

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Park Blvd Presbyterian Church
4101 Park Blvd, Room 35, 3rd Floor, Oakland**

Friends of Sausal Creek works to restore, maintain, and protect the Sausal Creek Watershed. We educate future generations, involve the community in local environmental stewardship, and collaborate with agencies and other nonprofits to have a positive impact on the local ecosystem.

Present Richelle Jacobs, Tim Vendlinski, Jeff Stephens, Carl Kohnert, John Cadiz (Student Board Member), Barry Stenger, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus), Rob Leidy, Eleanor Dunn, Morgan Capilla, Sean Welch, Steve Ritchie

Absent Beth Keer, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus)

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt (Executive Director), Satoko Takeda Mills, Restoration and Stewardship Intern, Elizabeth Boegel, Communications and Community Education Intern

Board Involvement

Come Meet Oakland's Wild Trout, with Rob Leidy, Saturday, July 31,
10:00 a.m., Dimond Park

Introductions of New Interns

Satoko Takeda Mills, Restoration and Stewardship Intern, and Elizabeth Boegel, Communications and Community Education Intern introduced themselves to the board, and board members welcomed and introduced themselves to the new interns.

Satoko will work with Jay on restoration and nursery activities, providing additional support during his parttime summer schedule. Elizabeth has already published the June newsletter and is learning the communication methods of FOSC. She will be assisting with educational events and field trips. Jackie Van Der Hout is preparing for her move to Durham, NC, and will start graduate school at Duke. As she transitioned out of her FOSC role, she helped with intern training. We are also fortunate that Nicki Alexander continues to support the onboarding process through remote training.

Briefing & Discussion -- Moving Forward with DEI: Discussion on "What's Next?", and Team Oakland

Building on the April meeting where the board engaged in small group discussions on cultural and institutional racism, the board continued its

efforts to identify barriers and outcomes. Anna Marie highlighted the existing Team Oakland program as an opportunity to engage our target population -- youth historically under-represented in outdoor and environmental work -- and to mentor interested youth. Given that we don't have the staff to lead this effort, she wondered if the FOSC board could support one Team Oakland crew instead of the historical three (four hours a week over five weeks), and asked for volunteers. Mark offered to lead a hike from Fern Ravine to Dimond Park, including mucking around in the water. Rob offered to team with Mark, or work independently. What she had in mind was board members' and staff's participation providing a consistent weekly team, with Jay doing the nursery part. Barry suggested bringing them to the lower watershed, however transportation would be an issue. Tim urged involving them in ivy removal.

Lower Watershed Creekside Parcels, Barry Stenger

Barry reported that Mike Perlmutter from the City contacted FOSC for our feedback about certain undeveloped parcels along the creek which they might consider purchasing. At the end of April, some FOSC board members and staff engaged in a Zoom meeting with City officials. That meeting focused on particular properties in the lower watershed, with City representatives wanting to assess our interest in identifying areas for conservation.

FOSC decided to put together a proposal to identify certain creekside properties that the City could consider either purchasing outright or obtaining conservation easements. We decided to focus on properties from Wood Park south to Barry Place.

On May 17, Jay, Rob, Tim and Barry took a tour of the area from the top of Wood Park to the end at Bellaken Gardens. Barry secured permission from property owners to have a look at their properties.

Upshot: The team felt there is potential for Wood Park to be developed into a real showcase for creek riparian landscape; there is excellent habitat on some of the vacant creekside properties south of Wood Park; there is a very engaged property owner at the end of Hickory Street (a longtime FOSC member/donor) who is an enthusiast; and the administrator of Bellaken Gardens showed a willingness and an openness to our possible proposals.

Tim will prepare a first draft of a proposal to the City. We need more clarity about what the City is thinking: buying property and having FOSC manage it? Getting easements and involving FOSC in conservation efforts?

The question arose as to whether FOSC would want to become a property owner, and if so, what would that require in terms of our self-

understanding as a non-profit? At this point, the City is looking for our best advice on securing properties for conservation.

