January 23, 2018

Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE PRESIDENT TO EXECUTE AGREEMENT GRANTING MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST $1,817,950 IN MEASURE A FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM FUNDS FOR PURCHASE OF AN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT OVER TAYLOR RANCH

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Authorize President to execute grant agreement for APNs 119-020-25 and 119-020-27.
2. Authorize an increase of $1,817,950 in Measure A Fund 2560 expenditure appropriations within the Farmland Preservation subprogram (6402) through use of available Measure A Fund Balance (2560).

SUMMARY:

Marin County Parks has received an application from Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) requesting $1,817,950 in Measure A Farmland Preservation Program funds to purchase an agricultural conservation easement over the 705-acre Taylor Ranch located approximately one and a half miles north of Point Reyes Station. The subject property (Assessor Parcels 119-020-25 and 119-020-27) is used for commercial agriculture and is operated as an organic dairy. The ranch has been in the Taylor family since the 1970's and is located between the MALT-protected Giacomini Dairy and Panfiglio Ranch on the north and east, and Elaine Martinelli's ranch to the south. Protection of the ranch would connect a moderately sized swath of nine MALT-protected ranches stretching from Marshall to Point Reyes.

The appraised fair market value of the easement is $3,594,000. MALT's grant request represents fifty percent of the total purchase price plus fifty percent of administrative costs associated with acquisition of the easement. MALT will be contributing the remaining $1,817,950 from its own funds for purchase of the easement.

Ranch properties in West Marin face a very high risk of conversion to exclusive residential development, which increases building density, road construction and other activities that threaten agriculture and natural resource values. Karen Taylor and her family need to sell an easement to MALT to pay down debt incurred when it purchased the property from Karen's sister, who inherited the property from her
mother. If they cannot sell the easement to MALT, they will need to subdivide the ranch and sell off a portion of it. Once part of a ranch is sold for non-agricultural use, the remainder becomes more likely to be converted out of agriculture. Once properties like the Bivalve Dairy go out of production, they will likely never be available to an agricultural buyer again. The sale of part, or eventually all of this ranch for nonagricultural uses would reduce the overall productive agricultural land base in Marin by 705 acres. Permanently preserving this ranch for agricultural uses will help to maintain the critical mass of farms necessary to sustain the required agricultural infrastructure to keep farming and ranching a viable component of the county’s economy, and secure a MALT-protected agricultural buffer along the east shore of Tomales Bay.

Staff considers grant applications for funding from the Measure A Farmland Preservation Program on a first-come, first-served basis, and evaluates the merits of proposals based on criteria contained in the Marin County Agricultural Land Conservation Program. The creation of this program was authorized by your board on January 31, 2012. Additionally, as approved by Marin voters in 2012, twenty percent of Measure A funds are mandated to be used for the protection of Marin County farmland at risk of subdivision and development in order to preserve Marin’s working farms and ranches.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There will be no increase to General Fund Net County Cost as a result of your Board’s actions, as the purchase is fully funded through Measure A Funds. If approved, expenditure appropriations within Measure A, Fund 2560, Farmland Preservation Grant Program, will be increased by $1,817,950 and fully offset by a reduction in available fund balance (2560-320525).

REVIEWED BY:

[ ] Dept. of Finance  [ X ] N/A
[ X ] County Counsel  [ ] N/A
[ ] Human Resources  [ X ] N/A

Senior Open Space Planner Craig Richardson the principal author of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Chamberlain
Assistant Director