

**Friends of Sausal Creek  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 7:00 p.m.  
Zion Lutheran Church, Piedmont, 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, Russ Huddleston, Rob Leidy, Kristy Brady, Vick Argarwal (Student Board Member), Laila Robinson (Student Board Member)

**Absent** Sean Welch, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Maria Katticaran, Tim Vendlinski, Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus)

**Staff Present** Kate Berlin (Interim Executive Director), Ella Matsuda, (Restoration & Nursery Manager), Eliana Thompson (Communications Intern)

**Guest Present** Mostafa Khiabani (FOSC Volunteer)

**Remarks from President, Rob Leidy**

-On

behalf of the Board, Rob thanked the Staff for making this past year so successful, expressing appreciation for all their excellent work. He welcomed Mostafa Khiabani, a frequent nursery volunteer, as well as Student Board Members Vick Agarwal and Laila Robinson. Rob acknowledged that this meeting was taking place on unceded Huichin (alternatively spelled Huchiun) Ohlone territory.

**Committee Updates**

**Restoration, Russ Huddleston**

-Russ listed and reported on the status of several projects. For example: cost estimates for revegetation and park improvements at Wood Park far exceed the funding available through our targeted source, the U.S. EPA San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund. Therefore, the Restoration Committee is recommending we approach the City of Oakland to secure their formal commitment to this project, but also to request that they act as lead agency on the application. Additionally, there are canopy collapse issues that must be contended with in Dimond Canyon. It is incumbent upon us to come up with a management plan for the riparian community, among other projects. Russ also reported that Rob Leidy has applied for the Creek

Protection Permit from the City at Fern Ravine.

-MLK Day was extremely successful with 120 volunteers! Both Councilmember Janani Ramachandran and former Congressperson Barbara Lee attended.

#### Executive Director Search Update, Kate Berlin

-Kristy announced that we've interviewed three candidates so far in our search for a new Executive Director. Another will be interviewed next week. Kate expressed her enthusiasm for the candidates. The next step will be for the preferred candidate to meet Staff.

#### General Committee Update

-Rob reported that the Education Committee could use some help. At Kristy's request, Kate said she will create a list of all the committees and who is on them. Additionally, need more Board members, especially people with skills in finance and fundraising. We also need Nursery Committee members.

#### Executive Report - Comments and Questions, Kate Berlin

-Kate reported that we finally succeeded in unlocking our funds from our EPA grant, which we completed in January. However, future opportunities for federal funding have been eliminated for the foreseeable future because of the new administration. This includes another EPA grant for which FOSC had planned to apply in April.

#### Finances, Barry Stenger

##### Budget/Actual Comparison

-Barry announced that over all we are doing well bringing in organizational income. Kate said that our End-of-Year Appeal was so successful that it will may account for 97% of our yearly budget. Barry added that the printing we did for that Appeal paid for itself.

#### Project Timeline and Cash Flow

-Kate went over details of the project timeline and cash flow with the Board.

#### Fundraising

-Barry reported that one of the reasons our End-of-Year Appeal was so successful was because of great matching grants offered by the Board. He thanked Board Members for their participation.

-Barry suggested that, in the future, we consider hosting a Thank You event not just for top donors, but for middle-range donors as well.

-The idea was floated that a hike with Rob in Fern Ravine could serve to help recognize donors' contributions and possibly prepare them for the Mid-Year Appeal. Eleanor suggested the idea of our choosing a particular flower, plant, or moss to entice people out for watershed talks.

## **Q1 Grant Horizon, Kate Berlin**

-Kate gave a detailed report about our grants, in what capacity we will need to meet with the City, certain grants getting yanked, and where we may turn next. EPA's Region 9 grant may not yet be shut down, so we'll go ahead and apply on the chance it may have some funds. These aim to support restoration in the lower watershed. We hope that Proposition 4 funding will be accepting applications in the summer.

## **\*Guideline Trustee Change**

-Barry was asked to consider becoming the Trustee for our Staff's 401(k) plan ("Guideline"), which means he would be the overseer of that plan. Because his daughter Elena Stenger is on staff and therefore a participant in this plan, special permission had to be obtained from her to satisfy conflict of interest concerns. Elena gave that permission. Eleanor moved that Barry be appointed as Trustee to the Guideline 401(k) plan for our employees. Russ seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously.

## **Administration**

-Eleanor informed the Board that funds have been transferred from *Gusto* to *Guidelines*. She advised that we stay on top of *Gusto*, since they have been remiss getting our funds to *Guidelines*.

-Rob asked all Board Members to sign the annual Conflict of Interest form. Kate suggested she create a DocuSign contract she would send out to Board Members. Everyone thought this was a good idea.

## **\*Minutes and Commitments Review**

-Approval from both the October and December, 2024 meetings have been pending. Barry moved that the minutes from the October, 2024 Board meeting be approved with the following amendments:

### **Name Change Consideration:**

The Chair, 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.

Russ seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously. Barry then moved that the December, 2024 minutes be approved. Russ also seconded that motion, which was then approved unanimously.

### **End-of-Meeting Comments, Observations, Questions**

-Russ gave enthusiastic praise to Kate for her outstanding *California Botanist* talk, which was extremely well received by the audience. Her talk can be found online.

-Eliana Thompson, FOSC's new Communications Intern, introduced herself. Eliana grew up in Oakland and graduated from U.C. Davis with an emphasis in conservation and culture. She is instituting a "Watershed Wednesdays" addition to the newsletter, pointing out different features of the watershed, giving information about the trails, and letting readers know to get involved.

-Ella announced that volunteer turnout is up to 400% compared to last year.

-Rob reminded the Board that next year will be FOSC's 30th anniversary. He is inviting ideas for how we might celebrate, and whether this should be the focus of this year's retreat. Barry volunteered to do a survey about the timing of the retreat, wondering if June would be the best month.

-Rob announced that Kristin Sheve, a U.C. Berkeley Extension Forestry Professor and redwoods expert may be interested in sponsoring a Masters student to work on Fern Ravine.

-The Board expressed a desire for a different meeting place for the meetings. Ricky said she would continue to search.

### **Adjournment**

-The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

**-PLEASE NOTE! Next Board of Directors Meeting** Until further notice, meetings will take place on the **THIRD** Wednesday of every other even-numbered month. Therefore, the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, **April 16**, 2025. We will convene at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1658 Excelsior Avenue (at Woodruff), Oakland, CA 94602, at 7:00 p.m.

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\*The original version of these minutes, prior to the amendments made to correct them, read as follows:

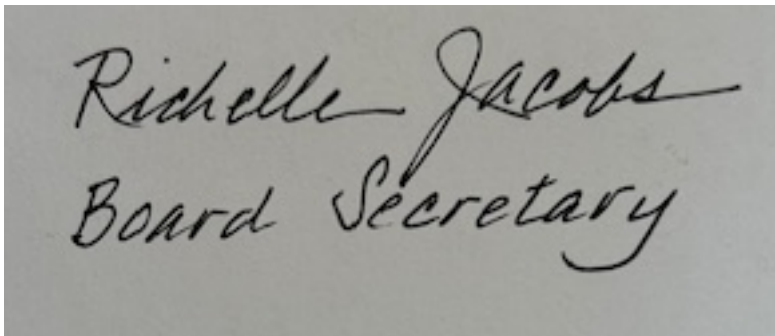
### **Skyline Trustee Change**

-Barry was asked to consider becoming the Trustee for our Staff's 401(k) plan, which means he would be the overseer of that plan. Because his daughter Elena Stenger is on staff and therefore a participant in this plan, special permission had to be obtained from her to satisfy conflict of interest concerns. Elena agreed to Barry's becoming Trustee. Eleanor moved that Barry be appointed as Trustee to the Guideline 401(k) plan for our employees. Russ seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously.

### **Minutes and Commitments Review**

-Pending from both the October and December 2024 meetings, Barry moved that the minutes from the October 2024 Board meeting be approved with the amendments that were made. Russ seconded the motion, which was then passed unanimously. Barry then moved that the December 2024 minutes be approved. Russ also seconded that motion, which was then approved unanimously.

Amended Minutes submitted April 23, 2025

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Richelle Jacobs" on the first line and "Board Secretary" on the second line. The handwriting is cursive and fluid.