



Oakland Firesafe Council
Board Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2021
Via Zoom Conference Call

Present :

Ken Benson
Margo Bart
Carolyn Burgess
Chris Cullander
Glen Dahlbacka
Barbara Goldenberg
Jon Kaufman
Kathryn Levenson
Martin Matarrese
Laurie McWhorter
Doug Mosher
Sue Piper
Dale Risdén
Bob Sieben
Elizabeth Stage
Nick Vigilante
Doug Wong

Guests:

Lisa Jacobs
Olga Bolotina
Dan Kalb
Joe DeVries
Rebecca Sanchez

The meeting called to order at 10:04 am by the Chair.

1. Minutes of September 25 and November 21, 2020 approved as mailed.
2. Treasurer's Report: There is a \$31,275 balance in the OFSC bank account. This balance reflects an \$8,000 grant from the Cal Fire Foundation which is due the Oakland Community Preparedness & Response Project. The previous grant of \$15,000 has been spent. The Joint Powers Authority Fund encumbrance now totals \$7,975. Not included in the bank balance is the PayPal account balance of \$1,050. All this brings the reconciled cash balance of the Oakland Firesafe Council to a total of \$16,350.

$\$31,275 - \$8,000 - \$7,975 - \$1,050 = \$16,350$
Bank OCP&R JPA PayPal Reconciled
Balance Grant Fund A/C Cash

What has not been included in the above is the grant from the Bay Area Air Quality District for \$10,000 which was obtained by the good actions of Jon Kaufman of the Claremont Canyon Conservancy CCC). The grant has been approved and the District has been invoiced.

3. Old Business
 - a. **Oakland CP&R**--Neighborhood Organizing Update- Doug Mosher



Scheduling workshops, one in a week—need to get the word out. Moving forward, put out our weekly e-newsletter; provide these workshops; GenOak 2 way radio network has 100 people around Oakland and nearby, monthly check ins, radio exercise in March. Please help spread the word, if you are a member of an NCPC or neighborhood group, send contact information to Doug to provide that outreach.

b. Regional Vegetation Management District Update-Jon Kaufman. Amazingly, given holidays and Covid-19, we have raised \$37,000 in hand or pledged and on the way to support the JPA Seed Fund. We need about \$100,000 to get where we want to be and any checks to be made out to OFSC or PayPal mark for JPA fund on both. Still reaching out to organizations and elected officials who have not yet signed the endorsement letter, Mayor of Richmond—hopeful of getting that area on board and central part of Alameda County (San Leandro) if you have contacts, let us know. Moved forward with a consultant to help move this forward, contracting with PlaceWorks—does a lot of work with cities in East Bay and around CA. Enough to get started. Have a meeting with Alameda County Mayor’s Association next month. If you are a member of an organization in Alameda County or Oakland that has not yet endorsed—get an endorsement from your group, add to a list.

c. City of Oakland Wildfire Prevention Interagency Team—Michael Hunt, Joe Devries

Winter update: 7 things

- California League of Cities Effort to opposed ADU in high fire severity Zones
- VMP—comment extended to January 22—
- Budget Cuts—Nick—summary of service reductions- overtime function for OPD—area crime response and administration. 1.56 million savings—some of that money had been used to address Grizzly Peak issues-- may have some negative impact on Grizzly Peak and Skyline—if you know anything about that—specificity-- it is really bad, we will lay people off, worse than great Recession—hope appears to transition in Washington that may lead to stimulus package to support local governments. Revenue 62 million deficit for this fiscal year may go up to 70 million. Impact on police, drastically slash overtime, in order to fill patrol beats mean pulling people for special units—will be losing community resource officers—less CRO coverage and fewer officers to provide for special operations—asking Engine companies to have a visible presence—out there on New Years Eve.
- Vegetation Management Inspections—fiscal management document financial manager prepared—one areas considered reductions in vegetation management in fire zones—add any additional information.
- Potential closure of fire stations—2 browning out done it before, fire chief not happy—I don’t see any magic bullet—Labor is city’s biggest expense on a rotating basis.
- Other gathering places—Met with MNC and Doug Moser re gathering locale issues on Skyline above JMP sometime this winter, working with tree department, when they take down a tree and have a log to drop it there.
- UC Berkeley successfully completed Claremont Canyon mitigation plan no issues
- Finalize MOU with other jurisdictions re Grizzly Peak
- Vince and Planning Department examining map that Cal Fire is updating—some parts of Oakland that should be included that weren’t
- Saw a Cal OES grant that could pay for solar powered signage and control arms on red flag days—our projects did not qualify—looking for money for that concept

