

**Friends of Sausal Creek
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, August 14, 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, Kristy Brady, Beth Keer, Russ Huddleston, Rob Leidy, Maria Katticaran, Sean Welch

Absent Harry Schrauth (Board Member Emeritus), Mark Rauzon (Board Member Emeritus), Delaney Welch (former Student Board Member)

Staff Present Lisa Giordano, Executive Director

Guests Present Mostafa J. Khiabani, FOSC volunteer and founder of *Friends of Farahzad River*, Tehran; Courtney Kaplan, FOSC Fern Ravine volunteer; Lynda Deschambault, environmental scientist retired from the EPA

Board Involvement Creek-to-Bay Day (Sept. 21 & 22, 2024). Meet at the Scout Hut in Dimond Park and go to various sites from there.

Remarks from President Barry Stenger

- Barry welcomed Board members and acknowledged that this meeting was taking place on unceded Huichin Ohlone territory.
- Barry asked the Board whether it would be willing to consider renaming and rebranding the organization -- not at this meeting, but in the foreseeable future. His reasoning mostly had to do with fundraising and the fact that a "Friends of" organization usually connotes a group helping to raise funds for a parent organization. The Board expressed an openness to considering this. Barry said he would get back with more information.
- Barry also floated the idea of having fewer Board meetings and omitting the August meeting. He suggested the Board consider an alternative to bi-monthly meetings. Perhaps quarterly? Additionally, he suggested that in place of the two meetings that would be dropped, we consider an annual June retreat plus a yearly Board volunteer day when we all volunteered together.

Board Discussion/Committee Reports

RESTORATION COMMITTEE

- Rob reported that the staff has concluded community outreach for our capital improvement projects at Wood Park and Barry Place. We will apply to PRAC for a permit for split rail fencing in Joaquin Miller Park. There is still much work to do in the upper part of Fern Ravine, so we will try to get a ten-year programmatic permit.
- Russ announced that he and Ella secured a ten-year permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to propagate and outplant pallid manzanitas in our restoration sites. Thanks to Tim, who met with the Green Biome Institute, they have agreed to do conservation genetics on the leaves that Russ and Ella will be collecting.
- Tim reported on tree work at Big Trees, Manzanita Grove, and Blue Rock Mesa near Lookout Point. He reported that the Superintendent of the Park District said they're ready to replace temporary fencing with permanent split rail fencing. If we remove non-native cypress trees, many natives will have more sunlight and thereby transform that area. This season volunteers removed brush and daylighted many pallid manzanitas that had been smothered by competing vegetation.
- Lisa reported that we have applied to the Environmental Enhancement Fund for a grant for \$543,919 over three years, for fencing and trail restoration. She is optimistic about our chances of receiving this funding.
- Rob and Ella are working on a scientific paper about the work at Fern Ravine.

NURSERY COMMITTEE

- Russ reported that we have instituted monthly seed hikes; also, that eight benches in the nursery have been refurbished by Eagle Scouts to meet industry standards. He is aiming to get air certification for the nursery, which will require keeping it pathogen free. Ella is gearing up for the plant sale. At this time we have approximately 5000 plants. Lisa announced that we are seeking funding to manage invasives, and that we are seeding grasses.

(RAINMAKER& ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE updates to be reported under Fundraising.)

- Team Oakland: Lisa said that Team Oakland participants had a very positive experience this summer. Plans for the current school year are underway. There will be a three-week program at the Richmond/El Cerrito Summit K2 School for middle schoolers. We will receive \$4,000 for that program.
- State of the Watershed debrief: Concerns were expressed about our State of the Watershed event which occurred later than usual this year, as well as its being held outdoors where there was less foot traffic than in other parts of the park. Kristy suggested we aim for a non-summer event, and timed for when school is in session. Russ praised the speakers and raised the question as to whether a specific versus a general topic might be preferable in the future.
- Program expenses/hours breakdown & regional watershed map: Lisa displayed a pie diagram showing the expenses and staff hours breakdown from month to month. She queried the Board about whether to continue using the pie chart format, or to go with something new, such as bubbles. She will try to map, for example, how much time Ella spends in the lower versus the upper watershed. Ella already has her finger on how many plants go where.
- Possible property bequest to FOSC: Barry and Tim met with donors who wanted to know if FOSC would be interested in being included as a beneficiary in their trust. They would like to bequeath a piece of creekside property. Tim explained to them that since FOSC is not a land trust, it would be difficult to accept the offer of this bequest, and suggested a better path may be to give the property to the City while they, the donors, are still alive. The donors are looking into this. Tim suggested they engage land use attorneys who could work out a liability arrangement. Barry thought it notable that donors such as these think of FOSC as an organization whose advice they respect.

Finances

- Lisa discussed the Project Timeline and Cash Flow Chart and spoke about grant applications in progress and on the horizon, as well as grant delays.

- FOSC was rejected on a few competitive grant proposals. On a positive note, though, we did receive a \$10,000 grant from the California Health Care Foundation in memory of Vincent James.
- FOSC has a new contract with City Parks and Trees for \$2,681. We are still waiting to receive overdue funds from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), who claim this money will be forthcoming in about eight more weeks. Lisa said we may have to dip into operating expenses to cover our bases. She suggested a draw of about \$8,600.
- Financial Statements of Position and Activities were reviewed.

Fundraising (Barry Stenger, Rainmaker Committee Chair)

- Donor Dinner 2024: Invitations for the Donor Dinner on Thursday, September 26th, are ready to send.
- Midyear Appeal 2024 review: We netted \$15,500; the goal was \$20,000. An analysis will be prepared for the next Board meeting focusing on who did and did not donate.

Endowment Committee Update

- Barry reported that the *For the Future Fund* currently has \$208,000, though this figure fluctuates. He wondered whether we should ask specifically for endowment donations in our appeals. Tim wondered if it might be a good idea to take a portion out of the *For the Future Fund* and put it into a high-yield CD to guarantee a steady return. Barry responded that the fluctuations continue to have an upward trajectory, and reminded the Board that Carl Kohnert's motto was always to keep our funds in stocks.

Administration

- Lisa informed the Board that our hoped-for transition to a new bank continues to be a work in progress. The Board discussed the possibility of considering other options for both an account and for a credit card. Eleanor reminded the Board that we must have a credit card because the current situation, where staff use their own cards and then get reimbursed, is not tenable. Lisa said she will narrow the options down to two banks and come back to the Steering Committee for a decision.
- A Quickbooks transition to the online version from the desktop version is in progress. This will allow accessibility from individual laptops.

- Employee/Intern handbooks have been completed. They will afford easy access to policy review.

Minutes & Commitments Review

- Tim moved to approve the June 14 , 2024, Board meeting minutes. Kristy seconded the motion, which then passed unanimously.

Individual Board Member & Guest Check-In

- Lynda Deschambault spoke of her campaign for an upcoming seat on the East Bay Regional Parks District Board. She shared that the EBRP is currently working on a "Second Century Plan" as the 90th anniversary of the East Bay Regional Parks approaches. Lynda is a former Moraga mayor and council member.
- Courtney Kaplan, neighbor and Fern Ravine volunteer, is here tonight to learn more about FOSC.
- Mostafa J. Khiabani volunteers for FOSC and works with *Friends of Farahzad River*, Tehran, online.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Next Board meeting

- The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at the Montclair Presbyterian Church, Oakland, CA.

