

**COASTSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**September 2, 2021
9:00 a.m.**

LOCATION:

Pursuant to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20,
the meeting was held by teleconference and Zoom video conference.

MINUTES

1. OPEN SESSION

Deputy Chief/Secretary Jonathan Cox opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. The purpose of this meeting is to review the Vegetation Management Action Plan and to begin preparing a presentation for the Board at the September 22nd meeting.

2. ROLL CALL (All participants were present via Zoom.)

Present were Directors Steve Stockman and Cynthia Sherrill as well as Deputy Chief/Secretary Jonathan Cox. Director Bruce MacKimmie was also present. Also present were CalFire Deputy Fire Marshall Captain Austin Seeley and Fire Marshall Chief Gary Silva. Jean Headley took minutes.

Sabrina Brennan of Moss Beach was present online.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Director Stockman.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sabrina Brennan of Seal Cove/Moss Beach spoke on behalf of some of her neighbors. She read aloud an email she sent to Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox yesterday regarding increased fire hazard caused by dried tree trunks littering the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. Cut down trees are never removed, and they are used as an unnecessary form of fencing. They request that these downed trees be removed by County Parks Department.

Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox indicated Staff will coordinate with the Fire Marshall to determine the level of fire hazard. Captain Austin Seely said he will visit the site today or tomorrow to see which areas are of most concern. He asked Ms. Brennan if she has a contact person with the Parks Department, and she responded she got a response from Nicholas Calderone, the Director of County Parks. She will provide his contact information to Captain Seely.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Approval of Minutes of August 19, 2021 Special Meeting – Vegetation Management Committee Meeting

ON MOTION by Director Stockman, seconded by Director Sherrill, by the following Roll Call Vote, the Committee approved the Consent Calendar as submitted:

Director Stockman	Aye
Director Sherrill	Aye
Director MacKimmie	Abstain

Motion passed 2-0-1, with Director MacKimmie abstaining.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review Vegetation Management Action Plan

Deputy Chief Cox updated the Committee on the educational flyers that are being printed and should be distributed soon. He indicated that Michele Ortiz is compiling the information for the District's website. The Fire Danger rating sign at the El Granada Community Center is being drafted now and will go on Station 41 at a prominent location.

Director Stockman said we should come up with a proposal regarding the unimproved lots.

- B. Discuss Current Vegetation Management Activities

Director Sherrill said we are actively involved in responding to Ms. Casey's letter and it might be time to review and/or add to the comprehensive response plan. She asked Captain Seely if we got any response from the landowners who were contacted following Ms. Casey's letter.

Captain Seely responded he made a site visit two weeks ago and there was a large amount of tree work and brush removal being done. Staff had made the permit approval process for eucalyptus tree removal easier to obtain. He indicated, however, that the lots near Susan Casey's home are still out of compliance.

Director Sherrill asked how many responses we got from the letters that were sent to the eight property owners. Captain Seeley responded that although no responses were received, two of the property owners responded by doing work on the property. There was no response from the other six property owners.

Director Sherrill asked Captain Seely about involvement by the District Attorney if fines are imposed for non-compliance. Captain Seely replied that he spoke with the District Attorney's Office, and they said it is the Board's decision what we want to do.

Captain Seely discussed the Weed Abatement Program where the property owners are notified. If they don't take care of it, the District hires a private contractor to mow, but not to do any brush removal, tree work, or any work on steep terrain.

Director Sherrill asked regarding shaded fire breaks along the Highway 35 corridor in unincorporated areas along evacuation routes, and if that is anticipated for this area. Captain Seely said the majority of these lots in question are privately owned and the District doesn't have the ability to clear the lots without Board approval.

Director Sherrill asked if CalFire has seen any successful programs that have encouraged property owners to take care of their properties. Captain Seely said that other than incentive for providing for defensible space in case of wildfire, he's not aware of any additional incentives.

Director Stockman said he thinks every community across the west is facing these issues. He said the committee will try to stay current on these topics, but we need to stay aware of this issue. He suggested perhaps a separate phone call among Deputy Chief Cox, Director Sherrill, and himself on this issue to go deeper into this issue.

As to Captain Seely's site visit two weeks ago, Director Stockman asked Captain Seely if he has already addressed the concerns in Ms. Casey's letter. Captain Seely responded that they have addressed the concerns, but not much has been done due to the enforcement issue. However, some of the neighbors did some of the work themselves.

