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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Executive Committee was called to order by Chair Ingram at 12:01 p.m., Wednesday, September 16, 2020, at the RCA Conference Room, 3403 Tenth Street, Suite 320, Riverside, California, 92501, and via Zoom.

2. ROLL CALL – was taken by April Boydd.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT	COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT
Jonathan Ingram, Chair – City of Murrieta***	Natasha Johnson, Vice Chair – City of Lake Elsinore
Larry Greene – City of Canyon Lake***	
Lesa Sobek – City of Menifee***	
Crystal Ruiz – City of San Jacinto***	
Kevin Jeffries – County of Riverside, District 1***	
Jeff Hewitt – County of Riverside, District 5	

*Arrived after start of meeting ** Departed before meeting adjourned ***via teleconference

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

4. CLOSED SESSION

(NO BUSINESS)

5. COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Committee Member announcements.

6. ADDITIONS/REVISIONS

There were no additions or revisions.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 19, 2020

M/S/C (City of San Jacinto/City of Canyon Lake) to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2020, meeting of the Executive Committee as submitted.

(6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 Abstain)

8. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MSHCP FEE COLLECTION REPORT FOR AUGUST 2020

Jennifer Fuller, Director of Administrative Services, reported that for the month of August 2020, the total MSHCP fee collection receipts was \$1,028,187.

M/S/C (City of Menifee/City of Canyon Lake) to approve this item as recommended:

- 1) Recommend that the RCA Board of Directors receive and file the Western Riverside County MSHCP Fee Collection Report for August 2020; and
- 2) Authorize staff to agendize this matter for the October 5, 2020, meeting of the RCA Board of Directors.

(6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 Abstain)

9. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION CONCERNING THE PROPOSED RCA'S MANAGEMENT AGENCY CHANGE

Honey Bernas, Interim Executive Director, reported that on August 5, 2020, the RCA Executive Committee voted unanimously to request that RCTC explore the possibility of becoming RCA's Managing Agency. She reported that RCTC responded positively to the request and on August 12, 2020, the RCTC Executive Committee acted to initiate a due diligence review to analyze this opportunity.

Ms. Bernas stated that currently, the RCA has a management arrangement with the County of Riverside and in this agreement, RCA assigned staff are County employees whose salaries and benefits are funded by RCA. The RCA also receives other services

RCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Page 3 of 8

September 16, 2020

from the County including IT, software, access to the County's accounting system, and some real estate and right of way services.

She further stated that during the past month, both RCA and RCTC have been attempting to determine if this change is feasible and if there are any fatal flaws. Ms. Bernas stated that both agencies have not identified any fatal flaws to date. She stated that she is confident that RCTC has the quality of leadership and technical skills to become RCA's management agency.

Ms. Bernas stated that RCA's focus is to transition to RCTC by the end of 2020, maintain institutional knowledge, ensure that nothing falls through the cracks, protect employees, eliminate contract redundancy, maximize funding and sources of funding, increase RCA's presence in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., improve and increase public engagement, complete land acquisition and reserve assembly, ensure organization and MSHCP stability, create efficiencies, and focus resources on MSHCP implementation.

Ms. Bernas stated that RCTC's focus is to do no harm to RCTC, complete cost recovery for any expenditures related to RCA, RCTC will have no assumption of financial obligations or of legal liabilities of RCA, identify and address any political concerns, protect the Measure A investment in MSHCP, ensure continued MSHCP benefit to RCTC projects, advance both agencies' ability to achieve their missions, integrate RCA staff into the RCTC organization, and ensure full staffing and resources.

Ms. Bernas stated that areas of assessment include the implementation mechanism, financial, legal, policy, contracts, and staff/organization.

Ms. Bernas stated that some findings have been noted from the assessment. The team has reviewed the implementation mechanism; the managing agency agreement; and the roles, responsibilities, and obligations. In the financial area, the team identified the need for financial independence, full cost recovery to the appropriate organization, and no assumption of financial obligations.

For clarification Ms. Bernas stated that it's important to remember that RCA will continue to remain a separate legal entity governed by the existing Joint Powers Agreement. The RCA will continue to have its own Board of Directors.

In the area of staff and organization, the team noted that workloads are high for both agencies, an integrated organization will be required, and sufficient resources are essential. In the interim organization, a 35% staffing increase will be necessary and retention of consultants and County systems at initiation will be crucial.

