



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: September 5, 2018

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing: (a) entering into an option agreement to acquire APNs 2826-022-026, 027, 035, 2826-023-014 and 2826-041-039, approximately 231 acres; (b) authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 1 and 68 grants; (c) authorizing the acquisition of APNs 2826-022-026, 027, 035, 2826-023-014 and 2826-041-039; (d) entering into an agreement with the City of Santa Clarita for funding; (e) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, and (f) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board, Santa Clarita Valley, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing: (a) entering into an option agreement to acquire APNs 2826-022-026, 027, 035, 2826-023-014 and 2826-041-039, approximately 231 acres; (b) authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 1 and 68 grants; (c) authorizing the acquisition of APNs 2826-022-026, 027, 035, 2826-023-014 and 2826-041-039; (d) entering into an agreement with the City of Santa Clarita for funding; (e) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, and (f) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board for this Lyons Canyon property.

Background: Lyons Canyon is the Santa Susana Mountains watershed just north of Towsley Canyon and Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon. The property was a former Warner Brothers Ranch. In 2009, Los Angeles County approved Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 53653 which provides for a combination of 185 houses and condominiums. The project would remove over 150 oak trees. The City of Santa Clarita recently bought approximately 110 acres just south of the mouth of Lyons Canyon. The wide, gentle bottom of Lyons Canyon provides excellent habitat and recreation value with superb access from the Old Road paralleling Interstate 5. Acquisition of the property would extend the contiguous Santa Clarita Woodlands park complex to the Pico Canyon watershed and to other Mountains Recreation and

Conservation Authority properties. The current appearance of the property is degraded by a recent wildfire but its inherent resources are intact.

The current property owner is national homebuilder DR Horton. For its own internal reasons DR Horton is willing to entertain a sale of its entire property to the MRCA. The company had an appraisal prepared by an MAI appraiser frequently used by MRCA to establish a value for negotiation purposes. More details about price and terms can be addressed in closed session as necessary. With the potential passage of Proposition 3 on the statewide ballot this November, the buyout of this approved subdivision adjacent to the Santa Clarita Woodlands park complex and traffic clogged Interstate 5 is possible. The attached figure shows the property and proposed trails in the Los Angeles County General Plan.

The proposed action would authorize entering into an option agreement and signing a purchase and sale agreement with DR Horton. It further authorizes acquisition of the property, entering into a funding agreement with the City of Santa Clarita, entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District for Proposition A funds, and entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). The property is wholly within an approved Conceptual Area Protection Plan to make it eligible for WCB funding. The proposed action also authorizes grant applications to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for both Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds. Staff will have submitted such a Proposition 1 grant application by August 30, 2018 which is the Conservancy's grant round deadline.

To demonstrate the MRCA's intent and resolve to complete the acquisition, a series of down payments (refundable) are necessary before the end of 2018. The structure of the conceptual acquisition deal requires the passage of Proposition 3. If the proposition is not successful, the transaction would be cancelled and the development would presumably proceed. There are no formal or informal commitments from any funding partners at this moment. The completion of the transaction will require contributions from all of the above listed funding entities. DR Horton is cognizant of the timing pertaining to the release of Proposition 3 funds given its passage in November.