Elizabeth Stage: 911 calls and fire safety/budget—less expensive way of responding to 911 medical emergency—90% are medical in nature, 90% are responded to by fire department—locations of fire house closures, geography of fire incidents and medical emergency incidents taken into account in determining closures—Everyone understands that with the gravity of the budget situation we can’t have the level of service we are accustomed to. Ask Michael Hunt at OFD for something that can be



publicized on closure, medical emergencies and Vegetation Management money. We don't worry about fire season until July 1, work they do with retained funds to manage their properties.

Carolyn Burgess—survey telephone opinions what should be cut, foremost thought what shouldn't be cut, vegetation management, 911 calls, fire department—beginning of Regular budget survey.

Laurie McWhorter—ADU's City of Berkeley trying to push back on ADUs in the hills—my planning folks on our working group, reached out to me want to be involved California League of Cities effort, wanted authority from our office, Council Resolution making WFP a priority. Homeowner Associations concerned – let us know if he needs homeowner association letters of support

- d. **OFSC 2020 Insurance Cancellation Survey** – 173 people responded. Highlights:
- 45% had been with the same company for more than 11 years;20% for less than a year.
 - 51% had received a nonrenewal notice; 49% had not.
 - 56% had received the notice in 2020; 27% I 2019; 16% in 2018, 6% in 2017; 4% in 2016, 6% before 2016.
 - 94% said stated reason was that they lived in a high fire risk severity zoe.
 - 45% have switched companies in past 5 years; 55% had not.
 - 86% said they switched because on nonrenewal; 11% found a better rate.
 - 53% said it was very difficult to find a new policy; 27% said somewhat difficult; 12% said neutral, 6% somewhat easy, 3% easy.
 - 6% negotiated with their insurance to renew again; 68% went through a broker; 33% ended up with California Fair Plan. 11% with a supplemental plan.
 - 56% said prices were 20% higher than 5 years ago; 19% said more than 105 higher, 20% said roughly the same; 4% said lower.
 - 17% said coverage was better than 5 years ago; 67% said it was the sae; 13% said it was worse, and 3% said it was significantly worse.
- e. **The Savvy Homeowner in our Fire Prone Community series** starts on January 28, 5;30-7 pm with The City of Oakland Prepares for 2021 Wildfire Season

4. New Business

a. **Pros and Cons of using diesel generators during PSPS** -Nick Vigilante

For Oakland, PG&E PSPS events started in the fall of 2019. To respond to the loss of electricity, more and more of our residents are purchasing and using portable generators. During the RFW and PGE PSPS event from October 25-27, there was a fire along Crown and Merriewood Drives in Thornhill caused by an overloaded portable generator being shared by two homes. The fire seriously damaged those homes and caused minor damage to a third nearby home. The fire scared residents because it happened on a windy RFW day and could have spread rapidly had it not been for a quick response by Oakland Fire. The fire alarmed our Board because we could see that generator caused fires could become more common in the future. As a result, in November our Board recommended that the City address the use of portable generators through awareness training and if possible, through some form of substantive City oversight. Oakland Fire was quick to respond to the challenge and developed and disseminated via media platforms a portable generator safety video. The video features AFM Vince Crudele offering valuable tips on the operation and maintenance of portable generators. Vince looks handsome in the video wearing a fashionable scarf. Although the video is good, it does not provide much detail regarding generator connection to appliances, distribution systems, and about generator overloading. Our Board members conveyed video feedback to Oakland Fire and Oakland Fire committed to developing supplemental generator guidance in those areas.