Director Stockman said the Committee is trying to come up with a policy that addresses the entire Coastside to take to the Board for action. He asked Deputy Chief Cox what would be needed for the Board to pursue the evaluation, and are there contractors out there prepared to bid.

Deputy Chief Cox said that Captain Seely has audited all of the unimproved lots in high fire hazard area, and he is working on a Staff Report that includes a synopsis of the status. There are 238 lots that are unimproved, 100 of which are already in the Weed Abatement Program. This leave 138 unimproved lots in the high fire hazard area that are unmitigated. He said some of the reasons they are unmitigated is because (1) they are in a riparian area impeding a protected area, (2) they are on a

steep slope and can't be mitigated due to safety, and (3) there is no access due to being landlocked or behind fences. That leaves 62 remaining lots that fall within an updated Weed Abatement Program. If you talk about potentially \$10,000 per lot, that is a lot of money.

Deputy Chief Cox feels the policy issue needs to address do we focus on the very high fire hazard areas in the near term and then the high fire hazard areas in subsequent years. He said this would be a Fire Hazard Abatement Program, being different from the Weed Abatement Program. He suggested that the Committee recommend to the Board that we do a couple years of Fire Hazard Abatement on those 62 lots that follows the Weed Abatement Program but happens at a different time of year.

Director Sherrill asked what resources do we need to gather together to create a Fire Hazard Abatement Policy for the Coastside Fire Protection District. She said that Captain Seely had said multiple agencies were involved in the south 35 program. Do we need multiple agencies as well?

Deputy Chief Cox said this is solely between the CFPD and the property owners. There is no need for including any other agencies.

Director Sherrill asked what if the property owner says, "Don't touch my property or I will sue you." Deputy Chief Cox responded that Captain Seely spends a lot of time speaking with the property owners, and it is very difficult for the owners to argue that there isn't a fire hazard, but they don't feel we should be charging them since they did the work.

Director Stockman initiated a discussion about making a fire hazard abatement a separate path from weed abatement. Deputy Chief Cox recommended that we take the immediate path of abatement on the properties. Once a property owner makes it through the fire hazard abatement process, they would then be enrolled in the weed abatement process.

Director Sherrill initiated a discussion about the impact on the District of having to wait for reimbursement for the Weed Abatement and Fire Hazard Abatement billed to the property owners. Deputy Chief Cox said that we lose the opportunity to make interest on the funds or to use those funds on something else.

Director Stockman discussed the role the District Attorney's Office will need to play in collecting from those property owners who don't pay for their abatement. Captain Seely said the District Attorney would not be involved in that part, but they would get involved when individual lots get called up on their correction notices.

Directors Stockman and Sherrill discussed what we still need to discuss at the September 9 Committee meeting to be able to make recommendations to the Board. Director Sherrill said we need to include in the assessment of what needs to be done and when, what the impact of the new policies or requests is on manpower and funding will be. And we are also developing a specific response to Ms. Casey's letter, as well as a phased and timed expansion of the fire abatement so that every neighborhood has an answer as to what is being done and the time frame for it. Hopefully, there can be a campaign to public encourage landowners to step up.

Director Stockman asked if Captain Seely and the Committee could have a Zoom meeting to prepare a response to the Casey letter. Captain Seely said yes. He discussed this is also a public outreach issue.

Deputy Chief Cox responded to a "chat" comment from Sabrina Brennan about properties owned by the County. He said that Nicholas Calderone is the contact person regarding the eucalyptus groves in Quarry Park.

Director Sherrill asked when Captain Seely is available, and he said he will get back to the Committee via email.

Director Stockman suggested a quick letter to Ms. Casey saying that we are working on it and want to give her a thorough response and ask for her patience to allow us a bit more time, but that it is a high priority to address the needs of that neighborhood. The letter should come from the Board through Michele Ortiz or President Burke. Deputy Chief Cox said it should come from President Burke.

Director Stockman said that next week's meeting will be about making a recommendation to the Board regarding adding the Fire Hazard to the Weed Abatement Ordinance as identifying the most endangered lots.

Deputy Chief Cox said that at next week's Committee meeting, Staff will give the Committee a Staff Report about what this looks like in detail so the Committee can take it to the full Board for recommendations.

Jean Headley will have the minutes of this Sept. 2 meeting as well as the Sept. 9 meeting prepared in time to be on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

6) **ADJOURNMENT**

Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox adjourned the meeting at 10:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deputy Chief Jonathan Cox, Secretary
Coastside Fire Protection District

Note: Audio and video tapes of meetings are available for inspection during regular business hours.