

**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 video conference meeting via Zoom on **November 4, 2024 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

Present: Stewart Winchester, Sue Nishizaka, Volker Jaedicke, Michelle Rinehart, Alec Dara-Abrams

AGENDA

- La Colina Hill Fire (Volker Jaedicke)
 - Volker made a very helpful slide presentation of the Los Arboles Fire that happened on Oct. 1st. The fire started between Wildcat Canyon Regional Park and the La Colina neighborhood. The initial fire call came in at 5:56pm and forward progress was halted at 6:56pm. There were 27 minutes from the initial call until the first fire engines arrived on the scene. That amount of time is concerning, and is partly explained by the difficulty in finding the fire’s location based on the initial calls. It is lucky there was no wind that day. There’s no vegetation management in that area, there is a lot of illegal dumping, and there are some illegal buildings, including “the barn” where people may be living illegally. Michelle stated that she attended the La Colina block party and discussed this issue with folks. Michelle urged folks to use the [exterior hazards complaint form](#) to raise concerns about any property that is not your own. Stewart stated that that area is a disaster waiting to happen in terms of vegetation, and here’s a marijuana grow back there. Marilyn explained that the problem is that Richmond doesn’t sufficiently inspect.
- [Moraga Orinda Fire District proposes no vegetation in Zone 0](#) (first five feet around structures)
- Richmond Fire House #64 Open House report (Oct 6, 2024—National Fire Prevention Week).
 - Sue said the open house went very well, with about 160 attendees and good cooperation from staff. About 14 organizations and vendors participated. Looking at having one in May next year (wildfire prevention month) and another in

October (fire safety month). Michelle attended as a vendor and said it was a great event and was easy to participate in as a vendor. Attendance was especially great given the hot weather that day.

- Treasurer's Report for FY2023. discussion of budget development, goals
 - Rebecca presented the organization's finances, including the expenses from the open house (about \$1,400) which were very low considering how many folks came through. Balance is about \$21k. Of that, \$10k has already been budgeted for the Cal grant. So we are left with about \$11k that we can consider using for the other events we're planning. The Executive Board can make a proposal in the future of how the funds can be spent. The May event will be education focused and the October one will be another open house at a fire station.
 - Ra described the scary issues up in the El Sobrante Hills, chiefly the narrow road and only one egress. Marilyn suggested we try to get a grant to cover road paving and maintenance. Michelle suggested the resources at <https://uphelp.org/> and <https://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0100-press-releases/2024/release023-2024.cfm>. Michelle offered to do a zoom or panel discussion with Ra's hills neighborhood since the whole hill was dropped from home insurance.
- Michelle update.
 - The recent fire is very close to where a \$1.1M grant project (shaded fuel break) was denied. They are going to go back and reapply once the grant period opens.
 - The CCFPD open house had 755 attendees, the event met a grant deliverable, it was a free event and very successful.
 - Actively accepting applications for mitigation projects. The distribution of projects needs to be county-wide.
 - Large biomass (like a large stump) may be left in place for some large vegetation mitigation projects (for example, the Heavenly Ridge project).
 - Red flag warning notice went out
 - Closing out the grant in Dec and doing all the reporting
 - Nov 15th is the deadline for renewal of all Firewise strategic plans (renewals are every 3 years)
- Volunteer recruitment for board roles and tasks
 - Marilyn asked that if anyone knows folks in social media and web work, we could use volunteers- even if only for a few hours.
 - saarni@mac.com, 510-910-1730 - for anyone interested in helping with the website.
- Website relaunch - bids received
 - To migrate current content from temporary Weebly site
 - Want WordPress, open source content management system
 - We have 3 bids, and one is exactly what Marilyn was looking for.
 - Prefer a local, California business

- Announcements
 - Firewise Demo Garden update. The MOU has gone off to UC's legal, and has passed Richmond legal as well as our firesafe group's legal. UC thinks they'll have it done by Thanksgiving. After that, the City Council likely needs to approve.
 - Sponsors!