



Wildfire Prevention District (WPAD)
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, September 29, 2005 - 7:00 p.m.
Trudeau Training Center
11500 Skyline Boulevard, Oakland, CA

Ken Benson, Chair; Robert Sieben, Vice Chair; Carol Bernau; Susan Burnett; Ben Fay; Barbara Goldenberg; Carl Hackney; Tamia Marg; Gordon Piper; Ernest A. Robinson III; Allene Warren.

Draft Minutes

- I. **Call to Order** – Ken Benson, Committee Chair
Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. **Roll Call** – Ken Benson, Committee Chair
Present: Ben Fay, Tamia Marg, Gordon Piper, Allene Warren, Ken Benson, Ernie Robinson, Bob Faber for Carol Bernau, AFM Leroy Griffin, Kristine Shaff, Prevention Inspector Camille Rodgers
Excused: Susan Burnett, Robert Sieben **Absent:** Carl Hackney

- III. **Public Comment**
 - Roger Brett – Montclair Neighborhood Association – Thank you to Board for actions and support on Phase 1 of the Pershing Drive eucalyptus removal. Contractors have visited site and are submitting their bids.

 - John Bouey – Piedmont Pines Neighborhood Association – Submitted letter and photo to the Chair. He is concerned about vegetation management, just as he has been in previous months. He is critical of the work being done.

[Corrections to Mr. Bouey’s comments – there have been no Red Flag Days this season prior to 9/29/05 and the Tiger Mower for roadside clearance has been active on Skyline and Redwood Road.]

 - Jonathon Goodwin – Resident of Canyon – Has been working with CDF and Moraga/Orinda Fire District for the past five years. Community involvement is a critical element in a successful program of wildfire preparedness and the Canyon community held an evacuation drill, since it was a recommendation coming out of the After Action report from the 1991 fire. Canyon has created sectors, small neighbor groups of about 15 families each. They have been using a risk assessment instrument. They have worked on infrastructure issues also, including water supply. He is interested in more grass roots and public involvement, especially in terms of education and presentations that can stimulate interest.

 - Ron Barklow – Is glad to see that the reporting system has started, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Skyline is in need of a lot of roadside clearance work to reduce the risk from cars and catalytic converters.

- Karen Paulsell – Friends of Sausal Creek – Handout to Board on good plant resources; the California Natural Diversity Database, can be used also with consultants. There are 100 federally listed plants that need special attention and treatment. Also recommended a special technique for broom clearing: when cut close to the ground late in the season, less than 5% re-sprouts. This is an example of how treating correctly at the right season can be extremely effective.
- Dick Otterstad – private brush clearing company for 15 years observed that this year in particular, it appears that many private parcels are out of compliance, yet there does not seem to be that much work being done, either his company or others. He is interested in knowing more about how contracts are announced and awarded.

IV. **Approval of Minutes**

- August 25, 2005 minutes – Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes with two corrections (change of affiliation of one public speaker and clarification that the correct label is Red Flag Day, not alert or warning).

V. **Vegetation Management Staff Report**

- The large scope fuel reduction project with UC Berkeley (UCB) is doing very well and has completed Phase 1 – the removal of 300+ stems of eucalyptus along Grizzly Peak. Total removal will be 1,000 by the end of the project.
- The Leona Open Space project with East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is starting in October. They are also hosting a project from Shasta and have learned techniques to bring the cost per stem removal down, which is very good news.
- Staff of the Fire Prevention Bureau has completed a Notice of Intent for a grant to FEMA for a Disaster Mitigation Project for a fuel reduction program. It will bring significant funding resources for priority areas along the ridge top so that the fuel break/fire break will be continuous.
- Inspection and Compliance Status:
 - 89% of private homeowners are in compliance, a larger number than ever before. Overall the WPAD is 85% in compliance.
 - Engine companies are completing the last of the re-inspections required on non-compliant properties. Inspectors will then issue letters and second notice, levy the fines and proceed with contractors to have the needed work done, as per stated procedures. Staff estimates nearly 1,800 parcels will be out of compliance. Staff continues to work with the Chief of Operations to improve the quality and consistency of the inspections by the engine companies, including a plan for increased training in the future.
- Chair Ken Benson asked what action would need to be taken in order to increase the fines of those property owners who had been out of compliance for several years, as suggested by AFM Griffin. Griffin stated it would entail a change in the Fee Ordinance and it could be done in conjunction with the Fire Code renewal. He also requested that it would need council support. From the audience, Council member Jean Quan suggested the proposal would need to be brought to the Budget Committee by February in order to make the budget cycle.
- Roadside clearance continues with the Tiger mower and the EBCC crews. They are working on schedule in Joaquin Miller and along Skyline. Cal Trans is completing work along 24 and now is headed to Highway 13.

