

Oakland Firesafe Council

Draft Minutes for April 19, 2023 via Zoom 7pm - 8:30pm

Called to order by Ken Benson, President, about ten minutes late due to technical difficulties.

Attending: Gabrielle Allen, Lin Barron, Louse Comfort, Olga Crowe, Henry DeNero, Joe DeVries, Sue Duncan, Joelle Fraser, Jen Grim Michael Hunt, Jerry Kent, Barbara Kluger, Steve Mendelson, Robert Meyers, Gordon Piper, Sue Piper, Peter Seidl, Elizabeth Stage, James Turner, Marcus von Engel, Doug Wong, Stan Weisner

No March 2023 OFSC Minutes yet

Treasurer's Report: Bank balance is \$20,935; there's about \$12 thousand in funds to be deposited and \$12,772 encumbered (\$10,352 in MOU fund and \$2,420 in the Cal Fire Foundation Fund). Acceptance was moved by Jon Kaufman, seconded by Sue Piper, unanimously accepted.

### 3. Old Business

#### A. Oakland --Neighborhood Organizing Update- Doug Mosher

Introduced Joelle Fraser, the new Firewise Lead. She's a teacher who has worked on issues of school change and bridging Western science with indigenous knowledge. She's doing regional professional development with teachers through a non-profit, "Ideal." OFSC has two Firewise USA-recognized communities, an additional eight or nine in various stages of getting started. The team will be tabling at Chabot Space and Science on Saturday.

The Personal Emergency Preparedness program, in partnership with Emergency Management Services Division (EMSD), continues its one-hour workshops; they have reached 1,000 Oakland residents. Biweekly newsletters are sent to 960 people. Guides on the website are being updated.

#### B. Regional Vegetation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update-Jon Kaufman

The draft MOU (mechanism for coordinating wildfire prevention among jurisdictions along the ridgeline in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties) is still under development; it was discussed with attorneys about 10 days ago, then the working group and the full group of representatives. The recently-updated website, [eastbaywildfireprevention.org](http://eastbaywildfireprevention.org), has more information.

#### C. City of Oakland and Wildfire Prevention Interagency Team—Michael Hunt (Oakland Fire), Joe DeVries (Deputy City Administrator), Olga Crowe (EMSD)

Joe reported that he and Michael have figured out how to make Oakland's payment to the MOU by writing a report and resolution for City Council approval; it will go to the Council in the next month or two and Joe will let us know when to weigh in with our support. The Climate Fellows are drafting these items and they're also studying the impact of applying layers of compost on land to contain moisture to decrease wildfire risk.

Grizzly Peak will again be closed for July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Oakland is advocating that Montclair be given higher priority for PG&E's undergrounding program; they've gone to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to protest that density and fire zone severity weren't criteria in the selection process that excluded Montclair. They might not be successful in this case, but it's putting a stake in the ground for the future.

Cal Trans' roadside clearing was delayed for a couple of weeks, is now back on track, currently clearing up 28 feet from SR13 and then SR24. Given the roadside brushfires last summer, the Fire Marshal is pushing parts of for I-580 as well; regular maintenance teams will include that in their work plan.

Michael Hunt: The extreme weather earlier this year had a silver lining, approximately 450 trees came down that no longer need to be removed. Now there's a challenge with erosion and mudslides, but it's safer along SR13 and Skyline. It was also a good chance for Oakland staff to work across departments because the needs were overwhelming and there was no time to waste.

Legal wrangling of contracts has been resolved and the goats will be in the hills in the next few weeks

The Vegetation Management Plan is in final editing, they hope to release the plan and start the 45-day public comment period in the next week.

The mailer about upcoming defensible space inspections is in the final stages, incorporating language recommended by Doug and Jen. The Fire Marshal and the Chief consider OFSC a great partner and want to amplify our messages. Inspections will start in June and they'll try to schedule as soon as they can because there's increased vegetation to mitigate.

City Council approved an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security for Oakland's pilot project to install and study smoke and air quality sensors in the Wildland Urban Interface, the first such project in a city of our size and scale. The program has historically been done in rural areas and forests. (They only measure smoke and air quality, are consistent with Oakland's privacy standards.) Instead of 20-25 locations originally planned, there will be sensors from two vendors in the same ten to twelve locations (not yet specified). OFD is planning a big media push and will let us know when the locations and schedules are determined so we can assist with neighborhood gatherings to welcome the sensors and celebrate this important accomplishment.

In May, there will be a City Council meeting including Chief Freeman, Michael Hunt, Felicia Bryant, Jessica Feil, Olga Crowe, and one more speaker, not yet scheduled.

Olga Crowe, Emergency Management Services Division. The Emergency Operations Plan has been approved by the City Council. The first annual Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) all-hands meeting was held recently; radio training and homemade pancakes were well received. They're starting a new CERT class on April 29<sup>th</sup> in partnership with the city of Alameda.

C. Initiative on Climate Change – Louise Comfort. The UCB group and its other UC partners appreciate OFSC's participation in and support for their work. They're planning their next community workshop in Marin on May 10<sup>th</sup>, will continue with the second workshop in Alameda County sometime this summer.

