

**Friends of Sausal Creek  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 7-9 p.m.**

*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, Beth Keer, Tim Vendlinski, Jeff Stephens, Carl Kohnert, John Cadiz (Student Board Member), Steve Ritchie, Morgan Capilla, Barry Stenger, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus), Rob Leidy

**Absent** Sean Welch, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Eleanor Dunn

**Staff Present** Anna Marie Schmidt (Executive Director)

**Guests** Karen Paulsell, Tara Parker-Essig

**Board Involvement**

**15th Annual FOSC Native Plant Sale** - Online sale October 11-16; curbside pickup October 17-18.

**2nd Sausal Creek Watershed live streaming tour** - Wednesday, October 28 at 3:30 (*Wholly H2O*)

**Community Talk: Park Rx** - - Wednesday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m. Mona Koh and Morgan Guenther, Zoom meeting

**Remarks from the President, Jeff Stephens**

Jeff acknowledged the indigenous lands the Sausal Creek watershed inhabits. An internal group consisting of board and staff members is forming to discuss the proper recognition of this Ohlone territory, along with related issues of systemic racism wherever it resides within FOSC.

**Board Member Updates and Discussion: Plant Sale**

Jeff wholeheartedly thanked Beth and Karen (who has been volunteering for FOSC for almost twenty years!) for their superlative work on the online plant sale. Beth reported we received over 70 orders the first day and have brought in \$8,000+ so far. Anna Marie presented our alternative plant pick-up plan -- moving out onto Joaquin Miller Road -- if the park is closed on pick-up day because of fire danger. Beth

reported Jay needs help identifying plants and pulling plant orders on Thursday or Friday and Tara (one of tonight's guests) volunteered.

Tim also wanted to give a special shout out to Beth and company for their elegant work on the online plant sale!

### **Fundraising Updates: End-of-Year Appeal Report and Activities, Jeff Stephens**

Jeff explained that because of Covid-19, the decision was made to use a "light touch" in our mid-year appeal; therefore only existing donors were earmarked. The "Rainmakers Group" (Anna Marie, Jeff, Barry and Carl) has been discussing what to do about the end-of-year appeal. Barry recommended, and we concurred with his idea, that we send out a printed letter to likely donors. He suggested we emphasize the current economic uncertainty and point out that we are a tried-and-true stable organization; that we make good use of donor dollars; and that we are a trusted partner in the community. This letter will be sent to 450 -500 addresses and Harry will print them up. In the past, board members have sat around a table together writing personal messages on each letter. This year, though, Anna Marie will distribute packets to board members to do on their own. She asked that any board member who doesn't want to participate this time around, please to let her know ASAP. She will remove them from that obligation. The timing for this effort is approximately November 9 -16. Many thanks to Harry for handling the printing and board packet assembly.

Jeff gave special kudos to Barry, who did exhaustive fieldwork walking the watershed to gather addresses of residences adjacent to the creek. With the help of Google, he procured 400 addresses (no names) this way. We have crafted a separate letter for them (and will cross check with our current donor list). Thank you, Barry, Carl, and Anna Marie!

### **Financial Report, Anna Marie**

Anna Marie gave the run-down on our Project Timeline and Cash Flow, including going over grant applications in progress and those on the horizon.

As for the plant sale, it has been a lot of work reinventing how to do it. All but two plant sale sponsors have fallen by the wayside. These two have been acknowledged on the plant sale web page. Beth suggested we could put a flier in the sale boxes thanking patrons for

their supporting our sponsors, as well as mentioning them in the November newsletter.

Anna Marie reported that some grants, such as Whale Tail, have been paused until our education program resumes. Jeff told the board that the current budget assumes donations will come in at about 50% of last year's, while the plant sale is looking more robust than anticipated. We are exploring multi-pronged funding options and submitting a forgiveness application for \$29,000 from PPP. Mid-year appeal donations are still coming in.

### **Staff and Environmental Education Update; Covid-19 Volunteering Protocol, Anna Marie**

Anna Marie announced that our Education and Outreach Coordinator, Maribel Garcia, has tendered her resignation after seven weeks on the job. This has caused the Steering Committee to review the requirements of that job and its tasks, especially now during Covid-19. Jeff queried that if we hire for this position again, what are the skill sets we will need? Do we put environmental education on hold for now? Should we hire a communications person? Jeff, Barry and Ricky agreed to be on the hiring committee.

