



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: August 7, 2019

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(f): Consideration of resolution authorizing a project planning and design grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to develop visitor facilities on dedicated and acquired open space within the former Verdugo Hills golf course property in La Tuna Canyon, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board authorize a project planning and design grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to develop visitor facilities on dedicated and acquired open space within the former Verdugo Hills golf course property in La Tuna Canyon.

Background: Last August, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Governing Board approved the attached resolution authorizing (a) entering into an agreement with Snowball West Investments LP to acquire all or portions of APNs 2572-025-006, 2572-021-020 and 2572-021-016; (b) authorizing the acceptance of an open space dedication from Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 69976 on the former Verdugo Hills Golf Course property; and (c) authorizing entering into a Project Agreement for said acquisition with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District. Last month the Los Angeles City Planning Commission approved a 215 unit project. A zone change goes before the City Council in August.

In February, the MRCA signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Snowball West Investments LP. The MOA provides the MRCA with a specific timeline to be able to acquire specific sets of lots based on appraised value once the project is approved. In addition it provides operations money to the MRCA to maintain the approximately 38-acre open space dedication. If the MRCA acquires the first option of approved residential lots, the MRCA would also receive \$250,000. Fifty thousand dollars of that amount would go to the Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition a non-profit entity that desires to develop unique interpretive facilities on the property regarding the World War II era detention of people living in the United States.

A portion of the property was actually an internment camp during World War II – the Tuna Canyon Detention Station operated by the Department of Justice. In past two years, the Tuna Canyon Detention Station Coalition was able to achieve City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (HCM) (#1039) status for an approximately 1.5-acre portion of the property. The site does not have parking and contains many oak trees. Working with the Coalition and VOICE, the MOU provides for the MRCA to acquire more land both immediately east and west of the HCM. Staff deferred to the other preservation parties on which lands were most important to protect in each subsequent phase depending on available funding. The preservation parties involved primarily want to expand the size and accessibility of the HCM. The Coalition also desires a museum site for an exhibit that currently has no permanent home.

Both State and County open space funding has grown more scarce in the past year. The only funding identified to buy more land to complement the HCM is from the 5th District Supervisorial District that has upheld a longstanding commitment to the golf course preservation supporters to sequester \$1.7 million of Proposition A Excess Funds to acquire all or part of the property.

A plan that shows how the visitor experience of a unique interpretive infrastructure would greatly benefit from additional preserved land is a key to obtaining both public and private funding. The proposed grant application to the Conservancy seeks approximately \$25,000 to accomplish such a plan in high quality presentation format.