



**Oakland Firesafe Council
Board Meeting Minutes
June 20, 2020
Via Zoom Conference Call**

Present: Lin Barron
Ken Benson
Linda Dittes
Barbara Goldenberg
Jon Kaufman
Jerry Kent
Barbara Kluger
Bob Meyers
Gordon Piper
Dale Ridsen
Bob Sieben
Nick Vigilante
Allene Warren

Guests: Olga Crowe
Lisa Jacobs

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 am.

1. Approval of **Minutes** May 16, 2020---approved as mailed.
2. **Treasurer's Report**- -total unencumbered \$15,545.30; no additional donations this week; still \$3,442.30 encumbered fund – CalFire Foundation Grant Fund, OCPR (\$15,000 originally); CalFire funds (\$125,000) not encumbered. Doug Mosher, Michael Kilian and the Board go through invoicing and payment process with CalFire on a monthly basis.
3. Old Business
 - a. **Oakland CP&R**--Neighborhood Organizing Update- Doug Mosher-held first Zoom meeting---concerned that it focused too much on CORE and not on other topics. We've received several videos and the contest will run through the summer. The 7 step challenge emails were a hit, plan to run two more before the 4th of July.
 - b. **Regional Vegetation Management District Update**-Jon Kaufman---a number of organizations have endorsed and the Sierra Club moving to finalize their endorsement. The steering committee is reaching out to elected officials---may need to find some money on the table as an incentive; reaching out to state to



find incentive progress is slow, yet moving forward. But given climate and weather conditions and the need for local government to do what they need to be doing, increases importance.

Friends of Montclair Railroad Trail endorsed the proposal A comment was raised about how slow and reluctant East Bay Regional Parks (EBRP) was to a complaint about maintenance of their property next to a residence—will people wonder if JPA will be more responsive to complaints. Jon explained That's exactly why we believe taking a regional approach is better because other agencies have other fish to fry and don't make it a priority. We need to have a clear focus and aggressive approach to vegetation management. EBPR has lots of other things on their mind these days, but we think if we don't have an approach that focuses on vegetation management, we can lose property and lives. Use email chains as opportunities. Barbara Goldenberg noted that when making complaints, it helps if you can be diplomatic. Jerry Kent added that EBRP has an approach to vegetation management that only deals with half the problem—only on ladder fuels and not on canopy fuels.

Lisa Jacob from Councilmember Kalb's office noted that given the budget constraints that all municipalities have right now, it might be helpful to highlight what could be cost savings of a regional approach. Increased efficiency is one of goals of regional approach. Our interest is in getting more work done, which will require more money.

Feedback from Council Members re new District—approaching public officials—so far, Oakland Councilmembers Dan Kalb and Sheng Thao, and Western Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia support.

- c. **City Budget and Wildfire Prevention**—mid cycle budget approval process underway amid decrease in COVID revenues. Council is still debating budget things still being considered. From wildfire prevention perspective great kudos to Dan and Sheng, wildfire items that had been pre-approved have been protected; Bas, Kalb, and Thao introduced a progressive business tax plan to review the business tax process. Lisa noted that the proposed budget will be discussed in a budget meeting on Tuesday, probably will be adopted on June 30. Budget Advisory Committee gave separate feedback



4. New Business

- a. **Inspections**—Nick Vigilante explained that his stance on social media is to talk about all the improvements that Travis Hansen, the acting OFD vegetation management supervisor, has been making; He’s been telling people that we think transparency and improvements in communication all good. We hope to continue to work with Travis this summer to continue to improve the process, seeing in that in some places high standards still not being enforced. We should get a better feel how sloppy or rigorous. Informally is okay, but nothing formally yet.

Jon Kaufman added that the improvements been good, however there is a huge problem having fire fighters doing something they aren’t used to doing. Their documentation has shown photos that are labeled as back yards and are not, trying to get thorough the details, but missing stuff.

Barbara Goldenberg noted that you can catch more flies with honey: They may not go into back yards, nor through a closed gate, and cannot walk around to see in back yard. Cannot fault them. Generally speaking, you can tell via “horseback” inspection, what the condition is. We have focused for years on timeliness, which is the most important thing.

Gordon Piper stated that: when he served on WPAD Advisory committee, the city said they were 95% to 99% compliant, but on-the-street observation showed less compliance. The City has not been enforcing requirements on trees and wooden fences. Leaves us at risk. Not tough enough. Needs to be quality control.

Jon Kaufman noted that a inspector cannot walk into someone’s back yard, unless invited or approved, Only with owner’s permission. They only have access to public spaces.

