

SUMMARY MINUTES

ABAG Regional Planning Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 2, 2014
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 8th Street, Oakland, California

1. CALL TO ORDER

Anu Natarajan, Vice Chair and Councilmember, City of Fremont, called the meeting to order at 1:12 pm.

A quorum of the committee was not present.

Members Present

Susan L. Adams, Supervisor
Ronit Bryant, Councilmember
Tilly Chang, Executive Director

Linda Craig
Diane Dillon, Supervisor
Pat Eklund, Councilmember
Pradeep Gupta, Councilmember
Scott Haggerty, Supervisor
Erin Hannigan, Supervisor
John Holtzclaw
Linda Jackson, Planning Manager

Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director
Nate Miley, Supervisor
Karen Mitchoff, Supervisor
Anu Natarajan, Vice Mayor, (RPC Vice Chair)
Julie Pierce, Councilmember
Laurel Prevetti, Assistant Planning Director
Carlos Romero
Pixie Hayward Schickele
Warren Slocum, Supervisor

Jurisdiction/Agency

County of Marin
City of Mountain View
SFMTA
(County and City of San Francisco)
League of Women Voters--Bay Area
County of Napa
City of Novato
City of South San Francisco
County of Alameda
County of Solano
Sierra Club
Transportation Authority of Marin
(Congestion Management Agency)
Greenbelt Alliance
County of Alameda
County of Contra Costa
City of Fremont
City of Clayton (ABAG President)
City of San Jose (BAPDA)
Urban Ecology
California Teachers Association
County of San Mateo

Members Absent

Shiloh Ballard
Andy Barnes, Policy Chair
Desley Brooks, Councilmember
Paul Campos
Julie Combs, Councilmember
Dave Cortese, Supervisor, (RPC Chair)
Michael Lane, Policy Director
Kristina Lawson, Councilmember
Mark Luce, Supervisor
Eric Mar, Supervisor
Harry Price, Mayor
David Rabbitt, Supervisor

Jurisdiction/Agency

Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Urban Land Institute
City of Oakland
Building Industry of America--Bay Area
City of Santa Rosa
County of Santa Clara
NPH
City of Walnut Creek
County of Napa
City and County of San Francisco
City of Fairfield
County of Sonoma

Mark Ross, Councilmember	(ABAG Vice President)
Carol Severin, Associate Director	City of Martinez
James P. Sperring, Supervisor	East Bay Regional Park District
Egon Terplan, Regional Planning Director	County of Solano
	SPUR

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. APPROVAL OF REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 5, 2014

Member Haggerty indicated corrections.

Minutes could not be approved – quorum not present.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Committee Members

Vice Chair Anu Natarajan welcomed new members and asked for introductions.

Members Pradeep Gupta, Tilly Chang, Warren Slocum and Carlos Romero introduced themselves. Member Eric Mar was not present.

Member Eklund thanked ABAG staff for their input on a report concerning ABAG, and encouraged other RPC members to ask other elected officials to attend ABAG General Assembly.

B. Staff

None

5. SESSION OVERVIEW BY Miriam Chion, ABAG Planning and Research Director

Ms. Chion provided highlights of the General Assembly, introduced current session on open space (PCAs) as part of Plan Bay Area Implementation, and detailed the schedule of RPC topics for the rest of the calendar year.

Member Eklund indicated a desire to discuss the Plan Bay Area update process, particularly public outreach.

Member Adams expressed a desire to balance individual community needs with a regional vision especially around transportation issues.

Chair Natarajan asked for more discussion of community engagement issues

6. PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA PROGRAM UPDATE

Information

Laura Thompson and Mark Shorett, ABAG staff, introduced the new criteria for Priority Conservation Area (PCA) designations, the new application process, and the timeline update. They then took questions and comments.

Member Gupta asked whether ABAG's public dollars could be compatible for use in a for-profit agricultural lands PCA.

Ms. Thompson clarified that ABAG looks for support from the local agency where the proposed PCA is located before making a funding decision. She emphasized local agency support as the most important aspect of a PCA funding determination.

Ezra Rapport, ABAG Executive Director, added there may be an easement as part of the application so that the proposed PCA could continue to operate as a business but remain as agricultural land in the long term.

Member Adams expressed concern about already designated PCAs having to reapply for funding once they already had secured public support.

Mr. Shorett indicated that a PCA with resolution of support need not undergo the public process again.

Member Adams asked whether all previous PCAs would need to reapply for the program.

Ms. Chion indicated that ABAG wants to make sure that all existing PCAs conform to the new criteria.

Member Adams expressed concern about meeting the May deadline.

Ms. Chion clarified that the time period to respond is an entire year, May 2014 to May 2015.

Member Adams asked to expand the discussion to PCAs located in urban areas.

