

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Park Blvd Presbyterian Church
4101 Park Blvd, Room 35, 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, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus)

Absent Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Aneeshi Sandip Desai (Student Board Member), Steve Ritchie, Sean Welch, Eleanor Dunn

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt, E.D., Ella Matsuda, Restoration and Education Manager

Board Involvement

Earth Day - Saturday, April 23, 8:45-12:00. Scout Hut and various sites

Community Talk: Shuumi Land Tax - Wednesday, April 27, 7:00 p.m.
via Zoom

Upper Watershed Tour for the Society of American Foresters (Martin Matarrese, SAF lead; Mark Rauzon, FOSC lead - Saturday, April 30, 10:00 - 2:30. Convene at the Chabot Space and Science Center Parking Lot

Remarks from the President, Beth Keer

Beth invited attendees to share positive memories from the pandemic. She welcomed Ella Matsuda, our new Restoration and Education Manager, who moved here from Houston to work with FOSC. Ella expressed her pleasure at being here, and her appreciation for the plant hike she took with Beth.

Board Member Check-in, Briefing, & Discussion

Board member recruitment The Board batted around ideas for recruiting new members, such as looking among our volunteers, using Earth Day to see if anyone stood out, considering various donors, leveraging someone's "no" by asking if they might know of any candidates, looking into adjacent organizations such as the Society of American Foresters and

California Native Plant Society members. Ricky said she would unearth and send out the old list of board member duties, with an eye to its being updated by the Board. Mark said he would once again contact Jess Beebe and her partner, Gwen Rino.

Shuumi land tax The Board discussed what role FOSC should play, given that the watershed is on Ohlone land which was usurped by the invasion of Europeans. Our share of the annual Shuumi land tax would come to \$800. Would it be a conflict for us to pay taxes to another non-profit? What about other proactive ways we might support them, such as helping them grow native plants, using nursery space dedicated to particular natives, or lending a hand in setting up their own nursery? Tim wondered, "Since this is occupied land, do we not owe them a tax? Should we encourage the City to give over a chunk of Joaquin Miller Park?" Anna Marie reminded the board that the Sogorea Te have been invited to participate in the feasibility study for the lower watershed. Rob urged collaboration rather than paying a tax. Mark, who is working on a book about the breakdown of the Bering Sea with an Alaskan native as co-author, was vehement that the collaboration has to be 50-50. Beth advocated in-kind work. Tim referenced Sequoia Point as a location where, in partnership, we could help them reclaim and restore it. "This kind of partnership would allow us to get to know them as people." Rob said he would welcome a conversation similar to Unlearning Racism. Ella suggested acknowledgment on the website, perhaps also offering a link to the tax there. Anna Marie said she would check in with Ariel Lucky to come up with a version of what to say. Rob suggested including native names of locations on our watershed map.

Board Retreat Anna Marie passed around a sign-up sheet to find a date and time for this year's retreat. The agenda for the retreat is a walk and talk in strategic watershed locations.

Endowment and Fundraising Updates: Mid-Year Appeal, Barry Stenger

Barry, who is chairman of the Endowment Committee, passed around copies of his report on the current status of the *For the Future Fund* Endowment. He explained that in the past two years the Board has approved an annual draw on the endowment designated for operational expenses. Since those funds have not been used and therefore remain in the Vanguard account, there is a need to separate operational funds from the *For The Future Fund* balance. He proposed that The FTF funds and the funds approved for operations remain in the same account but be distinguished separately as "FTF Funds" and "Funds Available for Operations." This would allow us to

keep track of the correct FTF balance to be used when proposing the annual draw, while at the same time keeping the "Funds Available for Operations" in that same account, accruing interest and dividends for the FTF Endowment. Barry moved that the board approve the 4% annual draw on the balance of the FTF Fund (calculated on the average of the last 12 quarters) amounting this year to \$6,136.00, and that this draw be designated as "Funds Available for Operations". Beth seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. Beth thanked Barry for his good work.

Turning his discussion to the Mid-Year Appeal letter, Barry laid out some of the Steering Committee's ideas about whom to include in our mailing list, such as past donors and some of our 3700 newsletter recipients. The conversation then turned to ideas about what to highlight in the letter. Here are some of those ideas:

- with the loosening of restrictions, we're poised to jump back in with more school groups;
- purchasing soil sterilizer;
- our feasibility study, which will include lower watershed projects;
- hiring new staff, including young smart scientists;
- FOSC is changing with the times, remaining strong and relevant because of the type of people we're hiring;
- our extraordinary number of volunteers and how much gets accomplished because of them;
- nature's cycles: So many giant oaks are dying. You're the new acorns, and we're in this together. Together, we can mitigate Eco-Grief.

Financial Report, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie went over the Project Timeline and Cash Flow Chart. She reported on grant applications in progress and on the horizon, and reviewed the budget for FYE23. She said that FOSC needs to hitch our wagon to the County and City in order to position ourselves for certain grants. Mark questioned the wisdom of that, stating his belief that we've been stretching to take on jobs the City and County can't do. He argued that maybe we should go small. Anna Marie asked that we consider what our optimal size should be as we enter the next 25 years; what about staffing and program goals? What are our priorities?

Tim expressed concern that while Friends of Joaquin Miller Park is pursuing a large grant from the state, they may not have the capacity to plan and implement it. He also pointed out that missing from the Staff Report is the reason the El Centro stormwater proposal was rejected: that this should be a City of Oakland effort. "I wondered why the City wasn't doing it, and

posited that we should be pitching it to them." Anna Marie asserted that we are often asked to do City tasks, and wondered how we might help them to tackle such tasks. "Perhaps our feasibility study could unlock money from the City." She reminded the Board that in June we have to vote on the FYE23 budget.

Meanwhile, she said, we have two excellent interns in Kate Berlin and Rosa Nelson, and expressed hope that we might move them into staff positions. She reported that we have increased our staff's health reimbursement from \$250 to \$380 per month (as per the directive of the Board in November, 2021), and raised salary ranges.

Mark suggested we consider having a fundraising party in conjunction with a 25th anniversary celebration. Perhaps hire a party planner? Beth said she knew someone she could contact. Ricky said she would volunteer to help out with such a party as long as she wasn't a lone wolf.

Rob offered to write a Save the Redwoods grant.

Minutes Barry moved to approve the minutes from the February 9th meeting. Beth seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Staff Report, Staffing Updates, and Commitments Review, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie reported that FlowWest is in the third month of the lower watershed feasibility study. They are looking at various design options at each site, costs, identifying the stakeholders, and interviewing community members about possible site uses. A draft is anticipated in May. FOSC hopes to be the catalyst which moves the City to take on certain projects. The study will be reviewed by the community and shared.

Anna Marie reported that new hire Shayla Ramos quit fewer than seven days in, to take a job with a federal agency. On the brighter side, she said our new crew is great!

Tim gave a distressing Fung Fellowship update. He met with Dan Zevin and was discouraged to see that the students had no idea what he was talking about when he referenced the excessive use of Joaquin Miller Park, both its legal and illegal trails, or the mapping, or the Fern Ravine sub basin. None of the students had read his report nor did they ask any questions. "Yet these same students are supposed to deliver the project in two weeks!"

Mark announced that a new bird species was discovered in the watershed, near Blossom Street -- the red whiskered bulbul! Barry reported seeing it as well. Likely it is an escaped cage bird.



(Photo courtesy of Mark Rauzon)

Adjournment The meeting ended at 8:57 p.m.

Next board meeting: June 8, 2022, 7:00 p.m. Location TBA.

