

Oakland Firesafe Council Meeting
July 19, 2023
Approved Minutes

Attending

Michael Alvarenga, Lin Barron, Ken Benson, Carolyn Burgess, Louise Comfort, Olga Crowe, Damon Covington, Alec Dara-Abrams, Joe DeVries, Joelle Fraser, Jerry Kent, Barbara Kluger, Ron Marley, Doug Mosher, Robert Meyers, Ed Orre, Dale Risten, Peter Seidl, Barry Stallard, Elizabeth Stage, Stan Weisner, and Doug Wong. Also people with screen names Emmalina and Sisil and a phone number ending in -9399.

Acting Chief Damon Covington was invited to introduce himself as people were joining the Zoom. He's a 23-year veteran of the fire service, 22 years in Oakland, and he has held every rank in OFD. He's proud of the work that was started by Chief Freeman and will apply to serve as Freeman's permanent successor, which would make him the first "home-grown" chief in a long time. When asked how we could support him, he suggested that communicating with Mayor Sheng Thao would be the best way to express our opinion

Called to Order at 7:02pm.

1. Minutes

June draft minutes, moved by Elizabeth, seconded by Doug Wong, were accepted as presented.

2. Treasurer's Report (Ken Benson, on behalf of Treasurer Michael Kilian)

As of July 18th, the bank balance is \$25,306, with an outstanding check of \$4,261, leaving 21,045. Of that, \$11,876 is encumbered for the MOU; that program has a check on hand from Richmond. There's \$9,169 unencumbered, still awaiting payment of an invoice from Oakland EMSD. Moved by Carolyn and seconded by Lin the report was accepted as presented.

Please consider donating to OFSC; we need to rebuild the OFSC foundational funding stream. See the [donation page on the OFSC website](#).

Old Business

1. Neighborhood Organizing Update-Doug Mosher

Continuing to provide preparedness workshops, about once a week, and now setting up district town halls. GenOAK two-way radio program and ham radio folks participated in the July 4th patrols. Participating in a network with other firesafe councils (e.g., Berkeley, Diablo) and fire agencies, "Partners in Prevention," and creating materials for National Night Out

2. Firescaping Program-Doug for Jen Grimm. She has added some new materials to the site and a list of providers in Oakland.

3. Firewise Update-Joelle

Still only two Firewise recognized communities, but many in the pipeline. Presenting to the Friends of Courtland Creek and conducting an assessment with Adam Ball of OFD at Hillcrest Estates. Also interest from Montclair (50 homes) and from Dale by Joaquin Miller Park. Met with Parkridge Estates.

Doug announced that the City of Oakland will not provide funding for this fiscal year due to budget cuts. They have permission to use the carryforward which will take them through August and have applied for a small grant, are now looking for other opportunities.

4. MOU Update- Ken for Lisa Jacobs & Jon Kaufman

The MOU is circulating among the jurisdictions where they will be presenting it to their governing bodies for approval. It's been three years of effort, led by Lisa and Jon, with our thanks, to City staff, donors and volunteers, and the work of Jerry and Elizabeth who serve on the community advisory group.

Moved from JPA to MOU because it is a simpler process. At a meeting of a smaller working group two weeks ago they all agreed on a draft MOU to be shared with the wider network of interested jurisdictions in the East Bay Hills.

5. City of Oakland updates-Joe DeVries on behalf the City Administrator and Michael Hunt from OFD. They were thrilled with the fog on July 4th and all of the preparations that led to a peaceful holiday. They're pleased with the progress on the MOU and hope that it doesn't hinder operations of emergency personnel as it moves forward. Neighborhood Services has over 400 groups registered for National Night Out, exceeding their goal of 350 but still short of pre-pandemic numbers of 600-700.

The revised Vegetation Management Plan is now scheduled for an August release, public comment into October, then the Planning Commission and Council approval by the end of the calendar year; it needs to be parlayed into a community engagement strategy so an assessment mechanism can be on the ballot along with the reauthorization of Measure Z that funds OFD and OPD.