Member Prevetti expressed appreciation for staff's work. Was concerned that land identified by Greenbelt Alliance as urgently in need of protection from urban development and areas where there is a need for local consensus were not appropriately addressed by the PCA categories. Contrasted urban greening in Oakland with agricultural land preservation in Contra Costa and wanted staff input on developing more detailed PCA criteria.

Member Madsen thanked staff for their work and commented that previously approved PCAs should be able to transition to the new program with minimal adjustments. Agreed with Member Prevetti's comment.

Member Miley asked if having a support resolution from the jurisdiction is a new component and whether property owners need to be notified that their property is being considered for a PCA designation.

Ms. Chion answered that notifying property owners is not a requirement and that ABAG assumes that if a PCA is supported by a council resolution there is enough consensus.

Member Miley expressed concern that many property owners were not being notified of PCA designations affecting their land. Asked for clarification concerning PDAs and PCAs informing the One Bay Area Grant Program.

Ms. Chion clarified that part of the regional structure for allocating One Bay Area Grant funding was a PCA designation.

Member Miley asked whether a PCA designation has an impact on property values.

Ms. Chion answered that is something that ABAG has not analyzed and it will vary from location to location. It is neither a land use designation nor a zoning designation. In some cases if the PCA brings potential resources it might increase the value of the property.

Member Miley recommended that ABAG provide further clarification on the meaning of a PCA designation. Mentioned that property owners were concerned that their properties were taken without compensation or that their properties were devalued.

Member Eklund thinks that for PCAs to be appropriately vetted they should go before the elected body of the jurisdictions in question and be approved by a vote.

Ms. Chion stated that ABAG relies on the committee and the board to decide the level of engagement that they want the agency to have with the local property owners. If that is an item that the committee would like to be included in the criteria they will consider that.

Member Eklund suggested adding a question asking if the jurisdiction making the PCA designation has discussed it with the property owners within the PCA, if the answer is no, the city should determine how the property owner feels about it. Referring to the application process she asked whether it applies to all the PCAs even though for Marin, Sonoma, and Napa regional moneys have already been allocated and that those PCAs underwent a different application process.

Ms. Chion explained that the PCA program is a regional program and applies to all 9 counties. The PCA program does not mention funding but provides a designation that can be used to apply for existing open space preservation funds.

Member Eklund asked how PDA designations would work with the new timeline.

Ms. Chion responded that ABAG hopes to have all PCA and PDA designations, revisions and removals by July 2015, which is when ABAG aims to start the specific analysis.

Member Eklund indicated that ABAG has done a wonderful job on these categories, and asked a series of question about what specifically was included.

Member Dillon expressed concern that many of the PCAs in Napa County fall under multiple designations and that it would be exceedingly difficult for the county to notify all the affected property owners. She was also concerned that having PCA designations undergo the public process in Napa again would likely be redundant.

Ms. Chion suggested that if the property owner's notification requirement is a proposal, it should be discussed and that ABAG is relying on the jurisdictions to handle that process. For the update process, ABAG is looking to assess existing PCAs and to identify what additional information is needed (i.e. if a resolution is not available then they will request that). If there is already a resolution ABAG will accept it. For PCA designations, if it is clear that the PCA falls under one of the four categories then staff will need confirmation from the lead agency to accept or modify the designation. It is ABAG's intent to be more specific about the geography, the type of use or the quality of the land, and the local support. These were the three components that the committee and the board wanted to have in the process.

Member Haggerty expressed a concern about funding for PCAs. Asked for clarification on whether \$5 million had been previously set aside.

Ms. Chion confirmed \$5 million for the North Bay and \$5 million for the rest of the region.

Member Haggerty stated that the funds that are provided are not enough for the rural areas. Suggested having two PCA programs, one for county and one for city. Would like this committee to make a strong recommendation. He asked Mr. Rapport if it was MTC that funded PCAs the last time.

Mr. Rapport replied yes but he doesn't think that PCAs are limited to what occurs in OBAG which has a very small carve-out for agricultural areas. Every seven or eight years the State of California has a bond measure for open space, urban parks, greening, etc. and if they have this type of prioritization in place in their plan, it would facilitate how those funds would get applied for and spent.

Member Haggerty mentioned that the Committee should recommend to MTC and ABAG that the OBAG funding be greatly increased, because the amount of monies allocated was severely underfunding PCAs.

Member Pierce stated the need to clarify what PCAs are intended to do. They provide a significant agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions, and are in urgent need of protection due to pressure from urban development and other factors, supported by local consensus. ABAG needs to be very clear about what the intent of a PCA is and separate that from the reasons for the funding and what the funding is intended to do for the PCAs. They need to be very clear whether this is just a clarifying matter from staff or whether it does need to go through a public process.

Mr. Rapport states that the original message has been lost. These new requirements were simply to make sure we have: a) local government consensus b) categories that are useful for data collection c) higher quality mapping.

Member Haggerty expressed concern that the needs of the suburbs and rural areas were not being met. Brought up the idea of a density transfer credit from higher density jurisdictions to rural areas which has been done in Livermore with great success.