In my viewpoint, for portable generator guidance to be effective, it cannot be a one-time event. Guidance will have to be regularly reinforced through media platforms and community and block groups to help reduce the risk of generator caused fires. Generator guidance can also be disseminated as part of the annual VM inspection program, and by way of CORE and NW training class and materials.

It is also my viewpoint that portable generator guidance will not be enough to address the increasing risk of generator caused fires. Many residents will not read the guidance or the generator operating manual. Therefore, some form of substantive City oversight of portable generator operation and maintenance is going to be necessary. As to what form that oversight will take? Well, that is the question, and it needs to be determined soon because Oakland will enter another PG&E PPS season later this year – between September t and December.

Some ideas that have been discussed include: (1) requiring a no fee permit for purchase and use of portable generators in the Oakland Hills High Fire Danger Zone; (2) requiring the purchasers of portable generators to complete a free on-line class regarding portable generator operation and maintenance before using their generators; (3) yearly generator inspections by Oakland Fire during VM inspections to include questions about the frequency of generator usage and maintenance; (4) fines for using portable generators without a permit and for using them improperly; and (5) procedures for residents to submit complaints when a neighbor is not properly operating a generator with an investigation and enforcement process. These are examples but only for our discussion purposes.

Bob Sieben—fire department biggest concerns put generator in garage near furnace, coming down hard on putting in own generators

Laurie City of Berkeley does not have a robust inspection – measure FF

Doug Wong—address fuel storage, put generators in garage—fuel is near the water heater; Inspections in a budget crunch—in CC 70,000 in RV, Camping—something we have to put out in community where neighbors can watch neighbors—has to be serviced every day.

Doug Mosher—Do have a generator guide on OCPD; I do have a generator and used it, Do not use it inside a garage, well ventilated, Safe storage of fuel considerations.

Barbara- encourage us to take the non-nuclear option, encourage and provide information about alternatives—battery backup; did not get solar recharger—lasted for 24 hours with 3 kids doing school, 2 phones, tv, kept refrigerator closed; for one -3 days life can be not exactly normal and you can cope.

Generators are intrusive noise and smelly

Glen – OFD is patrolling—you can hear these generators—stop by leave a brochure or talk to homeowner to take on education campaign and or a team of expert neighbors.

Joe Devries—could be city wide—generator safety is not just WUI—in low-income neighborhood may have older generator that hasn't been maintained. City could create an insert in VMP inspections reeducating.

- b. **OFSC Response to Oakland Vegetation Management Plan and Draft EIR** requesting an Alternative 5 that allows for changes in weather and fuel conditions, and includes removal of high hazard trees and restoration as part of the plan.

Bob Sieben—phenomenal article In Chronicle—all about the arsonist who started fire in 2015—he gave the program, have a book that arsonists can go by-- ; Mulch isn't any good mulch—bear on some of these issues

Arsonists are a big problem--- another criteria likely possibility.



c. Other

1. Thank you to Lisa Jacobs—Lisa thanked us, and stated that she would like to remain involved as this group is so inspirational, in terms of community action and leadership, commitment to science. Welcome back Olga.
Elizabeth Stage noted that the NHCA NCPC having a meeting January 19, Tuesday, need to say goodbye to Kristine Duenas, Jurgens, and invite MNC—honorific ceremony by zoom, collecting one or two sentences about Lisa, and Kristine
2. Laurie—Claremont Canyon Conservancy work with you with new group—
3. Bob Sieben-over 150 copies of book interested in them—Homeowners Guide to Wildfire
Call from Santa Clara County order 1000 copies, do the printing—his printer going out of business—put in an insert (Chair sought and received unanimous support for OFSC to get the 150 Copies and she would work with Bob.)

5. Next Meeting February 20, 2021 at 10 am on Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.