

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 5:00 p.m.
via Zoom**

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

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

Staff Present Anna Marie Schmidt, E.D.

Guests Paul Frank of FlowWest, Niko Dittmar, Joaquin Miller Park Enduro Race organizer

Board Involvement

Jingletown Estuary History and Art Walk – Sunday, June 12, 10:00-12:00. Meet at the Mural Wall on Peterson Street between Ford and Chapman Streets.

Remarks from the President, Beth Keer

Beth welcomed everyone and invited Niko to introduce himself. Niko said he was here to answer questions and concerns about the Enduro race.

Board Member Briefing & Discussion

FlowWest Feasibility Study, Paul Frank Paul reported on the progress of the feasibility study. FlowWest has completed interviews with stakeholders and assessments of five sites: Wood Park, Josie De La Cruz, Barry Place, Fruitvale Bridge Park, and Austin Square (owned by the Alameda County Flood Control District). They evaluated sites on parameters such as physical creek improvement, education signage and creek awareness, and native plant gardens. Paul and his cohorts are in the final phase of writing up a draft of their study, to be submitted to FOSC in the next week or so. For each site, a menu of possible actions will be listed, including approximate cost, challenges, and funding opportunities.

At the August board meeting, Paul will formally present the feasibility study and FlowWest's recommendations for site development, including estimated costs.

(At this point Beth Keer left the meeting because of a family emergency. Barry Stenger, Vice President, took over.)

Enduro Race, Niko Dittmar Niko Dittmar, a junior at Bishop O'Dowd High School, presented his case for the Enduro race, a mountain bike race in Joaquin Miller Park sponsored by Mike's Bikes in Walnut Creek (among others). He said this would be a fundraiser for the Bicycle Trails Council of the East Bay (BTCEB) to do bicycle trail maintenance in the park. To date, \$20,000 has been raised through entry fees. Their intention is to sponsor four workdays both before and after the 150 rider event. Participants must attend a meeting about rider etiquette and discouraging riding on and building illegal trails.

Niko said that Christina McClendon at the Central Reservations Unit at the City approved their permit application, and the event was also approved by Friends of Joaquin Miller Park (FOJMP). He said he was working with BTCEB, including John Roberts, as well as people from the City, to help guide and plan this event. In response to Barry's inquiry, Niko said that there will be 40 trail volunteers to monitor the race. He reported they have clearance from the Central Reservations Unit, the Oakland Police, and the Oakland Fire Department. They have \$3 million in event liability insurance, as well as liability waivers.

Tim Vendlinski expressed alarm that a full-fledged mountain bike race was approved, given so many concerns about recreational damage in this park -- plus the precedent it sets. The approval process for this race is inconsistent with any other such event in Oakland, which requires the Park Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) approval. Tim emphasized to Niko that the permit he acquired is from the people who oversee picnic reservations. This major event would close trails, excluding others from using them for an entire day. He said that FOJMP informed him that they have not endorsed the Enduro race and are quite upset about this event. While BTCEB might claim that the race is approved, this is absolutely not

the case. Most significantly, the Enduro race is missing permission from PRAC.

Niko explained that he presented at a FOJMP board meeting and everyone seemed supportive, though no vote was taken. Tim responded that board members at FOJMP told him they never approved it. Evidently the opposition wasn't expressed because it never came up for a vote. Tim noted that Niko should have been educated about the rules and process by Jerott King and the adults of the BTCEB.

Niko responded that he had asked Central Reservations about external approval and Christina told him none was needed unless items were going to be sold. Niko reiterated that this is the first event of its kind, noted the potential funds for local trails, and claimed the number of riders on that day would actually decrease because of the Enduro race. They will be having a planning meeting on June 15 about the trails and anyone from FOSC would be welcome to attend.

Barry thanked Niko and told him the BOD would go into a closed session to discuss it. Tim said he would draft a brief letter of opposition to the Enduro race to be directed to Dana Riley and PRAC, and send it to the board for review.

