



**CITY OF SAN RAMON
OPEN SPACE TASK FORCE
SUMMARY OF ACTION**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**CHAIR CAROL LOPEZ • VICE CHAIR DAVID ERNEST •
DONNA KERGER • HARRY SACHS • DOMINIQUE YANCEY
CITIZEN MEMBER JOHN YOUNGBLOOD • GHAD LIAISON PHIL O'LOANE**

**San Ramon Council Chamber
2222 Camino Ramon**

**Meeting Time
April 9, 2012 - 5:30 P.M.**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Carol Lopez; Vice Chair David Ernest; Donner Kerger; Harry Sachs; John Youngblood; and Phil O'Loane

Absent: Dominique Yancey

Staff: Robin Bartlett, District Engineer/Division Manager; Karen McNamara, Public Services Director & Interim Parks & Community Development Director; and Christina Buna, Recording Secretary

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

-None-

5. CONSENT ITEMS

-None-

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6.1 *Summary of Actions from the March 12, 2012 meeting. Approved as presented.*

7. TASK FORCE BUSINESS

Laura Mercier, Executive Director of the Tri-Valley Conservancy, gave an informative presentation of the Tri-Valley Conservancy and methods of land preservation.

The Tri-Valley Conservancy is the only land trust that is accredited in Alameda County. The Tri-Valley Conservancy was founded in 1994 and is made up of 10 to 12 Board of Directors, 60+ volunteers and 4 staff.

The South Livermore Valley Area Plan was created by 1993 to provide to provide strong economic incentives and equitable development regulations to promote investment in viticulture and ensure that development limits be placed on agricultural lands.

The South Livermore Valley Agricultural Land Trust was established in 1994 as a 501(c)3 non-profit, public benefit corporation to preserve and protect important agricultural and open space lands. The South Livermore Valley Agricultural Land Trust became the Tri-Valley Conservancy with an expanded geographic area covering the cities of Livermore, Pleasanton, Dublin, San Ramon and the Sunol area.

Land Trusts obtain funding from mitigations, grants or donations.

Ms. Mercier stated when Ruby Hill was approved the City of Pleasanton, City of Livermore, Alameda County, the Developer and property owners all agreed there was a formula based on square footage per house to be built and is adjusted every year. When a developer pulls a permit and pays the fee based on the square footage of what the home will be, the amount paid for the permit goes to the City of Pleasanton and is then transferred into the Tri-Valley Conservancy's funding. Tri-Valley Conservancy received \$14 million to purchase land or conservation easements. The Ruby Hill mitigation money is restricted to only the South Livermore Area Plan. Tri-Valley Conservancy has 4,300 acres of conservation easements, 2,800 acres are agriculture and 500 acres of open space – the majority of the land is privately owned.

Mr. Ernest asked if the Tri-Valley Conservancy is limited to only Alameda County. Ms. Mercier answered Tri-Valley Conservancy has kept their border to up to Contra Costa/Alameda County not interfere with other groups, but they are not limited.

Ms. Mercier stated it is not recommended for cities to hold conservation easements.

Ms. Kerger asked if the Walnut Creek Land Trust is separate from the City of Walnut Creek. Ms. Mercier responded that she is not aware of the Walnut Creek Land Trust.

Ms. Mercier stated in the City of Livermore there is a Specific Plan that consists of five specific areas on the southern boundary of Livermore. The City of Livermore has conditions for the developers that state for every house built an acre of land must be preserved and for every acre of land built on another acre of land must be preserved. Another condition the City of Livermore required was the property owner had to plant and maintain vineyards for eight years.

Ms. Kerger asked if there are partnerships between Tri-Valley Conservancy and Public Agencies. Ms. Mercier responded Tri-Valley Conservancy does partner with Public Agencies.

Ms. Mercier stated there are two different ways to look at funding: 1) Do you want to own the property or 2) Do you want the conservation easement. Ms. Mercier stated the reason to own the property is because you want to keep and maintain that land. Ms. Mercier stated a conservation easement is to allow the owners to keep the land, but you pay for the conservation easement.

Ms. Mercier stated once a land trust receives a conservation easement, it is required to monitor the land annually and to enforce the restrictions.

Ms. Kerger asked if improvements to the land that are documented each year determine the value of the land. Ms. Mercier responded that the question leads to another discussion with the tax assessors. Ms. Mercier stated that with conservation easements there is a State policy, but it is how each County assessor interprets the policy can determine the value of the land. Ms. Mercier stated there is not a clear answer to Ms. Kerger's question, but did state the land that adjacent to a conservation easement does increase in value.

Stewardship must monitor resource management plan and restoration enforcement. Ms. Mercier stated for liability reasons to be aware of adjacent property owners and uses.

