



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: December 6, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item V(e): Consideration of resolution authorizing the use of Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 funds to acquire properties in Chapter 8 Agreement 2466, and the addition of parcels in Sherman Oaks, Cahuenga Pass, Beverly Glen, Benedict Canyon, Laurel Canyon, Beechwood Canyon, and Hollywood Knoll to the Final Engineer's Report, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the use of Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 funds to acquire properties in Chapter 8 Agreement 2466, and the addition of parcels in Sherman Oaks, Cahuenga Pass, Beverly Glen, Benedict Canyon, Laurel Canyon, Beechwood Canyon, and Hollywood Knoll to the Final Engineer's Report, Los Angeles.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) commonly enters into Chapter 8 Agreements with Los Angeles County to acquire tax defaulted properties. This process is an essential component of the agency's efforts to increase the amount of protected open space in southern California. The MRCA has acquires over 1,500 acres though this process.

Chapter 8 Agreement Number 2466 contains 24 parcels totaling 4.47 acres in the City of Los Angeles. Two of these parcels, totaling 1.41 acres, fall in the jurisdiction of the Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 2 (Area F), and therefore will not be addressed in this report. The remaining 22 parcels addressed in this report are located in Sherman Oaks, Cahuenga Pass, Beverly Glen, Benedict Canyon, Beechwood Canyon, and Hollywood Knolls. The Governing Board adopted resolution 05-114 in November 2005, which authorized the acquisition for all concerned parcels, but did not specify the use of Assessment District funds.

A table below includes each parcel, its size, general location, and current cost to the MRCA. The cost estimate is projected through January 2007. A brief description of each parcel, or cluster of parcels, follows along with attached aerial photographs with the parcel boundaries.

Agreement Number 2466

APN	Acreage	Location	Price
2274-020-031	0.03	Sherman Oaks	\$4,655
2274-020-032	0.03	Sherman Oaks	\$4,650
2274-020-033	0.05	Sherman Oaks	\$1,886
2428-026-034	0.06	Cahuenga Pass	\$8,158
2429-026-001	0.01	Cahuenga Pass	\$910
4371-017-018	0.71	Beverly Glen	\$44,038
4371-027-004	0.18	Beverly Glen	\$1,755
4371-027-013	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$4,641
4371-032-025	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$14,791
4379-012-007	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$2,323
4380-016-016	0.26	Beverly Glen	\$4,265
4380-017-050	0.24	Beverly Glen	\$9,714
4380-017-054	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$6,723
4380-017-062	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$3,079
4380-018-017	0.06	Beverly Glen	\$32,779
4380-031-018	0.24	Beverly Glen	\$30,681
4383-007-028	0.04	Benedict Canyon	\$3,835
4383-026-010	0.17	Benedict Canyon	\$71,389
4384-011-004	0.34	Benedict Canyon	\$9,213
5567-028-017	0.11	Laurel Canyon	\$19,887
5580-018-004	0.09	Beachwood Canyon	\$13,149

5585-003-030	0.14	Hollywood Knolls	\$15,181
Totals	3.06		\$307,702

Sherman Oaks

These three slim (20-foot-wide) parcels (APNs 2274-020-031, 032, and 033) would serve a dual purpose. Currently, there is no protected habitat linkage across Camino de la Cumbre between Fossil Ridge State Park and the MRCA's Fossil Ridge adjacent property (Oak Forest west). The logical place for that connection to occur, the two McKinnon donation parcels that abut the east side of Camino de la Cumbre, provides no guarantee on the west side of the road. To mitigate this uncertainty, it is logical to maximize any now available connectivity on the west side of the road. Although these three parcels do not directly abut parkland on either end, they provide a future guarantee of such connectivity for a total of around \$10,000. The second purpose is to ensure that development on the west side of Camino de la Cumbre will consist of smaller sized estates consistent with the neighborhood and the existing lot size. More precisely, these divisions between the lots preclude lot ties and consolidation more detrimental to habitat connectivity. Currently, and in the foreseeable future, there is no brush clearance associated with any of these three parcels. The MRCA's Chief of Construction who oversees the brush clearance activities has stated that, in the future, it would be unlikely for the Fire Department to be overly concerned about the MRCA not doing clearance on the properties (assuming a new house is built) if the larger owners next door have not done so. The parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area A).

Cahuenga Pass

The protection of a functional system of habitat linkages between Laurel Canyon Boulevard and the 101 Freeway in the Cahuenga Pass (to Griffith Park) is a high priority. The two subject parcels (APNs 2428-026-034 and 2429-026-001) contribute to this system and to the Mulholland Scenic Parkway viewshed. The connectivity case for APN 2428-026-034 is obvious. It is not on the District No. 1 Engineer's Report but it is worthy of adding as a one time opportunity purchase and because of its nominal cost. APN 2429-026-001 has value because it is near the Mulholland Drive bridge over the 101 Freeway. It is important that this parcel is not used as part of larger lot line adjustments with surrounding parcels. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area C) if available, or from private donations. A minor amount of brushing is required on APN 2428-026-034.

Beverly Glen

Small lot subdivisions on both sides of Beverly Glen Boulevard offer numerous tax defaulted parcel opportunities annually. However, with the scarcity and value of land increasing, more and more speculators are attempting to assemble blocks of these parcels for fairly significant sized developments. The opportunity to acquire high quality parcels in this area at low prices and that help consolidate a disparate distribution of existing public land is fading rapidly. This agreement includes eleven quality parcels on both sides of Beverly Glen Boulevard. The parcels provide core habitat values and contribute to habitat connectivity. None of the parcels require, or should ever require, brushing. Few if any of the 11 parcels are in the District No. 1 Engineer's Report. However they all meet the objectives of the report, and as is shown on the attached figures, they provide equivalent or greater value than many of those parcels in the report. It is worth adding all of the such parcels to the report because of their value as one time opportunity purchases at nominal cost. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area B).

Benedict Canyon

APNs 4383-007-028 and 4384-011-004 are located on the east slope of Benedict Canyon. Both properties contain high resource value and should not be lost from the public trust. Neither appears to require any brushing. APN 4383-026-010 is on the ridgeline between Beverly Glen and Benedict Canyons also located between an existing MRCA parcel and a large block of City-owned parkland. The parcel would require some brushing, but by being acquired would also prevent even more brushing on adjacent MRCA parkland then if it were to be developed. The ridgeline is an important wildlife corridor and an area worthy of strong protection efforts. None of the three parcels are in the District No. 1 Engineer's Report. However they all meet the objectives of the report, and as is shown on the attached figures, they provide equivalent or greater value than many of those parcels in the report. It is worth adding all of the such parcels to the report because of their value as one time opportunity purchases at nominal cost. These parcels would be acquired with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area B).

Laurel Canyon

APN 5567-028-017 provides important Laurel Canyon Boulevard viewshed across from the historic Canyon Country Store. The strategic value of the parcel outweighs the minimal potential brushing requirements. If it were to be acquired it would be with funds from Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area D). It is worth pursuing because speculators are attempting to develop the paper streets and small lots in this area.

Beachwood-Hollywood Knolls

APN 5580-018-004 is located in the Beachwood Canyon area one parcel away from Griffith Park. It is an exemplary parcel that, along with another MRCA Chapter 8 parcel that is further along in the process, will be a contiguous open space peninsula extending from Griffith Park. APN 5585-003-030 is roughly located in the Hollywood Knolls area. The parcel would provide important ridgeline protection and is part of a habitat linkage extending back west to Lake Hollywood. Neither parcel requires brushing. Both parcels would be funded by Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 (Area E). Both parcels are on the Engineer's Report.