

City of Capitola

Commission on the Environment

Regular Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 – 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice-Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Council Member Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

3. Public Oral and Written Communications

The Chair may announce and set time limits at the beginning of each agenda item. The Committee Members may not discuss Oral Communications to any significant degree but may request issues raised be placed on a future agenda.

4. Staff Comments

5. February 18, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

6. General Business

A. T-Mobile Hometown Grant

Recommended Action: Authorize the Chair to sign, on behalf of the Commission, a letter supporting the City's application to the T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program.

B. The Park at Rispin Mansion Interpretive Signage

Recommended Action: Discuss and provide feedback on potential themes for the proposed interpretive signage at the Park at Rispin Mansion.

7. Items for Future Agenda

8. Adjournment

Next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2026.

Agenda and Agenda Packet Materials: The Commission on the Environment Agenda is available on the City's website: www.cityofcapitola.org/ on Friday prior to the Wednesday meeting. If you need additional information, please contact the Public Works Department at (831) 475-7300.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Disability-related aids or services are available to enable persons with a disability to participate in this meeting consistent with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Assisted

listening devices are available for individuals with hearing impairments at the meeting in the City Council Chambers. Should you require special accommodations to participate in the meeting due to a disability, please contact the City Clerk's office at least 24-hours in advance of the meeting at 831-475-7300. In an effort to accommodate individuals with environmental sensitivities, attendees are requested to refrain from wearing perfumes and other scented products.

City of Capitola Commission on the Environment Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 – 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Council Member Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

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- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call** – Chair Beritzhoff-Law called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.
Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Michael Maroney, Council Member Clarke, Scott Rohlf
Absent: Dennis Norton
City Staff Present: Erika Senyk (Environmental Projects Manager)
 - 2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**
None.
 - 3. Public Oral and Written Communications**
None.
 - 4. Staff Comments**
Staff provided updates on topics such as the City's Climate Action Plan RFP, a State Coastal Conservancy Grant to support resiliency planning for Esplanade Park, the City's Clean Community Designation Program award, a T-Mobile Hometown Grant opportunity, BOEM's Offshore Drilling proposal, State regulations for plastic carryout bags, a potential stormwater infrastructure improvement planning project through a collaboration with the Regional Climate Project Working Group, and new Water Quality Monitoring signs at Capitola Beach entrances in coordination with the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Department.
 - 5. January 21, 2026 Regular Commission Meeting Minutes**
Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

Motion to approve the January 21, 2026 minutes: Council Member Clarke
Seconded: Vice Chair Maroney
Motion passed 4-0-1 (Commissioner Norton Absent)
 - 6. General Business**
 - A. 2026 COE Workplan**
Recommended Action: Discuss and approve a list of COE goals for calendar year 2026.

The Commission discussed their goals for 2026 and approved the following workplan:

COE Goals for 2026:

1. **Support the update of the City's Climate Action Plan goals at COE meetings.**
2. **Provide support and guidance to City staff on environmental improvement projects (e.g., Rispin Riparian Corridor) and relevant funding opportunities.**
3. **Increase and improve public awareness of environmental management and compliance efforts.**

Motion to approve the list of COE goals for calendar year 2026: Council Member Clarke

Seconded: Vice Chair Maroney

Motion passed 4-0-1 (Commissioner Norton Absent)

7. Items for Future Agenda

1. T-Mobile Hometown Grant & The Park at Rispin Mansion improvements
2. Carryout bag ordinance updates

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 PM to the next Regular Meeting of the Commission on the Environment on March 18, 2026.

ATTEST:

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Chair

Capitola Commission on the Environment

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 18, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Topic: T-Mobile Hometown Grant

Recommended Action: Authorize the Chair to sign, on behalf of the Commission, a letter supporting the City's application to the T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program.

Background: In April 2021, T-Mobile launched a Hometown Grant Program with a five-year commitment to support up to 500 small towns across the nation with up to \$25 million in funding available. To date, T-Mobile's Hometown Grants have funded projects in hundreds of communities – revitalizing parks, upgrading technology, supporting public safety, and expanding public access. The final opportunity to apply for the Program is open now, and all applications must be submitted by March 31, 2026.

Through the Program, T-Mobile aims to fund projects that build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections. Examples of eligible projects include adaptive uses of older and historic buildings into community gathering spaces, improvements to outdoor parks or trails, and technology projects for public libraries. Proposed projects should be shovel-ready, physical builds or improvements that can be completed within 12 months after receiving Hometown Grant funding. Town managers or employees from small towns with populations less than 50,000 are eligible to apply, and T-Mobile will award up to \$50,000 for shovel-ready projects.

At the February 18, 2026 Commission on the Environment (COE) meeting, the Commission provided potential eligible uses for the Hometown Grant funds for the Park at Rispin Mansion. These ideas included park improvements such as lighting, adding structures for visual interest, interpretive signage, and community planting projects. The Commission requested for staff to return to the regular March 18, 2026 COE meeting with a proposed shovel-ready project for the park that would be eligible for the Hometown Grant funds. The Commission also requested for staff to return with a draft letter supporting the City's grant application, to-be signed by the Chair following the COE's approval (Attachment 1).