Urban Watershed Assessment, Rob Leidy

Rob spoke about the tree die-off in the watershed and strongly advocated using the best science to learn what the ideal vegetation composition and density should be. The interest in tree planting by the Student Conservation Association spurred FOSC to review appropriate land restoration. He floated the idea of going after a grant to hire an urban forester to help point us in the right direction. He and Tim considered pitching this to the USDA and other organizations, including UCB researchers. Tim asked Rob if he would write up something to submit. As it happens, Tim knows someone high up in the federal government's "fire network" who may be of help to us. Rob agreed to do the write-up. Mark said we would need a GIS map of the tree density in the entire watershed -- the "urban forest wildfire interface." He touted the idea that FOSC could be adding to our credentials by labeling ourselves the Fire Guardians of the Watershed, since in the next ten years we're going to be fighting fires because of the drought. Mark also expects a massive bird die-off. Like Rob, he supports expert input.

Tim made the point that large swaths of land should be transitioned into native grassland rather than forest. Grasses are great carbon sequesters but need management. There is not enough prairie in the watershed anymore. Mark was concerned that we don't have the staff to manage vegetation at that level.

Tim also mentioned that he is working with Jay for locals to donate oak trees to the nursery.

Fundraising Updates: Mid-Year Appeal and Grant Strategy, Jeff Stephens

Jeff reported that we drafted a letter to 350 current and prospective donors, emphasizing the theme, "We're here with boots on the ground, resilient and time tested." This letter will be mailed on June 1.

Revisiting grant possibilities, the plan is to target foundations which have some likelihood of offering grants for operational funding. With Barry's help we hope to identify board members of those foundations and send them specific letters.

Financial Report, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie went over the project timeline and cash flow chart with the board. She detailed the grant applications in progress as well as those on the

horizon. After a few tweaks, Barry then moved to pass the proposed FYE 22 budget. Steve seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously.

Staff Report Issues & Questions, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie announced we have reconfigured the part-time Community Outreach and Environmental Justice position into full-time. We will post this listing more widely and reach out to our network in the Fruitvale. Our new intern Elizabeth will do communications and assist the Education person.

Jeff considered what our plant sale would look like this year, given how successful it was online in 2020. He proposed a meeting when Jay and Beth have returned. Mark wondered about the possibility of weaving a 25th anniversary celebration into this year's plant sale, turning it into a community gathering -- possibly even getting some funding for it. Anna Marie put forward the idea of the sale working on a hybrid model, and reminded the board of there being a possible issue about park access because of fires. (Red flag days close the park.) What about having the sale in November, just before Thanksgiving? Sean informed the board that if the sale were done virtually, and not on City property, we could conduct the sale year 'round.

The board then considered scheduling the sale later in November. It was originally moved into autumn because that is a better time to plant. Also, now that it rarely rains in October, November might well be a better option. Perhaps after the time change? A later sale might also skirt the fire season.

Ricky wondered whether the idea of hiring an assistant to the ED was still on the table. Anna Marie thought this position should be considered once other staff is hired.

Minutes

Eleanor made a motion to approve the April Minutes. Carl seconded the motion, and the board approved it unanimously.

Commitments Review and Updates

John has graduated from Cal and will be leaving us to work on his Masters in Urban Planning at USC. He has committed to recruiting our next Student BOD member. Mark was also asked to circulate information about the position among students at Laney.

Jeff announced that he and his wife will be moving to Bend, Oregon, on June 20. He wondered about the logistics of chairing the board meetings over

the remainder of his term as President. Unfortunately, Eleanor, who is Vice President, is on call for the entire summer and can't be available to run the meetings. Jeff plans to use his remaining time as President to complete operational tasks. A decision about how to resolve this dilemma was left for the Steering Committee. Anna Marie wondered whether we should continue to do Zoom meetings, perhaps from time to time.

Adjournment The meeting ended at 8:50 p.m.

Next board meeting: August 11, 2021 Location TBA