

<p><b>Midcoast Community Council</b>  <i>An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar</i>  PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038  <a href="http://www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org">http://www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org</a></p>	<p>Michelle Weil, Chair  Claire Toutant, Vice Chair  Len Erickson, Secretary  Dave Olson, Treasurer  Gregg Dieguez  Jill Grant  Dan Haggerty</p>
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## ***Minutes for Meeting of April 14, 2021***

### **Call to Order (7pm)**

All Council Members present. 84 others present. This meeting was conducted virtually in compliance of State and County COVID-related orders.

### **1. Board of Supervisors' Report**

Lena Silberman gave updates on Covid-19 status of the County overall, and the parallel trail. She also posted links (see the MCC website for all links from this meeting). Several questions were asked; Lena will research and send answers later. Barbara Dye of GCSD mentioned the sewer line replacement project on several streets near the Post Office. GCSD continues to follow up on the possibility of a community center in the old fire station. Permits are in progress for the park on the Burnham strip.

Harvey Rahrback said that the HMB City Council has decided to create a citizen's advisory committee for redistricting. The council allocated \$250,000 for non-profit community groups.

Kathryn Slater-Carter said MWSD is working on their budget, and has also received a district election letter. They have not yet decided whether to switch to district elections. Mentioned the RCD water quality report at Sewer Authority Midcoast. She also mentioned water quality work at the harbor.

Kellyx Nelson mentioned that the RCD was having a water quality discussion on April 21.

Carlyle Ann Young asked Lena about RV pump out (to be researched), and asked Kellyx about San Vicente Creek being on the beach bumper list. Kellyx said that would be discussed at the meeting on the 21st.

### **2. (7:25) Public Comment & Announcement**

Krystlyn Giedt spoke about the revised Caltrans emergency VMS signs; she does not think they are needed or a good idea. She requested MCC allow more public feedback. It was pointed out that April 20th was the deadline for Caltrans comment.

Ann Rothman asked for an oversight committee on local resident or worker preferences at Cypress Point.

Kathryn Slater-Carter spoke on the Costanera restaurant moving, and that the Use Permit for the Montara beach location required that it remain an operating business.

### **3. (7:25) Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of minutes for March 24th, 2021  
Moved Gregg, 2nd Dan, passed 7-0

### **4. Regular Agenda**

- a. **Wildfire Preparedness on the Midcoast**

(7:40) Rich Sampson presented a few slides. He started off by saying that removing all the eucalyptus from Quarry Park isn't something he sees as realistic in the next 5-10 years. Even if that was done, it would not change the high severity rating, due to the way that the models are constructed (because there would still be flammable plant material). It also would likely not reduce fire insurance rates. It would improve safety, but not significantly affect insurance.

(19:55) David Cosgrove spoke, gave a link to longer talk fire safety (on youtube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsmf-Qzk\\_DI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsmf-Qzk_DI)) last week, two more in series. Everybody should establish their own evacuation routes, with multiple choices; early evacuation is better than late. Suggests that the community get familiar with Zonehaven (<https://community.zonehaven.com>).

(20:05) Supervisor Horsley spoke on some of the things that the County has done, including equipment for Parks equipment and adding a natural resources management division (it oversees the fuel reduction effort), funding and the development of the zonehaven application with Calfire.

(20:10) Nicholas Calderon presented and talked about fuel reduction efforts in parks. 6 of county 24 parks have areas in very high fire danger zones. Have been working on plans and strategy to cover all of those areas with resources and funding, short and long term, and to obtain more funding (for all areas in danger), based on 14 criteria, with human life highest weighted. Showed list, talked about trying to reduce severe fire danger rather than all fire danger. Quarry Park #2 on list of 18 projects, maintaining 2019 work along roads. Some other areas like Kings Mt even higher risk than Quarry. Showed some of the higher priority projects.

(20:30) Kellyx Nelson spoke, no presentation. Discussed joint project between RCD and County for chipping, etc. Talked about the Firesafe Council <https://firesafesanteo.org/>, and that it is a good site for information, as well as the council being a good forum to discuss priorities. Priorities need to be established prior to funding becoming available (as in the recent assembly bill). She answered a number of questions that came up in email or chat. FEMA funding isn't available for the projects being done, because they don't meet the criteria for the very specific grant programs.

Kellyx Addressed questions about complete removal of eucalyptus (referenced large number of emails asking for that); chat questions mostly more flexible in approach. A multi-pronged approach is needed in terms of involvement and funding, including residents. At this point, there is not a clear definition of a project. Has heard significant concern about fire insurance costs and cancellations, and also about risk to residents. She is hearing from people in multiple parts of the county, not just the Midcoast.

