



**North Hills Comm Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Claremont Club and Spa, Berkeley Room  
June 17, 2024**

**Board Member Attendance:** Fred Booker, Carolyn Burgess, Miki Chan, Donna Karch, David Kessler, Brian McCrodan, Elizabeth Stage

**Board Members Excused:** Nancy Mueller, Anna Sarukhsnov

**Guest Attendance:** Anu Agarwal

**1. Call to order:** David called the meeting to order at 4:07 P.M.

**2. New Board Members:** David Kessler made a motion to approve Fred Booker and Brian McCrodan as members of the Board. Seconded by Elizabeth Stage. Motion was unanimously approved (5-0-2 [Nancy, Anna]).

**3. Review and Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was approved by consensus.

**4. Review and Approval of Draft Minutes of May 20, 2024 minutes:** The Minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved, as presented, by consensus.

**5. Announcements**

**Board member announcements:** Fred said that on Tuesday at 10:00 a.m., he will be meeting with Kathy Kramer of "Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour", Jim Hanson of the California Native Plant Society and Sandy Pearson to talk about how to approach a Firewise garden using native plants at the Gateway Demonstration Garden. Board members are welcome to attend. Fred would like Anna to create an Instagram account to show the progress of changes made to the Gateway Garden.

Brian would like to see more communications and posts on OpenForum.

**Member Announcements:** None

**6. Treasurer's Report:** Donna reported that NHCA received donations totaling \$347.52 in the past month. Expenses included \$131.93 for NHCA's internet provider and \$160 for website maintenance.

The current balance in the checking account is \$5,443.38. The current balance in the savings account is \$13,582.06. The total available funds (combined checking and savings) for NHCA are \$19,025.44.

Fundraisers are needed for the two gardens. It was suggested that Garden Initiative links be placed on Facebook and Instagram accounts.



Brian suggested adding Zelle and Venmo as options for donations. Several Board members agreed.

## **7. Committee Reports:**

**Communications.** Donna Karch circulated the Communications Committee Report. David Kessler has started a draft of the NHCA Newsletter and has circulated it to the Board; he has received positive feedback. David wants to broaden the scope of communications. He wants NHCA to have a presence on Instagram and Facebook. David continues to encourage subscribers of Announcements to subscribe to Open Forum. Miki briefly described how Facebook works. Several Board members plan to contribute articles to the newsletter. Constant Contact may be used. Lia Turk helped with the layout of the 2023 Annual Newsletter and might be able to help with Constant Contact newsletters.

Brian asked how NHCA communicates with people. He said that people need to be kept informed.

Elizabeth gave a presentation on the proposed Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ) ballot measure. On June 25, 2024, the Oakland City Council is scheduled to vote on whether the proposed ballot measure will be added to the November 2024 ballot. Fred asked for a map of the WPZ area. Elizabeth said that one will be available. Fred also wants funds used for more, and thorough inspectors. (Attachment 1)

Brian asked about the history of the name "North Hills" rather than just "Oakland Hills". Carolyn gave a brief explanation of districts and zones and said that the city designated our community the North Hills as part of the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils.

Brian would like the proposed newsletter to have shorter paragraphs with links to "more information". Brian and David will work together.

Elizabeth would like to use the newsletter to make people who live in the WPZ aware of the ballot measure and help raise funds for the WPZ ballot measure.

Donna said that she has been in contact with Sarah Kidder, the designer of NHCA's Facebook account. Sarah will add current NHCA Board members to the Facebook account so that it can be updated. Miki volunteered to help with Facebook.

Carolyn asked about the procedure to use Announcements. David explained that Announcements require a formal format. Carolyn questioned that requirement. Fred and Brian agreed that all Announcements need to be sent in a formal format. Donna said that she will send a copy of the 2024 Communication Plan and Guidelines to all Board members. (Attachment 2)

### **Public Safety – Carolyn**

Carolyn's Public Safety Report had been distributed to the Board. She said that she has had excellent communications with Captain Lisa Ausman. On a negative note, Carolyn said that there are fewer than 300 police officers on the ground. (Attachment 3)

## **8. Old Business**

**a. Management of Memorial and Gateway Gardens.** The discussion of the gardens is included in Board member announcements above.



**b. Irrigation System at Bentley School.** Donna has been in contact with Jim Nagle at Bentley and is awaiting a date and time for Fred and Donna to meet with Bentley staff.

**c. Quarterly Newsletter.** The discussion of the newsletter is included in Communications above.

**9. New Business**

**a. Homeowner Insurance Discussion:** Anu Agarwal attended the meeting because her homeowner insurance policy was not renewed. Donna briefly described what the insurance representative from United Policyholders had presented at the Annual Meeting. Donna offered to email Anu insurance information.

**b. Linking Benevity to NHCA website.** This item will be placed on the July 2024 Agenda.

**David Adjourned the Meeting at 6:01 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna Karch and Nancy Mueller, co-secretaries



## **Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ)**

(ballot measure to raise money to fund the 2024 Vegetation Management Plan) eks 6/15/24

### **Timeline**

#### Vegetation Management Plan

Oakland prepared and circulated a draft vegetation management plan in 2018 and received scathing public comments, including a coordinated effort by the Conservancy (Jon and Jerry), Oakland Firesafe Council (Sue Piper), North Hills Community Association (Elizabeth), and the Sierra Club (Norman LaForce). Without addressing these comments, in 2020 Oakland prepared the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that was based on the draft plan. The Council Members who represented most of the high fire zone at the time, Dan Kalb and Sheng Thao, negotiated with the city staff/consultants and these community organizations line-by-line. It took nearly three years to complete the revisions in such a way as to be legally justifiable because lawsuits were expected, resulting in the Revised Vegetation Management Plan EIR (“revised plan”). The plan was improved considerably, with more extensive roadside clearing on evacuation routes and elimination of dead and dying trees; there were compromises (e.g., distances between trees to reduce the likelihood of lightning-ignited crown fires and thinning, rather than elimination of highly flammable trees like eucalyptus). The consensus was that the plan was good enough to provide a roadmap for improved fire safety and it was time to move forward. The Conservancy reluctantly endorsed the adoption of the plan, joining again with the Oakland Firesafe Council and the North Hills Community Association. The final revision was adopted by the City Council on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

While waiting for the final publication and adoption, Deputy City Administrator Joe DeVries and/or OFD Chief of Staff Michael Hunt provided updates and listened to community input via the Oakland Firesafe Council monthly meetings. They wanted to make sure that the new ballot measure addressed the shortcomings of the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) that had expired in 2017 and failed by a very small number of votes when its reinstatement was on the ballot. In addition to having a robust plan that delineates the specific projects that will be undertaken—three priorities for each of the city properties than are included in the plan—they considered the lessons learned from the previous assessment district (see next page).

Immediately after the VMP passed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, the draft “Wildfire Prevention Zone” package was presented to the city council for its first reading on June 4<sup>th</sup> and is scheduled for the second reading and adoption on June 18<sup>th</sup>, leaving a short time to get it to the Alameda County Registrar of Voters by the July 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline.

On the next two pages are the Executive Summary of the WPZ, links to additional information, and a list of issues for discussion.

## **ATTACHMENT 1**



## WILDFIRE PREVENTION ZONE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Adoption of this proposed resolution will authorize the placement of a special tax ("Special Tax") on the ballot to provide wildfire prevention and preparedness services to those communities within the boundaries of the City’s Wildfire Prevention Zone (WPZ). The WPZ is the same area as the City’s former Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD). It includes all areas of the City that fall in the California Department of Forestry and Fire Services (CAL FIRE) Very High Fire Severity Hazard Zone (VHFHSZ).”

### Notes:

- A Special Tax is different from an Assessment; the tax will be assessed on the parcels in the area for the benefit of the area, not requiring a one-to-one correspondence between each parcel and each expenditure. Some parks, like Garber, have many homes within ignition range of highly flammable trees; others, like the North Oakland Sports field, have fewer homes adjacent but many within ember range.
- The area is defined by the maps that Oakland uses, based on the CalFire maps but more extensive.
- The initial tax will be \$99/year for a single-family dwelling, calculated similarly for multi-unit dwellings and commercial structures; there are reductions or exemptions for several categories of people (e.g., low-income), and its increase will be limited by the Bay Area Consumer Price Index or the comparable index for California.

The full legislative package is available here:

<https://oakland.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6693996&GUID=D0DA215B-C9A5-4DA1-8829-F17131389E3B&Options=&Search=>

### Executive Summary continued:

“This Special Tax will create a dedicated funding source to support the City’s efforts to address wildfire risk by:

- \_Implementing a comprehensive vegetation management plan,
- \_Expanding roadside clearing to protect emergency evacuation routes
- \_Enhancing fire patrols on high-fire danger days
- \_Expanding goat grazing fuel reduction efforts
- \_Performing annual inspections of all parcels in the WPZ
- \_Providing public education efforts to help residents, businesses, and property owners protect themselves in their neighborhoods
- \_Providing community oversight and annual auditing of the funds.”

The 2017 WPAD Advisory Committee prepared a final report with recommendations for any new assessment district based on their experience of what worked and what needed to be improved.

<https://oaklandca.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/w/OAK063154.pdf>

Many of the challenges have either been addressed or are being given more attention, such as contracting (now done by Public Works, less inefficient than having OFD do it), staffing of the Fire Prevention Bureau (upgraded fire inspector classification and cross-training of fire and building inspectors), lack of support from OFD administration (strong support from the Chief of Fire and his Chief of Staff). The most prominent problem was the lack of attention to coordination within the city; this precipitated the Council’s adoption of a Resolution making Wildfire Prevention a priority for all City departments. Subsequently the City Administrator established the Interdepartmental Wildfire Prevention Task Force, convened by Deputy City Administrator Joe DeVries.

Less evident in the report, but prominent in the view of the former members of the WPAD Advisory Committee, was the need to strengthen its role and relationship with the city staff. The relevant portion of the draft (from pages 8 and 9) is here:



#### 4.59.030. Planning, Oversight, and Accountability

A. Commission. The City Council shall enact additional legislation establishing community oversight and accountability of the Special Tax through the establishment of a new board or Commission or through an existing City Commission. The purpose and duties of the commission shall include: reviewing the annual operational use of the Special Tax proceeds in reducing wildfire risk, making advisory recommendations, including policy recommendations, to the City Council regarding the use of the funds to further prevention efforts, studying best practices from other jurisdictions, participating in regional wildfire prevention forums, and supporting outreach and public education efforts in the Wildfire Prevention Zone and Citywide.

B. Annual Financial Audit. An independent audit shall be performed annually to ensure accountability and proper distribution of the proceeds of the Special Tax in accordance with the objectives stated herein as provided by Government Code sections 50075.1 and 50075.3.

C. City Auditor's Audit. The City Auditor may perform audits to ensure accountability and proper disbursement of all revenue collection by the City from the Special Tax in accordance with the objectives stated therein and in compliance with provisions of California Law

Before the item went to the City Council, the Oakland Firesafe Council appreciated the opportunity for the community to make its recommendations directly to the City Council (liked the insertion of "policy recommendations" because it elevated the seriousness of the role) and suggested ways that an interactive process, modeled on the Budget Advisory Commission's participation in annual budget formulation might be specified. There's been reluctance to be too specific because any modifications must go back to the voters and the draft hasn't changed.

At the first reading of the City Council meeting June 4<sup>th</sup>, two points of contention were raised by the League of Women Voters and others with similar views, the use of the Consumer Price Index for annual increases (as opposed to a limit of 5% or some other cap) and the lack of a sunset (as opposed to a five- or ten-year expiration which they claimed inaccurately that sunsets have been used consistently in recent ballot measures). Council requested that a supplemental document be prepared by June 20<sup>th</sup> to inform the June 26<sup>th</sup> decision, addressing these concerns and providing a map at the parcel level. The Alameda County Registrar of Voters deadline for the November 5<sup>th</sup> ballot is July 2<sup>nd</sup>.



**North Hills Community Association**  
**2024 Communication Plan and Guidelines**

Communication from the organization to the community shall be approved by the Communications Chair. Two vehicles for the communication exist:

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Announcements platform shall be used for communication from the organization to the membership/community. Guidelines for use of Announcements shall be as follows:

- Announcements to be used only for time sensitive issues, such as:
  - o the annual meeting, regular board meetings
  - o communication of critical event involving community welfare, such as an important city council or city council committee hearing on an issue of particular importance to the North Hills
  - o new information of timely importance that has been put on the NHCA website
- Announcements is not to be used to forward press releases of other information from city or other government agencies or departments.
- Announcements shall continue on the Pairlist platform using the template that was deployed for the first time in March 2024 for graphic consistency and consistent appearance across all phone, tablet and desktop platforms. It shall continue on Pairlist until such time as the Constant Contact platform is ready for deployment. The CC template for Announcements should graphically resemble the Pairlist template first used in March 2024.

**NEWSLETTER**

NHCA shall institute a quarterly newsletter, beginning July 1, 2024. Content of the newsletter, using the Constant Contact platform, shall include items of general interest to the membership including:

- How to subscribe to city and other government agency and area organizational resources and communications, including:
  - o City council, mayoral or other city newsletters/bulletins
  - o Nixle
  - o AC Alert
  - o Claremont Canyon Conservancy
  - o Oakland Firesafe Council
  - o United Policyholders
- Links to resources on the NHCA website
  - o How to file and monitor a blight or code compliance complaint
- Stories involving neighbors, human interest, good neighbors
- Refresh/remind information on vegetation management compliance
- News regarding NHCA activities/initiatives



## **WEBSITE**

The website is to be modified to include key links on the home page, with a Support/Donate link prominent among them. Website shall be formatted for effective viewing on all devices including phone, tablets and desktops.

The Communications Committee chair is responsible for ensuring the website is current.

## **USE OF OPEN FORUM**

Open Forum is a platform for the exchange of ideas among neighbors.

Communication to the neighborhood from NHCA should not be broadcast on Open Forum, but rather through Announcements and Newsletters. Open Forum shall remain a neighbor-to-neighbor platform. NHCA Board members can, of course, participate as neighbors on Open Forum.

On a monthly basis, the Communications Committee shall ensure that subscribers to Open Forum are added to Announcements. All Open Forum subscribers will be on the Announcements/Newsletter list.

NHCA communications, properly branded and using Announcements and Newsletters, will enhance the professionalism and standing of NHCA.



## Public Safety Report May/June 2024 Burgess

May 21-City Council Mtg

May 23- NHCA Public Safety Meeting 7:00p in person and zoom  
Montclair Presbyterian Church 5701 Thornhill Dr  
Speakers: Area 2 **Capt Lisa Ausmus**-crime reports and area patrol activity  
D-4 Council member **Janani Ramachandran**-crime concerns and  
mid-term budget focus  
Miki Chan assisted 35 in person(not including speakers or staff) 20 on zoom

May 24- All NHCA supplies, and equipment delivered to Donna Karch for storage.  
Paper goods, cups, plastic table clothes, information handouts, 1000+  
donation envelopes, suitcase to transport, free standing bulletin/white board and  
marking paper, Pens and large markers, Large A frame to advertise meetings,  
plus, inserts> plastic coated signs for Public Safety and Garden activities, 10x3  
foot hangable canvas banner, Projector in black padded case.

May 24- phone meeting with Rajni-questions about NHCA goals.

May 28- 0930 Finance and Mgmt Committee-proposed budget cuts Public Safety  
1130 Public Works- Roadway Landslide and Evac safety impact on  
Tunnel Road /Bay Forest Bay Forest HOA rep present  
6:00p Oakland Public Safety Meeting canceled

June 8- D-4 Advisory Council Budget Conversation

June 11- 6p- Oakland Public Safety Meeting Canceled

June 12- Zoom Mid-Cycle Budget special meeting.

June 17- NHCA Board Meeting