More things on the horizon: Climate Corps fellows will be embedded in EMSD, VM, and other OFD departments' Caltrans has had to postpone its more extensive work (from 8' to 28') until January, Public Works is repairing some of the existing cut outs on Grizzly Peak and will continue from Northern Skyline farther South; the Urban Forest Plan is coming soon, creating a tree canopy to reduce the heat in the flats' and the General Plan Housing overlay will maintain the restrictions on ADU's to protect evacuation routes in the S-9 overlay.

EMSD Update-Olga Crowe. EMSD recently worked with several jurisdictions on a FEMA table-top exercise for wildland fire response, including evacuations, and recovery. They are starting to prepare the Integrated Preparedness Plan for all City departments to work together during

emergencies; a work group will start in August on this three-year project to map out the training and exercises needed. Her final item is a request—for every plan they create, they need to do a Racial Equity Assessment; they do the research and now need to get community feedback. Looking for community champions to create community hubs for conversations. Please contact Olga directly if you are interested in learning more and hopefully willing to assist, starting with recommendations of people or groups they should involve. Chief Covington weighed in on the evacuation question, don't know where the incident is located so cannot specify the routes for people ahead of time; they'll have a joint command to coordinate the fire department, police who are in charge of traffic, etc.

6. Initiative on Climate Change –Louise Comfort

They want to identify the neighborhoods in Oakland that would be most challenging or risky and would affect the most people. They want to make a network of organizations to see how information flows so they can model the fire progression, communications, and the traffic. Chief Covington said he'd be happy to talk with Louise, very interested in incorporating the new and existing tools to improve the timeliness and accuracy of the information available. They're hoping to get more sensors on the network soon.

7. Advocacy (Elizabeth Stage)

The adopted budget is better than the Mayor's submission, in part due to the OFD grant that will keep stations open and hire more fire fighters, also includes a grant writer to help bring in more outside funding and a couple of new technicians for Tree Services.

Lots of concern regarding home insurance, Joelle said that Firewise recognition fits well with insurance premium reductions and perhaps reversing nonrenewal decisions. Carolyn said that she's heard that some people who were nonrenewed got their insurers to visit their homes, point out remediation opportunities and then get renewed.

There's lots of interest in PG&E's undergrounding plans, what communities are considered higher risk than Montclair and the North Hills. Barry Stallard from PG&E was in the meeting but unable to be heard.

8. FOJMP and pursuit of CalFire Forest Health Grant - Dale Ridsen

Still waiting to hear about CalFire grant, they're picking up debris and the City has done some tree work, trying to remain positive. Ed Orre, CalFire leader for our region, said they are waiting for the statewide committee in Sacramento for final decisions, but pointed out that this proposal was among 13 applications for a total \$26.6 million, only awarding \$4 million in this cycle; he offered to talk with Dale about other possibilities, wants our region to be successful.

9. Update from OWLs – Lin Barron

Lin's been working with Dale to set up a meeting with Janani, pre-meeting with Nate Stalnakar in early August to discuss how the volunteer stewards for all of the parks can be recognized and supported by Public Works; Adopt-A-Spot focuses on big events like Earth Day and MLK Day, rather than daily, weekly, and monthly work. The use of power tools by volunteers is a hot topic, also battery-operated string trimmers. If the City cannot do what needs to be done, they need to rethink their approach to the work of volunteers.

New Business

Alec Dara-Abrams reported that Berkeley Fire Safe Council submitted a grant proposal last month with OFSC support, still waiting to hear the decision. The City of Berkeley commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Berkeley Hills fire on September 17th (the actual date), BFSC plans to participate. They have a \$15,000 grant from the Berkeley Chancellor's Community Partnerships, will be working with a Lawrence Lab fire scientist to measure impact, now planning, and waiting for the Cal students to return to campus.

Ken has a birthday fundraiser on his Facebook page, encourages everyone to donate early and often so that we can continue the emergency preparedness work.

Open Forum: Veronica is looking forward to Joelle's visit to Melrose

Meeting adjourned at 8.33pm

Next meeting Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 7pm via Zoom.