



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

April 5, 2023

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Heather Abrams, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Consider the request from Fairfax Open Space Committee (FOSC) for Council to authorize donation of \$12,000 to Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) for their acquisition of Upper Hawthorne Canyon property in San Anselmo, directly adjacent to Fairfax, and adopt Resolution making findings as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

Consider the request from Fairfax Open Space Committee (FOSC) for Council to authorize donation of \$12,000 to Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) for their acquisition of the Upper Hawthorne Canyon property in San Anselmo, directly adjacent to Fairfax, and adopt Resolution making findings as appropriate.

BACKGROUND

On February 14, 2023 staff received a request from FOSC regarding the Upper Hawthorne Canyon property. Since then, FOSC members, Mayor Cutrano and Vice Mayor Coler have met with representatives of MOST, County of Marin Parks, and the San Anselmo Open Space Committee.

DISCUSSION

If the Council wishes to approve the requested use of funds, the Council will need to make findings that the allocation will be in the public interest of Fairfax. The attached resolution contains findings drafted by Vice Mayor Coler and MOST.

On the next page is a FOSC-provided map of the subject property.



FISCAL IMPACT

Donate to MOST \$12,000 of \$54,541.11 currently held in Fund 73-673-931 for Fairfax Open Space acquisition. These funds were raised by private donations and fundraisers including calendar or card sales and an annual concert.

This does not include its apportionment of Measure A funds (now \$100,000) which remain in Fund 23 until spent.

ATTACHMENT

Resolution with findings

RESOLUTION 23-___

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFAX TO DONATE \$12,000 TO THE MARIN OPEN SPACE TRUST (MOST) SOLELY FOR THE ACQUISITION OF UPPER HAWTHORNE CANYON

WHEREAS, the Town of Fairfax and its residents deeply value our open spaces, ridgelines, wildlife corridors and visual landscape; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, the Fairfax Town Council first established the Fairfax Open Space Committee (FOSC) as an advisory body to the Town Council dedicated to the preservation of open space in *and around* Fairfax; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Fairfax's General Plan states that the Town is defined by open space and that residents value the open space in *and around* the Town; and

WHEREAS, it is FOSC's responsibility to survey the lands within, *and adjacent to*, the Town of Fairfax to determine the availability of unique, threatened, or environmentally sensitive land parcels that may be appropriate for dedicated open space for the public; and

WHEREAS, in and around the Town of Fairfax, there is a vast swath of undeveloped land and natural habitat from Hawthorne Canyon in San Anselmo to Fairfax and beyond to Loma Alta Open Space in the unincorporated area of Fairfax; and

WHEREAS, the existing Hawthorne Canyon open space just beyond the Town of Fairfax boundary is shown in the Town of Fairfax's current planning area; and

WHEREAS, the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) works to preserve Marin's most important remaining open space lands at risk of development; and

WHEREAS, MOST has secured a purchase option on the remaining undeveloped ten-acre portion of Hawthorne Canyon (called Upper Hawthorne Canyon) adjacent to Fairfax's Upper Ridgeway open space; MOST has launched a \$550,000 fundraising campaign, with a June 15, 2023 deadline, to raise funds for the purchase, project costs, and stewardship of the property; and

WHEREAS, MOST is engaged in a fundraising campaign to raise public and private donations to pay for the property; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of Upper Hawthorne Canyon would complete the protection of the 46-acre undeveloped natural habitat and accessible public open space on the boundary of the Town of Fairfax; and

WHEREAS, a popular hiking trail from Upper Ridgeway Avenue in Fairfax passes through Upper Hawthorne Canyon to Oak Springs Drive (abutting/adjacent to Fairfax town boundaries in San Anselmo); and

WHEREAS, if Upper Hawthorne Canyon was developed (instead of being preserved as open space through the MOST acquisition) this existing hiking trail would be extinguished and would significantly alter the natural, scenic, visual landscape of the Willow Avenue neighborhood in Fairfax; and

WHEREAS, the Towns of Fairfax and San Anselmo have partnered with MOST in the recent past to acquire and preserve open space that benefits both our Town's residents; and

WHEREAS, starting in May 2014, MOST, the Towns of Fairfax and San Anselmo and their Open Space Committees raised \$1.2 Million for acquisition of the sixteen-acre Sky Ranch property for open space and also raised \$120,000 for site restoration. The property was transferred in 2015 and is under the jurisdiction of the Marin County Parks & Open Space District. The site was restored to its natural beauty and is available for safe recreational activities including hiking and day equestrian use (it was previously used as a private equestrian facility for about 50 years). With eleven acres in Fairfax and five in San Anselmo, it is a gateway to 100,000 acres of GGRNA, MMWD and Marin County open space with hundreds of miles of trails stretching all the way to the Golden Gate and Point Reyes. Sky Ranch is adjacent to the Bald Hill Open Space Preserve and the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed; and

WHEREAS, Upper Hawthorne Canyon, just below Oak Springs Drive and adjacent to Fairfax, is contiguous with the 22-acre Hawthorne Canyon Open Space Preserve, owned by the Town of San Anselmo. The preserve was protected in 1999 when neighbors and town residents contributed funds toward its purchase. The Town of San Anselmo owns two other adjacent open space parcels to the east of the Upper Hawthorne Canyon property; with the preservation of Upper Hawthorne Canyon, approximately forty-six contiguous acres would be forever protected. The views from the property encompasses the scenic hills of San Anselmo and Fairfax with Mount Tamalpais beyond, and San Francisco in the distance; and

WHEREAS, the Fairfax Open Space Committee (FOSC) is recommending that the Town of Fairfax donate \$12,000 to MOST for the acquisition of the Upper Hawthorne Canyon; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Fairfax and FOSC can build on its earlier Sky Ranch partnership with the Town of San Anselmo and its SAOSC and MOST, through provision of these funds, which will preserve and expand open space adjacent to Fairfax, and furthers our commitment to our visual landscape, our ridgelines, hiking trails, wildlife corridors and biodiversity for future generations of Fairfaxians; a

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Fairfax hereby approves a donation of \$12,000 to MOST for the purpose of contributing to MOST's acquisition of Upper Hawthorne Canyon.

The foregoing resolution was adopted at a regular meeting of the Fairfax Town Council of the Town of Fairfax held in said Town on the 5th day of April 2023, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Chance Cutrano, Mayor

Attest: _____
Michele Gardner, Town Clerk