

**CONEJO OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING**

**May 14, 2025
Civic Arts Plaza Board Room
2100 East Thousand Oaks Boulevard**

SUMMARY MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE:

Chair Huffer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Flag Salute.

2. ROLL CALL:

Director Engler, Director Newman, Director Nickles, Director Sullivan, and Chair Huffer were present.

Also present were: CRPD General Manager Friedl, Assistant Attorney Brick, CRPD Park Superintendent Belavic, COSCA Administrator Stark, COSCA Analyst Huber, Senior Recording Secretary Goor, and via Zoom was Office Supervisor Luxenberger.

3. PRESENTATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A. Introduction of New CRPD Parks Superintendent Patrick Belavic by CRPD General Manager Friedl who reviewed Mr. Belavic's extensive background, qualifications and positions at numerous country clubs, including Assistant Superintendent of Wood Ranch Golf Club, and Superintendent of Saticoy Golf Club. He has been Grounds Supervisor at CRPD since 2015 and his many contributions were noted.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR:

A. Approval of Minutes of February 19, 2025 Meeting.

Director Engler abstained as he was not present on February 19th.

Motion by Director Newman to approve the Minutes of the February 19, 2025 meeting and carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Newman, Nickles, Sullivan, and Chair Huffer; Noes – None; Abstain – Engler; Absent – None.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

A. 2025 Conejo Open Space Trails Action Committee (COSTAC) Appointments

- i. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- ii. Discussion and action regarding appointment of new members and alternates to COSTAC.

COSCA Analyst Huber discussed the recruitment process for four scheduled COSTAC vacancies including the City Clerk posting, press release, posting on COSCA social media, and other outreach efforts. She reported ten applications were received, three of which were from incumbents, nine were interviewed, and the results were forwarded to the Nominations Subcommittee. COSCA Analyst Huber reviewed the qualifications of the nominees and responded to Directors' questions regarding the lack of applications from the equestrian community. Directors suggested that volunteers who check the equestrian box on their annual Trail Workday waivers could be encouraged to take part in the committee.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Engler to approve staff recommendation (to find that this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA], and approve the Nomination Subcommittee's recommendations for new COSTAC members [Members with Terms 2025-2028 Doug Baker, Monique Baker, Susan Baukus, Kira Krukowski; and Alternates with Terms 2025-2026: Ryan Leddy Jessica Minucci, and Rachael Weitz]); carried 5 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Newman, Nickles, Sullivan, and Chair Huffer; Noes – None; Absent – None.

B. Authorization to Accept Three Open Space Parcels (7.14 acres) from the City of Thousand Oaks

- i. Find that this action is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 14, sections 15061, 15304, and 15317.
- ii. Adopt Resolution accepting the transfer of three open space parcels totaling 7.14 acres from the City of Thousand Oaks to COSCA for management as open space, authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to execute any, and all, documents necessary to accept access easement, and authorize staff to record the accepted transfer deeds.

COSCA Administrator Stark presented the report noting the properties purchased with the Community Recreation Facilities and Open Space Acquisition & Maintenance Endowment Fund, appropriated by City Council, have titles held in the City's name for subsequent transfer to COSCA. He reviewed the three properties to be transferred: 0.75 acre in Skyline open space, 4.46 acres in McCrea open space, and 1.93 acres in Arroyo Conejo open space. All have conservation value, are free of known title defects, are without infrastructure or defects that would compromise conservation values, and are already managed by COSCA.

COSCA Administrator Stark responded to Directors' questions noting only the Arroyo parcel has potential future trail access, and regarding additional fire abatement or trash removal, noting the parcel on North Moorpark Road has power lines. Southern California Edison used to perform that maintenance, but will not be doing so in the future; it will be added to COSCA's weed management program. He also responded that staff are now generally caught up with the review of historic documents for parcels intended for transfer to COSCA, but a few more may be transferred in the future.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Engler to approve staff recommendation (to find that this action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA], pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 14, sections 15061, 15304, and 15317; and adopt a Resolution accepting the transfer of three open space parcels totaling 7.14 acres from the City of Thousand Oaks to COSCA for management as open space, authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to execute any, and all, documents necessary to accept the properties, and authorize staff to record the accepted transfer deeds); carried 5 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Newman, Nickles, Sullivan, and Chair Huffer; Noes – None; Absent – None.

