



June 21, 2021 Board Meeting  
Via Zoom

Present: Steve Hanson  
Dave McGinness  
Nancy Mueller  
Sue Piper  
Brenda Roberts  
Elizabeth Stage

Excused: Ken Cohen  
Chris Johnson

Guest: Carolyn Burgess

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Chair Steve Hanson

1. **Minutes** of May 17, 2021 were approved as mailed.
2. **Treasurer's Report**—
  - a. Brenda Roberts reported total donations year to date are \$3,150 and expenses are \$3033.50. We have \$25,596.39 the checking and savings account, of which \$5,082.7 are designated for the garden and \$20,504.32 are unrestricted. Almost all of the donations year-to-date are earmarked for the garden.
  - b. Brenda reported that she has signed NHCA up for Amazon Smile. The Communications Committee was asked to send out an announcement to members and post on our website to note that this is another way to support NHCA.
  - c. Brenda proposed and the Board approved requesting a Pro Bono quality review or transactional audit of NHCA finances. Once she gets an agreement with a provider, she will meet with Steve to go over the plan and move forward.
3. **Communications Committee**
  - a. Sue Piper noted that the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary/Marketing Committee is moving forward with plans for the Community Comeback Picnic at Lake Temescal on Sunday, October 17 from 10-3. Sarah Kidder is completing the special

event application. We hope East Bay Regional Parks will waive some, if not all, of the fees. The committee has approved the branding concept and await final proposals at their meeting this week. Plans call for a section of the NHCA website to contain information on the Community Comeback effort, which includes not only the Picnic, but a series of personal interviews on video, text or audio to convey the reality of the 1991 Firestorm and how various members of our community have taken the lessons learned to heart over the past 30 years. There will be a section of art and artifacts to showcase the more creative response to the Firestorm. We have postponed fund raising for the Micro-Doc until the end of the year, when we believe we will have more momentum.

- b. Brenda reminded the Board that the event—even with a lot of volunteerism and in kind support—will cost between \$18,000 and \$20,000, which we do not have in our coffers. The Board approved that each Board member will attempt to raise \$2,200. Sue asked all Board members to review the sponsorship list and add potential sponsors to the list, while also agreeing to do outreach.

#### **4. Public Safety Committee—**

##### **a. Oakland Fire Department**

##### **i. Vegetation Management (VM) and Wildfire more broadly**

1. Chief Reginald Freeman is our new neighbor, on Charring Cross
2. Inspections: No unusual problems reported regarding vegetation inspections as the steps for getting information from Accela continues to be shared; referring complaints about overgrown properties to [wildfireprevention@oaklandca.gov](mailto:wildfireprevention@oaklandca.gov) since none of our contacts is home except [VCrudele@oaklandca.gov](mailto:VCrudele@oaklandca.gov) who is responsible for large apartments and institutions (hospitals, schools, businesses).
3. Oakland 2021-23 Budget: So far, decent for OFD (not good for OPD). Mayor’s budget fell back to historical \$1.1 million for clearing (crews and goats) city properties (compared with \$1.1 million in continuing funds plus \$900K in “one time” funds in 2019-20 that cleared 80% of properties) ; EKS and SGP lobbied CMs Kalb, Thao, and Reid and testified at Council; Council President budget added \$500K annually to continuing funds; considered a victory and EKS testified at CC June 17<sup>th</sup> to thank them. Council revisions June 24<sup>th</sup> and final vote June 29<sup>th</sup>.

4. Ten-Year Vegetation Management Plan and its Environmental Impact Report: Wait and see. Non-responsive to NHCA letter two years ago in which we partnered with many groups organized by OFSC to point out that it was fatally flawed. Representatives from the same groups provided public comment to Planning Department, orally at hearing and in writing. SEH, SGP, and EKS lobbied Kalb and Thao who submitted “amendments” to Planning; waiting to hear what the next steps will be.
  5. Emergency evacuations: Making progress, but it’s slow. OFD is first responder to more than 90% of 911 calls since they handle medical emergencies, so they are the lead City agency for this work. We have more work to do getting parking regulations and enforcement to make sure that emergency vehicles can access homes so they can provide timely responses, but the interdepartmental wildfire working group chaired by Joe DeVries, assistant City Administrator, understands the issue and has it on their “to do” list. Our attention has moved from individual emergencies to collective emergencies, particularly wildfires, where two lanes of traffic (first responders entering and residents exiting), so the focus has moved from a street-by-street perspective to evacuation routes--the pathway from a home to safety. The Zonehaven app will provide fire information to OFD in real time so they can pin-point the location where their help is needed and the speed and direction of the fire so that they can call for evacuations by targeted zones; over time, this app will be able to give individuals real-time information about which direction to turn each time they have to decide. NHCA will be involved in education about Zonehaven as it develops, has also been one of the community groups working with researchers from UC and nationally who are working on simulations for emergencies that will hopefully help people to see the relationship between their behavior and the safety of their community as a whole. (More on this topic related to Accessory Dwelling Units, below.)
- ii. Emergency Services

1. Plans: Making progress. The draft Local Hazard Mitigation Plan was distributed with little opportunity for public comment, included boilerplate language about the Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI) areas, describing our homes as “vacation homes” as if we were in Tahoe. After EKS and SGP testified at Planning and City Council, they solicited comments for that document and have now made changes. They are now soliciting comments on the draft Emergency Operations Plan. The request for proposals for the City’s General Plan has been revised to incorporate community input into the process from the beginning, so the Safety Element (that “builds on” the other two documents) may end up being helpful on wildfire issues.
- iii. Wildfire Priority Resolution, Interdepartmental Working Group: Good relationship.
1. The NHCA letter a year ago regarding risky behavior (illegal fireworks and unsafe disposal of smoking materials) at the lookouts along Grizzly Peak resulted in closure of the lookouts with chained logs that has dramatically reduced partying at those sites. The work was extended along Skyline. And Grizzly Peak will again be closed to all non-local traffic (pedestrians, bikes, motor vehicles) for July 4<sup>th</sup>.
  2. Parking Enforcement is now proactively patrolling the hills areas on Red Flag days.
- iv. Oakland Police Department
1. Neighborhood Council (Neighborhood Services has moved to City Administrator’s office, still transitioning into a broader role)
  2. By the end of this week, NHCA will have additional sandwich boards and new posters for Public Safety Meetings and Garden Volunteer Days, printed on foam board and laminated. Thanks to Carolyn for picking them up since I’m landlocked by paving on my part of Alvarado. (more below)
  3. May Public Safety Meeting, designed on survey results, postponed due to availability of speakers.

**b. Other City Issues**

- i. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU, including creating “granny flats”** inside the building’s existing footprints in basements, garages, etc. and free-standing buildings on the lot with one or more units are being encouraged locally and at the state level as quick and relatively inexpensive solution to the affordable housing crisis. Still an active issue. This issue first emerged in early March when OFSC learned about Senate Bills 9 and 10, two of many bills in the legislative session that make housing development in the state easier and quicker, with ADU approval almost automatic. Exceptions for historical districts and for fire severity zones were (and still are) limited. Using the OFSC letter as a draft, NHCA created its own letter that was circulated by Steve for board approval on March 5<sup>th</sup>; no objections and sent on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Concurrently, Rebecca Kaplan introduced a resolution in the Oakland City Council with a similar sentiment, but she had reached out to OFSC as she formulated the language to forbid new ADU’s in the Wildland Urban Interface. Based on NHCA support for the position implied by the recent letter, EKS testified at the Council meeting March 16<sup>th</sup> to support the resolution. When the Oakland Planning Commission’s Zoning Committee considered ADU restrictions in the WUI on April 15<sup>th</sup>, EKS and SGP encouraged the commissioners to consider evacuation routes instead of individual streets; so many roads feed into Hiller, Thornhill, Golf Links, etc. that their carrying capacity is already overloaded with vehicles from feeder streets. Commissioners asked staff to reconsider the proposal. When the full Planning Commission heard the item on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the full map of the Very High Risk Fire Hazard Zone was proposed as restricted. After nearly 100 speakers (including EKS), they sent the staff back to the drawing board with a more “surgical” approach despite the presentation by Nick Luby, OFD Deputy Chief that showed Zonehaven simulations from 1991 that put the entire area at risk, even homes on wider roads and near freeways. Will be hard to thread that needle.
- ii. Also in March, OFSC formed a legislative task force to monitor these and other WUI bills, EKS represented NHCA and participated in conversations with Assembly Member Wicks’ and Senator Skinner’s offices to express our concern about increased population density in WUIs unless there was sufficient**

infrastructure to allow residents to evacuate quickly. Several bills on this subject are still in play in the legislature; they have to be completed before the summer recess and signed by the Governor by the end of September.

**c. Paving**

- i. In the Three-Year Oakland Paving Plan, the original proposal from the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) averaged our area's highest number of roads ranked 20 or lower (where 100 is excellent) with our highest median income and gave us the least amount of paving money which was allocated to Claremont Avenue (completed June 21<sup>st</sup>) and Grandview Drive from Hiller to Dorothy Place (taking place the week of June 28<sup>th</sup>).

Communications with residents were insufficient and EKS has informed residents by Open Forum and door-to-door on that segment that "short delay" means 1-2 hours on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> day, 4+ hours on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. (Still awaiting confirmation of the timing for the Grandview week.

- ii. At the City Council Meeting, Dan Kalb orchestrated a Council Member discretionary fund of \$1 million each and specified Alvarado Road; that's paying for the paving this week from Claremont Avenue to Amito. In the next three-year plan, they will be required to factor wildfire safety in their calculations and we will work with the D1 office to make sure that happens.