Member Romero asked if urban greening designation is a new designation.

Ms. Chion replied there are no new designations, they only had a PCA designation, and they are proposing four categories which the panel will help to clarify.

Member Romero asked if you fund PCAs how can you ensure that they remain PCAs for the long term as it is not a land use designation.

Mr. Rapport mentioned that this is a system for a PCA application but the actual administration and implementation of the PCA and award of dollars is a different process, explained that there are rules that would protect PCAs from converting to greenfield development.

Member Dillon wanted clarification on what constituted a resolution supporting a PCA.

Ms. Chion responded that PCA resolutions are specific references to areas that a local jurisdiction wants to designate for conservation.

Member Dillon wanted to clarify, if the ABAG Executive Board is not adopting these criteria until May 2014, whether any resolution adopted prior to that date approving the existing PCAs would suffice.

Ms. Chion confirmed that the Board will adopt the new criteria. The PCAs that have resolutions do not need to seek a new support resolution. For new PCAs or existing PCAs without resolutions ask the lead agency will need to provide a new support resolution. The final approval on the designation of a new PCA is July 2015.

Member Dillon wanted to confirm that the cut-off date for the new criteria is the date that ABAG Board adopts these criteria.

Ms. Chion responded that if they get PCA proposals before the Board adopts the new criteria they will use the existing criteria then they will assess what needs to be updated.

Member Chang expressed her appreciation for the staff's work. Wanted CMAs to be part of the conversation when jurisdictions are designating PCAs as CMAs were involved in the original funding allocation through MTC.

Member Madsen asked how many of the existing PCAs lack resolutions.

Mr. Shorett answered that only a few have resolutions.

Member Madsen suggested that PCAs go back to their home jurisdictions where the decision can be made to have a resolution so the PCA can be entered into the new program. Thinks that notifying property owners of this regional decision would be excessive.

Chair Natarajan commented that there are a few issues that they have to come back to: the intent of the PCAs, funding, whether resolutions are for existing and new PCAs, and a checklist for criteria.

7. PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATIONS

Mr. Shorett introduced the panel of Bay Area open space leaders who presented case studies related to each of the proposed Priority Conservation Area designations:

- Natural Resource Lands: Crystal Simons, Program Manager at Bay Area Open Space Council
- Agricultural Land: Jamison Watts, Executive Director at Marin Agricultural Land Trust
- Urban Greening: Lina Velasco, Senior Planner at City of Richmond
- Regional Recreation: Amy Hutzal, Program Manager at California Coastal Conservancy

Chair Natarajan thanked the panel for great presentations, and announced that the action item to adopt the revised PCA guidelines would be deferred to the next meeting, and invited members to provide additional feedback for staff to take into account.

Member Mitchoff commented that the Sacramento River Delta should be under some sort of protection and under consideration for a PCA designation.

Member Hotzclaw expressed concern about diverting scarce funding resources to urban greening.

Member Jackson was concerned about urban greening and whether or not such a PCA designation fit with the original intent of designating PCAs and whether it would syphon off resources from agricultural lands, open space and natural landscapes. Wanted further discussion about urban parks.

Member Madsen indicated that PCA planning framework is a tool to direct dollars and also a tool for jurisdictions and other entities to use in their planning. For urban greening he expressed a desire for more thoughtful discussion before potentially ending that as a category. For new PCA designations he thought the program would work better as an opt-out program as opposed to opt-in.

Member Bryant sees a disconnect between urban greening and the preservation of agricultural land, open space and natural landscapes. Thought that urban greening was an inappropriate designation for PCAs and that a separate program should be created.

Member Chang wanted performance measurements for PCAs that would ensure participation of all interested parties and to inform decision-makers when considering tradeoffs between development and planning.

Member Dillion commented that PCA categories are necessary as Napa is under constant urban development pressure from landfills and affordable housing on its agricultural preserve land and watershed.

Member Miley indicated that as a representative of urban areas he is puzzled about PCA funding going to the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) and asked for greater clarity about their PCA preservation plans and transparency in funding.

Member Eklund expressed interest in continuing this conversation to the next meeting. Agrees with Member Haggerty that MTC needs to put more money into the PCAs. Emphasized the importance of urban greening and thought that it was an appropriate PCA designation. Also thought that PCA funds could be used in efforts like the Marin Agricultural Land Trust and other trusts like it to leverage even more dollars.

Ms. Chion indicated that all questions will be taken into consideration for the preparation of the materials for the next meeting which will need to be a three hour meeting.

8. ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR NATARAJAN ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 3:20 PM

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 4, 2014 at 12:00 PM

Submitted:

Wally Charles
Administrative Assistant

Date: May 23, 2014

For information or to review audio recordings of ABAG Regional Planning Committee meetings, contact Wally Charles at (510) 464-7900 or info@abag.ca.gov.