



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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March 3, 2021
Brett Miller, City Manager
City of Hollister
375 Fifth St.
Hollister, CA 95023

Sent via Email: brett.miller@hollister.ca.gov

Re: Riverfront Regional Park and Parkway Trail, Property Exchange Agreement with County of San Benito, City of Hollister and San Benito Joint Union High School District

Dear Brett:

The County of San Benito Resource Management Agency would like to make an informational presentation to the Hollister City Council at its next available meeting, preferably on March 15, 2021. The presentation would take approximately 15 minutes. The purpose of the presentation is to outline the County's plans for development of a Regional Park and related facilities, and to ask the City Council for its assistance.

Three Million Dollar Grant Opportunity. Crucial deadlines are fast approaching for an application by the County of San Benito to the California State Department of Parks and Recreation for a grant of up to Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000.00) which will double the amount of money available to the County to develop a 70.2 acre Regional Park on vacant land along the San Benito River South of the High School. The grant will provide a major boost to the plan for River Parkway Trail System and Regional Park that has been in the works for over 10 years. The City's timely cooperation is needed to help make this long-deferred dream of a regional park move forward.

In order to qualify for the state grant a minimum parcel of 50 acres is needed. This requirement can only be met if the long-contemplated transfer of 47.6 acres south of River Parkway owned by the High School District is combined with the 22.6 acre parcel (APN 020-170-017) already owned by the County of San Benito. Only counties, or joint powers agencies including counties, are eligible to apply for the grant. The applicant must own or control the park site to be most competitive for the grant award.

Prior Agreements between the City, County and High School District. The County, City and High School District first entered into an Interagency Cooperation Agreement on November 21, 2016 for the safety closure of Nash Road between Monterey and West Streets, in exchange for construction of River Parkway and the transfer of the High School District's land south of the Parkway to the County for development of the regional park.

That Agreement was amended on October 5, 2017, to reduce costs of the road construction and delete the construction of a shared use parking lot north of the Parkway on High School District property to be retained. Copies of those agreements are attached for your reference. The County completed construction of River Parkway between Nash Road and San Benito Streets at a cost of over One Million Nine Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,900,000.00) in 2018.

Immediate Need: Nash Road Closure. The High School District requires permanent closure of the safety zone of Nash Road between Monterey and West Streets before it will convey fee title to the 47.6 acres to the County for park development. The City owns the north half of this section of Nash Road. The High School District owns the south half of this section of Nash Road, subject to a public right-of way that is outside City limits under the jurisdiction of the County. Both the City and the County must conduct street vacation proceedings pursuant to Streets and Highways Code section 8230, et seq. for this to be accomplished. The County will conduct its public hearing on vacating the public right-of-way for the south half of Nash Road on March 23, 2021. **The County and the High School District respectfully request that the City Council authorize and schedule its public hearing to permanently vacate the north half of this section of Nash Road as soon as possible, preferably in April of 2021.** Exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act apply to both the road closure and the property transfer.

Part of the urgency is the need to engage the public and other agencies in public outreach and preliminary planning for the park facilities to be constructed with grant funds and the funds that the County has already set aside for development of the park beginning in April in order to complete all of the steps necessary to complete the grant application by the November submittal deadline. The City of Hollister and residents of the City and County will be included in this consultation and pre-planning process. Until that process is complete the County cannot commit to specific improvements or elements of the regional park plan.

Park and Roadway Improvements Already Underway. The County is in the process of preparing plans for a temporary parking lot on the property it currently owns south of River Parkway to facilitate public access and use of the unimproved trails already in use on upland portion of the High School District property to be constructed even before the grant application will be submitted.

The County is also preparing to immediately install interim traffic controls in the form of three-way stop signs at the intersection of Nash Road and San Benito Streets, provided the County can have the assistance of City Road crews to install the necessary street marking and pavement striping. This is only a temporary solution until the County can complete plans and specifications and complete right-of-way acquisition to construct a round-about at this intersection to safely facilitate the efficient flow of traffic and pedestrian and bicycle travel along San Benito Street to Union Road, which the County expects to complete within the next two to three years.

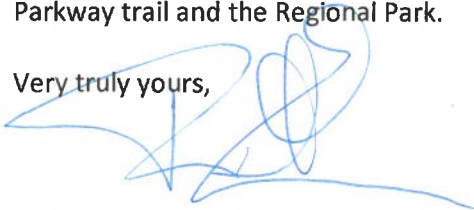
The Bigger Picture. The County has also begun preliminary discussions with property owners of portions of the San Benito River bed from the northern City Brigantino Park / Fourth St – Apricot Park trails to extend a multi-use hiking, cycling and equestrian trail all the way to the County's property and corporation yard on Southside Road, a combined distance of over 4.2 miles, that will provide an incredible amenity for the citizens of Hollister and San Benito County, but also be an attraction for visitors from out of the area that will showcase some of the under-appreciated natural beauty that the County has to offer.

The trail in this section would complete the first of five segments or "reaches" of the 20-mile River Parkway trail system envisioned to extend from Anzar High School to Tres Pinos, with the Regional Park as the centerpiece.

All this is possible at little or no cost to the City of Hollister. To do its part to make this long-deferred vision come to fruition, the City must agree to vacate and permanently close the north half of Nash Road between Monterey and West Streets. We strongly urge the City Council agree to take this important step as soon as possible.

There may even be an opportunity for the City and County to jointly submit a separate three million dollar (\$3,000,000.00) grant application to pay for additional trail improvements such as a pedestrian, bicycle bridge over the San Benito River to connect the two city trail segments. We look forward to further discussions with City officials about development of the River Parkway trail and the Regional Park.

Very truly yours,



Ray Espinosa, County Administrative Officer
County of San Benito

Cc: Mayor Ignacio Velasquez
Council Members Rick Perez, Rolan Resendiz, Honor Spencer, Tim Burns
City Clerk Christine Black