

**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 **June 5, 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	[] Present	[X] Absent
Rebecca Orona	[X] Present	[] Absent
Angel Montoya	[X] Present	[] Absent

AGENDA

1. *Updates and Announcements*

1. Please approve [minutes of our last meeting](#)

Minutes were approved - No corrections

2. *Status of Cal Fire Council Capacity grant tasks*

Marilyn - Eight people have been trained and received professional Rescape certifications in firescaping; two are city staff.

Susan - Consultant Harriet Goldman and held one-on-one meetings; additional meetings are scheduled.

Marilyn – Website design bid has been sent out; waiting for response.

3. *Update: new hire for OES Manager (Chief Montoya)*

Chief Montoya - There was only one qualified candidate who decided they were not interested in the position, so HR is advertising the open position again.

4. *Update: Firewise Demo Garden at Station 63 (partnering with UC Master Gardener Program)*

Marilyn - There was an initial meeting with Fire Chief Victor Bontempo (existing succulent beds will remain). A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with representatives from the Fire Department, Master Gardeners, WCCFSC, and Daniel Chavarria (Director of Public Works) to discuss landscaping plans. The timeframe for a community clean-up will likely be

the first part of August. The MOU (memorandum of understanding) that was sent via email was very complicated and does not apply to our situation. Our MOU will be much easier.

e. Update: El Sobrante Fire Risk signs (Joyce or Soheila)

Joyce - The Fire Risk (Arrow or Fire Danger Needle) sign at the intersection of Castro Ranch Road and San Pablo Dam Road fell over during the January storms. It was rescued by Cliff Watts and recently turned over to the County Work Crew.

Soheila - If the sign is placed back in its original position, it can be replaced quickly. If it is moved to another location, then a survey needs to be done which could be a lengthy process (note: some residents felt that it was not in the best location to be seen).

Chief Montoya - Additional signs have been ordered and should be received by 6/15/23. Public works will install the signs.

f. Concerns for Wildcat Canyon (Kate) – on hold until Kate arrives

2. BOARD VOTE: a new Conflict of Interest policy (Ra Criscitiello)

- 1. Folks should [review this policy](#). Prior discussions done. We vote this meeting to adopt.**

This motion was approved and passed.

Soheila - This conflict-of-interest issue arose when she was running for office. There was concern that people running for office should not take advantage of publicity for their own political campaign. about a conflict of interest

Marilyn - The consultant made a special note that this was being put into place.

3. FireWise campaign (Joyce) + June 15th at Pinole Library + June 17th at Pinole City Hall

Joyce - On June 15th, a hybrid meeting is being held on zoom and in-person at the Pinole Library. Mark Evans will be providing information about becoming FireWise to neighborhood councils. Neighborhoods in El Sobrante are currently having general meetings to discuss becoming FireWise. There are six resident leaders that have stepped forward to organize meetings, share information, and

submit applications. The timing is right since people are aware of fire dangers and are worried about the loss of fire insurance.

Marian Williams - Asked who to contact for help in setting up a FireWise Community. Joyce Forte is the new FireWise Coordinator (joyce@joyceforte.com) with Mark Evans assisting (he will be at the Pinole Library on June 15th).

Soheila – On Saturday, June 17th, Contra Costa County Fire Protection is holding a Pre-Season Wildfire Preparedness Town Hall from 10-11 am at Pinole City Hall. ConFire is hosting this event which will cover preventing, planning, preparing, and responding.

Note: This meeting will be live on Facebook (www.facebook.com/contracostafire) and archived thereafter on the Con Fire Facebook page.

Tool Shed at Station 63 – Related to Firewise Demo Garden at Station 63

Chief Montoya - There have been discussions about who is responsible for maintaining landscaping at fire stations ... public works or the fire stations. Fire stations do not have equipment at stations to maintain landscaping. He will investigate storing equipment at Station 63 and survey what type of metal shed is needed.

4. *Initiating a Home Visit advisory program for El Sobrante and Richmond 98403 and ??*

Marilyn - Eight people have been certified in firescaping and home hardening. We have access to six of those people, plus herself, as she is also certified. Cal Fire offers classes for each region, including home visit training courses and certification (which may not be needed). Some counties are using a new software app Fire Aside. (fireside.com) that can be used by volunteers who are making best practices and home hardening recommendations. The app can be customized for local jurisdictions and used to quickly create reports on a mobile phone (including photos). The app is a handy guide to provide recommendations and resources to the community.

Chief Montoya wants to make sure that their information is in line with their defensible space program.

Soheila asked if it would be helpful to have a fire marshal go with them to help with the initial assessment. She asked if volunteers could look at HOAs since they do not have neighborhood councils. She also asked about the cost of the Fire Aside app. Marilyn said that the cost is based on the number of people using the app and non-profits would have a lower cost than government agencies. We should include the

app request in the grant application.

Discuss developing/updating two Richmond ordinances: (1) Fuel Mitigation and Exterior Hazard Abatement Standards to apply to Very High and High Fire Hazard Zone structures within the Richmond city borders. (2) Ordinance to provide authority for identified hazardous vegetation and combustible materials to be abated by public agency if owners do not respond to citation to abate. Two ordinances for two separate issues: (1) Standards that property owners must comply with, and (2) giving public agencies authority to access private property and abate when property owners do not respond to citation, and how to recoup costs. (Marilyn, Soheila, Chief Montoya). To set up a working team...

Marian Williams - Is there a current map showing high vs. very high fire zones. Marilyn said that the Cal Fire should have a finalized map in September that will also show local responsibility for various areas.

Marian - Are there would be any legal ramifications for home inspections by volunteers? Marilyn emphasized that these are recommendations only and will be referred to as home advisory visits (not inspections). The city can do inspections and has the ability to cite and enforce.

Soheila - The City of Richmond has a landscaping training program to help juveniles re-enter society. She would like to have fuel reduction education added to the program. There is a \$100k grant being proposed; if this goes through, this will need to be completed within a specified deadline. Marilyn emphasized the pragmatic implementation of firescaping, including using mulch correcting and limbing up trees at the appropriate season.

- a. *Anyone else want to participate? Someone who is comfortable with city ordinance language would be helpful. Ideally 5 people. Call Marilyn at 510-910-1730 if interested.*

Working team volunteers to work with Marilyn are Stew Winchester, Soheila Bana, Marian Williams, Erin Axelrod (for environmental impacts) and Serge Glushkoff (for final review for resource law compliance). After first draft review, consult with Deputy Chief Munson.

- b. *Here is Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Feb 2023 standards for fuel vegetation and exterior hazard abatement.*

<https://www.mofd.org/home/showpublisheddocument/3034/638134405854070000> (Feb 2023)

c. *Here is MOFD's proposed fuel mitigation/authority to abate ordinance to apply to all entities within MOFD (first reading 5/17/2023):*

<https://www.mofd.org/home/showpublisheddocument/3233/638194703487330000>

d. *MOFD has its own board of directors; City of Richmond's parallel line of authority is Richmond City Council. This could create an issue for review of appeals, as City Council has little capacity for this function. Perhaps City Manager's office for an administrative appeal tier?*

5. *Hazardous materials in Richmond - feedback from those who attended recent commission meeting?*

Here is the link to the meeting:

<https://pub-richmond.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=49753>

6. *Waste management survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/wastesurvey> ENG*

Soheila urges everyone to fill out this survey.

Note: Marilyn - Paradise has a celebration goat party every April. We have an opportunity to bring in our small farmers in April or May.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm