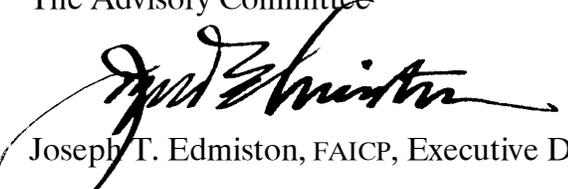


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: May 22, 2006

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 12: Consideration of resolution confirming exercise of first right of refusal pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 33207 for properties declared excess by the California Department of Transportation in and around the Valley Circle-101 Freeway Interchange and designating authority to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire and improve said properties, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution confirming exercise of first right of refusal pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 33207 for properties declared excess by the California Department of Transportation in and around the Valley Circle-101 Freeway Interchange and designating authority to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire and improve said properties.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33207 (b) of the Public Resources Code and Government Code Section 6500

Background: In the attached letter dated August 18, 2005 staff sent a letter to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) exercising the Conservancy's first right of refusal on a series of unconnected parcels at the Valley Circle-101 Freeway interchange. One of the parcels at that time was under contract for sale to a private party and the remainder and been declared excess and were being prepared for auction. The attached map shows the locations of these parcels in four distinct areas. Subsequent to the Conservancy's August 18th letter, the buyer of the easternmost parcel backed out of the sale in deference to the Conservancy's intent to maintain the property as permanent open space.

The parcels offer scenic viewshed along the freeway and major arterial roads, provide an excellent opportunity to clean storm runoff in an ecological restoration area, and are of strong community interest to create native plant gardens for beautification. Through a grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), the Conservancy funded a preliminary plan that included habitat restoration and storm water infiltration on each of the four parcel clusters. The total improvement area is approximately two acres.

Caltrans staff has been researching its original purchase price and calculating any administrative and management costs it has incurred since the properties were acquired over 45 years ago. The attached letter from the Caltrans Southern Right of Way Region dated May

10, 2006 officially describes and organizes the subject parcels into Disposal Units/Director's Deeds. Staff concurs with the parcels and herein incorporates them by reference. The only note to make is that parcel number 056220 contains a building and parking lot. That facility is used by a Caltrans surveying unit. It is not staff's intent to acquire the developed areas. The open space on the west side of the parcel is however fully contiguous with the open space in parcel 56221-01-01 and is integral to the uses proposed by the Conservancy. Hence the proposed action confirms the Conservancy's exercise of first right of refusal on all of the parcels in the Caltrans letter dated May 10, 2006.

Given the era when the parcels were acquired and the limited administrative and management costs that Caltrans has most likely incurred in that time period, the cost of the parcels is not expected to be high. However, at this time staff has not been given an estimate by Caltrans. A Metropolitan Water District (MWD) pipeline easement courses through the two easternmost clusters of parcels.

The proposed action also designates authority to the MRCA to acquire and improve the properties. The cost to the Conservancy could diminish if the MRCA acquired the property because the process for a non-State agency to go through various State reviews may be less involved.

The MRCA has a State grant application (2005-06 Consolidated Grants Program) pending for \$250,000 to improve the properties. The phase two application for that grant must be submitted by June 8, 2006.

A Woodland Hills Property Owners group has committed to maintaining the largest and most visible parcel that abuts Valley Circle Boulevard. According to them, the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has committed to providing a water meter at no cost.