

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
via BlueJeans (video conference)
Wednesday, April 15, 2020, 7:00 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, Eleanor Dunn, Beth Keer, Tim Vendlinski, Jeff Stephens, Carl Kohnert, Shannon Louie (Student Board Member), Rob Leidy, Steve Ritchie, Morgan Capilla, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus)

Absent Sean Welch, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus)

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt (Executive Director)

Guest Camille Nowell, FOSC Volunteer

Board Involvement

50th Anniversary of Earth Day - April 18 (repurposed as a week-long virtual event)

Read-Along – A virtual book group discussion of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer – April 29 at 5:30 p.m.

Sudden Oak Death Blitz – May 2 and 3

Recent Board Action Anna Marie emailed board members on April 12 requesting their votes as to whether to invite Morgan Capilla to join the board. All nine voting members gave a unanimous yes, and the invitation was extended on April 14. Morgan accepted the invitation.

Remarks from the President, Jeff Stephens

Jeff thanked everyone in attendance for joining this online board meeting, and welcomed Morgan Capilla onto the board. He expressed appreciation for Carl's hosting the board retreat on March 8th, not long before the sheltering-in-place order went into effect.

Staff Update and Board Member Discussion: FOSC and COVID-19 Impact

Anna Marie noted that Becca Sanchez left her position as education and outreach coordinator on March 8 to join City

Councilwoman Sheng Thao's staff. Anna Marie screened twelve applicants. She, Beth, and Ricky then conducted four face-to-face interviews for that position. This was before the shelter in place order took effect. When school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic went into effect, the steering committee decided to place this position on hold. As things unfold, we will make the best informed decision possible as to when to repost this position. At this point, Oakland schools are not scheduled to reopen until the fall.

Jeff reported that with Becca's departure, Jackie Van Der Hout, our intern, has stepped up to the plate to fill in and handle education and outreach responsibilities. Meanwhile, our previous education and outreach coordinator, Nicki Alexander, who had been serving in the Peace Corps in Paraguay, was evacuated and is currently sheltering in place in Atlanta, GA. Nicki reached out to FOSC and we have engaged her to work on remote and online projects. Nicki and Jackie will each be working $\frac{1}{4}$ time -- Jackie communicating with the FOSC and school communities, and Nicki completing special projects (e.g. curriculum developments, waivers, DACTIP grant). Their salaries will come from the money that had been designated to pay Becca.

In celebration of Earth Day's 50th anniversary, Anna Marie invited board members to share personal memories about Earth Day for the FOSC newsletter and our website. She pointed out we will have to come up with creative ways to connect with our constituents during this time of sheltering-in-place. Jackie will pull together all submissions so that FOSC can have a robust Earth Day message on April 18, our heretofore scheduled day for Earth Day restoration activities. Our message will include a list of resources, a rundown of everything FOSC is doing, and a greeting from Jeff, as board president. We will think about interweaving a discretely worded request for donations.

Carl reminisced about his high school experience of the first Earth Day, and also shared about his first job out of grad school with the agency that would become the EPA. He offered to write up these experiences for the Earth Day 50th Anniversary newsletter.

Fundraising Update, Jeff Stephens

Jeff referred back to last year's Mid-Year Appeal. The board contemplated the dilemmas and needs FOSC is facing now, given the pandemic. Last year's appeal started around Earth Day and ran through the solstice. We raised \$16,800, \$7000 of which came from the board. We sent postcards to 1400 individuals -- everyone we had a mailing address for. 97 individuals donated, 34 of whom were new donors.

The board discussed the dilemmas of how to run a fundraising campaign during these troubled times. How much do we try to raise at this point, given the need to support first responders? How do we remain sensitive to these health and economic challenges while requesting donations at the same time? *Giving Tuesday* on May 5 will be a Global Day of Action, but it will be Covid-19 oriented.

