

32 19-892

Receive a report from the Board's Regional Park Committee regarding the status of the process to form a Regional Parks and Open Space District pursuant to SB 365; Consider and accept the Administrative and Financing Plan (Plan) as the Initial Draft for the proposed district that may be updated from time to time as deemed necessary through ongoing public outreach and Board direction; and Provide direction to staff regarding options for next steps towards the formation of a Countywide Dependent Regional Parks and Open Space District including a) consideration of public outreach options, b) timing consideration and options for a potential ballot measure formally establishing district formation for voter consideration for a potential ballot, and c) consideration and timing for placement of potential revenue measure on a voter ballot

Supervisor Vasquez provided information on the history of efforts to create parks in the County and on recent meetings with state legislators concerning legislation on the matter. He advised that he felt it was too early to go to the voters in 2020 with a ballot measure and suggested to instead look at setting priorities in January given the recent losses of positions across the department. He noted that he would like to work on the reorganization of the fire districts, to look at compliance of Williamson Act contracts, and other things such as working on hemp, housing issues, economic development, etc. He recommended that the Board accept the recommendation to approve the Administrative and Financial Plan (Plan) today and to wait on the rest due to more work needing to be done to address concerns by property owners and residents.

Chairwoman Hannigan commented on protection of green spaces throughout the County and being able to access the open space. She noted that parks could be learning environments and gathering places and that she had been enjoying the County parks her whole life. She then commented on the map of parks, noting that the map was already out there and that conversations were already taking place about the parks with the cities. She advised that she did not feel that an annual parcel tax of \$19 was too much to ask for this asset and noted that Solano County was one of the only counties in the Bay Area that did not have a regional park system. She commented on benefits to property owners having a park system in their neighborhood and recommended that the Board accept the Plan and move forward on efforts to create a regional park system. She advised that staff and community agencies could get together and conduct a collaborative effort on this effort.

In response to a question from Supervisor Spering, Mr. Emlen advised that the County could not campaign on behalf of a measure and noted that there was a process for someone else to lead this effort.

Supervisor Spering commented that there needed to be an advocacy group that handled the work needing to be done. He then commented on other issues that also needed to be worked on.

Mr. Emlen noted that the Board was required to take certain actions per state law.

Chairwoman Hannigan invited members of the public to address the Board on this matter and the following comments were received:

- A) Dan Smith, Chair of the Solano Open Space Citizen's Committee, commented in support of a regional park district, noting that the committee was willing to take a role in public outreach for the district.

- B) Amanda Brown Stevens, Executive Director of the Greenbelt Alliance, commented in support of a regional park district, noting that she was willing to partner with the County on the efforts.
- C) Bob Berman, representing the Solano County Orderly Growth Committee, commented in support of a regional park district and of formation of a broad based committee to work on efforts, suggested that the County Parks & Recreation Commission hold city meetings to get public input, that there be voter polling conducted on the matter and that formation and funding be placed on separate ballots.

In response to questions from Supervisor Vasquez, Mr. Emlen advised that work already done by the consultants had been budgeted for previously and that this year's budget contained funding of \$100,000 for potential work that needed to be done. He noted that the conversation had not taken place yet regarding any recouping of these costs for the County.

- D) Nichole Braddock, Executive Director of the Solano Land Trust, commented in support of a regional park district, on importance of land to larger community needs, on provision of mental health and wellness activities for children participating in field trips to parks, on support of children in thinking about STEM careers, working with the Solano County Office of Education on wellness centers, access to nature reducing adverse childhood experiences, and noted that a lot of thought and on effort was being put into the support for a regional park district.
- E) George Guynn, Jr., Suisun City, commented in support of delaying efforts to form a regional park district, on financing of the district by a separate entity, on other priorities that he felt needed to be addressed and against increasing property taxes.
- F) Carole Paterson, Solano Land Trust Board member, commented in support of a regional park district and on benefits of outdoor camps to children.
- G) Sue Frost, Solano Land Trust Board Vice-President, commented in support of a regional park district and on the benefits of outdoor learning for children.

Supervisor Brown commented in support of Consideration Item #1 and agreed with Mr. Berman that the County may not be ready until the ballot in November 2022. She advised that she did not want to lose focus on having funds for busses to transport students to the parks and commented on the importance of the parks as a positive experience for kids.

Supervisor Thomson commented that parks providing an enhancement to neighborhoods only applied to those neighborhoods close to the parks and didn't apply to those properties far away. He then commented on the number of current assessments on properties and the need to consider how the taxpayer is going to pay for more taxes. He advised that he was not convinced that the way things were going was the right way to roll out a potential park district. He then noted that he felt that the Land Trust was doing a wonderful job of acquiring property but not maintaining them. He recommended that there be more thought be put into how the property assessments would be fair across the board.

Mr. Emlen provided information on discussions by the Board's subcommittee on how the parcel tax could be tiered, noting that the structure would need to be looked at in-depth if this matter moved forward.

Chairwoman Hannigan noted that the subcommittee discussions had included looking at different types of properties and not just single residences.

Supervisor Vasquez commented on his history of supporting parks and noted that this was about taking care of priorities. He commented on the commitment of staff time and expenditures that would hit the General Fund to make these things happen and advised that he would like everything in place before going out to talk to the public. He noted that there were a lot of questions that still needed to be analyzed and that there were other priorities that needed to be addressed besides a park district.

Chairwoman Hannigan recommended accepting the Plan and directing staff to work with interested community partners to develop a path forward and to work on outreach and education on what the park district would mean for Solano County.

Supervisor Spering advised that the recommendation was too broad for him to support. He advised that he was in support of placing the formation of a district on the ballot as a first step and that a parcel tax would be too controversial at this time.

Chairwoman Hannigan noted that the timeline of next steps covered this and that she could accept the recommendation to pursue only the formation of the district.

Supervisor Spering advised that he would second this motion if it was only for the formation of the district.

In response to a question from Chairwoman Hannigan, Supervisor Spering noted that he wanted to focus on the formation of the district and not talk about the parcel tax portion yet.

Supervisor Brown asked for clarification of the motion, noting that the Chairwoman's motion was to continue to pursue the formation of an independent district and that work be done to gauge the public and towards the formation of the district.

Supervisor Thomson advised that the fire districts could be competing on the same ballot in November 2020.

Supervisor Spering noted that he wanted to separate the parcel tax out from the formation.

Supervisor Thomson advised that he was in support of moving forward, but not about talking any dollars or cents yet.

Supervisor Vasquez clarified that the Board would be directing staff to do the work to create the ballot measure to create the district.

Mr. Emlen asked if the Board would be comfortable about the department hiring someone to help with polling and other efforts.

Supervisor Spering advised that staff should come back with a proposal, strategy and plan on how to move this forward with community partners to get it on the ballot for November 2020.

Supervisor Vasquez advised that staff would come back for more direction and that the Board should vote separately on whether to accept the Plan and whether to direct staff to work on a plan to move things forward.

On motion of Chairwoman Hannigan, seconded by Supervisor Spering, the Board received a report from the Board's Regional Park Committee regarding the status of the process to form a Regional Parks and Open Space District pursuant to SB 365; Accepted the Administrative and Financing Plan (Plan) as the Initial Draft for the proposed district that may be updated from time to time as deemed necessary through ongoing public outreach and Board direction; and Provide direction to staff to work with

local community partners to bring back a proposal or plan for next steps towards the formation of a Countywide Dependent Regional Parks and Open Space District. So ordered by 5-0 vote.