



**GREAT REDWOOD TRAIL AGENCY  
Board of Directors Meeting**

**Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 10:30am**  
Healdsburg City Council Chambers  
401 Grove Street, Healdsburg  
Sonoma County

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**A. OPEN SESSION - CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Hart called the meeting to order at 10:30am.

**B. ROLL CALL**

**Directors Present:** Haschak, Campbell, Hunerlach, Madrone, Hagele, Sackett, Bagby (joined the meeting at 10:35am), and Chair Hart

**Directors Absent:** Mulheren

**Others Present:** Interim Executive Director – Karyn Gear, GRT Project Manager – Simone Nageon de Lestang, GRT Project Manager – Louisa Morris, Sonoma County Legal Counsel - Aldo Mercado, and Recording Secretary – Hiedy Torres

**C. AGENDA APPROVAL**

Upon Motion by Director Madrone, seconded by Director Hagele, the Agenda was approved as presented.

Motion Carried:

AYES: 7- Haschak, Campbell, Hunerlach, Madrone, Hagele, Sackett, and Chair Hart

NOES: 0

ABSENT: 2- Mulheren and Bagby

ABSTAIN: 0

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jason Liles, Senator McGuire Senior Advisor-

Mr. Liles said he has been reflecting about the October 2018 NCRA board meeting and remembering when Governor Brown had just signed the Great Redwood Trails Act and the North Coast Railroad Authority began its transition to the Great Redwood Trail Agency. There was some pushback at that time, and he suggested that the legacy board members resign their positions with the NCRA and give new members a chance to assume those positions. The NCRA board was hesitant to accept the new mandate, but within a few months, the board took on its new role and began working extremely hard to take on its new role as a trail agency. The GRTA has a remarkable board that has a strong focus on trails. He expressed his profound thanks to the board for all the dedicated hard work that has gone into the new agency.

Chair Hart thanked Mr. Liles for all his dedication to this project.

No other public comments were made.

**E. CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Approval of Minutes - Regular Board of Directors Meeting- February 16, 2023
2. Approval of Financial Statements - February and March 2023
3. Approval of Warrants Issued - February and March 2023
4. Approval of Cal Card Statement - February and March 2023

Chair Hart called for public comment. No public comments were made.

Upon Motion by Director Haschak, seconded by Director Campbell, Agenda items E.1 through E.4 were approved as presented.

Motion Carried:

AYES: 8- Haschak, Campbell, Hunerlach, Madrone, Hagele, Sackett, Bagby, and Chair Hart

NOES: 0

ABSENT: 1- Mulheren

ABSTAIN: 0

**F. STAFF REPORT**

1. Executive Director Report - Karyn Gear

Ms. Gear said there will be a groundbreaking ceremony for the Humboldt Bay Trail South on May 17 in Humboldt County. The Conservancy has been working with CalSTA to get the remaining funds transferred to the GRTA and this should happen soon.

As a small agency, the need for assistance with HR was identified, and CPS HR Consulting has been brought on board to assist with the hiring process for a new General Manager and to assist with updating agency policies. The GM position has been posted and applications should begin to be received by the agency.

Ms. Gear also informed the board that Simone Nageon de Lestang has given notice and she will be leaving at the end of May. She thanked Simone for all the tremendous work she put in with the agency and wished her the best in her future. The Conservancy has posted this job position and will work on filling this position as soon as possible.

Chair Hart thanked Simone for her incredible dedicated work and the energy she put into the agency.

## 2. Great Redwood Trail Master Plan Update

Simone Nageon de Lestang – Ms. Nageon de Lestang shared information about the first community engagement in-person meeting that was held in Fortuna on March 22. She said it was an excellent meeting and there was a great turnout. The attendees were engaged and overall, very positive about the trail. There were 98 attendees at this meeting, and it was held in a show and tell type of model with interactive stations set up and was a big success. All the Humboldt County Supervisors were present, as well as Timber Heritage Association, Humboldt Trails Council, The Buckeye Conservancy, and the equestrian population showed great interest. There was a large presence from the Loleta community, and they showed major support for the trail. There were questions asked about access to water, restrooms availability, trail build costs, campgrounds, fire safety, trespassing, encampments, economic development, and the availability of mapping and apps. There was also an online workshop that was held on April 4 and had great attendance.

Louisa Morris- Ms. Morris updated the Board on the second community engagement in-person meeting that was held in Willits on March 23 and cohosted by The City of Willits. There were 69 attendees, and the outcome was very positive. Stakeholder groups included the Mendocino County Farm Bureau, Mendocino Railway, Mendocino Land Trust, Blue Zones, as well as neighboring landowners. This meeting also had 6 interactive stations. The “best practices” station showed high interest and had posters that listed best practices related to protecting and restoring the environment, culture, supporting firefighting and emergency access, being good neighbors, taking a proactive approach to homelessness, and creating an inviting trail experience. Community feedback was received about fire safety and access for fire personnel, allowance of dogs on the trail, privacy, cost of the trail, strategic restroom locations, kiosks that showed nearby services and information, bed and breakfast availability.

