

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [McDonnell, Kevin](#); [Barnacle, Brian](#); [Cader-Thompson, Janice](#); [Healy, Mike](#); [Karen Nau](#); [Shribbs, John](#); -- [City Clerk](#); [Ellis, Evelyn](#)  
**Cc:** [Ervin, Olivia](#); [Hines, Heather](#); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Peter Cohn's letter of support for City Council approval of the Scott Ranch Project and the FEIR  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 22, 2023 1:03:16 PM  
**Attachments:** [Family Resource Center Acknowledgement Letter to Kelly Creek Protection Project - November 16 2021 - PDF Copy.pdf](#)

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---Warning: Use caution before clicking any attachments. THIS EMAIL IS FROM OUTSIDE OUR EMAIL SYSTEM.---

Dear Mayor McDonnell and Members of the Petaluma City Council,

I am a semi-retired social worker and civil rights lawyer with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a 36-year resident of Petaluma. My professional and community engagement has included social work with children and disabled adults along with their families, and social justice. The NAACP civil rights work has covered a range of matters involving: educational equity, employment discrimination, police misconduct matters and voting rights, with a view to creating a more just and inclusive society.

It is from this perspective that I decided to join my longtime colleague and fellow public interest lawyer – Greg Colvin – to volunteer as a Co-Founder of Earth Island Institute's Kelly Creek Protection Project (KCPP). Greg, a 34-year Petaluma resident, brought to KCPP his extensive expertise as a nationally recognized and highly respected nonprofit lawyer who regularly worked with charitable and philanthropic organizations. We both saw KCPP as a wonderful community service opportunity to work with the philanthropic community, Petaluma residents and Sonoma County Regional Parks (SCRP) to expand Helen Putnam Park by purchasing and gifting as much of the acreage of the Davidon/Scott Ranch (Davidon) as possible to SCRCP for the benefit of the residents of Petaluma and Sonoma County.

In pursuing this path and after the 2017 City Council meeting, the Kelly Creek

Protection Project team was able to work constructively and in good faith with Davidon Homes' Vice-President Steve Abbs to either purchase the entire ranch for \$11 million dollars or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the historic ranch for \$4.1 million dollars. Having experienced the benefits of a one square block public park with a library and playground while growing up in the urban core of Long Beach, I shared the view of the KCPP team that this would be an extraordinary and beneficial gift to our community because it would expand a 216-acre Helen Putnam Park by the 44+ acres of the 58-acre Scott Ranch and give a clear and safe downtown access to a new 263-acre park for all the children and families of Petaluma, including those with mobility challenges.

Of course, downtown access would mean that Helen Putnam Park could have the potential to become more inclusive and available to our entire community – Eastside as well as Westside. It would mean that residents would no longer need to travel by car to gain access to the main Chileno Valley entrance to the park but rather could safely enter the park through a new entrance at Windsor and D Streets by walking, bicycling or wheel-chairing. This would also be consistent with the stated policy goals of Petaluma to have more outdoor amenities serving infill housing near our bus and train stations in order to diminish carbon emissions. The residents of this additional housing there would also have easy and direct access to this jewel of SCRP.

In working to make access to Helen Putnam Park and all the Regional Parks more diverse and equitable, KCPP had the pleasure of partnering with Sonoma County Regional Parks and its Foundation beginning in 2020-2021 to promote Vehicle Entry Passes for low-income families. In the course of that initiative, KCPP reached out to the Family Resource

Center of Petaluma City Schools, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa and other public service venues on the Eastside of Petaluma. As a result, KCPP has been able to support free passes for some 550 families. The value of this outreach work and the importance of the Scott Ranch Project to the community were underscored by the kind November 16, 2021 acknowledgment letter to Kelly Creek Protection Project from the Family Resource Center which is attached.

With respect to the park concept plan, the KCPP team has greatly benefited by having the expertise of a park and landscape architect in Maggie Jensen of Prunuske Chatham Inc (PCI) – who has worked so closely with the SCRP and the Project in developing a stellar park plan that protects and enhances the environment and ecosystem on the ranch. PCI has a track record and focus “on creating, restoring, and caring for places that support diverse plant and animal life—and nourishing people, too.” Because KCPP will be gifting the 47 acres of the Davidon/Scott Ranch property to Regional Parks, KCPP believes that it is important to rely on the professional expertise of Regional Parks and a highly respected park architect to develop the most environmentally sound park concept. With that said, KCPP and the Scott Ranch Project have always been open to receiving feedback from the community and public officials regarding their ideas about the park. In the final analysis, it will be SCRP who will receive this \$5.6+ million dollar parkland gift and has the necessary skills to effectively manage the sensitive habitat as it does with its other 50+ parks and beaches.