The RCD works with both public lands and private property owners. Multiple solutions will be needed, not just a single project.

Attempting to do a 100% removal of eucalyptus would be so expensive that it would probabl not be possible to get funding, resulting in nothing. State released \$140M

in funding today for the entire state, and many areas are competing for that funding.

Community support is an important part of getting funding, and work on private property gives leverage to funding dollars. HMB and Pacifica are both doing work along roads. Discussed tree ordinance not being a significant barrier; if somebody does experience problems, please contact her staff at the RCD (sheena@sanmateoRCD.org or Erica@sanmateoRCD.org). Quarry Park project fits better with some grant programs than others (mitigating risk vs recovery, shovel ready vs planning stage, etc.)

Discussed San Diego project (had lots of Nextdoor and other discussion). Much smaller project, and not the same as SMC).

(20:45) Supervisor Horsley mentioned that the County helps fund RCD projects because they have more flexibility than the County, and have been able to leverage other funds. County continues to pursue non-local funding for this issue, as well as sea level rise. Mentioned that the hotel/motel purchases were funded with special state funding; it couldn't be used for anything else.

(20:50) Sheena Sidhu spoke on the Coastal Regional Prioritization Group of the Forest .... ; works with other local RCDs and Firesafe groups. Creating an overall prioritization list and set of criteria, combining all the local priority lists. Goal is to create strong grant proposals while not competing between the local agencies.

MCC clarification round: Asked about using goats rather than herbicides, and when the next project for Quarry Park will be planned and ready for action.

Nicholas answered that there are 2 more projects planned for Quarry park in the next 5 years 1. Remove mature trees along Quarry Park roads to ensure they remain open. Also expand south ridge fire road for access to the south and east portions of the park. 2. Remove all vegetation in 200' fuel break along SW edge of Quarry Park near residences along Columbus, etc. Cost of both is about \$1.2M Haven't yet explored use of goats. Explained that herbicide is painted on stumps, not broadcast sprayed.

Dan asked about purchasing specialized equipment like feller-bunchers. Nicholas said that for each project, they rely on the people bidding for the project to determine the best equipment. Rich said that some of that equipment was used in 2019, and also in other recent projects. It's limited to less steep slopes.

Len asked about eucs in the El Granada medians. Supervisor Horsley answered that he has been told that the answer is that the property owner owns out to centerline, but the County has an easement for the road. Supervisor Horsley asked DPW to estimate the cost of removing some of the eucs in the medians. Barbara Dye said that the GCSD attorneys opinion is that the County owns the medians due to the date of transfer.

Jill asked about the additional fire stations in the planning stage, asked if any were new. Skylonda was a complete rebuild. San Mateo Highlands is the other that has been rebuilt, and the Pescadero station will be a complete rebuild in a new location.

Jill asked Kellyx how the RCD works with private landowners. They worked with the group of homeowners with the project at the Planning Comm today; not sure that they saved money, but they did help with the process.

Jill asked Nicholas who does the fuel reduction planning (parks, or parks and Calfire). Nicholas answered that it's parks, but they discuss with Calfire and others. On an annual basis, the Parks budget is about 0.5M/yr currently.

Gregg asked Rich whether chapparal was lower risk than eucalyptus. Rich answered yes, and he would prefer to see native vegetation. Yes eucs at 12, chaparral at 10, grass around 2. Rich's point wasn't about ability to fight fire, or risk, but rather that the insurance companies don't consider 12 vs 10 a significant difference

Gregg asked about Firesafe Council, and what steps are next, and how the MCC can be involved. Kellyx answered that it's a source of information and forum, not that it's necessary for the MCC to be directly involved. Attending meetings can be valuable to improve understanding. He asked who has overall responsibility. Kellyx said that there isn't a single point of responsibility today. She prefers the multiple plan approach.

Gregg asked Supervisor Horsley if the County will lead the effort to remove trees along roads to ensure safe evacuation routes. County isn't able to make Caltrans and private property owners clear those trees. Nicholas added that Parks continues to search for additional grant funds.

(21:25) Claire asked if the County could make rules to try and change (make illegal) unsafe activities like bonfires, bbqs, building in unsafe areas, etc. Supervisor Horsley doesn't want to try to change zoning, due to issues of legal taking; he hopes that real estate agents would be clear on their disclosures. He said that the Sheriff does patrol and enforce violations. Fireworks can't be sold or used in the County, but they can't do anything about Pacifica or other cities that allow their use.

