

APPROVED MINUTES

MEETING OF THE Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group (WPCG) Monday, April 29, 2024 10:00 a.m.

El Cerrito City Hall, Council Chambers
with Virtual Attendance available via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Note: This meeting was facilitated by Placeworks consultant David Early through Agenda Item 8.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

1. Alameda County: Supervisor Elisa Marquez
2. Contra Costa County: Supervisor John Gioia
3. City of Berkeley: Vice Mayor Susan Wengraf
4. City of El Cerrito: Councilmember Paul Fadelli
5. City of Oakland: Councilmember Janani Ramachandran
6. City of Richmond; Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin
7. Rodeo-Hercules FPD: Board Vice Chair Marie Bowman [non-voting: observed virtually]

Fire Chiefs Present: Broschard (Contra Costa County FPD), Sprague (City of Berkeley), Saylor (El Cerrito), McDonald (Alameda County FPD)

2. REVIEW AND APPROVE DRAFT AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Motion by Ramachandran, seconded by Wengraf to approve agenda.

VOTE: 6-0-0: Passed unanimously

3. OVERVIEW OF WPCG MEMBERS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE MEMBERS

Community Steering Group Co-Chair Jon Kaufman thanked the seven founding members and participating fire chiefs, and reported that representatives from the cities of Hayward and Pinole and the Kensington Fire District reported that their councils/board have agendized/plan to agendize proposed ratification of the MOU.

4. CONSIDERATION OF FISCAL AGENT AND STAFF SUPPORT

The WPCG MOU provides that either one or two separate agencies or organizations fulfill two different functions:

Fiscal Agent: Must be a member agency. Oakland Firesafe Council (OFSC) has served as voluntary fiscal agent during the formation phase. Now that the WPCG has been launched, a fiscal agent from among the members must be named to collect new monies and manage any leftover funds raised by the community volunteers that are still held by OFSC. Members agreed to start having conversations with their respective staffs about which agency makes most sense to serve as fiscal agent.

Administrative/staff support: Support staff can come from member agencies or other sources, such as nonprofit organizations or paid consultants. Community volunteers and consulting firm Placeworks have served this function to date. The WPCG will need to decide on its own administrative support, including whether to continue engaging Placeworks or identify a new form of professional administrative support.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Motion by Wengraf, second by Gioia, to have Placeworks continue providing support until a long-term solution is selected.

VOTE: 6-0-0: Passed unanimously

5. POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Jon Kaufman presented a [list of potential activities](#) for the WPCG to consider, which was gleaned from discussions with WPCG members and fire officials.

Richmond City Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin presented a resolution passed by Richmond City Council at the same time it approved the MOU. She asked the WPCG to consider adopting this resolution, which was drafted by members of the community from the Native Plants Society and the local Sierra Club.

Members discussed how it would move forward to develop a strategic direction for the new organization, including considering passing resolutions such as the one adopted by the Richmond City Council. Discussion points included:

- The WPCG should prioritize and focus on areas that could provide ‘quick wins’ to demonstrate the added value of this new regional body. Examples included developing consistent definitions for wildfire related terms, such as safe parking, fire code restrictions and obligations of homeowners.
- While an overall strategic framework will be necessary, the WPCG should avoid devoting too much time to overarching policies if it distracts from doing work that will build trust in the community and potential funding bodies.

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- As a first step toward developing its priorities, the WPCG should hear presentations from member fire departments about their current work in wildfire preparedness and vegetation management, as well as other experts, as necessary.
- A committee of the WPCG should create a proposed ‘strategic framework’ or list of priorities and a timeline for WPCG consideration at a future meeting.
- Upcoming agenda topics should include: (i) a workshop with technical presentations from member agencies and other technical experts, (ii) consideration of the creation of a committee to develop a strategy for the WPCG, (iii) discussion of the resolution from City of Richmond, (iv) identification of specific short-term goals, and (v) a discussion on insurance (possibly with the California Insurance Commissioner).