D. Advocacy—Elizabeth Stage

The expected state budget cannot continue to ramp up resources for wildfire prevention and forest resilience, so the Governor's Wildfire Task Force and the Legislature are focusing on making the best use of the funds in the pipeline. The task force meets every four-six weeks and has working groups that include experts from federal, state, higher education, and private sectors (e.g., Google's pro bono google.org). They gather and present existing and new data sets, are working across the board to share information and map it so that efforts will be strategic and collaborative. They're also reporting impact in clear language because they realize that they will need to demonstrate impact to continue to receive legislative and public support. Videos of the most recent meeting are here, <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/recap-of-sacramento-task-force-meeting/>

Senator Dodd from Napa, who has several bills this session, chairs the Senate Governmental Organization Committee and held a hearing March 28<sup>th</sup>. The background briefing has lots of information about alert systems, other technologies. [https://sgov.senate.ca.gov/sites/sgov.ca.gov/files/wildfire\\_oversight\\_background\\_3.28.23.pdf](https://sgov.senate.ca.gov/sites/sgov.ca.gov/files/wildfire_oversight_background_3.28.23.pdf)

The video of the hearing is posted (2 hours and 19 minutes). The first third was committee business, then there were panels. The first few speakers pretty much read what was in the printed document, then the last half had more back and forth with the committee members. <https://www.senate.ca.gov/media/senate-governmental-organization-committee-20230328/video>

Senator Allen's SB-571 looks promising, [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=202320240SB571](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB571)

The bill was amended March 21<sup>st</sup> and provides more specificity about evacuation plans and transportation studies. It requires a new residential or commercial development in fire zones that would have 40 or more vehicles evacuating in a wildfire (assuming 2/home) to have an evaluation plan, including a traffic engineering study, approved by police, fire, local government, CHP if state or federal routes are involved, And the county would have to incorporated in county-wide database. Will be a state-mandated local program and will have to go through the fiscal committee. Since there's no legislative analysis posted yet, (there was a Spring Recess 3/30-4/15,) contacted Senator Allen's office to find out who's in favor, who's opposed (no legislative analysis posted yet), see how we can help. I raised concern about the requirement that the evacuation time frame is one hour, that's a compromise that they made reluctantly. There's no mention of density/radiant heat, but it's a good start with traffic studies and approvals. Allen's from Southern California, representing Westside, coastal South Bay, and Santa Monica Mountains communities of Los Angeles County. The bill is set for a hearing on April 26<sup>th</sup>, but not certain it will take place; bill may be held over to the next legislative session. [The author pulled the bill from the hearing due to overwhelming opposition, will be held over.]

## Oakland

**Budget**, the anticipated shortfall is in the range of \$350 million over two years, so every dollar is going to be scrutinized. [Subsequently, this was published <https://oaklandside.org/2023/04/24/in-her-first-budget-as-mayor-thao-stares-down-oaklands-biggest-deficit-ever/>]

Council Members submitted their priorities to the Mayor. Only CM Ramachandran has wildfire as one of five priorities; Kalb and Reid include wildfire and parks as mentions. The Mayor's budget is expected on May 1<sup>st</sup>; it will be amended and has to be adopted by Council by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Once we see it, we'll know how hard it will be to keep the \$2million/year for clearing city properties (goats and hand crews)..

### **Fire Prevention Bureau (Adam Ball)**

Adam doesn't anticipate changes in the inspection rules or schedule. <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/compliance-standards-for-vegetation-inspections>

We've been expecting rules for Zone 0, the first five feet from structures; they will only be enforced for new construction. CalFire missed the deadline for parameters; the rules for existing structures may appear in the next iteration, three years from now. It's still a good idea to transition during this time frame, eliminating flammable plants and bushes and having nonflammable materials for the intersection with the ground.

In early May, goat grazing will begin on the large city lots, contracts still being arranged for Public Works vendors for smaller city lots.

E. Friends of Joaquin Miller Park and the pursuit of CalFire Grants: Dale Risdien. Two proposals have been submitted with the City of Oakland in the lead, totaling \$12 million if both are fully funded. He thanked Joe DeVries for considerable assistance and OFSC for support and advice.

### **4. New Business**

Welcome to Berkeley Firesafe Council, Henry and Marcus, 100<sup>th</sup> They've counted every tree in the fire area, been working with the Berkeley Fire Chief and helping each other getting grants, just became a Firesafe Council. Will use the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1923 Berkeley Fire as an educational opportunity.

Oakland Firesafe Council – Firescaping Program and Resources- Doug Mosher. OFSC's new "Firescaping" program is live (and continues to be built out). The goal is to provide an overview, guidance, and resources for fire-smarter landscaping practices for both residents and professionals <https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/programs/#firescaping>. As part of the program, we're curating a directory of local businesses that provide service and/or supplies related to Firescaping (and whose work is available in the Greater Oakland area). <https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/firescaping-services/> He thanked Jen and Joelle for their work on this program.

Jen said that OFSC is encouraging volunteers to work on fuel reduction in Oakland parks and open spaces; information and schedules are available here: <https://oaklandfiresafecouncil.org/park-stewards/> She thanked Lin Barron for her help updating the Park Stewards information.

### **Open Forum**

Peter Seidl announced that the Piedmont Pines Fire Safety Forum will be May 15 7-8:30pm on Zoom.

Barbara Kluger said that dirt bikes in (Northern) Knowland Park tearing up the conditions, getting in from Skyline; no fire danger yet, but will be soon. Ken said that Southern Knowland Park has been a problem for a long time, and they haven't been successful with signage or OPD community resource officer. He

recommended contacting Joe DeVries since Joe can break down the silos. Louise said that her neighborhood took turns getting up in the middle of the night to tell the motorcycle riders who were doing donuts and making noise to go away; Dan Kalb also helped and the riders have moved on.

Sue Piper said that it was heartwarming to see how far the Oakland Firesafe Council has come--what we're accomplishing and how we're respected, City folks know we want to help them. Thanks to everyone!

Meeting ended around 8:50pm.

Next meeting is May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm on Zoom.