

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
Presbyterian Church, 4101 Park Blvd., 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, Barry Stenger, Rob Leidy, Beth Keer, Eleanor Dunn, Hattie Bradshaw (Student Board Member), Amba Beattie (Student Board Member), Russ Huddleston, Sean Welch

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

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt, E.D., Kate Berlin, Communications and Operations Manager

Guests John Brega, Oakland Wildland Steward and Adopt-a-Spot Volunteer, (and later) Cameron Preston, Oakland Urban Farming Project

Board Involvement

~**State of the Watershed** - March 18, 10:00 - 1:00 (Dimond Park)

Remarks from the President, Beth Keer

Beth greeted John Brega, and board members introduced themselves. John is an Adopt-a-Spot volunteer for the north side of Joaquin Miller Park's Sunset and Chaparral Trails.

Board Member Briefing & Discussion, Anna Marie Schmidt

Nursery vandalism

The nursery was vandalized on Friday, January 20, between 11:00 and 3:00 p.m. Hundreds of plants were ravaged, tables toppled, the pot-washing station was ripped and overturned breaking several water and drain pipes and causing a water leak. The specific target seems to have been the plants. Other physical structures were untouched. The very next morning forty people showed up to help restore and replant! The following two Wednesday workdays saw an upsurge in attendance with the addition of several new volunteers and scouts. As of February 1, nursery staff and volunteers completed a massive repotting and reorganization of the nursery plants in

preparation for a final inventory. We should be ready soon to resume our propagation program. Anna Marie expressed gratitude to everyone who pitched in. She also acknowledged Jackie Salas, from the City of Oakland, for jumping in with immediate support the day of the incident and getting the pot washing station repaired within a few days. Material costs of the vandalism so far have amounted to \$6931, not including staff time.

A fallen tree had crushed the back part of the nursery fencing last November. We still await the removal of that tree. We will work with the City, and potentially Civicorps, to repair the nursery fence. We are currently seeking monetary and in-kind donations to replace damaged pots and trays. We will be testing for phytophthora across the nursery over the coming months because of the potential contamination while plants were on the ground.

John Brega, one of tonight's guests, has offered his services to help restore the damage. There has been an uptick in volunteers and donations. To date, we've received \$4000 in donations targeting nursery repair and restoration. This event brought additional staff concerns to mind. Anna Marie noted that last August there had been an assault on a staff member in the Chabot Space and Science Center parking lot. Since then, staff has agreed to use the buddy system whenever possible, and to alert one another if they will be doing a quick drop-off or pick-up on their own.

E.D. search

Rob, Barry, Kate and Anna Marie conducted the final interviews. Lisa Giordano has accepted our offer of the E.D. position. Relocating from the east coast, she will start on March 1 and arrive here physically on March 15. Lisa knows Oakland and the Bay Area, having lived here as a U.C. Berkeley undergraduate. Many thanks to the interview team and to Beth's leadership.

Joaquin Miller Park Master Plan Resolution

Anna Marie reported that City Council Member Janani Ramachandran and her staff will be touring sites in the watershed with an eye to shepherding FOSC's Joaquin Miller Park Master Plan Resolution through City Council. Her staff has been briefed by Sheng Thao's staff.

State of the Watershed

This year's State of the Watershed will take place in open air in Dimond Park. Sequoia Picnic Area will be peppered with tables representing the different aspects of FOSC: our upper and lower watershed priorities, rare plants, past accomplishments, future watershed projects from dedicated site and monitoring leaders, and of course Ricky with our FOSC tee shirts. Board

members past and present will conduct a few mini tours on the hour -- a rainbow trout tour, a creek daylighting update, and a Dimond Canyon trail hike.

The board came up with more suggestions, such as, how about a band? a food truck? John offered pictures of the park and the watershed for display. Student board members expressed enthusiasm for doing crafts and other activities with the public. Beth offered an oak tree food web game, Barry a screen to project videos from past States of the Watershed. Rob can provide a live fish display. Additionally, Kathleen will be there with her macroinvertebrates on display. Cameron offered to lead trips to where he and other volunteers have been planting, and to show the disaster from the recent storm.

Financial Report, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie reviewed the Project Timeline and Cash Flow Chart with the board, as well as grant applications in progress and those on the horizon.

Fundraising Updates: Barry Stenger,

End-of-Year Appeal

FOSC ended a successful campaign with approximately \$61,402 in donations from 224 donors. There was a time-limited match of \$15,000 (Dec. 15-31) offered by community and board members, which we overshot with online and mail-in donations totaling over \$18,050!

Rainmaker report

Barry reported that the Rainmaker committee, composed of himself, Anna Marie, Kate, and Beth, met to discuss new ideas for fundraising in 2023. Immediate action steps include completing the vetting of potential foundation funders, highlighting accomplishments in the newsletter and social media messaging, and updating our volunteer, partnerships, and donation website pages. More mid-term actions will include creating targeted pitch decks to approach audiences like the City, foundations, and corporations for funding and/or collaboration. This list also includes regular outreach to media with stories or pitches.

Financial future and fundraising discussion

Barry emphasized that we have to look beyond cash flow and informed the board that, looking long range, this year's income will likely come in below budget. Donors, grants and government contracts, and program fees are our three legs. Donations are meeting the budget, but grants and contracts are down, which means we likely will have to dip into our reserves.

Our growing edge may well be climate change, which is Lisa Giordano's bailiwick. Our grants tend to be project-oriented. Barry's preference, of course, would be to find funding where we're given money and free rein to spend it as we want. We need to attract major donors who give \$1000 or more. Tim suggested we have an "advancement coordinator".

Anna Marie pointed out, on the brighter side, that the vandalism brought us 50 brand new donors. Barry felt strongly that we should have someone in charge of communications so that, for example, the vandalism would have been reported sooner to the media. Eleanor added that we should create a way of thanking the donors who gave when they heard of the vandalism, and foster communication with them. Rob suggested offering exclusive donor walks. Cameron added that since his FOSC journey began at the plant sale, that would be a great place to start.

Minutes

Beth moved to approve the minutes from December, 2022. Tim seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

Staff Report, Anna Marie Schmidt

The board enthusiastically thanked Anna Marie for the staff report.

Announcements

Russ initiated the idea of a pallid manzanita "summit" to evaluate the health of our current habitats and to update our management plans. When the ground dries in the spring we will do a full census of the Big Trees pallid colony and develop a management plan for that site. This was much heralded by Beth and Tim, who volunteered to be on the planning committee. Russ wondered what might be the best approach to accomplish these goals. Tim suggested a one-page profile of each population. Eleanor added that this is Martha Lowe's and Ralph Kanz's bailiwick. Anna Marie asked that EBRPD's Michelle Harmond be included on that list.

Cameron, who is Chairman of the Oakland Urban Farming Project, talked about partnering with FOSC to protect the Elderberry tree (*Sambucus*), a tree indigenous to California. Elderberry trees in Dimond Canyon are now considerably overwhelmed by cape ivy. They should be pruned back to allow for healthier growth, and the ivy needs to be cleared away from them. Cameron suggested that we put in guerilla signage such as *Elder Tree Crossing*, to call attention to these beautiful trees.

John wondered if he could help FOSC by joining it to other such organizations.

Anna Marie brought the meeting to a close by saying that, as her tenure comes to an end, she would be sharing her thoughts and recommendations going forward with Lisa and the board. She expressed her love for FOOSC and its board.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Next board meeting:

April 12, 2023, 7:00 p.m. in the Iona Room at Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church.