PUBLIC COMMENT: The following suggestions were raised:

- The CalFIRE study on vegetation in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties is an excellent resource for the WPCG.
- Importance of the three “R’s”: Remove, Restore, Re-establish biodiversity, and recommendation to hear from environmental community at next meeting.
- There are five different FireSafe groups on the west side of the East Bay Hills ridge. The WPCG should consider using them as a collective voice and resource.
- The WPCG should not put off the hard decisions and start doing something.
- Words and policy frameworks are important in the beginning; need more attention on home hardening because vegetation management and fuel breaks have limits.
- Would be good to have the WPCG consider home insurance issues with a presentation from the State Insurance Commissioner at a future meeting.
- Involvement of East Bay Regional Parks District is critical in the region; EBRPD staff have been involved in discussions to date. The relationship between the WPCG and EBRPD, and other regional bodies will need to be explored.
- At future meetings the chair should consider announcing Zoom participants.

ACTION: Motion by **Wengraf**, second by **Marquez** to have the next meeting agenda consist of technical presentations from member agencies and other technical experts, and to include the following items for future meeting agendas:

consideration of an ad hoc committee for strategy; the resolution from City of Richmond, and discussion with California Insurance Commissioner.

VOTE: 6-0-0: Passed unanimously

6. FINANCIAL SITUATION

Community Steering Committee Co-Chair Lisa Jacobs provided an overview of money raised to date to support the formation of the new regional body. Contributions have come from the community, insurance industry (CSAA Insurance), PG&E, with significant grants from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Donner Family Foundation and the Bay Area Council Economic Institute (BACEI) via a grant from the State Coastal Conservancy. In addition, six jurisdictions (Alameda County, Contra Costa County, Berkeley, Pinole, Richmond and Moraga-Orinda Fire District) have provided financial support.

The main expenditure has been the engagement of the consulting firm Placeworks (David Early and team) which has provided consistent and professional logistics, facilitation and strategic support to the effort. The other expenditure has been legal advice from Hanson Bridgett (Shayna van Hoften).

The bottom line is that the WPCG has approximately \$25,000 available currently (before April billings).

Members generally agreed that options for funding the WPCG and its activities should be discussed at a future meeting.

7. PRESENTATION: EAST BAY HILLS FUELS REDUCTION REPORT

Patrick Kellerman, Vice President for Research and Policy for BACEI, presented the draft report, "Harnessing the Private Sector: Opportunities and Challenges for Incentivizing Market-Based Uses of Woody Biomass in the East Bay Hills." The report is the product of a grant received from the State Coastal Conservancy to BACEI and Oakland Firesafe Council as fiscal agent for the WPCG. The report includes a description of the process to create the WPCG.

WPCG members and others are welcome to review the report and provide any feedback to Mr. Kellerman or Lisa Jacobs. The report will be made available to the public once finalized.

8. ELECTION OF LEADERSHIP

El Cerrito Councilmember Paul Fadelli nominated Berkeley Vice Mayor Susan Wengraf as WPCG Chair. Councilmember Wengraf accepted the nomination, noting that her city councilmember term will end after the 2024 November elections.

Oakland Councilmember Janani Ramachandran nominated herself as WPCG Vice-Chair.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ACTION: Motion by **Fadelli**, second by **Marquez**, to elect Susan Wengraf as Chair for the remainder of her term as city councilmember and Janani Ramachandran as Vice-Chair.

VOTE: 6-0-0: Passed unanimously

Note: Chair Susan Wengraf facilitated the remainder of the meeting.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

- A member of the Park Plaza Neighborhood Council announced some time-sensitive events and the Contra Costa County Mayor's Conference hosted by Richmond on October 3, 2023.
- Pinole City Councilmember Maureen Toms announced that approval of the WPCG MOU was on the next city council agenda.
- A member of the public suggested the WPCG consider an advisory role for the local FireSafe councils.

10. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Actions to approve admission of new members to WPCG.
- Creation of an ad hoc committee to advise on strategic direction of WPCG.
- Consideration of the resolution passed by the City of Richmond.
- Home insurance and a presentation by Commissioner Lara's office.
- Presentation on the historical ecological study of the region with a presentation by the SF Estuary Institute.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- A commenter expressed hope that the frequency of WPCG meetings will match the urgency of the comments.

11. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the WPCG will be on July 8, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Location to be announced.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.