

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, December 11, 2019, 7-9 p.m.
Park Blvd. Presbyterian Church
4101 Park Blvd., Room 35 on 3rd Floor
Oakland, CA 94602**

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, Paul Frank, Sean Welch

Absent Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Mark Rauzon, (Board Member Emeritus)

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt (Executive Director), Jay Cassianni (Restoration and Nursery Manager)

Guest Barry Stenger, retired E.D. of St Anthony's

Board Involvement

Solstice Planting Day- Saturday, December 21, 9:00 a.m., Dimond Canyon and Barry Place.

King Tide Walk - Saturday, January 11, 10:00 a.m., Fruitvale Bridge Park.

State of the Watershed - Wednesday, January 22, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Dimond Library: "Who is working in the watershed, and what are they doing?" Board attendance encouraged.

MLK Day Workday - Monday, January 20, various sites. Board help needed.

Board and Staff Retreat - March 8.

Planting and Nursery Workdays- 2nd and 4th Saturdays.

Remarks from President, Jeff Stephens

Board members introduced themselves to Barry Stenger. He lives in the lower watershed and has recently retired as the E.D. of St. Anthony's.

**Board Member Discussion and Staff Update by Jay Cassianni,
Restoration and Nursery Manager: Restoration Overview:
Identifying FOSC Priorities**

Jay thanked the board for supporting his part-time status with FOSC during the summer, and asked the board their opinion on how things went during his absence. Beth said plant survival was good. She thought a more exhaustive to-do list would be helpful for any future absences on his part, as volunteers were very efficient and completed tasks quickly. She said we need more planting days, and therefore more volunteers. She also wants to brainstorm about what to do with extra plants.

Jay told the board he plans to apply again to work at Sequoia/Kings Canyon this coming summer, but won't make any decisions without conferring with Anna Marie and the SEKI folks.

He shared his accomplishments and made some proposals. To help him focus his efforts, he sought board members' opinions on priority restoration sites, the optimal number of scheduled workdays per month or year, and Adopt-a-Spot sites that might need attention. A lengthy conversation ensued, including:

- Creating a plan for invasive plants in Dimond Canyon.
- Re-oaking Oakland. Tim strongly suggesting we cultivate the restoration of oaks, saying if we take out invasive trees, we can bring in primo acorns and do the mitigation. He brought up partnering with Cal Fire with this in mind. "We could be the go-to organization for high quality oaks." He said he would provide information on the Sacramento oak program. He reminded the board that Bob Roat came away from the meeting at Leimert Bridge with thoughts on what our next steps might be. Tim said that Bob will send us details about his thinking.

- Rob suggested focusing on Scotch broom, and cited the new restoration of Sausal Creek in Dimond Park as a priority for invasive plant management.

- Rob wondered about interfacing with *Save the Redwoods*, and reminded the board that Fern Ravine is still unfinished (a workday is scheduled there on MLK Day). He is wondering about partnering with *STR* to do understory planting.

- With respect to fire safety and vegetation management, Jay noted that the tree canopy on Skyline Blvd will have to be opened up (i.e., less overhanging vegetation) for it to be a viable fire escape route, which could impact planting plans. And Tim, remembering ways that city workers have done damage when no one was on hand to oversee

their work, strongly urged there be a biologist onsite whenever the city comes in.

Fundraising Update, Jeff Stephens and Anna Marie Schmidt

Jeff reported on the End-of-Year Appeal. We raised \$10,500 from donations on Giving Tuesday. In total, there were 123 donors giving \$18,000 so far. This falls short of the same time last year by \$5000. There will be one more email blast sent before the end of the year.

Anna Marie gave a brief update on grant submissions and decisions.

She provided the final tally for the October 20, 2019 plant sale. Gross sales, including sales tax, came to a new high: \$8611. There were also \$570 in donations and \$3300 in sponsorships. In all, proceeds amounted to \$12,241 (including sales tax), making 2019 the highest grossing plant sale in FOSC history! There were additional discussions about whether larger plants and/or trees might further boost sales, as well as whether FOSC could raise plants to sell to other nonprofits and/or government agencies for restoration projects.

Financial Report, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie updated the board on the Project Timelines and Cash Flow.

Jeff enthusiastically reported on FOSC's financial progress over the last six years: from \$87,000 in liquid assets in 2013 to our current \$200,000. Steve reminded the board we're still \$20,000 short in operating reserve. The stated goal for the operating reserve is roughly three months of core operating expenses. Anna Marie reminded the board that the plan was to transfer funds from the primary account to the operating reserve in January to continue to rebuild the account.

FTF Endowment Update, Carl Kohnert

Carl reported we have \$135,472 in endowment funds, helped greatly by the bull market. We received \$40,000 in investment returns. The Endowment Committee is continuing incrementally to move more of these funds into Vanguard's Social Index Fund, which is more representative of our mission. Tim offered to investigate other socially responsible funds since the SIF includes some fossil fuels. He said he would bring spread sheets to the next meeting so we can have a closer look.

We're at end of the five-year board of directors' commitment for the FTF. Soon it will be time to frame the next round.

The Endowment Committee is developing a tri-fold brochure about the legacy program to distribute at our community meetings. The brochure will include some testimonials from legacy donors. 2021 will be FOSC's 25th year in existence.

Board of Directors Steering Committee Slate and Vote

The slate of officers for 2020 was put up for a vote:

Jeff Stephens as President, Beth Keer as Vice President, Eleanor Dunn as Treasurer, Richelle (Ricky) Jacobs as Secretary. Steve made the motion to vote in all of these officers. Sean seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

The suggestion of including Rob Leidy as an At Large Steering Committee member was put forward. Sean did some quick research and determined an At Large member could be added without any alteration of the by-laws. His position will be confirmed at the next meeting.

Minutes and Commitments Review

Jeff moved and Beth seconded that the minutes from the October 16th meeting be approved. This motion was passed unanimously.

Executive Director Responds to Questions on the Staff Report, Master Calendar

Anna Marie reported that Rob and Mark had led a terrific mini-watershed tour for Rose Foundation program officer Laura Hernandez. This included watershed history, a trout walk in Dimond and Canyon Parks, and an introduction to Fern Ravine and the FOSC nursery.

The date for the State of Watershed meeting was moved to January 22 to accommodate Dimond Library's schedule.

The board retreat will take place on March 8. No topic has yet been chosen. Tim suggested we go back to brainstorming from last year, writing a paragraph for each idea. Jeff suggested we have two to four projects sufficiently developed to enable grant research, including project descriptions and rough budgets. These will enable FOSC better to respond when opportunities arise. Other ideas were also welcomed.

Rob will lead a trout walk in February, the date yet to be chosen.

The March community talk will take place on March 25.

Jeff thanked Jay and Barry for their presence at the meeting.

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. A board photo was taken.

Next board meeting: February 12, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