Discussion: Staff recommends the installation of interpretive signage at the Park at Rispin Mansion as a viable project for this grant opportunity, considering the project eligibility criteria for the T-Mobile Hometown Grants Program (e.g., shovel-ready, 12-month project completion timeline). Project materials that the City has already acquired (e.g., site improvement and landscaping plans) can also be used in support of the City's grant application. Additionally, in 2025, the City completed the Capitola Wharf Interpretive Signage Project with the successful installation of four educational reader rail signs and one six-panel informational kiosk on the wharf. The successful completion of the Wharf Signage Project demonstrates the City's capacity to effectively implement a second signage project at the Park at Rispin Mansion within the grant's required 12-month timeframe.

Attachments:

1. Letter of Support

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager



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Website: <http://www.cityofcapitola.org>

T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program
T-Mobile USA, Inc.

March 10, 2026

Dear Grant Review Committee,

On behalf of the City of Capitola's Commission on the Environment, I am pleased to offer our strong support for the City of Capitola's application to the T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program for the installation of interpretive signage at the Park at Rispin Mansion.

The Park at Rispin Mansion is one of Capitola's most unique and valued public parks and open spaces, blending rich cultural history with an important natural landscape. The park is located directly across from the Capitola Library, creating a natural extension of an important community gathering space. Together, the library and park offer residents and visitors a welcoming place to relax, read, learn, recreate and connect—allowing people to enjoy the quiet benefits of a peaceful, natural setting.

The Commission on the Environment strongly supports efforts that help residents and visitors better understand and appreciate the ecological and historical significance of this site. The proposed interpretive signage would be an important step toward achieving that goal.

Educational signage at the park would provide accessible information about several key themes, including the history of the Rispin Mansion and the early development of the surrounding property. In addition, signage would highlight the park's riparian habitat, native plant communities, and the wildlife that depends on these protected ecosystems. By helping park visitors recognize and understand these natural and historical features, the project will foster a deeper sense of stewardship for local resources.

Interpretive signage is a simple yet highly effective tool for environmental education. It allows visitors of all ages and backgrounds to learn about the natural world directly within the landscape itself. The Commission believes that these educational elements will enhance the park experience while also supporting broader community goals related to sustainability, conservation, and public engagement.

We are grateful for T-Mobile's commitment to supporting small communities through the Hometown Grant Program. Funding for this project would help transform the Park at Rispin Mansion into an even more meaningful and educational gathering space for Capitola residents, school groups, and visitors.

Thank you for your consideration of the City of Capitola's application. The Commission on the Environment strongly encourages your support for this project and would welcome the opportunity to see the educational signage become a lasting benefit for our community.

Sincerely,

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law
Chair, Commission on the Environment

Capitola Commission on the Environment

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 18, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Topic: The Park at Rispin Mansion Interpretive Signage

Recommended Action: Discuss and provide feedback on potential themes for the proposed interpretive signage at the Park at Rispin Mansion.

Background: In 2025, the grounds surrounding the Rispin Mansion were transformed into a new public open space, referred to as the Park at Rispin Mansion. The park celebrates Capitola's natural setting and history through native landscaping, walking paths, bike racks, gathering areas, and interpretive features. On December 17, 2025, the park was opened to the public and serves as a community space for residents and visitors to gather, relax, recreate, read, and enjoy nature.

Due to budget constraints, some of the originally envisioned features for the park were not included in the first phase of construction. The City intends to continue implementing these additional elements as funding becomes available. Interpretive signage highlighting the historical and ecological significance of the site is included as one of the elements planned for future installation.

In 2020, Michael Arnone and Associates, the City's contracted landscape architect for the Park at Rispin Mansion project, prepared a site plan including five potential locations for interpretive signage installation at the park (Attachment 1). Some potential educational signage themes presented at past public meetings included the following:

1. Name of the park, date of original construction, date of dedication
2. Nuns of St. Clare period photo and narrative
3. Butterfly Habitat and Oak Woodland restoration
4. Henry Rispin bio, photos and narrative
5. Mansion interior floorplan, photos and narrative

In March 2026, City staff approached the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County regarding a potential partnership to support the park's signage content development, imagery, and design processes. The District works with public agencies, landowners, and community partners to design and carry out projects that improve stream and riparian ecosystem health—such as removing invasive species, restoring native vegetation, reducing sediment inputs, and enhancing habitat for fish and wildlife—while also conducting monitoring to evaluate ecological outcomes and guide adaptive management. One of RCD's frequently monitored sites includes the riparian and environmentally sensitive habitat areas surrounding the Park at Rispin Mansion.

