

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, December 11, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Montclair Presbyterian Church, Oakland, CA
followed by details from a
Closed Session Board Meeting
Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 5:00 p.m.
Via Video**

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.

Board Members Present Richelle Jacobs, (Board Secretary); Barry Stenger, (Board President); Tim Vendlinski, Russ Huddleston, Rob Leidy, (Board Vice President); Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus), Kristy Brady, Beth Keer

Board Members Absent Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Maria Katticaran, Eleanor Dunn, Sean Welch

Staff Present Kate Berlin, Incoming Interim Executive Director

Guests Present Carl Kohnert, former Board member and former Endowment Committee Chair; Vick Agarwal and Laila Robinson, prospective Student Board Members

Board Involvement

- ~ Solstice Planting (12/14)
- ~ MLK, Jr. Day of Service (1/20/25)

Remarks from President Barry Stenger

~ Barry welcomed Board members and acknowledged that this meeting was taking place on unceded Huichin (alternatively spelled Huchiun) Ohlone territory. He invited the prospective Student Board

Members to share a little about themselves. Vick Agarwal is a sophomore at College Preparatory School in Oakland; Laila Robinson, a junior at Oakland High, hopes one day to be a restoration ecologist. A tenet of hers is that everyone is equal in nature.

Board Discussion

Environmental Enhancement Fund Budget & Staff Changes

~ FOSC has been awarded a \$407,939.30 grant from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Environmental Enhancement Fund (EEF) over three years for restoration of the watershed's headwaters at Fern Ravine. Tim reported we need a minor conditional use permit from the City of Oakland, which he is working to procure. Mark said the canopy collapse phenomenon in Dimond Canyon must be addressed.

Strategic Planning

~ Tim reported Staff are feeling overstretched. He said it is imperative the Board consider which projects to pull back from. Additionally, we need a performance review of all our restoration sites. He strongly believes FOSC must stop investing in sites that are not maintained. Kate added that we need to do a ranking of all sites.

Questions on Executive Report

~ There was all around praise for the Executive Report prepared by Kate, with Lisa's assistance.

Finances (Kate Berlin, Interim E.D.)

~ Kate reviewed our current budget, including its actual comparison, timeline, and cash flow.

Fundraising (Barry Stenger, Rainmaker Committee Chair)

Grant responses

~ Barry shared that we failed to be funded by the HDR Foundation for our Native Revegetation project. However, we were given feedback on how to improve our chances in the future and FOSC will re-apply in 2025.

~ Kate and Ella did a walk-through of Wood Park with representatives from the EPA. Since the project there will require the use of big equipment and City permitting and approval, partnering with the City is required. We've received positive feedback from the City about this plan. Tim suggested we ask Eco Block to do a presentation on how they would like to partner with FOSC on future Wood Park grants.

Grant Horizon

~ Kate reviewed the winter application cycle with the Board.

Endowment (Guest Speaker Carl Kohnert)

~ Carl praised FOSC for the impressive work we've been doing in the three years since he's left the Board. He reported that the Endowment Fund is currently at \$227,000, which provided FOSC with a draw of \$9282 this past year. He would like to see the Fund expand to \$300,000 in the next two years. Carl is willing to work with anyone in the organization to give public or private talks about the Endowment and legacy giving, letting people know how good this kind of giving feels. He queried the Board as to whether we know anyone who might consider making a legacy gift, adding that there can be tax advantages to some seniors for such donations. He is looking for people passionate about our watershed, and requested specific names. Kate asked if he would be open to an invitation to the next Rainmaker Committee meeting. Carl gave an emphatic Yes.

End-of-Year Appeal

~ Barry asked the Board if they were open to providing a financial match option for the End-of Year Appeal. (Yes.) He reported that so far, we have taken in \$21,723. It is our 28th year, so he suggested we aim for \$28,000.

Administration

~ Kate announced that our new credit card has arrived, and our new tee shirts and hats.

~ We need to find a new location for our Board meetings. Ricky volunteered to follow up on a possible venue at Zion Lutheran Church on Park Blvd.

Minutes & Commitments Review

~ Two corrections were made to the Minutes from October 9, 2024.

a) The original Minutes read, *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.* The corrected Minutes are to read, *We had a robust turn-out for Creek-to-Bay Day. FOSC is seeking proper sourcing for the white alders.*

b) The original Minutes read,

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 public. Rob and Eleanor seconded (and thirded) Sean's motion. There was unanimous agreement.

The corrected copy is to read,

Barry Stenger made the following motion: Whereas the name "Friends of Sausal Creek" may not accurately represent to the broader community and to potential funders the work that we actual do, be it

resolved that as a Board we initiate a process to explore renaming this organization.

There was a lengthy discussion about this proposal. 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 offered an amendment to the motion stipulating 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.

The Board decided to postpone the vote on approval of the October 9, 2024, Minutes until the February Board meeting.

~ Kristy moved to approve Vickram Agarwal and Laila Robinson as Student Board Members. Russ seconded that motion, and it was passed unanimously.

Board Officers

~ Board officers are usually elected in December for the upcoming year. After lengthy discussion, Rob suggested the following slate for 2025: Himself as President; Kristy Brady as Vice President; Richelle Jacobs as Secretary; Barry Stenger as Treasurer; and Eleanor Dunn and Russ Huddleston as At-Large Steering Committee members. The vote on this slate was tabled until an additional virtual Board Meeting could be held.

Executive Director Search Committee

~ The search for a new E.D. will go public on December 15. Kate, Barry, Kristy, Rob, and potentially Tim stepped forward to be on the search committee. This committee will hold initial screenings and panel interviews. The strongest candidates will be given the chance to meet with staff.

Board Discussion

~ There was a discussion about having a Board member serve as liaison between Staff and Board. Tim felt we need a direct channel of communication going in both directions between Staff and Board about how things are going and how Staff is feeling. Kristy pointed out that in such a small organization there would be a high likelihood that conflict would arise between two people working closely together. A "designated investigator" or "liaison" could eliminate the possible intimidation Staff might feel airing grievances to the entire Board. Tim endorsed the idea. Rob suggested we discuss the idea of this position in the new year.

~ Beth Keer is leaving the Board, although she will remain active in the organization. She has been a stalwart and consistent presence on many committees, many workdays, many projects. She will be sorely missed! The Board wholeheartedly thanked her for all she has done for FOSC.

Adjournment

~ The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m., followed immediately by a closed Executive Session.

Next Board meeting

~ The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Garden Room at Zion Lutheran Church, 5201 Park Blvd, Piedmont, CA.

Additional Board Meeting
December 18, 2024
Held on Video, 5:00 p.m.

Exceptional Meeting

This exceptional, closed meeting was held in order to finalize the officer slate for 2025 and, additionally, the members of the E.D. Search Committee.

Board Members Present Barry Stenger, Russ Huddleston, Sean Welch, Rob Leidy, Beth Keer, Tim Vendlinski, Eleanor Dunn, Kristy Brady, and Richelle Jacobs

Board Members Absent Maria Katticaran, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus)

Officer Vote

~ Rob moved that the following candidates be voted in as the officers of the Board, to serve as of January 1, 2025: President, Rob Leidy; Vice President, Kristy Brady; Treasurer, Barry Stenger; Secretary, Richelle Jacobs; At Large, Eleanor Dunn and Russ Huddleston. Eleanor seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously.

E.D. Search Committee

~ This committee will consist of Rob Leidy, Kristy Brady, Tim Vendlinski, Barry Stenger, and Kate Berlin.