The board entered into a lengthy discussion about whether to/and how to fundraise during this time. Some felt it would be insensitive of us to engage in a campaign; others felt we might wait to see how the pandemic unfolds; still others thought there could be an appropriate way to request donations, asking people to give as they are able. If we decide to make a mid-year request, how to go about doing so? Some of the topics considered for such a campaign: retaining staff so as to continue our good work; sustaining the nursery, which needs care and funding. Rob suggested we figure out the minimum we will need in order to stay afloat, and determine to what extent we will need to use our reserves. He advocated tempering our mid-year requests. Mark put forward the idea of broadening the appeal in the name of community health, weaving a larger perspective about all of us being a part of nature, a part of the solution: “ecosystem health.” Tim suggested we point out how much park usage has spiked, and that Sausal Creek is still open and still needs stewardship. He emphasized the value of nature in the city, the 74 miles of walkable streets, the new blueness of the sky. He mentioned the irony of now seeing face masks and plastic gloves clogging the storm drains.

Jeff summed up the discussion by saying that it looks like the board is advocating no coordinated campaign at this time, but taking a soft approach – reminding our community that FOSC is still working hard, meeting its obligations. Anna Marie said she would capture these ideas and, with the help of the Rainmakers, draft a message aimed for June distribution.

Following up from the last meeting about making thank you phone calls to donors, the board discussed whether to pursue this plan. Several members of the board felt that such phone calls could be intrusive during this difficult time, while others thought otherwise. This decision was tabled until the next meeting.

Financial Report and Board Member Discussion, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie reported on the Project Timeline and Cash Flow Chart scenario. Instead of giving a “worst case scenario” she ran down what a “bad case scenario” would look like, considering diminished donations, paused education grants, and staff uncertainties. She reported the good news that, as of April 20 or so, it looks likely we will receive the approximately \$25,000 promised by the Alameda County Flood Control District. Also, the City of Oakland will be putting out to bid the plant storage contract we have enjoyed, and if ours is accepted, that will mean an additional income of \$9500 spread over eight months.

Anna Marie reported on our three grant applications: Rose Foundation, Clean Water, and Explore the Coast. She said if Team Oakland (recently approved by the City Council) is up and running this summer, we will be a subcontractor and work with three teams from June through August.

She clarified that we still don’t know whether Jay will be with us part time or full time this summer through September, as he has not yet received notification from the USFS Kings Canyon/Sequoia project.

Jeff told the board that the Payroll Protection Plan applies to non-profits, but Anna Marie shared the dilemma that our bank, the Community Bank of the Bay, is not accepting applications because of the backlog. Eleanor knew of a California bank that was accepting them and shared that information with the board.

Carl adjured the board to make as generous a mid-year contribution as each member is able. Anna Marie offered to take a 10% pay cut, but Jeff insisted this was not on the table, given all she does and how many additional unremunerated hours she actually works. Carl reminded the board that our situation is not yet that dire – we have a rainy day fund, and we’re still afloat!

Minutes and Commitments Review

Minutes: Jeff moved to approve the minutes from the February 12th meeting. Tim seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Commitments Review: Anna Marie updated the board on staff commitments during this time of sheltering-in-place. She is working on grants and reports, and trying to get our invoices in. Jackie is spearheading the Read-Along; she jumped from being tasked with field trips (canceled as of March 16) to handling communication -- including the newsletter, updating the website, organizing curriculum, and

staying in touch with the teachers. Jay is still out-and-about in the watershed by himself, keeping the nursery going, keeping plants alive, checking restoration sites, collecting seeds, doing online consulting with scouts, filling the trail map boxes, and consulting with the Leimert Bridge landscapers about plants and trees.

Executive Director Responds to Questions on the Staff Report

Tim asked for clarification on the canyon project erosion issues. Anna Marie elaborated and will send the report to the board. He was also curious about the recovery of our native plant garden which had been destroyed by the City's maintenance crew. Anna Marie responded that the City has reimbursed us \$450, and Betsy has done some replanting. We are waiting to see how the garden regenerates this spring and what infill planting will be necessary.

Beth reported that Chabot has laid off 2/3 of its staff. They won't be providing funds for pallids anytime soon.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Next board meeting: June 10, 2020, 7:00 p.m., via Bluejeans.