

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, October 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Montclair Presbyterian Church, Oakland, CA**

Our mission is to conserve, restore, and enhance the Sausal Creek Watershed by educating future generations, involving the community in environmental stewardship, and collaborating with agencies and nonprofits. We support Oakland's biodiversity and are working toward a climate-resilient future.

Present Richelle Jacobs, Eleanor Dunn, Barry Stenger, Tim Vendlinski, Russ Huddleston, Rob Leidy, Sean Welch, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus)

Absent Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Beth Keer, Kristy Brady, Maria Katticaran

Staff Present Lisa Giordano, Executive Director

Guest Present Joseph Boyle, Wood Park Neighbor

Board Involvement

- Plant Sale (October 26)
- Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast (November 9)
- Solstice Planting (December 14)

Remarks from President Barry Stenger

Barry welcomed Board members and acknowledged that this meeting was taking place on unceded Huichin Ohlone territory. He alerted that the annual evaluation of the Executive Director is upcoming. A Google survey will be sent to Board members.

Board Discussions & Committee Reports

- **Nursery Committee**

Russ reported we have inventory of over 7000 plants. The stormwater retention area near Wood Park will be getting plants (but not trees) from us as part of an EPA-funded EcoBlock project. There is a leaking pipe at the bottom of School Street with standing water in the concrete.

- Restoration Committee

Russ said that samples of pallid leaf tissue are now in the hands of Cal State East Bay Green Biome Institute. He is hoping *Bay Nature* will accept an article he and Ella would like to write about their pallid manzanita work, which Lisa contacted them about. If not, they will pursue other publications. He also wants to look into collecting herbarium voucher specimens for plants in the watershed, since currently only about 10% of the flora has been documented with collections. We already have a permit to propagate. We are aiming for a diverse population.

- Creek-to-Bay Day Recap & Feedback

We had a robust turn-out for Creek-to-Bay Day. FOSC is seeking proper sourcing for the white alders. "Be Green" is the local distributor.

Lisa reported that we're almost done with the Wood Park and Barry Place restoration plans proposal.

- Internship program

We have a field Intern, Ivan Reiger, from Latitude High School. Lisa raised concerns about our internship program. Interns place an increased management burden on staff, and the program has not been developed sufficiently in order to provide clear guidelines and expectations for interns. She suggested as well that our 9-month internships are too long. The board discussed a shorter time frame. Tim suggested we discard the use of the word "intern" for all other service positions aside from our existing Stewardship and Education Intern. Sean said he would read up on the latest laws for unpaid interns. He stated emphatically that we have to do a better job of distinguishing between those positions. Lisa has developed an intern handbook for paid interns. Sean reminded the Board that students must receive high school or college credit for their volunteer work with us, with no special exceptions, if they are not being paid.

- Erosion Control at Barry Place

Tim reported we are working with the City of Oakland Tree Services this winter to purchase and install straw wattles on the top of the embankment at Barry Place to control erosion. Even though we will be high above the streambed and floodplain, we might need to secure a permit from the City to install the straw wattle.

- Name change consideration

There was a lengthy discussion about Board Chair Barry Stenger's suggestion that the Board consider beginning the process of exploring renaming the organization. Sean emphasized we need to be mindful that a name change will take substantial resources and time, requiring focus group polling and hiring consultants. We don't want to harm what we have, and our mandate is to fulfill our duty to the organization. Lisa asked the Board to consider whether, in fact, we are entirely a creek group since we manage green space and do pallid work (and more) as well. Sean asked us to consider the ways in which the current name may not be serving the organization. He wants better to understand the limitations of FOSC's current capacity to generate revenue. He proffered that people don't understand what we do, and this lack of understanding hurts our ability to generate funds. He wondered if, perhaps, it's less about a name change than about a tagline. Sean moved that a process be created by which we reconsider the ways in which FOSC is presenting itself and is therefore perceived by external stakeholders and the general public. Rob and Eleanor seconded (and thirded) Sean's motion. There was unanimous agreement.

- FYE23 Annual report

Lisa pointed out that there was an error in the draft of the total funds reported for the fiscal year because our bookkeeper had not included the EPA income. Eleanor strongly suggested the Board track all their volunteer hours, and remember to turn them in. She reminded us of the need to sign in to make such tracking easier.

- Advocacy Committee

Rob suggested we rethink our Capital Improvement position.

- Questions about Executive Report

Lisa has updated the numbers given in the staff section of the report.

Tim attended last Tuesday's staff meeting. He will provide the Board with communications and fundraising notes from that meeting.

- Strategic Planning

Lisa will meet with committee chairs to review organizational priorities and plan for the year ahead.

Finances

- Lisa discussed the Statement of Position. Barry commented that we're a little under with income for this time of year and reminded the Board that this is normal. Income is down because some of our funders have yet to put their money in the pipeline.
- Lisa reviewed the Statement of Activities, and went through the Project Timeline and Cash Flow chart with the Board.

Fundraising (Barry Stenger, Rainmaker Committee Chair)

Grant responses

We are hoping for \$39,000 for the nursery from HDR Foundation and around \$500,000 for expanded conservation and restoration work at Fern Ravine.

Grant horizon

Lisa reviewed the fall application cycle.

Endowment

Carl Kohnert has volunteered to come to a Board meeting to lead a discussion on the Endowment, which is currently at \$220,000. Barry queried the Board as to whether it was open to accepting Carl's offer. The board gave an enthusiastic Yes.

Donor Appreciation Dinner Review & Looking Ahead

Lisa reported on the Donor Appreciation Dinner held on 10/26/24 at the home of John Bliss and Kim Thompson. She said that the dinner was fun and the ambiance warm. Lisa reported that we brought in \$700 from the silent auction. Mark reminded the Board our 30th anniversary will be in two years. He suggested we plan a gala.

End-of-Year Appeal

Rainmakers will meet at the end of this month to discuss the End-of-Year Appeal. Barry asked for the Board's thoughts about what should go in the letter. Mark suggested we emphasize open space as a mental balm, an antidote to the high pressure, noisy world. Tim enthusiastically agreed, and added that the letter should be short and sweet. He also suggested the report format can be used and modified.

Administration

- Lisa announced we have a new bank! Chase. Our long sought-after credit card is on the way.

- Our Quickbooks is now online. This is great news because it means the ED no longer has to travel to Pam's house to confer.
- Eleanor said we need a pop-up on our website for the plant sale. Right now it is too hard to find.
- Lisa announced that new shirts, and also hats, are on the way.
- New keys need to be ordered. Rob suggested there be a key we all can have access to. (Eleanor has the lock box for FOSC at her home.)
- Montclair Presbyterian Church no longer has a Wednesday evening, every-other-month room available for our meetings. The search is on for a new venue. Barry will look into the possibility of the Dimond Library, but we would need to start our meetings earlier if we are to use that space.

Minutes & Commitments Review

- Tim made an amendment to the August 14th minutes. The minutes wrongly stated that vegetation removal at Blue Rock Mesa was for the purpose of giving more light to the pallid manzanitas. He moved that the minutes reflect instead that the purpose of vegetation removal there would be because the south side of the hill could be a zone for a potential planting site for pallid manzanitas. With this amendment in place, Tim moved to approve the minutes. Eleanor seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously.
- Tim also urged that the Board meeting minutes be made available to Board members in a Google Doc file rather than via email.

Individual Board Member & Guest Check-In

Rob expressed appreciation to Lisa, Kate, Ella, and Elena for all their hard work on the plant sale. Sean said that the new waivers are awesome. Barry said that he met with Tim, Lisa and the City tree people. He was gratified to see we're highly respected by that department. Lisa is excited about staff and our new "intern". Joseph thanked the Board for welcoming him to the meeting. He found it very informative. Mark commented enthusiastically about Elena and her work.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Next Board meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Montclair Presbyterian Church.