The conversation continued with a focus on Jackie, who has continually stepped up to different roles. She has coordinated communication and outreach as well as serving as primary author for the newsletter and social media. Though she has moved to Sebastopol, she will continue to come to Oakland up to once a week for restoration, water quality, or nursery work. We will need to reconfigure this interim status for her.

Anna Marie reported that our waiver has been adapted to Covid - 19 protocol: volunteering will be done by RSVP only, with all on-site groups kept small.

### **Restoration Updates, Mark Rauzon and Karen Paulsell**

Karen and Mark reported the unsettling news that there are many black acacia trees dying in Oakland. The cause of this die-off is unknown, while the fire danger is evident and urgent. Samples have been taken to the lab. No course of action can follow until the cause is understood. Financing the cutting and hauling will be a complex issue because some of these trees are on Oakland City property, some on property owned by PG&E, and some on property owned by OUSD. Mark showed a brief video to give us the visuals.

The board discussed the role FOSC should play. Tim, Mark, Beth, Karen and Rob talked about what should replace the acacias once they

are removed, as well as which services and departments should be on alert and involved. Jeff's opinion was that we have a role to play to bring attention to this, but it is not primarily on us to solve the problem. He said many key groups are apprised of the situation, and our role is to educate the community. Karen's position, though, is that the board should be making a ruckus at Public Works, while Tim is fervent about wanting us to call this to the attention of the fire department and CalFire.

Karen is eager to hear from the five other nearby counties, and Rob wants a pipeline to the researchers so we are abreast of the science and testing results. Jeff reiterated his opinion that our role is to educate and to help bring the stakeholders together to help solve the problem collectively.

### **Minutes and Commitments Review (Anti-Racism work)**

Beth moved to approve the August, 2020, board meeting minutes, and Barry seconded the motion. This motion was unanimously passed.

Anna Marie reported that staff met to reflect on FOSC's public and consistent acknowledgment that Sausal Creek exists on native land. A formal statement to that effect and next steps in anti-racism work for the organization are in the works.

### **Miscellaneous Updates, and Executive Director's Responses to Questions on the Staff Report**

Anna Marie informed the board that Mark participated in *Wholly H2O's* watershed tour series, the first of which took place near Fruitvale Bridge Park and in Jinglestown. Our website will announce details of the next one. She reminded the board that our upcoming community talk, "Park Prescription", will take place via Zoom on Wednesday, November 18, at 7:00 p.m. Mona Koh and Morgan Guenther with East Bay Parks will be giving this talk.

Anna Marie reminded everyone that the next FOSC officers' election is scheduled for our December meeting. She invited board members to consider stepping into an officer position, and she will be reaching out as well.

She reported that staff is in search of an anti-racism organization to help her with a plan for FOSC. And, looking ahead to our annual retreat in the new year, our action committee (Morgan, Rob, John, Barry and possibly Beth) is looking for a training organization with anti-oppression expertise to help organize and lead a workshop for the retreat.

**Adopt-a-Spot:** Barry and Rob have noted a water discharge in the tunnel at Barry Place. FOSC contacted Jennifer Stern at the City. Barry and Rob also drafted a letter to various agencies asking for testing of the water discharge, which they presumed was coming from the Central Reservoir. The City has asked EBMUD to conduct water quality testing. EBMUD confirmed that the source was the Central Reservoir and reported low level chlorine. FOSC awaits a copy of the report.

**CalTrans slope failure at Hwy 13/Park Blvd:** Tim reported a constant discharge from this slope, feeding brackish water into the nearby storm drain. This discharge is runoff from the freeway and is filled with plastics. Poor water quality is measured there continually. To get a public record request, CalTrans put him through his paces! He and Rob will continue to monitor this situation.

**Guest introduction:** Tara Parker-Essig introduced herself and told the board a little about her background. She is currently working as a landscaper and gardener, volunteering with Sky and Gardens, and lending a helping hand in nursery and pallid monitoring.

**Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m., followed immediately by a Closed Session.

**Next board meeting** December 9, 2020, at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom.