

**Friends of Sausal Creek  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 7:00 p.m.  
St. Paul Lutheran Church  
1658 Excelsior Ave., Oakland, CA 94602**

*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, Laila Robinson (Student Board Member), Tim Vendlinski

**Absent** Sean Welch, Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Maria Katticaran, , Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus), Vick Argarwal (Student Board Member)

**Staff Present** Nicki Alexander, (incoming Executive Director), Kate Berlin (Interim Executive Director)

**Remarks from President, Rob Leidy**

- On behalf of himself and the rest of the Board, Rob welcomed Nicki Alexander back to FOSC. Nicki recounted some of her history since she was on staff with us as Education and Outreach Coordinator in 2018. After that she worked at the EPA and also did a stint in the Peace Corps in South America. She will be assuming the role of Executive Director of FOSC full time in June.

- Rob acknowledged that this meeting was taking place on unceded Huichin (alternatively spelled Huchiun) Ohlone territory.

**Committee and Other Related Updates**

**Restoration, Russ Huddleston**

- Russ reported that we've signed the Fern Ravine contract with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, marking March 13 as the official start of our grant period.

- Mark and others are looking at canopy collapse in Dimond Canyon. (Eliana wrote an article about this for our newsletter.) We'll try to get eight white alder trees planted this weekend (the goal ultimately is 20). Eventually we're looking for grant funding for a comprehensive restoration plan for Dimond Canyon. We have a similar plan for Fern Ravine.

- Kristy, Tim, and Russ had a brief conversation about outplanting of manzanitas at Blue Rock Mesa, which is likely to be put on the agenda for this

fall. The Restoration Committee will be meeting on April 17th and this will be added to the agenda.

- Rob reported that he, Tim, Nicki, Kate, and Ella met with Oakland Tree Services at Fern Ravine today to discuss tree removal of select trees as well as other collaborations. Tree removal is scheduled to begin on Friday and work into next week. They showed Tree Services where fencing will go along Fern Ravine Creek and Orchard Creek and also discussed collaborating on growing plants for the City. Kate and Ella will follow up with the City for this future endeavor. Tree Services seemed enthusiastic and embracing of ecosystem restoration beyond fire fuel management.

#### Permit Update

- Tim reported that we've received clarification from Isaac Harvey that his brief email is sufficient to submit to the City for waiver of a tree protection permit for the minor conditional use permit packet. He said the documents will be uploaded to the portal tomorrow. He is hoping to get an intake appointment soon, after which the permit should get final approval.

#### Nursery

- Kristy reported that a donor has gifted us funds for a soil sterilizer. The only problem is that these sterilizers are currently on hold since the patent holder died. We are on a wait list.

#### Lower Watershed and Education Committees

- These two committees need more members. The current plan is to approach partners in the lower watershed and do recruitment outreach in the newsletter.

#### Board Member and Committee Member Recruitment

- Rob asked the Board please to look around for some promising Board member candidates, since we need at least two or three more members. We'll take prospective members for coffee to answer their questions and flesh out what Board membership entails.

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

- Kate was widely praised for her excellent report. The Board was also impressed with the many tasks the team is working on. Staff members Elena Stenger, Ella Matsuda, Eliana Thompson, and intern Robert Williamson, were all lauded for their work.

#### Finances, Barry Stenger

##### Budget/Actual Comparison

- Barry announced that everything is looking good -- we're at our goal point for the year. The Mid-Year Appeal will be going out in mid May.

### Project Timeline and Cash Flow

- Kate went over details of the project timeline and cash flow with the Board. There are currently no cash flow issues.

### Permit Fee, Kristy Brady

- Alexia at the Bureau of Planning mentioned a potential \$6000 permit fee for the EEF grant work, which would go far beyond the \$500-\$600 we'd been led to expect. Ours is unprecedented work and so the City may be lumping us in with "building structure" projects, whereas ours is habitat restoration. Kate will talk to Alexia in the hopes of getting this fee waived.

### Kate's Budget Shift Proposals

a) Supplies: That there be an increase from \$7500 to \$11,500 for a soil sterilizer. This increase will be offset by a restricted contribution of \$4000.

b) Transportation: That there be an increase from \$300 to \$1000 for Nicki's airfare; also, an increase in mileage reimbursement for staff, to go into effect next year. This amount TBD. There is no income offset for these changes.

c) Insurance, Taxes, and Licenses: That there be a \$700 annual premium increase (it is currently at \$4500) to meet Schedule Q requirements (\$2M Occurrence limit and \$4M Aggregate. The current coverage is at \$1M Occurrence, \$3M Aggregate.)

d) Subcontracts: That there be an increase from \$30,000 to \$46,750 for one installment of YEP Stream Team 2025 Services. This additional \$16,750 would be incorporated the next FY for the 2nd installment. This will be offset by the CNRA grant income.

e) Payroll fees: That there be an increase from \$2160 to \$5052 to finish the year. This category includes monthly charges for *Gusto* (\$180), *Guideline* (\$113-\$129), and *Take Command Health* (\$120).

f) Office supplies: That there be an increase from \$700 to \$2060 to include a printer and toner for Nicki (\$1000), and envelopes and postage for MYA (\$360). There is no income offset for these increases.

g) Printing and copies: Rectifying a typo, the budget line should be \$1000. Additionally, there would be an increase of \$150 for professional printing of the MYA letter.

h) Hospitality: That the allocation be increased from \$500 to \$700 for the May Appreciation Picnic. This cost will be offset by DIA grant income. Because of expanded programing and community events, a significant

increase in allocation for hospitality should be made, the amount to be determined for next year.