The services that Willits would like to see are campgrounds, river access, interpretive and educational materials and signs, restrooms and rest areas, and landscape and ecological protection. There was mention of protecting the culture of Willits, from the indigenous population to present, preserving the history of logging and what makes Willits special.

A webinar meeting was held following the two in-person meetings and had 44 attendees. 85% of participants were excited about the trail and very positive feedback was given.

Chair Hart thanked staff for their incredible dedication to this project. The results are so exciting, and the hard work shows.

Dir. Madrone thanked the GRTA staff for all their hard work. He said he is excited about the trail and the impact the trail will bring to our community. The economic impact will revive communities. He mentioned the salmon migration streams and rivers and how beneficial this trail will be to the environment.

Dir. Haschak thanked staff for their dedication and gave his appreciation for the outreach to the community. He said we have a unique location, and the Eel River Canyon is a major asset to our community.

Dir. Bagby echoed the comments previously made and appreciates all the outreach that has been done. She said this is decades in the making and this transportation project benefits so many communities up and down the corridor. She said the Foss Creek Trail is so heavily traveled and took no time for the community to adapt to use of the trail. Ukiah and Healdsburg are great examples of the early stages of this amazing trail project.

Dir. Campbell echoed the thanks in the work on this project. He asked if there was feedback from the neighboring landowners at the in-person planning meetings. He was curious if there would be outreach made to agricultural landowners.

Louisa Morris said there was feedback from landowners about fire protection, privacy, agricultural operations, dogs, changes the trail would bring, and trespassing off the trail, and the feedback varied. Notice of the meetings were sent out to landowners that live within a mile of the rail line and to local farm bureaus.

Dir. Hagele said the trail greatly benefits the community of Healdsburg. He appreciates the focus on the uniqueness of each

community. The trail brings the community together and has a positive economic impact.

Dir. Hunerlach thanked Louisa and Simone for their very hard work. He was not able to attend the outreach in Fortuna but has received positive feedback from the Humboldt County community. This is so unique and exciting to be able to use and understand the trail system.

Dir. Madrone said the uniqueness of our communities is an important part of this project. The community building aspect of the trail is so beneficial. The trail is a neutral project that assists in bringing our communities closer together.

Dir. Haschak said one other part of the community that needs to be included in outreach is the emergency response personnel.

Dir. Hart said that at a recent climate protection meeting, there a poll was taken on what is the most important topic on transportation, and 85% of the responders said that safe bike transportation is a highly important topic to address.

Chair Hart called for public comment. No public comments were made.

#### **G. MATTERS FROM THE BOARD**

Dir. Sackett said was given the opportunity to explore the Eel River Canyon near Outlet Creek and was excited to be talking to people that were utilizing the river and looking at the tunnels. Trail development would impact surrounding landowners and may improve their properties.

Chair Hart said there was a recent court ruling, Mendocino Railways vs. John Meyer, that is a case involving eminent domain to action by Mendocino Railways against Mr. Meyer that included a 20-acre property in Willits. This case resulted in a decision for Mr. Meyer rejecting the eminent domain claim made by Mendocino Railways. The court found that 90% of the revenue comes from excursion train activities and 10% of revenues comes from leases. In the court's opinion, Mendocino Railways is not a public utility. This was a state court action, but it is relevant to our current matters of abandonment.

Chair Hart called for public comment on Closed Session. No public comments were made.

The Board convened to Closed Session at 11:25am.

#### **H. CLOSED SESSION**

1. Discussion with Legal Counsel Regarding Pending Litigation:  
Abandonment and Railbanking Filings before Surface Transportation Board, AB 1305X  
[Government Code section 54956.9(a)]

The Board reconvened to Open Session at 11:47am.

#### **I. ANNOUNCEMENT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION**

Subsequent report regarding "Discussion with Legal Counsel Regarding Pending Litigation" agendized December 19, 2022:

Dehran L. Duckworth v. John O. Thomas, et al.  
Humboldt County Superior Court, Case No. DR190227  
[Government Code Section 54956.9(a)]

Aldo Mercado- Regarding Agenda Item H.1- Discussion with Legal Counsel Regarding Pending Litigation:  
Abandonment and Railbanking Filings before Surface Transportation Board, AB 1305X

Action was taken and directions were given to staff.

Regarding Agenda Item I- Discussion with Legal Counsel Regarding Pending Litigation" agendized December 19, 2022:  
Dehran L. Duckworth v. John O. Thomas, et al.  
Humboldt County Superior Court, Case No. DR190227

The Settlement agreement that was approved by the Board in December has now been executed by the agency.

**J. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING**

Regular Board of Directors Meeting  
Thursday, June 15, 2023, 10:30am  
Ukiah City Council Chambers  
300 Seminary Avenue, Ukiah  
Mendocino County

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

Upon Motion by Director Hagele, seconded by Director Madrone, Chair Hart adjourned the meeting at 11:49am.