



Agenda Item No. 13.

Staff Report

Date: November 10, 2022

To: Mayor Kuhl and Councilmembers

From: Christa Johnson, Town Manager

Subject: Town Council Consideration of Contribution Towards Acquisition of Bald Hill and Permission to Install a Commemorative Plaque

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Town Council consider:

1. Authorizing the Town Manager to execute an agreement to be approved by the Town Attorney that will enable the Town of Ross to make a contribution of \$200,000 to the Marin Open Space Trust for the acquisition of Bald Hill, and any FYE23 budget amendments necessary to make the contribution.
2. Authorizing the Marin Open Space Trust to install a commemorative plaque in Natalie Coffin Greene Park to recognize institutions and individuals that assisted significantly in the acquisition of Bald Hill.

Background

The “Bald Hill” property consists of approximately 60 acres of land and is prominently located at the top of Upper West Road in the Town of Ross. The property is comprised of two parcels identified as Marin County Assessor’s Parcel APN 073-011-1 & 30 which share a boundary with the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) watershed to the west and south. The Bald Hill property has been a high priority for acquisition and preservation as open space by the broader Ross Valley and Marin County communities since 1976. Acquisition would provide a point of access to MMWD lands as well as the Marin County Open Space District’s (MCOSD) Bald Hill Open Space Preserve by way of existing trails.

Highly visible, 1,132-foot Bald Hill is a spectacular backdrop to the Ross Valley. The property has a 360-degree view from Bald Hill’s summit to Mt. Tamalpais and all of Marin, to San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, and to the prominent peaks in the East and North Bay. The property is a gateway to more than 100,000 acres of protected land. Worn Springs Road, a MMWD fire road, traverses the western section of the land, making the summit accessible from trails originating in many of Marin’s communities. In addition to providing the public with views and recreational opportunities, preserving Bald Hill safeguards important wildlife and native plant habitat. The property’s terrain is habitat for fox, bobcat, and other wildlife and spans rolling hills of open

grassland and chaparral near the summit to steep slopes and creek drainages with native forests of redwood, oak, bay, buckeye, and madrone.

Discussion

A request to consider a \$200,000 contribution towards the acquisition of the Bald Hill property was placed on the Town Council's November 10, 2022 agenda at the request of Councilmembers Robbins and McMillan.

MOST is currently in contract to acquire the property. Upon acquiring the property, MOST will transfer the property to the MCOSD to preserve its natural resource and open space values. The property is in a natural condition and a management plan will be prepared by MCOSD.

If the Town Council authorizes a contribution to MOST for the purpose of acquiring the Bald Hill property, the Town Manager will work with the Town Attorney to execute an agreement that directs that the Town's contribution will be deposited into an escrow account. The agreement will also direct that the monies will be returned to the Town of Ross if the purchase is not made and transferred as open space to MCOSD.

In addition to the requested contribution, Councilmember Robbins has requested that MOST be authorized to install a commemorative plaque in Natalie Coffin Greene Park to recognize institutions and individuals that assisted significantly in the acquisition of the Bald Hill property. MOST would pay for the purchase and installation of the plaque.

Fiscal Impacts

There is funding available in the Facilities & Equipment Fund to make a \$200,000 contribution towards the acquisition of Bald Hill. Authorizing the contribution will reduce the funding available for other Town facility improvements.

Alternative Actions

The Town Council could direct the Town Manager to contribute a different amount towards the acquisition of the Bald Hill property.

Attachments

None.