KCPP has also been fortunate to have a distinguished Environmental Lawyer and Law Firm on our team in Tamara Gallanter of Shute, Mihaly and Weinberg. The Daily Journal

recognized Tamara as the 2020 California Environmental Lawyer of the Year. She has done extraordinary work on behalf of KCPP and the community in analyzing the full range of public comments that led to the City concluding in 2017 that there needed to be greater serious consideration to the more environmentally superior 28 home alternative. The public views have been ever top of mind in all the negotiations and have been an integral part of the parties reaching such an exceptional agreement for our community.

To be very clear, there has been no hidden agenda in KCPP's approach to working with Davidon. KCPP has always wanted to simply protect and preserve as much of the privately owned Davidon/Scott Ranch property as possible. It should be noted that the City does not own the Ranch and cannot simply take the land for its own use. After the key 2017 Council meeting, KCPP found that willing partner in Davidon which was prepared to allow KCPP to purchase as much of the land as possible for a public parkland gift to SCR. That commitment to work in partnership to achieve this public good has continued to this day. KCPP has been very grateful to the philanthropic community, the generous residents of Petaluma (who came forth by the hundreds with contributions from \$10 to \$10,000), Sonoma County Regional Parks, the Ag+Open Space District (\$1,000,000 acquisition grant along with a recent habitat improvement grant of \$450,000) and Davidon Homes for being engaged in this model collaboration to so constructively move the Scott Ranch Project forward.

In implementing this agreement, Davidon has recognized the important public benefit of the Scott Ranch Project and been willing to incur additional expenses for such things as the traffic calming roundabout on D and Windsor Streets and sidewalks with view benches, building a state of the art water infiltration basin that will serve to capture not only the runoff

from the new green homes but also from the Windsor Drive pavement, adding some 216 native trees to the residential canopy of the neighborhood, and assisting with other park amenities.

In further responding to public and civic input, KCPP is also very pleased with the agreement of Davidon Homes to further shrink the footprint of the residential plan to only 6.4 acres for the 28 new green solar-powered homes, to leave another 5 acres as private open space, and to give an additional 3 acres to KCPP for the public park.

The result is that KCPP has met its ever-present public goal of being able to protect some 89% of Scott Ranch and gift 47 of the 58-acre ranch to Sonoma County Regional Parks, which is now valued at over \$5.5 million dollars. This gift comes at a time when our own Recreation, Music and Parks Commission recently acknowledged that Petaluma does not have sufficient funding to purchase new parkland nor to adequately maintain its existing city parks. In surveying the community's priorities as a part of updating the General Plan, "more parks" was the number two priority for Petaluma residents.

In light of the above, I do not believe that anyone can reasonably or seriously argue that an over \$5.5 million dollar parkland gift to Sonoma County Regional Parks for the benefit of Petaluma and Sonoma County – at no expense to the City – does not reflect the best interests and priorities of our entire community. Therefore, I respectfully request that you vote to approve the Scott Ranch Project and the Final Environmental Impact Report.

Very truly yours,

Peter Cohn

Co-Founder of Earth Island Institute's Kelly Creek Protection Project

Email: Peter Cohn





November 16, 2021

Petaluma Family Resource Center at McDowell  
421 S McDowell Blvd  
Petaluma CA 94954

Dear Peter,

We are so grateful to you and your colleagues at the Kelly Creek Protection Project for your leadership in developing a partnership between Sonoma County Regional Parks, the Kelly Creek Protection Project and the Petaluma Family Resource Center at McDowell. Thanks to your support, this partnership, along with the scholarships that you provided for regional park passes, has enabled the neediest members of our community to find respite from the extraordinary challenges of the last year in the beauty of our regional parks.

In this most challenging of times, it has been a tremendous gift to the families who are so often hit hardest by the crises in our communities, be it fires or pandemic, that are occurring all too frequently in Sonoma County. Monica G. said it best, "I can take my family for a hike anytime I want! In the past, we always had to budget for a day at a regional park."

We are also very much looking forward to the completion of the Scott Ranch Project which will permit families from the Eastside as well as the Westside of our community to have direct and safe walking, bicycling or wheel-chairing access to a nearby Sonoma County Regional Park. At a time of a global pandemic and families' not having had easy access to the health benefits of the outdoors and large public parks, this project brings such a park directly to the families most in need in the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Catherine Crotty

Coordinator  
Petaluma Family Resource Center at McDowell