resource Conservation District, and Mariposa Fire Department are sponsoring an event on August 24th from 10 Am to Noon at the Midpines Community Hall to provide information on wildfire preparation.

Gamble asked who to contact regarding road quality concerns. Lammers suggested Public Works. Francisco stated that Supervisor Smallcombe would be the best contact.

4. Ferguson Project Update with Corey Casey, Project Manager

Lammers announced to the group that he and Huppe met with Casey prior to the meeting to express their concerns in the area.

Casey gave a presentation; including a history of the rockfall events that have occurred at the Ferguson Project location, rock shed project development, and a rendering of the proposed construction process. The project will be constructed from top-down, will take approximately 5 years to construct, and includes project elements and engineering that are unique. Project is currently in the process of obtaining funding and should begin construction in the spring to summer of 2025.

Ferguson asked about whether the road will be widened. Casey stated yes, however the area will be restored to the existing condition as much as possible

Rylands asked about compliance with the Wild and Scenic River Act. Casey confirmed that the project design has taken so long to complete to ensure compliance with the Act.

Huppe asked if traffic is expected to increase and Casey stated yes, but it will not be noticeable when compared to the existing conditions.

Rylands asked if the temporary bridges will be removed and Casey said yes, and it requires a highway closure to complete.

Casey stated that another interesting point in the project is the potential for operating the equipment remotely as well as the sheer load the project is expected to support.

Francisco asked about traffic concerns that have been previously discussed by MPAC. Casey explained that there is a potential to work with Autocamp to resolve some of the issues, however studies must be completed before a project can be initiated. Therefore, Casey expects a safety and operational study to be completed along Highway 140. Casey said that he and his team can return to present on the results of the studies.

Casey asked if there are any additional concerns other than safety at the curve near Autocamp. Lammers said that there is a concern near the Junebug and they already showed Casey some of the other signage and speed issues along Highway 140.

5. Presentation and Discussion on Bear Creek Clean-up with Kristina Rylands, Vice-Chair of Upper Merced River Watershed Council Board

Rylands gave a presentation on the Upper Merced River Watershed Council, its mission, and scope. The Great Sierra River Clean-Up will happen on September 21st. Rylands was contacted by Lammers to conduct a clean-up of Bear Creek, which is a major tributary of the Merced River, due to existing debris in the creek. Rylands expressed the potential issues associated with the clean-up, such a need for equipment and property owner authorization, and requested a discussion on planning the clean-up with MPAC.

Lammers stated that they could partner with Outward Bound for volunteers. Rylands said she already communicated with the organization, and they are willing to help. Lammers said that this clean-up could be tentatively set to occur a year from now. Lammers suggested surveying the creek and identifying the location of large debris in Bear Creek around February with the actual clean-up occurring in September. McGrath has offered the Yosemite Bug as a location to stage equipment. There will need to be assistance to haul the debris to the County Landfill.

Francisco stated that the MPAC is happy to help find additional resources and with participating in the clean-up.

Ferguson asked if the Creek is public domain. Pivak said not necessarily, and this will need to be researched. Engfer stated that a Fish and Wildlife Streambed Alteration Permit may be required to complete the work in the creek bed. GIS staff would be able to obtain a list of property owners along the creek within the project scope for obtaining authorization. Engfer suggested that the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation will be interested in the project and that Rylands should develop a team.

Lammers suggested that the clean-up start around Oak Road and continue downstream as necessary.

Parke suggested also including invasive species removal in the clean-up.

6. Presentation from the Prescribed Burn Association by Laura Wisdom

Wisdom gave a presentation on the Yosemite Gateway Prescribed Burn Cooperative, its history, mission, and scope. Anyone can become involved. This model is based on historical burn cooperatives in California. Members pool resources, knowledge, and time to conduct burns.

Wisdom described how to become involved, especially for interested property owners, including the planning process, and obtaining permits. Improving ecosystem health, cultural burns, and optimizing grazing are just a few of the reasons for conducting a burn on a property. All prescribed burns are conducted safely. Wisdom provided information on the liability associated with prescribed burns.

Wisdom will be conducting a home hardening and defensible space workshop in Ahwahnee this Saturday. Wisdom provided information on additional events in the community.

Gamble asked how a burn is conducted, which Wisdom explained. MPAC asked additional clarifying questions on the process for becoming involved. Wisdom encouraged the group to join the group. Historically burn bans have lifted in November, which is when work can begin. MPAC discussed other funding opportunities for property management.

7. Committee Business

8. Updates and Activity Reports

a. Community Plan Draft Update

Engfer stated that the document has to be prepared and sent out for public review.

b. Muir Lodge Site –Status Update

Update provided with Supervisor Updates Item 8.i.

c. Oak Fire – Update, Evacuation Routes and Lessons Learned Discussion

Update provided with Supervisor Updates Item 8.i.

d. KOA/Terramor Status Update

No update. The project proponents will be conducting water testing.

e. Whispering Pines/Bear Creek Cabins Update

No update.

f. Oak Road Bridge Project Update

Update provided with Supervisor Updates Item 8.i.

g. CALTRANS Project/Study Update

Update provided with Supervisor Updates Item 8.i.

h. Planning Commissioner Update

Engfer provided an update; the Planning Department will be presenting an online zoning access tool to the Planning Commission on August 16th, in addition to a new appointment system for the Planning Department. There will be a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on August 20th for the new online permitting system that is currently in development.

i. Supervisor Updates

Item was moved up before Item 5. Smallcombe provided an update on the Muir Lodge Site; the property owner was informed that they are liable for the existing fire risk and other issues that might occur on the property because of the squatters and the legal process for evicting the squatters.

Public Works has responded to the ongoing fire evacuation concerns expressed by MPAC, especially along Colorado Road, and they plan on adding signage along Colorado Road that read, "steep narrow road," and "road narrows," once approved by the County Engineer. Additionally, Colorado Road is currently at its maximum width, however brushing occurs annually. Smallcombe has reached out to the Sheriff to confirm that the Sheriff's Office is working with the National Park Service to mitigate the issues that occurred with the Oak Fire evacuation and Highway 140 closure.

Smallcombe provided an update that Bear Creek Cabins is currently still operating as a vacation rental.

Smallcombe will meet with Nancy Parke to discuss obtaining the necessary information to make the Oak Road Bridge project successful, such as easement information.

The Board of Supervisors authorized the County to purchase the Spring Hill property, which will become the permanent location for County Fire.

9. Future agenda items

MPAC directed staff to include the following items on the next agenda:

- Same Updates and Activity Reports

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, MPAC was adjourned at 8:04 PM by Chair Francisco.