Ken Benson added that inspectors are now armed with new technology and take a digital image. They may be able to do that without accessing a backyard. If we are going to make comments, do it with honey.



Elizabeth Stage recommended that if there is a legal blockage to their going to back yard if no one is home, have to have just cause, get an ordinance for City of Oakland, Great Job, maybe you don't have all the tools you need. Remove obstacles to your access to the 360 view of each property. Help Travis help us, give him authority for 360 reviews. With 25,000 properties and 5 inspectors, would not be completed in a timely manner, quality control in place. Spot audits.

It was noted that the State Fire code talks about trees, exemption, by inclusion, Oakland has same exemption for specimen trees.

OFSC should continue to work with OFC on providing feedback on organizational improvements—quality and process improvement and assistance to make inspectors' work and responsibilities easier.

- b. **State legislation—AB2167 and SB292**—Allene Warren shared that when she read it, sounded okay with it. Sue said she would ask United Policyholders to send us document proves their point. Elizabeth Stage subscribes to <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>—any time it moves, you will get notification. The bill hasn't moved an inch since—early lack of enthusiasm has stalled it. Anyone who is interested can subscribe—
- c. **Caltrans Vegetation Management**—Gordon Piper noted that in the past Caltrans only had 6 people in their maintenance staff who sometimes respond when he puts in service request. He feels there are a number of other locations along highways 24 and 13 where we are vulnerable. The City not providing water for entry garden at North Oakland Sports Field; When OFSC meets with Travis we should raise issues about EBMUD and Caltrans.
- d. **EBRP Use of Brontosaurus causing damage**—Barbara Kugler stated that along Skyline at Chabot Park, EBRP used a “brontosaurus” instead of goats for vegetation management. It destroyed the habitat. There will be problems on this current site in future years on this site because tires have damaged the soil structure. EBRP did something similar in a smaller area, which led to an infiltration of weeds and thistle. This year they went for a mile and carved up the soil. Ken Benson said that spoke with EBRP Director Dee Rosario who said that EBRP use to have a long term goat contractor, but last year they let that lapse.



Tiger mower didn't have as much an impact. Ken hopes that using the brontosaurus will not be an ongoing occurrence. Infiltration of weeds and thistle.

- e. **Closure of spaces along Grizzly Peak and Skyline**--Elizabeth Stage shared that this year there has been an explosion of illegal fireworks not only in Oakland but nationally. Police and Fire Departments are aware, concerned, perplexed. Problem for enforcement; communications problem. The City has formed a wildfire prevention task force—met first on Thursday. The North Hills Community Association Board has sent a letter to the City to ask that Grizzly Peak (9 from Skyline to UC B) to be closed at least for the 4th of July and hopefully throughout the summer due to large crowds, smoking, fireworks, etc. Doug Mosher provided a map with other problem areas along Skyline. The following comments were made during the discussion:

- Are there other strategies that are barriers to OPD getting handle on this?
- If you call nonemergency number, low priority; 911 it is not witnessing a crime in progress, not a priority. Middle ground imminent danger to people and property—need to figure out something that will help us. To consider this communications gap—what do you do?
- OPD and OFD have committed to begin patrolling. They hope it peaks in July. How can we channel our anxiety?
- Bob Meyers-the Piedmont Pines Neighborhood Association (PPNA) Board has been concerned with the Skyline overlook of Joaquin Miller park—getting goats to graze call 311 regarding trash complaints—Martin Matarrese—will be at Skyline—split heard so could deal with Skyline area
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, the County not holding people who area arrested; police are less likely to seek to arrest people that they know will not be held in the jail
- Nick Vigilante posted to Next Door that OPD and OFD could funnel messages to Watch Groups CORE Groups to be eyes and ears re fireworks and gun shots. Joe Devries—that was an easy thing to do they would be working on it.
- Lisa Jacobs shared that she is in touch with Joe Devries and OFD Chief of Staff Michael Hunt who said they would encourage that city council offices to be invited to the task force.



- f. **Adopt a spot**— Sue Piper noted that the City limits support to park stewards at this time due to COVID-19 Shelter in Place. Gordon Piper noted that in the past support from Adopt a Spot was difficult and under COVID-19 it is tougher to get volunteers. Jerry Kent added that EBRP still trying to decide about having volunteers come, have to be supervised by permanent staff—Probably will work this fall without volunteers.

5. Next Meeting July Meeting 18th at 10am (Likely Zoom again).

Meeting adjourned 11:39am.