- C. Contract Approval for Arroyo Conejo Trash Removal Phase II
 - i. Find that this action is Exempt under Section 15304 and 15061 of the California Environmental Quality Act, Minor Alterations to Land and Common-Sense Exemption, respectively.
 - ii. Approve contract with Woods Maintenance Services, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$285,000 and authorize the COSCA Co-Chief Administrative Officer to execute the agreement.
 - iii. Authorize an additional appropriation of \$35,000 from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund (Land Management) to complete funding for the Arroyo Conejo Trash Removal Project, Phase II.

COSCA Administrator Stark presented the report noting that with the Arroyo Conejo invasive species removal project, the amount of trash in the riparian habitat became evident, often carried through the urban storm drain system originating from urban litter and unhoused individuals. The trash creates pollutants including microplastics as well as dangerous conditions for wildlife. In 2024 13.4 tons of trash along the corridor of a 2,000-foot section of Arroyo Conejo Creek was removed. Based on that success, the City released a Request for Proposals for the second phase of the removal project and received four proposals. Woods Maintenance Services, Inc. was chosen based on their experience with similar type and scale of projects, realistic assessment of the effort involved, and competitive price. The City budgeted \$250,000 toward the project and COSCA staff is recommending an additional \$35,000 from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund (Land Management).

COSCA Administrator Stark responded to Director questions regarding the project scope and time, that the area doesn't involve automobiles or appliances, how unhoused individuals would be approached with regard to their possessions and storage thereof, hazardous waste, and working with Thousand Oaks Police Department Resource Officers. He added that the invasive species removal project has begun to wind down. Trash in the watershed in general was discussed with a goal to haul it out before it reaches the ocean. Volunteers may continue the effort.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Newman to find that this action is Exempt under Section 15304 and 15061 of the California Environmental Quality Act, Minor Alterations to Land and Common-Sense Exemption, respectively; approve contract with Woods Maintenance Services, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$285,000 and authorize the COSCA Co-Chief Administrative Officer to execute the agreement; and authorize an additional appropriation of \$35,000 from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund (Land Management) to complete funding for the Arroyo Conejo Trash Removal Project, Phase II; carried 5 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Newman, Nickles, Sullivan, and Chair Huffer; Noes – None; Absent – None.

D. Adoption of Updated COSCA Volunteer Manual

- i. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- ii. Accept and adopt the 2025 COSCA Volunteer Manual.

COSCA Administrator Stark provided the report noting that the purpose of the update was to better align volunteer management with COSCA's current oversight capacity. The update also provides additional detail to capture incremental program changes over time, introduces a Trail Ambassador Program, and adds elements to address liabilities which are found in more modern volunteer manuals. He detailed the many benefits volunteers provide, including increasing visibility of COSCA and freeing up Rangers to address other priorities. COSCA Administrator Stark responded to Director questions, noting the Conejo Open Space Foundation (COSF) has an extensive database of volunteers who must give contact information when signing up. Citizens can go to www.COSF.org for more information. Additionally, a helmet requirement can be added to the Trail Watch Volunteer Requirements - Bicyclists section on Page 27. On Page 30 under Volunteer Requirements – Resource Crew Leaders, fourth bullet 'Trail Crew Leaders' can be changed to 'Resource Crew Leaders.' He also confirmed that there is no resident requirement, that the Trail Ambassador uniform funding has not been determined to date, and that copies of the manual can be distributed to the City Council and the CRPD Board via a website link. Administrator Stark also responded to questions regarding which volunteer positions will require background checks.

Assistant City Attorney Brick responded to Director questions noting an annual waiver could be looked into, but for now, a waiver must be signed by volunteers for each event. He also requested that the COSCA Secretary be granted the authority to correct any non-substantive errors in the manual.

Motion by Director Sullivan to find that this action not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act; and accept and adopt the 2025 COSCA Volunteer Manual, and grant the COSCA Secretary the authority to correct any non-substantive typographic errors in the manual; carried 5 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Newman, Nickles, Sullivan, and Chair Huffer; Noes – None; Absent – None.

7. INFORMATION ITEMS:

A. Wildfire Safety Programs Update (verbal report)

- i. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- ii. Receive verbal report.

The verbal report was presented by COSCA Administrator Stark who reviewed a summary of actions from 2020-2025 including work with the Ventura County Fire Safe Council on home hardening including mailers, public workshops, free inspections, chipper days, and a pilot home-hardening project for ten low-income seniors' homes. The Fire Safe Council

is working on the development of Firewise USA-certified communities, of which there are currently 14. Other activities include invasive species management projects, access maintenance for first responders, and fuels management. He responded to Director questions with regard to who performs the fuel management work, the defensible space zone, regional work, and recent Prop 4 and grant funding.