#### Budget Adjustment Vote

- Barry made the motion to approve the budget adjustments as proposed. Rob seconded the motion. This motion was approved unanimously.

#### Nursery Budget Line Item, Russ Huddleston

- The Nursery Committee is suggesting we add a line-item budget for nursery contingencies and repairs to be considered for the next budget cycle. If those funds are unspent, they would roll over.

#### Annual Endowment Draw, Barry Stenger

- The calculation for the annual endowment draw is based on the average balance of the *For the Future Fund* over the last 12 quarters. The draw policy is typically 4%, though we took 5% over the last two years because of cash flow issues. The committee met virtually and approved recommending a 4% draw for next year's budget.

On March 31 the FTF fund's balance was \$215,959. The proposed 4% draw would be \$7,849.

- Barry moved to approve the \$7,849 draw on the endowment for next year's budget. Ricky seconded the motion. After a brief discussion clarifying the calculation used, this motion was unanimously approved.

#### Signage

- Mark wondered whether we have a budget line item for educational signage. He expressed concern that signage is needed before the City begins tree cutting. Kate responded that some signs (e.g. Forest Restoration in Progress), with a QR code, are already up where trees were removed. Additional signage will be installed when current trees come down. We've received signs from Tree Services about the importance of wildlife as well, and plan to install those. We will also be upgrading the current laminated restoration signs. Kate said she would talk to David at Tree Services about messaging on trees marked with Xs (i.e. marked for removal for restoration purposes.)

- Mark also inquired about budgeting for redoing path maps. Kate said that we are currently out of maps, with a plan to reprint a much smaller batch than last time (which was 30,000). There is a team working on a virtual map

version which goes beyond Dimond Canyon to include the whole watershed, which Ella is working on. This team will be discussing webpage content.

There is also a plan for more substantial trailhead signs (with our logo and a QR code) instead of laminated pages. The long-range plan is to get funding for a full reprinting, including with Spanish translation, of the entire watershed.

In the past, Friends of Joaquin Miller Park has paid for half the cost of printing the maps. We need an updated estimate, and to look at the possibility of sponsorships. Barry wondered if perhaps we might tie this into the Mid-Year Appeal.

- Rob suggested we might post about tree removals on our website, careful to explain the need for such removals. It was suggested we add a "Current Projects" page to the website to track the progress of our various projects. The newsletter was also mentioned as a good place for updates, since people are more likely to read the newsletter than the website.

As for general signage, the plan is for more signs explaining projects and native plants and linking to our website. Yard sign format is preferred over laminated pages.

## **Fundraising**

### **Q2 Grant Horizon, Kate Berlin**

- Kate gave a detailed report of the grant horizon. Fingers are crossed for funds from The Rose Foundation. We hope to hear in June. Kate will be attending a webinar for the Wildlife Conservation Board next week to learn about the process of procuring funds from Prop 4. Our goal is to fund the Wood Park project, but we will need City support. Kate will reach out to a few specific people there. Rob suggested that we need to think about projects that don't involve the City. Tim said we might pursue engagement with the county. Kate said we need to secure another large-scale education grant (like CNRA), since the current one ends in March of 2026.

### **Mid-Year Appeal, Barry Stenger**

- Barry reported that the Rainmakers met Monday. He said the Mid-Year Appeal letter will stress the importance of volunteers and affirm the generosity of our donors, emphasizing becoming a monthly sustaining donor. These letters will be mailed around May 16, with intermittent email blasts, through the end of July.

A general discussion took place suggesting ideas to enhance the Appeal--ideas such as what kind of information we need about the donors to make our private notes to them more personal; whether including a sticker

might pique interest; creating a visible "thermometer" (perhaps a redwood tree or a Calochortus sprouting petals?) showing the progress of the campaign. Kate said our stretch goal is \$20,000 while hoping for \$16,000.

Board members were asked to provide two or three names with addresses for prospective new donors.

#### Earth Day After-Party Fundraiser

- Kate gave details about the fundraiser party taking place after all the hard work on Earth Day. There will be an afternoon/evening benefit concert by local school teachers at Degrees Plato in the Laurel. Pitches for donations will be made between sets, and the proceeds will be split 50-50 with Friends of Dimond Park. Kate will show up early to set up a FOSC table.

#### Minutes

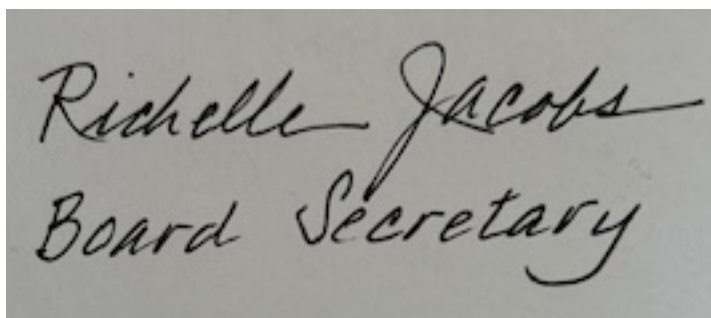
- Barry gave detailed instructions to Ricky, Board Secretary, for amendments to the October, 2024, and February, 2025 minutes. With those amendments on record and agreed to, he moved that the October minutes and the February minutes be approved. Rob seconded the motion, which was then unanimously approved.

#### Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

- The next meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, **June 18**, 2025, again at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 1658 Excelsior Avenue (at Woodruff), Oakland, CA 94602.

- A closed session followed this meeting.  
Respectfully submitted on June 30, 2025



Richelle Jacobs  
Board Secretary