- Contracts are being awarded to the pool of 11 contractors. A meeting with City Attorney and Contract Compliance asking for final clarification on a few issues is scheduled for October 13. Ben Fay will attend with staff.
- The Vegetation Management Hotline 238-7388 is now being staffed by the Prevention Inspectors as the previous temp workers have been reassigned. There was a case when the voicemail became full, but now a permanent schedule has been implemented. Calls are returned usually the same day and definitely within 48 hours. The call log and follow-up is on schedule.
- Chipping Service is very popular and continues to be about 2/3 of the service request calls on the Vegetation Hotline. Customers are continuing to set out more than the prescribed amount and mixing in leaves and trimmings that should go in the Green Bin, but schedules are being adjusted so as to meet all the needs. The budget will need to be monitored, especially in terms of projecting for next year. A suggestion was made that a different number be set for the chipping service so that the numbers of requests versus complaints or problems is separated from this popular service.
- Mapping – A meeting is planned for staff and the Office of Information Technology to identify a plan to produce a series of maps needed for the WPAD and especially for the upcoming Vegetation Management Plan. This will be an ongoing meeting. Again the need for external expertise has come up, and a proposal will be forthcoming as to what the needs are.
- Red Flag Days – We are lucky so far this season that there have been no Red Flag Days, although the season continues till November 1. Chief Williams has reviewed and updated the Fire Department's procedures and policies for Red Flag protocols. He is also working with Office of Parks and Recreation, Public Works Agency, Finance and Management Agency and the Police Department to expand the protocols to include additional signage, additional patrol, additional parking enforcement, increased closure of activity sites, etc. on Red Flag days. This is also an ongoing effort of all agencies until a final process is determined and implemented.
- Status report on our Public Agency partners – Much of the work performed by these partners is their usual maintenance work, where as we see it as much needed vegetation management projects. We need to have a united front, and speak as one voice with these agencies so that we can keep them focused on the priority areas and keep them working. The Oakland Unified School District will be added to the list.
- Staff restructuring in the Fire Prevention Bureau to better serve our WPAD needs. AFM Griffin was pleased to announce that Inspector Camille Rodgers has been given the assignment of oversight on all City-owned parcels. Her experience and expertise will assist compliance, support the Vegetation Management Plan and will also make the awarding of contracts more efficient.
- Public Outreach – There have been 11 various outreach efforts in the past month. Board is requested to advise Kristine of any presentations they do so we can keep track and so materials can be provided that keep our message and goals consistent and focused.
- An "after action" report will be compiled at the end of the season so that the entire process can be improved and will better inform us for next year. We have learned a lot and need to capture and apply that knowledge.

VI. **Advisory Board Committee Reports** – None scheduled.

- Gordon Piper reported on Cal Trans work on properties and identification of homeless living in the area. A meeting will be held by Councilmember Brunner on October 6, 2005 for the proposed development in Council District 1.

VII. **Presentations** – None scheduled.

VIII. **New Business**

- Kristine Shaff proposed that the Board invite author Douglas Kent (*Firescaping*, Wilderness Press 2005) to present at the next meeting, as public education. The Board agreed to 30 minutes of presentation and 30 minutes of open discussion and conversation. Flyers will be distributed throughout the WPAD via email and the website.
- Board requested that Claudia Cappio, Planning Director of the City's Community Economic and Development Agency be asked to speak at an upcoming meeting. The Board also requested that in a future meeting, an expert present on the invasive plant issue for our education.
- Tom Klatt from UCB and Ken Blonski from EBRP will be asked to present short status updates and reviews on the large scope projects at the November meeting.
- Kristine distributed database contact sheets to board members for completion by next meeting so that public outreach database can be compiled.
- Kristine informed Board that some modifications will be made to the posting of the meeting agendas and notices to better meet the Sunshine and Brown Act regulations: Board meeting agendas need to be posted 72 hours prior to the meeting (excluding holidays and weekends). The agenda packet needs to be included at the same time so all handouts and materials need to be submitted to Kristine at least five days prior to the meeting.