Ms. Bernas shared several assumptions and impacts to staff. All existing RCA staff are expected to be offered a position with RCTC and there will be alignment with RCTC classifications and salary ranges which could cause varying classification and salary impacts. Staff will be fully integrated into the RCTC organization and the PERS unfunded liability and existing leave accruals will be addressed upon separation from

RCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Page 4 of 8

September 16, 2020

the County. All current vacancies will need to be filled and a position will be added to the Reserve Management and Monitoring group. Special assignment compensation for impacted existing RCTC staff positions will be added and RCTC will be reimbursed for all staff time charged to RCA activities. Full staff resources will be needed to accommodate the workloads and RCA's current office location we be maintained.

She stated that the RCA Deputy Executive Director position will need filled and the RCTC Executive Director will take over as the Executive Director of RCA. RCA will also need to fill the Real Property Agent position and hire one new Sr. Ecologist for the Director of Reserve Management & Monitoring.

Chair Ingram stated that adding the positions will allow for in house services instead of outsourcing.

Ms. Bernas stated that RCTC will need four new positions:

- Deputy Director (Approximately 75% RCTC/25% RCA),
- Deputy Director Finance and Procurement Analyst (Approximately 75% RCTC/25% RCA),
- Legislative Affairs Analyst (Approximately 75% RCA/25% RCTC), and a
- Public Affairs Analyst (Approximately 75% RCA/25% RCTC)

Ms. Bernas stated that RCA's existing budget including salaries and benefits is approximately \$2.5 million. This amount does not include the Deputy Executive Director or Property Agent, which are estimated at approximately 500,000 for salaries and benefits. RCA would be looking at an estimated total increase of \$3.3 million for the first year.

Chair Ingram stated that RCA will see an increase the first year, but that will go down once things are balanced out.

Ms. Bernas stated that at separation, RCA would need to make the County whole for the PERS unfunded liability and payout the annual leave for staff. RCA funds have already been committed for the unfunded liability, and a portion of the leave buyout will happen regardless of a change in managing agency. RCA will need to transition off the County's IT systems, financial system, miscellaneous software, and equipment.

She stated that the transition will occur in three states. Stage 1 will likely take the rest of this fiscal year and include RCTC making conditional job offers to existing staff assigned to RCA and on-board new employees. RCTC will assume overall management responsibilities; launch a comprehensive organizational analysis; review, modify, and/or cancel duplicative contracts (potential cost savings and efficiency gains); initiate the development of a process improvement plan; initiate stakeholder outreach; and continue the Nexus Study approval process.

She stated that Stage 2 will likely begin in July 2021 and could take a couple years. Stage two will include recruitment of a permanent Deputy Executive Director assigned to RCA responsibilities; implement recommendations from organizational analysis

RCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Page 5 of 8

September 16, 2020

(could restructure departments, consolidate departments, and/or add positions); enhance public outreach and education regarding the MSHCP; continue and enhance proactive legislative outreach and grant efforts; and set priorities for the completion of the MSHCP, responsible access to public lands, and policies and procedures regarding the ongoing management of conservation areas.

She stated that Stage 3 will begin in 2024 and include continuing implementation of the MSHCP, continuous improvement of governance structure, and a gradual change in focus from acquisition to maintenance of acquired land.

Ms. Bernas stated that the next steps will be for RCA and RCTC to continue with the due diligence process. RCTC and RCA Executive Committees will receive updates at their respective meetings in October. The final decision will be determined by both the RCA and RCTC Board of Directors. She further stated that RCTC's expertise in right-of-way acquisition, management, legislative advocacy, grant funding, and coordination with state and federal agencies is outstanding. These are areas that are critical to RCA in accomplishing its mission.

The successful implementation of the MSHCP is vital to achieving the future economic, transportation, and conservation goals of western Riverside County. Both RCA and RCTC have a shared interest in the success of the MSHCP for acquiring reserve lands for habitat protection and for expediting the development of transportation infrastructure. There is a clear synergy between our two agencies.

While staff has already done a significant amount of work in analyzing the management transition, both agencies are still finalizing key details and that process is ongoing. RCTC will receive an update at their next Executive Committee meeting in October, as will RCA's Executive Committee.

If a decision is made by both Executive Committees to recommend to their Boards that the process move forward, then it would be up to the RCA Board of Directors and RCTC's Board of Commissioners to make a final determination as policy makers whether to move forward with this effort.