**d. Joint Powers Authority**

- i. Carolyn had the idea of cross-fertilizing with the Claremont Canyon Conservancy; Nancy's our CCC rep to NHCA and I'm the NHCA rep on the CCC board. Jon Kaufman, CCC President, is taking the lead on a regional Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for Wildfire Prevention and I've been representing NHCA as this goes forward. Endorsements from many community groups (NHCA was one of the first) and elected offices are accumulating, donations and grants are now supporting an organization, Placeworks, to convene a meeting that will lead to the formal establishment of a JPA. EKS and SGP are on the Steering Committee; we've participated in conversations with many of the organizations and individuals who have become endorsers; the full list and more information will be found on a website that will launch hopefully this week

## 5. Garden Committee-

- a. Firestorm Memorial Garden
  - i. Dedicated a bench to the memory of James M. Riley, Jr. to replace the damaged drinking fountain that his family had dedicated to him in 1994. Local 55, the Firefighters Union, paid for the bench. We held a press conference and got good coverage from KTVU and the East Bay Times.
  - ii. Landscape Design Consultant Jennifer DeGraff designed a planting plan for the repair of the Firestorm Memorial Garden after the contractor removed too many of our plants. She facilitated discussions with the City about prepping the site, and actually getting us to the point where the City was willing to allocated \$4800 to the plants and our irrigation consultant's time in setting up the drip irrigation system along the hillside. Now we are implementing the plan as follows:
    - 1. Planted more than 200 stipa pulchra (purple needle grass) along the hillside facing Tunnel Road. Expect delivery of 400 more by the end of the month.
    - 2. Installed drip irrigation along the hillside.
    - 3. Planted several hundred succulents along the south side of the garden (from the sign to the peninsula). (Succulents were babied in our home nursery from Gateway Garden cuttings this past fall.)
    - 4. Will plant spreading salvia "Bees Bliss" on the hillside along Tunnel Road (where the pink flags are).
    - 5. Limbed shrubs and trees in the garden for fire safety.
    - 6. Put in a request for Pro Bono tree services from Shoreline Tree Trimming and Landscape Services (they did the olives in Gateway last year) for removing Oak tree limbs along the ridge of Firestorm Memorial Garden.
  - iii. Expect to start Nathan Catalano's Eagle Scout project in early July—install header boards between the sidewalk and the garden to keep debris off the sidewalk.
  - iv. Anticipate working with Bentley School to remove dead trees and shrubs on their side of the sidewalk from Hiller to Tunnel, and to jointly plant appropriate drought tolerant plants at that site.
  - v. Have request out to Oakland Rotary #3 for a workday in early July to spread the 32 cubic yards of compost from Waste Management.

- vi. Working with parent/son teams from Boys Team Charity 2 x a month at Firestorm.
- vii. Awaiting CalTrans to submit a letter giving NHCA the right of recovery so that we can receive the insurance settlement from the Waste Management accident back in March.
- b. Gateway Exhibit Center
  - i. Expect to complete Mason Chan’s Eagle Scout project of replacing stairs at Gateway in July.
  - ii. Expect to complete Nico Laub-Sabater’s Eagle Scout project of weeding and planting succulents in July.
  - iii. Will receive spreading sedum plugs around June 24—we will baby them in our home nursery to plant before the rains in the fall. They will be planted in the flat area in front of the entrance to the Exhibit deck.
  - iv. Will continue to weed at Gateway during the summer.
- c. Gateway Extension Garden- Finalizing negotiations to allow NHCA Garden Committee to utilize the property across the street from Gateway.
- d. Other Volunteer Efforts
  - i. Fall workdays with **Chevron**—they may be reinstating their September workdays and are in touch with us about scheduling. We typically get 15 people for 4 days. We would split them among the two sites (and the Gateway Extension if that comes through).
  - ii. **Salesforce**—we now have two project managers with Salesforce who are interested in working with us in schedule regular workdays in the coming year.
  - iii. **Former partners**—we will reach out to them as things open up.

## 6. New Business

- a. **Insurance renewal**—Steven Hanson and Brenda Roberts will review whether or not NHCA needs to carry auto insurance. If not required to do so, they will delete it from the insurance policy, saving several thousand dollars a year.
- b. **Annual Meeting**—The Board approved scheduling a Zoom annual meeting for September 16 or September 30. Sue reminded that the Communications Committee needs to prepare the power point overview that can also be posted on our website.
- c. **New Board Member**—the Board unanimously approved adding Carolyn Burgess to the Board to replace Allison Silverstein. Carolyn



agreed to work with Elizabeth on the Public Safety Committee. Carolyn recommended that the Board work to find new board members from the other side of Highway 24.

7. **Adjournment**—The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.