Highway 13 Connectivity for Wildlife Crossings, Tim Vendlinks

Tim reported on his successful meeting with CalTrans staff, including the biologist with District 4, concerning Highway 13 as a blood alley for wildlife. Tim was able to provide information on the ecosystem of the watershed. This group is going to try to map the concentration of dead animals, identify the undercrossings, and look for what areas could be retrofitted to allow for greater connectivity for crossings. CalTrans is getting an infusion of money for such an effort. Eleanor Dunn told the group that it was our own Karen Paulsell who proposed native plants to replace the divider they took out, so that wildlife wouldn't be attracted to a dangerous zone.

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

Barry Stenger praised Beth Keer for the excellent appeal letter she wrote, which will go out on June 17. Electronic copies will be emailed to the board.

Our endowment balance was down to \$199,600 at the end of April because of the downward trend of the market. \$17,100 of that is "Funds Available for Operations," We continue to have difficulty getting the new signatories on the accounts. Carl Kohnert is trying to iron out these problems. Barry said he has postponed the next Endowment Committee meeting because of this issue. The Committee's intention is to engage an outside portfolio manager.

Financial Report, Miscellaneous Updates, and Specific Needs, 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. The board reviewed and voted on the budget for FYE23. Eleanor Dunn made a motion to approve the budget, Rob Leidy seconded, and this motion was unanimously approved.

As of June 1, intern Kate Berlin moved into a full-time position as the FOSC communications and operations manager, continuing to manage the newsletter and other outreach, administrative and personnel tasks, and assist with grant research and fundraising. We will need to ratchet up the amount and number of grants.

We plan to work with two Team Oakland crews and will receive \$5000 for this effort.

The reprinting of our trail maps will cost \$5700 for 30,000, half of which will be paid for by FOJMP. We're hoping the City will take on the other half.

Kate Berlin and Ella Matsuda are planning to produce a video promotion of the plant sale.

Education and outreach coordinator candidates are being interviewed now in the hopes of hiring someone by late June. The plan is for them to work part-time in the summer, full time in the fall.

We changed our payroll service from Paycheck to Gusto and are using their services to create a handbook. As 401(k) plans are now state-mandated if an organization has five or more employees, FOSC started our retirement program with Guidelines, a Gusto affiliate. FOSC's employer match provides 25% on the first 4% of employee contributions. This match will replace employee bonuses.

We are very much in need of soil sterilizer and a new staff computer. Soil sterilizer could be a specific request to donors. Tim suggested we reach out to a soil sterilizer vendor, ask for one of their machines, and offer prominent recognition in return.

Minutes Eleanor moved to approve the April minutes. Barry seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Questions on Staff Report & Staffing Updates, Anna Marie Schmidt

Anna Marie reported that several schools approached FOOSC in the spring, and we led five field trips.

Noel Gallo was part of the feasibility interview process. He was excited to learn more about the watershed and the creek's culverted path through the Fruitvale and mouth in the estuary, and invited FlowWest and FOOSC to his Fruitvale update meeting. While we did not discuss the feasibility study in any detail, FOOSC presented information about our organization and goals for the feasibility study. Duke Realty, which bought the Glass Factory, presented its plan for the space, including the public space. This was the primary topic at the meeting. Jason of Duke Realty later reached out to us about coordinating the design and native planting of the new landscape for the San Francisco Bay Trail.

Tim Vendlinski praised Anna Marie for the staff report. He expressed his pleasure at the summary on the Oakland General Plan update. He expressed hopes that this will provide a chance for us to lay out a grand vision for the future of the creek from hills to estuary, one that will improve the movement of wildlife, engage multi-lingual communities and will not sacrifice park areas in the name of recreation. Anna Marie added that we can still provide input to the process.

Tim reported with dismay that the City is intending to plant non-native trees throughout Oakland. The tree list has only 5 natives versus 45-50 non-natives. Rob Leidy suggested we send a letter on behalf of FOOSC, and Anna Marie agreed.

Action Items

~ Draft letter for the PRAC expressing our opposition to the Enduro race in Joaquin Miller Park - Tim Vendlinski and the BOD

- ~ Check with soil sterilizer companies for deep discounts in exchange for publicity
- ~ Anna Marie will send the link to the Oakland General Plan
- ~ Draft letter for Tree Services on non-native tree planting

Adjournment The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Next board meeting: August 10, 2022, location TBA.