

North Hills Community Association Board Meeting Agenda (draft)
December 21, 2020 revised
7:00 PM

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Meeting Via Zoom

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8037390667?pwd=aUcyR1pTeEJtRGtsak1GZEZibzVZQT09>

Meeting ID: 803 739 0667

Passcode: 765678

Dial by your location

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

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Meeting ID: 803 739 0667

Passcode: 765678

Board Members

Ken Cohen

Steve Hanson - Chair

Chris Johnson – 2 V. Chair/Public Safety Chair/Communications (excused)

Dave McGuinness

Nancy Mueller

Sue Piper – Interim Secretary, Garden Committee Chair

Brenda Roberts – Treasurer

Elizabeth Stage - V. Chair, Interim Public Safety Chair

Guests:

Gordon Piper

Allison Silverstein -theallisionsilverstein@gmail.com?

1.Call to order

2.Introduction of Guests

3.Review and approval of minutes- November 16 - Thank you Susan! (see attached)

4.Review of agenda- adoption of agenda.

5.Treasurer's Report—Brenda Roberts

- a. Budget and expenditure information
- b. Income
- c. New 30th Anniversary Fund Rising Committee has yet to meet. Steve will Schedule by the second week of January.
- e. Budget for Gardens to be discussed under Garden Committee

6. Communications Committee—

- a. Draft letter to City of Oakland Regarding the Vegetation Management Plan and the CEQA process for public input (attached)

7. Public Safety Committee—Elizabeth Stage

- a. Presentation about the changes in the CORE program, plans for the next few months.
- b. Public Safety Programing for the 2021 year -begin worked on by Elizabeth.

8. Garden Committee—Sue Piper

- a. Agreement with City of Oakland for Gateway Extension is still in negotiation
- b. Volunteer Use of powered mechanical tools and insurance implications.
- c. Budget and cost for Garden maintenance (see attached).
- d. Status of 4th Bore Project at Firestorm Memorial Garden (we just learned that several of the Oaks have Sudden Oak Death disease and at least 7 trees will need to be removed-- not by us, but it gives us an opportunity to replant with less messy (acorns), more fire prone, low maintenance, low water things.)

9. Old Business?

9. Administrative

A .Other

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON AND LETS HAVE A GREAT AND NEW-NEW YEAR!

10. Adjourn



PO Box 5844 • Berkeley, CA 94705 • www.northhillscommunity.org

Board Meeting Agenda (draft)
November 16, 2020
7:00 PM
Via ZOOM

Attendees:

Steve Hanson - Chair
Dave McGuinness
Nancy Mueller
Sue Piper – Secretary
Brenda Roberts – Treasurer
Elizabeth Stage - V. Chair, Interim Public Safety Chair

Excused:

Ken Cohen
Chris Johnson

Guest: Gordon Piper

1. Meeting called to order at 7:10 pm
2. Minutes of October 24, 2020 meeting approved with a change to the budget report, noting that \$3,000 in reserves is part of the total amount on hand, not additional.
3. **Treasurer's Report** – Brenda Roberts reported that there was no activity this past month—no expenditures, no donations as of October 31, 2020, leaving a balance of \$12,347.90 in the checking account and \$7,693.65 in the Savings Account.
 - a. **Annual Campaign:** So far close to \$3,000 has come in as a result of the annual fundraising letter, with \$225 donated through PayPal. Nancy Mueller agreed to personally contact local residents who expressed concerns about issues on Grizzly Peak earlier this year, to see if they will support NHCA since we took the lead in getting the city to respond. Elizabeth Stage will provide her with the list of names and Brenda will cross check with who has donated to date, so we don't duplicate.
 - b. **Additional Fund Raising**
 1. **A broader campaign**—Brenda, Steve, and Sue will come up with a new letter and proposal for a campaign to the

broader NHCA “membership focusing on the 30th anniversary of the Firestorm, for later this year.

2. **Garden Committee**—Sue Piper and the Committee will draft a letter that could be walked around Hiller Highlands and Tunnel Road residents to see if we can raise additional funds for Gateway and the Firestorm Memorial Garden—this letter to be distributed after the new year.

4. **Communications Committee** – Steve Hanson

- Concerns about PG&E PSPS and impact on homes that are undergrounded— Steve Hanson will draft a proposed letter that would be sent to PG&E and the CPUC expressing concerns that homes that have paid to be undergrounded are so heavily impacted by PSPS.
- Cell phone tower backups: Elizabeth Stage noted that the Montclair Neighborhood Association is focused on cell phone towers not having enough back up power—The Board decided to follow this but not weigh in at this time.

5. **Public Safety Committee** – Elizabeth Stage

- Wildfire Resolution Implementation Update: The Public Safety Committee received a report from the City Administrator as follow up to the Wildfire Prevention Resolution approved last November.
 - The City has formed an internal interdepartmental working group led by Joe Devries. They focused on issues along Grizzly Peak this summer and fall, and will expand their scope in the coming months. She noted that a group of non-Oakland residents along Grizzly Peak got fired up this summer and fall, and she and Sue Piper, representing the Oakland Firesafe Council, have steered them to like-minded wildfire prevention advocacy groups so that they can network.
 - The Internal Group is now working on promoting the Firesafe Streets Program, and are in the process of reposting signs that have been torn down, educating citizens, and enforcing where there are signs. However, the program is still fairly small and they are working on expanding the number of streets that will be brought into the program. She added that the City has contracted with ZoneHaven, an app that will provide real time information about evacuation routes. It is first being tested with fire fighters, and then will be made available to the public.

The Board approved nominating NHCA as an early public participant in Zonehaven.

- CORE has been reconstituted as a full CERT program. The City is looking for trainers, and the new staff are enthusiastic.
- Upcoming Public Safety Committee meetings: As an NCPC, we are required by the City to host at least 4 quarterly NCPC meetings. Elizabeth suggested we offer focused topics such as Generator 101 as a backup to PSPS, CPR co-sponsored by the Red Cross, and perhaps something about Firescaping and the drought. Because they would be Zoom presentations, they could be recorded and added to our program library on our website. Elizabeth will write up a concept for feedback. Sue offered to look at Firesafe Marin's website to see what they say about generators,

6. **Garden Committee**—Sue Piper

- **Gateway Extension**—Sue, Steve and Elizabeth spoke with City Administrator Ed Reiskin about NHCA's desire to have this third lot rezoned back to part of the Gateway Park, or to have an agreement that is the same as an adopt a spot agreement, not the land use agreement the City proposed. That discussion is now lodged with the City Attorney; we hope to hear back soon.
- **Gateway**—Sue and Gordon continue to make cuttings of succulents and removing overgrown plants within the first 5-10 feet of the deck to replant with low growing succulents, per the new defensible space requirements. We have been weeding and removing plants within 48 inches of the curb along Caldecott Lane to create a walking path. Gordon reported that Howard Mattis and a leader from Parkwoods have requested that the City add the sidewalk from the Firestorm Memorial to Parkwoods in the upcoming Capital Improvements Program budget, since 4th Bore Mitigation Funds ran out before they could move forward with this phase of the plan.
- **Firestorm Memorial Garden**—Ray's Electric and the City removed more plants than anticipated, due to a snafu in communications. The Garden Committee has hired Jennifer DeGraaf, a local landscape designer, to work with us and the City to ensure that the hillside is restored in a manner that is fire safe, drought tolerant, low maintenance and stable. The contractor will limb the Oaks; Bentley School will limb the Monterey Pines and rake up the pine needles on their property for fire safety.

- **Eagle Scout Projects:**
 - Mason Chen, an Eagle Scout candidate, is making progress on repairing the damaged steps in Gateway. We've secured donations for landscaping timbers (Ashby Lumber, valued at \$700), Rebar (Economy Lumber), 3 gallons of paint (Oakland PWA Paint Department), and step toppers from Weyerhaeuser Corporation for all of the steps. Mason has drilled holes in the landscaping timbers and will organize workdays with scouts, to paint the timbers, remove and replace approximately 70 damaged timbers, add the step toppers, weed the pathway and add gravel. Fund raising for actual dollars and in-kind donations continues.
 - Nicholas Laub-Sabater will be presenting his proposal to add a lattice screen behind the bench by the water fountain and to organize a workday in Firestorm Memorial Garden with scouts—sometime during the winter break.
 - Nate Catalano, has proposed organizing a workday at Gateway—we are waiting for details.
- **Lack of Water at North Oakland Sports Field**—Steve sent letters to the City, EBMUD and the CPUC. We heard back from the Oakland City Administrator that he was aware of the situation and will look into it further. We heard back from the CPUC and learned that they did not have jurisdiction over EBMUD.
- **Volunteer Recruitment:** Have requested a volunteer coordinator from Salesforce to help us recruit volunteers.
- **Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust Grant**—we should hear about our application for a \$20,000 grant this month.

7. **New Business**

- **Trash at Kaiser**—Elizabeth Stage reported that Alicia Johnson asked NHCA to write to OUSD about overflowing dumpsters and trash on the Kaiser Campus. Sue Piper said she checked with neighbors, who corroborated the problem. Sue said she would write to OUSD to see if they would clean the area up and to find out what their ongoing plans were to keep the property clean. The Board decided to wait to see what that response was before a letter was written.
- **CalTrans clearing its properties:** Gordon Piper raised the issue of Caltrans not managing vegetation on the slope between the Firestorm Memorial Garden and Gateway. Elizabeth noted that Joe Devries stated at the last OFSC meeting that this is an issue all along Caltrans properties in the Oakland WUI and that he meets with them regularly. She recommended that Gordon contact Joe Devries directly.

- **Compliance of the Paul Vincent Property at the bottom of Hiller Drive (across from the Firestorm Memorial Garden):** Gordon Piper was concerned that nothing seems to have been done to bring this property into compliance. It was suggested he email Travis Hansen to see whether or not the property is in compliance, and if not, where it is in the compliance process.
8. **New Business:** The board will meet again on December 21, 2020
 9. **The Meeting was adjourned at 8:29 pm.**



January 20, 2021

Ken Schwartz, Ph.D.
Managing Principal
Horizon Water and Environment
266 Grand Avenue, Suite 210
Oakland, CA 94610

Dear Mr. Schwarz,

As residents of the City of Oakland and as members of community organizations concerned about the safety of our neighborhoods and preservation of our homes, our lives and our environment, we have reviewed the proposed vegetation management plan and environmental impact report. While it contains much of value and is a good start, it needs some major revisions before we can consider it satisfactory and before we can support it with the tax measure that is likely necessary to fund it. We make the following requests and observations today:

1. Since the EIR currently under consideration is based on an unrevised 2019 Draft Vegetation Management Plan, we ask that you provide the public with a list of major changes made to that Plan and that you extend the time for comments beyond the holiday season to the full 60 days permitted under CEQA—January 22, 2021.
2. We ask that you provide a corrected VM Plan and DEIR based on recent fire behavior, which requires new assumptions: 40 and 55-60 mph winds instead of 20 mph, new pathogens that are killing large stands of trees in city parks, and increased severity of fire storms and lightning-caused wildfires that mandate increasing the scope of vegetation management and defensible space boundaries. (See bullet point a. below for more details). These changes should be aimed at lowering the Oakland Hills Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone rating through landscape scale management of its most dangerous vegetation.
3. We ask that you provide a fifth alternative that would be the preferred alternative to the four presented in the Plan that takes a broader vegetation management approach based on the increasing severity of fires as noted above. This would include removal of large stands of the most flammable and unsafe vegetation (eucalyptus, pine, cypress, acacia, broom, non-

native grasses) in key areas, to be replaced with native plants that have proven to be safer and more sustainable both environmentally and financially.

4. We ask that you provide a corrected Plan and DEIR incorporating the 3Rs advocated by the environmental community: the phased Removal of the most dangerous non-native vegetation, the Restoration of native habitat that is less fire prone and less costly to maintain, and the Re-establishment of native biodiversity that prevents fire-prone monocultures of invasive plants and protects endangered species.

These requests are based on the following concerns and observations:

- a. The Plan and DEIR do not sufficiently acknowledge the increased risk of wildfire in the past two to three years, necessitating more vegetation management than the plan currently anticipates. Vegetation is dying at a faster rate from the effects of climate change, pathogen-caused disease and perhaps other reasons as well. Oakland today experiences greater drought conditions, higher temperatures and stronger winds than it did when the VM plan was first conceived. For example, the Plan and DEIR are based on a wind condition of 20 mph, yet we are experiencing much stronger winds on a frequent basis. Even the 1991 firestorm winds were clocked at 60 mph. Pathogens are rapidly increasing the death of vegetation affecting large swaths of eucalyptus, acacia, oaks, bay laurel and various species of brush. All of these increase the risk of wildfire and damage to property and lives. Therefore, more fuel load reduction than called for in the plan must be undertaken.
- b. The Plan and DEIR call for thinning of eucalyptus groves, such as at the North Oakland Sports Field and on Grizzly Peak. Thinning removes much of the danger from fires that start on the ground but does nothing to prevent fires that start in tree canopies (such as lightning fires) or that spread into canopies. Preventing canopy fires requires removal of those trees most likely to ignite, such as eucalyptus due to its very flammable nature and the large amount of fuel it creates.
- c. While the EIR addresses housing density adjacent to city properties and its impact on fuel load, thus contributing to prioritization of projects, it does not address vegetation density adjacent to city properties that also impacts the goal of reducing the spread of fire. For example, at the North Oakland Sports Field, there are equally hazardous groves of trees on Caltrans and privately owned property on either side of the city-owned property. The current Plan and DEIR do not look at treating a larger percentage of the city-owned grove to compensate for the high fire risks on either side.
- d. Once a eucalyptus tree is cut, it must be prevented from resprouting. This requires the use of Garlon. Scientific research has shown that this herbicide does not pose the risks to people, animals and other plants that other herbicides do. Therefore, we wholeheartedly agree with the conclusion in the EIR that its use does not conflict with Oakland city resolution 79133.

- e. The Plan and DEIR must include replacing vegetation that is removed, be it by planting or by natural occurrence. Otherwise, the most opportunistic, invasive vegetation is likely to grow back, recreating or exacerbating the fire hazard. Current research shows that a more diverse, native landscape is more fire resistant and cost-effective in the long run. Any replacement plan must also include erosion control on steep hillsides.
- f. While the Plan and DEIR set priorities for the various areas, more prioritization is required to clarify in what order projects will be implemented. Projects should be prioritized based on greatest risk to life and property so that the overall risk of wildfire in Oakland can be reduced most expeditiously.
- g. The methodologies contained in the Plan and EIR must be based on the best available and applicable fire science. This means that a scientific approach developed for use in a woodland forest is not applicable in the wildland urban interface (WUI) like the Oakland Hills. Thinning is a forestry practice employed to maximize lumber harvests that should not be applied to eucalyptus fire risk reduction in the densely populated Oakland hills, especially when canopy fires have become a major concern.
- h. While there are other means of preventing damage from wildfire, such as home hardening and improving escape routes and warning systems, these must not be considered alternatives to vegetation management. Rather, vegetation management must proceed independently of these other means of risk reduction.
- i. The Plan and DEIR call for removal of large trees and other vegetation to a distance of 35 feet from the sides of key roads. It should be noted that the University of California is removing such vegetation to a distance of 100 feet to account for tall trees that could fall across roadways and block evacuation routes and fire department access. Wildfire and flaming embers will not respect artificial boundaries, especially if they are unrealistic, given recent experience.
- j. As a practical matter, the Plan needs to include maintenance strategies for each parcel and a timetable once initial fuel reduction work is completed. Without ongoing maintenance, flammable vegetation will regrow and the city's properties will become high risk again. These strategies and timetables should inform each year's annual plan and budget.
- k. The Plan and DEIR documents need to be organized for easy understanding by the public. The charts in Section 2 for each site should be expanded to include which site projects would be first in line; how many years it would take to complete that portion of the project; when is the best time to schedule the work (winter, spring, summer or fall); follow up maintenance and schedule; what would be planted to replace what was removed and in what quantities. While having a city-wide plan meets the legal requirements of CEQA, residents of the WUI are primarily interested in the public spaces

that are closest to where they live or play. There needs to be an easy way to understand the chart for each site so that the public fully understands what to expect.

We appreciate the work that city and consulting staff have expended to date and look forward to a revised Plan and DEIR that addresses our concerns and, when implemented, will best reduce the wildfire risks we currently face.

Sincerely,

Sue Piper
Chair
Oakland Firesafe Council
Hiller Highlands

Barbara Goldenberg
Vice Chair
Oakland Firesafe Council
Paso Robles/Shepherd Canyon

Ken Benson
Secretary
Oakland Firesafe Council
Chabot Highlands

Karen Asbelle
Friends of Knowland Park

Lin Barron
Friends of Montclair RR Trail

Opie Belas
Chair, Friends of
Dimond Park

Haywood Blake
Dimond Park

Denise Bostrom
Montclair

Carolyn Burgess
Tunnel Road

Jim Clardy
Fernwood
Montclair

Macy Cornell
Chair, Montclair
Neighborhood Council

Steven Hanson
President
North Hills Community Assn.

Jeffery Kahn
Leader
Rockridge Terrace Assn.

Jon Kaufman
President
Claremont Canyon
Conservancy

Richard Kauffman
Friends of Beaconsfield
Canyon

Jerry Kent
Claremont Canyon
Conservancy

Daniel Lieberman
Colton-Heartwood
Montclair

Martin Matarrese
Former WPAD Member
King Estates

Mike Petouhoff
Former WPAD Member
Shepherd Canyon

Gordon Piper
Chair
Oakland Landscape
Park
Committee

Dale Risdin
Chair
Friends of Joaquin Miller

Pat Schwinn
Forestland
Montclair

Joan Squires-Lind
Forestland Heights
Montclair

Nick Vigilante
Vice Chair, Montclair
Neighborhood Council

Allene Warren
Former WPAD Member
Grass Valley

Stan Weisner
President
Piedmont Pines
Neighborhood Assn.

John Brega
Los Aramos
Piedmont Pines

Brenda Rueda-Yamashita
Co-Chair
Beat 35y NCPC
Chabot Park Estates

CC: The Oakland City Planning Commissioners and staff
City Council members
Oakland City Mayor
City Administrator



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January xxx, 2021

Dear Neighbor,

As we look forward to a brighter future in 2021, we ask that you consider supporting the North Hills Garden Committee's efforts to brighten our entrances to Hiller Highland.

October 20, 2021 will be the 30th Anniversary of the Tunnel Fire, ranked one of the most devastating wildfires in California's history. Whether we will be able to gather in person or not by then at a memorial event, keeping the Gateway Exhibit Center/Fire-resistant Garden and the Firestorm Memorial Garden at the entrances to Hiller Highland maintained and inviting is ongoing.

This year, with the help of Eagle Scout candidates, we are refurbishing the 67 steps at Gateway, renovating the plantings around the Exhibit Center with low growing groundcover sedum, pruning and planting cuttings of succulents in the garden outside of the 0-5 foot No Fire zone, and refurbishing the Firestorm Memorial Garden once work on the new bicycle lanes and retaining wall are completed. While we have been fortunate to negotiate thousands of dollars worth of in-kind donations, we still have expenses—for gravel to refresh the pathways at Gateway, for plant signage that would enhance the educational element at the Gateway fire-resistant garden, and for plants that we are unable to secure through donations.

With fewer volunteers and expenses, we need to raise funds so that we can keep our entrance gardens looking bright, fire safe and inviting.

We've enclosed a handy remit envelop for your convenience. We greatly appreciate your ongoing support of the gardens--- and would welcome hands-on volunteer support as well!

Sincerely,

Sue Piper
Chair
North Hills Community Association Garden Committee
510 499-8933

Proposed Garden Budget 2021

Objective: To support the Firestorm Memorial Garden and Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center and Gardens. To provide clean and beautiful landscapes at the entrances to the North Hills that promote native or fire retardant plants and defensible space for wildfire prevention.

Year 2020			Year 2020			
	2019 - Actual	2020 Budget - Proposed	2020 Actual	2021 Proposed		
Income				5351.89		
DONATIONS -	2,350 \$	2,500.00		2,500	* Winter 2020 campaign	
FUNDS FROM OFSC (from Cla	\$	6,657.00				
Revenues Total	\$	9,157.15	7050	7851.89		
Expenses				Required	Wishes	
Alarm (Monthly	\$ (1,300.00)	\$ 1,200.00		64.2		
Pre-approved	\$ (250.00)	\$ 250.00				
Reimbursed ex	\$ (1,700.00)	\$ 100.00				
Plants (Salesforce, WMSCOG,	\$	4,000.00			500	
Supplies (Pavers for WMSCOC	\$	500.00	soil	1000		
Tools (Pre-Approved Repair &	\$	250.00		300		
Irrigation Repairs (Pre-Approv	\$	250.00		1000		
Landscape Consulting				2500		
Weed contract				500		
Transportation (to pick up donated plants)				300		
Miscellaneous (Stamps, Postc	\$	500.00			250	
Expenses Total	\$ (3,260.00)	\$ 7,050.00		5664.2	750	6414.2
Net (OVER) UN	-908.86	2,107.15				
Special Projects (Specifically raised funds)						
Plant signage at Gateway		\$5,000				
(200 signs + shipping)						
Gravel		5,000				