Board Member Sobek asked if the Presentation given by the Interim Executive Director would be shared with the Board of Directors.

Ms. Bernas stated that the Board of Directors will be updated as new information becomes available.

The Executive Committee, with input from staff, discussed the due diligence process in regards to the possible merge and the importance of being transparent.

Supervisor Jeffries stated that he is in full support of the merger and keeping the full Board updated.

Board Member Hewitt stated that all information presented to the Executive Committee is available to the public and that an email to the full Board would be acceptable to keep them updated.

Chair Ingram stated that staff can send an update to the full Board as new information comes forward.

Steve DeBaun, Legal Counsel, suggested that the Executive Committee provide the Chair working with the Interim Executive Director the updates to provide to the Board.

Ms. Bernas reminded the Executive Committee that the Board meets in October.

Board Member Sobek stated that she would leave the decision up to the Interim Executive Director and Chair to decide if they want to send an email to the full Board or wait until the Board meetings to give an update. The Executive Committee agreed.

10. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION CONCERNING THE NEXUS STUDY

Honey Bernas, Interim Executive Director, reported that she met with the BIA and they completed their audit. She stated that they found no issues with the Nexus Study update and requested a 20-year extension or a two phase implementation. Ms. Bernas suggested a two-phase implementation with a 50% fee increase in July 2021 and a 50% fee increase in January 2022. She stated that staff would like to bring the Nexus Study presentation to the Executive Committee in November and to the full Board for action in December.

The Executive Committee, with input from staff, discussed bringing the Nexus Study forward for approval. It was decided to bring the Nexus Study update presentation to the Executive Committee in November and to the full Board for action in December.

11. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

11.1 DISCUSSION OF COVID-19 RELATED EXPENDITURES

Jennifer Fuller, Director of Administrative Services, stated that as of September 16, 2020, RCA has incurred approximately \$28 thousand of COVID related expenditures. As of September 16, 2020, \$21 thousand has been reimbursed by the County from CARES Act funding. She further stated that staff is seeking clarification from the County if the more current amounts will be reimbursed as some of the purchases were preapproved by the Executive Office. These amounts do not include any costs related to our Park Rangers from July forward because the billings had not been received in time to report on them.

12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: (Committee members are invited to suggest additional items to be brought forward for future discussion.)

There were no future agenda items recommended.

13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

13.1 UPDATE REGARDING FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Tricia Campbell, Director of Reserve Management & Monitoring, reported that she has been working to gather information from people who specialize in conservation and fire management. She also reached out to someone who specializes in fire ecology. She was able to speak with someone from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on what worked and didn't work in regard to the Orange County NCCP Fire Management Plan. She suggested RCA look at what was done for the Lake Mathews Fire Prevention Plan. Parks is in the process of onboarding the TAP employees for fuel abatement. She stated that she is almost ready to put together a scope of work for review in terms of the next steps to hire someone for the Plan.

Chair Ingram stated that it's important to add specifics.

Ms. Campbell stated that it's important that RCA is very clear and concise on what is needed in the proposal. She stated that RCA has a very unique circumstances so it's very important that RCA be specific.

Chair Ingram stated that the first time will be more work, but after that it should be just maintenance.

Ms. Campbell stated that she will make sure RCA retains the necessary services.

13.2 UPDATE CONCERNING THE CALIFORNIA POPPIES ON RCA RESERVE LAND IN THE WALKER CANYON AREA

There were no updates.

13.3 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION CONCERNING MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE MURRIETA HILLS AREA

Tricia Campbell, Director of Reserve Management & Monitoring, stated that she met with the mountain biking community in regard to the escarpment area. She stated that some mapping that includes the escarpment and Murrieta Hills area will be coming from the mountain biking community as to existing trails they value most. She stated that no one is making commitments to anything yet.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no more items before the Executive Committee, Chair Ingram adjourned the meeting at 1:23 p.m. The next meeting of the Western Riverside County Regional

RCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Page 8 of 8

September 16, 2020

Conservation Authority Executive Committee will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, at 12:00 p.m., at the Riverside Centre, 3403 Tenth Street, Suite 320, Third Floor, RCA Conference Room, Riverside, California, 92501.

Prepared by:



April Boydd

Administrative Manager/Clerk of the Board

Respectfully submitted:



Jennifer Fuller

Director of Administrative Services