B. COSCA Volunteer Corps Activity

- i. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- ii. Receive and file COSCA Volunteer Corps Activity report.

The written report was received and filed and indicates that from February through April, Trail Watch had 67 reports and 102.75 hours donated; Adopt-A-Trail had 153 reports and 256.75 hours donated. The Trail Work Program had 20 volunteers at Eagle Point in February; March activities, including Spring Trail Work Day, were postponed due to rain; and in April, 30 volunteers assisted at Wishbone Trail, and 34 removed trash at Arroyo Conejo.

C. Ranger Operations and Maintenance Activities (verbal report)

- i. Find that this action is not a project as defined under the California Environmental Quality Act.
- ii. Receive verbal report.

The verbal report was received with CRPD Park Superintendent Belavic presenting a PowerPoint. He is looking forward to collaborating with, and learning more about, COSCA and open space, and expressed gratitude for being chosen for the job. CRPD Park Superintendent Belavic thanked Supervising Ranger Prindle and his team for their work on the drainage action management plan including clearing of V-ditches, culverts, and drains. He discussed fixing ruts and trails due to flooding, washouts, illegal trails, clubhouses and bike jumps, as well as accompanying education and enforcement. COSCA has closed the Arroyo area to facilitate cleanup of homeless camps, some of which have makeshift kitchens along with booby traps. He commented on cleanups by the Rotary Club and Amgen in the Arroyo, the Earth Day Wishbone Trail cleanup, and the Conejo Canyons cleanup. The success of COSCA's annual Trails Education Days (TED) was noted, including Ranger presentations and a special version of TED at the Whole Access Trail for students with mobility issues.

8. COSCA UPDATES (CRPD General Manager and/or City Manager):

A. Follow-up items, announcements, and upcoming issues:

CRPD General Manager Friedl commented on CRPD's Annual Gratitude Circle where former City Council member and Mayor of Thousand Oaks, CRPD Director, and COSCA Director Ed Jones was remembered, along with the contributions of long time CRPD Board director George Lange were noted. He also mentioned that the Boney Mountain Rail Run is not on City, CRPD, nor COSCA property, and that sadly, a participant passed away on that very hot day.

9. BOARDMEMBER COMMENTS:

Director Engler stated there seems to be more powered bikes/electric motorcycles on the streets. COSCA Administrator Stark reported that COSCA Rangers continue intercept them in open space and technically, they are not legal on streets either, but he has not seen an increase in numbers in open space as there seems to be on the streets. Riders are generally minors that Rangers detain until a parent arrives. There has been outreach, Thousand Oaks Police Department (TOPD) is on board, and we can recommend continued messaging.

Director Nickles thanked COSCA staff for moving the meeting to accommodate a conference.

Director Sullivan stated that Elayne Haggen of COSF would have commented under public comments regarding Trails Education Days (TED); however, Special Meetings only allow for public comment on items on that Agenda. She reported that over four days, 1,070 fourth graders from all CVUSD schools participated. National Park Service and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Rangers joined the COSCA Rangers. The writing contest, with 70% participation, was judged yesterday, and the five winners will receive an award at the next CRPD Board meeting. She noted there were lots of volunteers, an equestrian volunteer was present for all four days, and TED organizers are already getting equestrian and other volunteers for next years' event, April 20-23, 2026.

Director Newman added that he is pleased all 17 elementary schools participated in TED. He expressed continued concern regarding unlicensed motorcycles. Director Newman stated that a resident identified two places where kids congregate and ride these motorized e-bikes, which can reach speeds of 50-70 mph, resulting in confiscation. TOPD continues to act on this issue. Chair Huffer concurred that seeing kids riding these is a safety concern.

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Chair Huffer stated he is looking forward to the next CRPD meeting as it is always delightful to hear from the children who participated in Trails Education Day. He also expressed gratitude for the numerous contributions of Ed Jones and George Lange over many years. He stated Arbor Earth Day was a well-represented event.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m. in memory of Ed Jones, former COSCA Director, Ventura County Board of Supervisors Member, CRPD Director, and City Council member and Mayor of Thousand Oaks. The meeting adjourned to the next Regular Meeting on Wednesday, September 17, 2025.



Chuck Huffer, Chairperson

Minutes Approved: September 17, 2025

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