

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
of
THE WEST CONTRA COSTA FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

The board of directors of The West Contra Costa Fire Safe Council (WCCFSC) held a videoconference meeting via Zoom on **August 28, 2023 at 7:00PM.**

The following directors were in attendance at the meeting and constituted the entire board:

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| Soheila Bana | [X] Present | [] Absent |
| Marilyn Saarni | [X] Present | [] Absent |
| Ra Criscitiello | [X] Present | [] Absent |
| Rebecca Orona | [X] Present | [] Absent |
| Angel Montoya | [X] Present | [] Absent |

Present: Michelle Rinehart, Stew Winchester, Chief Montoya, Volker, Kate Rauch, Karen Fenton, Joyce, Royce Saunders, Susan, Marian Williams, Orrine, Pam, Will Plutte, Serge Glushkoff

AGENDA

Announcements

- Sat Oct 14 - Richmond Fire Station #63 OPEN HOUSE (WCCFSC & Richmond Fire Dept). This is during National Fire Prevention Week, Oct 8-14. We need volunteers to help staff this.
 - Marilyn can track down the YouTube
- The WCCFSC T-Shirts are HERE! (Ra Criscitiello showed hers). Soheila has the shirts at her house, anyone who wants one can get one from her.
- We now have a Waiver form and insurance:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IhYdd11FIZWSqOFu-OD9VMz6yAPONE0B/view>
- Seeking volunteer to serve as CERT training facilitator (9 weekly meetings, 6-9pm). Chief Montoya met with Soheila about this and they identified someone. He will confirm tomorrow.
- We will have a table at the El Sobrante Stroll. Marilyn will tap the folks who did the firescaping certification for volunteers.
- Karen Fenton: on Sat. they had a successful CERT test to see how many neighborhoods they could hit with a repeater. They were able to reach Kennedy Grove and Hilltop green. They will continue to do testing. They want a grant to fund a 94803 GMRS repeater. Michelle asked what the scalability of that system would be. Karen explained that this is neighbor to neighbor communication.

Brief: Reflections on the Maui Fire (Marilyn Saarni)

- Discussion on lessons for WCCFSC

- Marilyn described why the Maui fire was so devastating
 - Extreme winds due to a tropical storm offshore, 30-40 mph, with up to 80 mph gusts, created turbulent conditions to drive embers
 - A recent “flash drought” had reduced moisture content in plants in just a few weeks, lands were lush a month prior
 - Abandoned farms are now covered by light fast-burning fuels
 - No backups for pumps
 - Only 3 evacuation routes, and the fire blocked first one and then the other
 - Large number of tourists
 - Power utility (Hawaiian Electric) doesn’t have a “turn-off” policy, has old infrastructure, they’re now being sued
 - They were aware of the potential danger (had declared red flag days, had annual reports by fire department staff urging several actions but no action was taken)
 - They had never practiced evacuations

About LRAD Sirens (Genesys - talking sirens)

Currently being installed in Berkeley (5 per year for 15 total). They think 15 will cover the whole city of Berkeley.

Would not create conflict with Richmond’s current industrial accident siren system. They’ll give instructions via Zonehaven number. Soheila explained that Mike Wilson from CA FireSafe said he could help us with a grant when we are ready. Michelle also spoke with Mike, who will send the grant info to Soheila and Michelle to preview and ensure that it is tailored to our community.

How to add in Unincorporated ES

Urging Contra Costa Grand Jury to investigate coordination of evacuation-related services.

Rocky described his focus in the letter on the technology side of evacuation (sirens, CWS, nixle). This is a civil grand jury that does in-depth research on issues affecting the county. Usually takes a year for the grand jury to process their findings. They take suggestions, so Rocky created a proposed letter and all agreed it’s an excellent idea. Soheila got the ok to use both City of Richmond and WCCFSC letterhead.

CALLING ALL HANDS - putting together the Oct 14 Open House

DISCUSS - Situation - Unincorporated ES North - Sobrante Ave/Circle Rd/Skyline, Monte Verde

- Marilyn described the area which is steep, very overgrown, and has a narrow road, only one road in/out
- Traffic study requested - assure that roadways are clear of parked cars (no parking signs, building ordinance?)
- Incentives to get residents to build off-road parking pads (may require removing retainer walls, fence, building parking decks)

- Sirens - how to inform residents of need to evacuate, especially as it may be impossible to have a police car drive through in the circumstance of a fire in that area. Involves Power utility, where to install sirens, backup power, cell companies or satellite Star Link
- Communications within the community
- Water supply (water tanks that can refill tanker truck to fight house fires)
- Evacuation routes, how evacuations are implemented, educating less mobile residents to evacuate voluntarily and proactively (seek local hotel discounts for these people?)
- GOAL - set priorities, what's doable and what has greatest impact on saving lives

CAMERAS - see AlertCalifornia.org. View current camera locations in our area.

Next page...see image of stuck UPS truck blocking single lane evacuation route. Marilyn pointed out that there's a huge dead zone where there are no cameras in our area. Ra shared that she tried to offer her property as a place for a 360 camera to be installed, but the agency was unresponsive. Soheila will connect Ra to Mike Wilson about cameras.

Michelle began request for community chipping day, which will take place on a Saturday. There will be 2 locations, both on concrete. Then Crew 12 will come for the chipping event. Any new FireWise community can collaborate to get these chipping days planned.

Kate Rauch asked which areas Michelle assists, and confirmed that her area includes Kensington. PG&E is taking down 2 trees, which is quite rare.

Volker installed mesh vents on his house himself, which he found very easy to do. He can show people how to do it. Soheila has applied for a \$10k grant for this mesh from the county.



This stuck UPS truck is not normalbut it is an example of how a single evacuation road can be blocked.

The more common example is the white car to the rightthat reduces the road pathway by parked in the road . Since the left side of the road is a steep dropoff, vehicles are forced to go to the edge of the road to pass, which causes cracks that indicate the road will eventually give way and access will cease altogether or until a very expensive repair is done.

People park in the road because they have violated setbacks and can't park off road in front of their house. Many times these rural neighbors use the street to park cars that can't be moved because they either were dead to begin with or the battery goes dead due to not being driven.

Those in charge don't seem to recognize that having these common issues makes the evacuation routes non existent as firetrucks are unable to get past these parked cars...that are IN the street.

I have spoken to the roads department, the county supervisor, the fire chief and sheriffs... no one is willing to use simple logic and forbid people who have violated setbacks and are parking In the road on single evacuation roads

As a citizen I find it frustrating and sad we don't have rational leaders ... they talk about evacuation priorities but do not act to ensure evacuation or outside of fire season that emergency vehicles can get in and out for Emergencies.