Tri-Valley Conservancy purchased a property in fee and will transfer the property to Livermore Area Recreation and Park District. The initial cost was \$1.5 million for the acquisition of the land. Tri-Valley Conservancy received grants from Coastal Conservancy for \$600,000, Altamont Open Space for \$300,000, East Bay Regional Park District \$150,000 and Livermore Area Recreation and Park District for \$150,000. The total cost to Tri-Valley Conservancy for the acquisition of the land was \$300,000 plus escrow closing fees. The reason for the \$1.2 million in grants is because the land that was purchased is going to connect a trail between Livermore Area Recreation and Park District and Camp Arroyo. Ms. Mercier stated it is possible to have public use trails on private land, but it is limited. Ms. Mercier stated trail corridors are important for public use.

Ms. Kerger, Ms. Lopez and Mr. Ernest all thanked Ms. Mercier for presenting and the information that was provided was very helpful and enlightening.

Mr. Youngblood asked how long Tri-Valley Conservancy's accreditation is valid for. Ms. Mercier responded the accreditation is valid for 5 years and takes about a year to prepare for renewal. Ms. Mercier stated they receive accreditation Land Trust Alliance.

Ms McNamara asked what tasks the volunteers perform for Tri-Valley Conservancy. Ms. Mercier stated the volunteers will accompany the Stewardship Coordinator on the visits of the different properties or help pour wines at the Quest for Excellence Event. Ms. McNamara asked if the volunteers help with restoration projects. Ms. Mercier responded the volunteers used for restoration projects are arranged with NRCS or the Resource Conservation District.

Ms. Mercier stated endowment funding is extremely important in order to maintain the land. Ms. Kerger asked isn't that the benefit to get other agencies involved because other agencies may have different resources that can benefit the partnership. Ms. Mercier responded that it is a benefit to have different partnerships that can provide resources.

Ms. Kerger stated a conservancy would be ideal for the East and West side of San Ramon.

Mr. Youngblood asked if Tri-Valley Conservancy has an insurance policy. Ms. Mercier stated Tri-Valley Conservancy has supplemental insurance that has a lot of different conditions.

Mr. O'Loane asked what Tri-Valley Conservancy's involvement in a large project. Ms. Mercier stated ideally there would not be any development, but in reality where would the funding come from.

Ms. Mercier stated the Tri-Valley Conservancy has five appointees; City of Pleasanton, City of Livermore, Alameda County, Livermore Wine Growers Association and Friends of the Vineyards.

Mr. O'Loane asked what the typical timeframe when a landowner is ready do something with their property. Ms. Mercier responded they have not had to deal with that yet, but she is currently working on developing relationships with landowners.

Ms. Kerger asked how Tri-Valley Conservancy initially gets involved with land conservation. Ms. Mercier responded Tri-Valley Conservancy tries to consistently be in contact with City Officials, land owners and conservation groups to insist conservation occurs.

Ms. Lopez asked if the City of San Ramon was interested in pursuing land conservation would Tri-Valley willing to assist in Contra Costa County. Ms. Mercier responded Tri-Valley Conservancy would be willing to assist in Contra Costa County, but to work in partnership with the City of San Ramon would cost money.

Chair Lopez allowed for Public Comment:

Oral – Sassan Roham – 67 Foster Drive, San Ramon, 925-408-4000

Mr. Roham asked what rights the citizens of San Ramon have in regards to development on open space. Mr. Bartlett stated to get involved in the planning process of the specific open space of interest. Mr. Roham asked what the purpose of the Open Space Task Force is. Mr. Bartlett responded the general purpose of the task force is to discuss preservation of open space. Ms. McNamara recommended giving Mr. Roham's contact information to Phil Wong and Debbie Chamberlain to organize a meeting with staff to bring the citizens up to speed on what has already occurred with the land in question and what is being planned. Mr. O'Loane stated it is important for staff to be in contact with concerned citizens to hear their thoughts and opinions.

Mr. O'Loane requested the members of the Open Space Task Force receive a copy of the Conservation Easement Handbook mentioned in the article Conservation Land Trust Activities and Potential Impacts on Planning by Ann Taylor Schwing.

Mr. Sachs requested the staff to provide the members of the Open Space Task Force with maps of the trail corridors. Mr. Bartlett responded that staff is currently working on compiling those maps.

Mr. Sachs asked if there a conservancy group that operates in Contra Costa County. Ms. Mercier responded she would look in to and inform staff of her findings.

Ms. Kerger asked what the goals were of the Open Space Task Force. Mr. O'Loane responded that he has asked the City Manager to provide the City Council with an update of the Open Space Task Force and any recommendations of goals for the group.

Mr. Youngblood asked for a clear direction of how involve the Open Space Task Force is expected to be in the decision of open space. Ms. Lopez responded that would be a question for staff to answer at a later time.

8. CONTINUED ITEMS

-None-

9. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Christina Buna