IX. **Old Business**

- Financial Report – Treasurer Ben Fay presented Budget Update (handout) with two charts. The un-audited budget 2003-04 shows a greater unused balance than anticipated. Board had several suggestions for using these funds including additional funds for vegetation management and hiring experts as consultants as needed for the Vegetation Management Plan. There is also more revenue received than estimated.
- Contract Report – Ben Fay reported that more contractors are on the certified list than previously (11) and they are actively bidding on projects which will provide a competitive process. Work is still being done by staff to finalize the contracting process to make it as effective and streamlined as possible. A meeting will be held with the contractors to better inform them on the process of certification, work scopes, bids, etc.
- Six-Month Strategic Objectives Matrix / 10 Year Plan – A brief review showed all on schedule, so recommended postponement to next meeting due to lack of time. Will need to update the time frame of the matrix.

X. Vegetation Management Plan

- One of the goals of the WPAD is to have a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP). There has been discussion and some meetings prior to now. There are many nearby partners whose good work we can build on and share the information they have already gathered. Some research has been done and a lot more is probably needed.
- There is experience and knowledge on the Board and in the staff, but it is likely that additional experts will be required, both as paid consultants and as collaborative partners. There will be need for professional mappers and planners, for help in both gathering and analyzing data. Consultants will be able to assist the process by providing direction and technical assistance as they will have much more direct experience in designing and implementing vegetation management plans for other jurisdictions.
- In order to move forward on this complex and large task, the Board agreed to establish a standing "VMP Committee." It will need to post its agenda, meeting schedule, etc. according to Sunshine requirements. The sub committee will bring forth material to the full Board for review and approval as needed at each monthly meeting. The plan will need to be presented annually to the Public Safety committee and to City Council.
- AFM Griffin will be the Fire Prevention Bureau lead of the project. Ernie Robinson of the WPAD Board agreed to be the Chair of the VMP Committee. Board members Barbara Goldenberg, Ben Fay, Bob Sieben and Tamia Marg all agreed to be members of the VMP committee. The committee will work closely with staff and consultants. Representatives from the public, including homeowner and neighborhood associations and special interest groups will be important partners as the process unfolds and specific topics are identified and worked on.
- The plan needs to look globally across the entire WPAD, not just at isolated islands and to represent the community. It needs to be comprehensive and cover the immediate, mid term and future. It needs to identify treatments and alternatives. It will need to allocate resources. It will need to include a process by which the plan itself can be updated, assessed and revised overtime as more is learned.
- One of the first steps is to identify an expert consultant to assist in the planning process overall.
- AFM Griffin passed out a DRAFT model of the process for review and comment by the Board. Tamia Marg reported it was an excellent beginning; it looks as though a lot of work has already begun and thank you to staff.
- Timeline: Goal would be to have an informational presentation for Public Safety Committee in January 2006, including process, goals, priorities, partners, etc. Another goal is to have a working model and process before next season so as to guide the vegetation management efforts to greatest impact.
- This will become a standing agenda item, to be reported on by the VMP Committee.
- Mike Petouhoff and Karen Paulsell were also identified as potential partners who could add important expertise to the group. Max Moritz and Scott Stevens from UCB were suggested also.. The VMP Committee will work to enlist these people and others as needed.

XI. **Board and Public Comments**

- Next meetings are October 27, November 10 and December 8, 2005
- Chair Ken Benson reminded each board member that when they attend public meetings and represent the Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District, they should use the Ten Year Goals as focus points, so that the message is clear, accurate and consistent.

Ten Year Goals – Establish and implement a fuel management plan which is strategic, cost-effective, sustainable and environmentally sensitive

- I. Reduce the sources of ignition
- II. Maintain access (fire suppression) and egress (evacuation) routes
- III. Develop fire prevention friendly policies
- IV. Reduce the spread of fires within the urban wildland interface
- V. Support/leverage efforts by home/property owners
- VI. Develop a year-round, seasonal strategy

XII. **Adjournment: 9:07 p.m.**