



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** PARKS

**File #:** 19-1102

Board Meeting Date: 11/12/2019

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**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Peggy Jensen, Interim Parks Director

**Subject:** Land Acquisition and Management Assessment

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Accept the Parks Department Land Acquisition and Management Assessment Process.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The San Mateo County Parks Department ("Department") manages 23 parks and recreation areas which include over 16,000 acres of parkland and almost 200 miles of trails. Over three million visitors enjoyed County Parks last fiscal year. The Department's 75 full time staff employees welcome and educate visitors, maintain park facilities, and restore and preserve natural resources.

Responsible land management and provision of quality visitor experiences requires funding for maintenance and capital repairs and adequate staffing. Increasing County park acreage - either through purchase of new properties or taking on management of property owned by other organizations - increases Department responsibilities. To promote informed decisions, the Department has developed a land acquisition and management assessment process. The Department process is based on a California State Parks process that considers opportunities, costs, and obligations associated with expanding State Park responsibilities.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The proposed Land Acquisition and Management Assessment Process ("Assessment"), assures that the Board of Supervisors ("Board") is aware of the impacts and costs of adding new lands, either owned or managed, to the County Park system prior to making a final decision on such an action. A copy of the Assessment Process, including a process flow diagram, is attached to this memo and described below.

### **STEP 1: Initial Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis**

When asked to evaluate expansion of the parks system, Department staff will prepare the following

two documents for review by the Board and the County Manager's Office.

- Draft Initial Assessment will include new recreation and program opportunities created by County ownership and/or management of the property, the ecological value of the property, existing improvements and facilities on the property, wildfire threats present on the property, and an assessment of how ownership and/or management of the property could support or adversely impact other County parks and programs.
- Draft Service Capacity Analysis will include an estimate of the annual operating cost (including staffing) to manage the property as a County park, estimated cost to plan, permit, design, and construct the visitor serving amenities necessary to convert a property into a County park, the cost of habitat restoration and preservation efforts needed to restore and preserve the ecological value of the property; and details on how County ownership and/or management of a property could benefit or adversely impact other County parks.

These two documents will be presented during a Closed Session where the Board will provide direction to the Department on how to proceed. If allowed by the property owner, this step will include a site visit. Also, to minimize costs, no consultants will be hired to prepare any reports or studies during this step.

#### **STEP 2: Ownership: Due Diligence and Assessment and Analysis Updates**

If the Board desires to purchase a property, detailed due diligence will be done, the draft documents will be updated and then presented to the Board in closed session for a decision on the purchase opportunity. The updated documents will include a 10-year projection of both the capital and operating expenses associated with managing the respective property as a County park.

#### **STEP 2: Management: Updates for a Board Ad Hoc Committee**

When a property management opportunity is under consideration, staff will visit the site, update the Assessment and Analysis based on potential management responsibilities, and make a recommendation to an Ad Hoc Board Committee of the Board.

#### **STEP 3: Presentation to the Parks Commission in Closed Session**

For property purchases, before the end of the due diligence period, the final assessment and analysis will be presented to the Parks Commission at a closed session. For property management proposals, the Parks Commission will review the assessment after a recommendation is made by the Ad Hoc Committee.

#### **STEP 4: Consideration by the Full Board**

After presentation to the Parks Commission the Department will present ownership and management opportunity recommendations to the full Board for consideration.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with adopting this policy. However, implementation of the assessment process will help the Department maintain park facilities, continue to offer quality visitor services, and budget more effectively and accurately.