In addition to their monitoring efforts, RCD also supports community education by developing outreach materials and interpretive signage that highlight watershed processes, native habitats, and stewardship practices, helping residents and visitors better understand and protect local riparian ecosystems. During City staff's conversations with RCD's communication team, their staff provided the following suggestions for signage themes at the Park at Rispin Mansion:

1. Wildlife (e.g., birds, monarchs, Foothill yellow-legged frog)
2. Coast live oak
3. Riparian habitat and zones
4. Fisheries
5. Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas/Conservation Easement
6. Historical uses of Soquel Creek at the Rispin Mansion site

Discussion: At the February 18, 2026 Commission on the Environment meeting, the Commission approved the COE's 2026 workplan, which included two goals relevant to the Park at Rispin Mansion interpretive signage project:

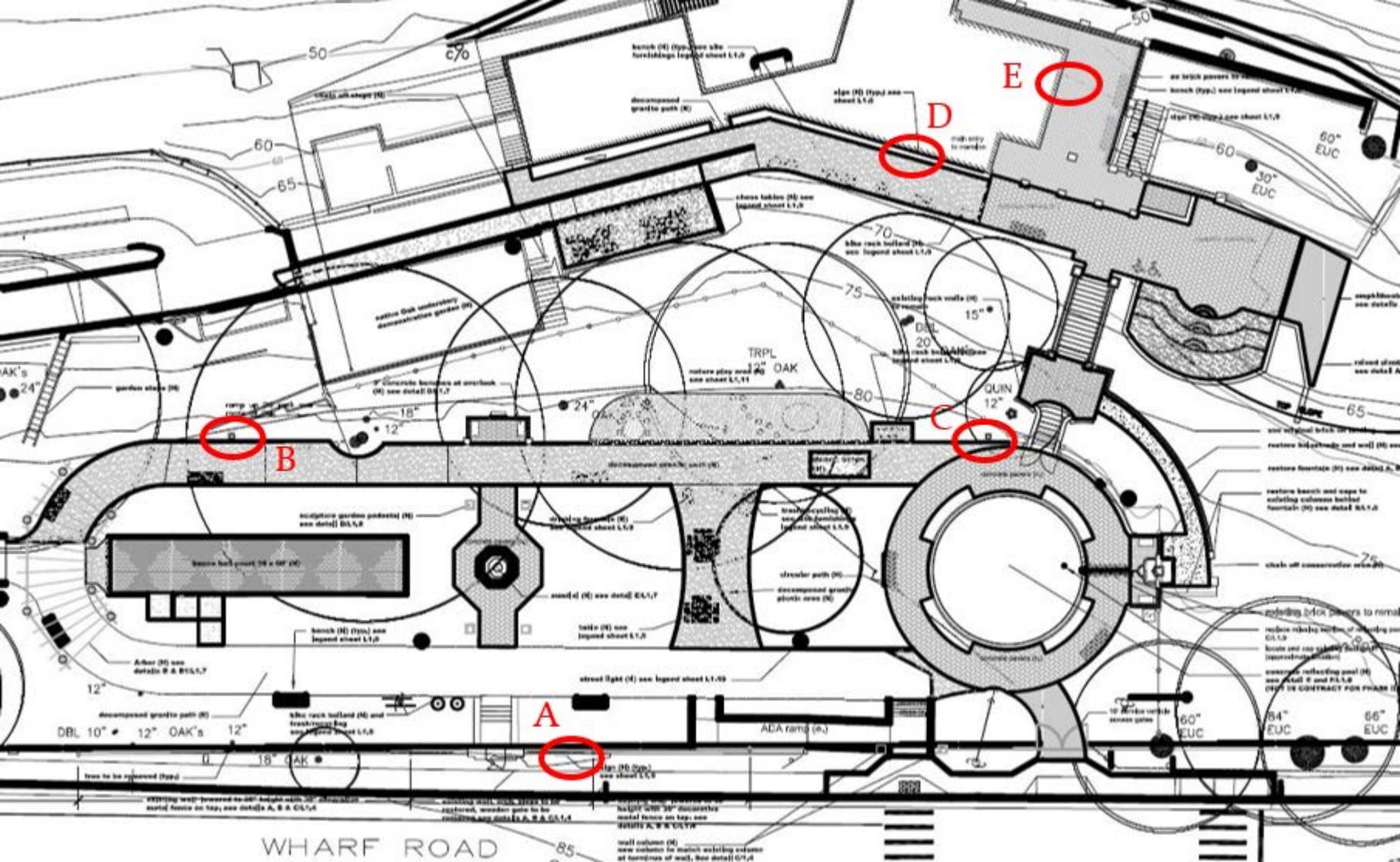
1. Provide support and guidance to City staff on environmental improvement projects (e.g., Rispin Riparian Corridor) and relevant funding opportunities.
2. Increase and improve public awareness of environmental management and compliance efforts.

Themes identified by the Commission will be incorporated into a list of potential topics presented to the community through a public survey, the results of which will help inform the final themes selected for the Park at Rispin Mansion interpretive signage project.

Attachments:

1. Map of Rispin Park Interpretive Signage Locations

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager



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