Dan asked Nicholas about the herbicide requirement for Quarry Park fire maintenance, and which herbicide will be used. Nicholas said it's used to control invasive species. Appears to be succeeding. Applied only directly to stumps. Rich also said it is very effective; typically takes 3-4 applications over multiple years. In general, they haven't had to plant new native vegetation; the seeds in the ground sprout through the wood chips from the cut trees.

Gregg asked about zonehaven, and how effective it is with no cell service or power. Answer was that it's not effective, and that's why people need to know their zone

ahead of time, and not wait until the last moment to evacuate. Rich said that the Sheriff's go through evacuation areas to get people out.

Gregg asked about wildfire cameras. Rich said that quite a few have been installed in the last 18 months. Calfire is trying to get one on North Peak, but there are obstacles. Calfire really wants one on Pillar Pt and in the harbor, because they provide a more useful view than Montara Mt. Also cameras being installed on the south coast.

(21:40) Kellyx answered more chat questions. Clarified what Rich said about eucs vs chaparral (wrt to insurance), and that there isn't much disagreement about removing some of the eucs. Answered questions about wildlife in eucs, and therefore we shouldn't cut them. If the eucs are cut, the wildlife will go back to the native habitats. The loss of some habitat in the short term isn't a reason to not cut eucs. We need healthy environments, not "any environment". But time of year of removal is also important, both for wildlife, and for erosion.

Rich clarified that if you look at the hazard maps closely, that both chaparral and eucs are high or very high fire danger.

**(21:45) Public Q&A started**

Cid asked if inmates would be used for fuel reduction. Rich answered yes. Cid asked about evacuation staging areas, mentioning the new tsunami map Cid mentioned she heard a homeowner was told that if adjacent trees caught fire, that the firefighters would probably not try to save the house due to risk. Rich said that they always try to save houses where possible, but if danger is too high, they won't risk losing firefighters.

Harold asked Supervisor Horsley who has the responsibility for making the agencies work together to improve safety. Also asked about evacuation and avoiding gridlock. Supervisor Horsley said local fire is the incident commander, then if necessary to the OES, so the county does coordinate. David Cosgrove said that zonehaven has a large set of functionality used by the first responders, and they do have access even without power or cell service.

Melinda - Local Green - she wants to help with local solutions and a community corps to offload first responders, and perhaps even thinning trees. Doesn't want to see large sections of trees cut at once, concerned about sustainability. Asks (everybody) what are we going for. Kellyx said she was asking the same questions, and that large cutting isn't her view of the goal. She's very concerned about ecological health. She thinks the community focus tonight is fire safety.

(22:00) JQ Oeswein asked about evacuation staging areas, and signs directing people to them, similar to the tsunami. Specifically about the airport. No zones today, and no immediate plans. Supervisor Horsley said that if necessary, air traffic could be diverted, but doesn't think signs are a good idea. Rich said

temporary refuge areas have been a topic of discussion, but the concern is that people might wait longer, and head for them, rather than leaving the coast early.

Ann Rothman asked where to find info for homeowners to make their homes safer. Rich said Calfire fire prevention pages have lots of information (also on Firesafe). The 2nd question was how to make it easier for homeowners to get permits to improve safety (tree removal, wider driveway, more fireproof sidings). Supervisor Horsley said for trees, work with RCD. For permit issues, he'll check with the planning department. Kellyx suggested finding out if there are a small number of things that many homeowners might want to do, and focus on those.

Karen Allanson has done some work to harden her home at top of EG Blvd, very concerned about fires in gusty winds. Wants to focus on safer evacuation routes (power lines, trees falling on road). Concerned PG&E isn't doing enough. Supervisor Horsley says County has talked with PG&E, but undergrounding lines are expensive.

Dolores Silva wants to see a short term plan for this summer. Rich said that the key is to try to go away from the fire when you evacuate. Areas like upper El Granada are a problem, and residents should know alternate routes (not by car) to evacuate.

Fran Pollard concerned that focus should be on fire prevention, not preparing for fires. Wants lower Quarry firebreak done right away.

Graham - Frustrated by lack of County action. Kellyx pointed out that a lot of the RCDs work has been done with the support of the county.

(22:30) Kathryn Slater-Carter - MWSD willing to work with the county and calfire to have them install wildfire cameras.

Walter Montalvo - asked how much time there is to evacuate once a fire starts. Rich answered that it's highly variable. Small fires (at least 10 in the last 10 years) have plenty of time. But if there are strong winds even a small fire can grow large and move rapidly. Spot fires started by embers can be miles from the originating fire in strong winds. Asked if there is a way to unlock gates like those at the top of EG Blvd. Rich specifically said something is likely to be done about that gate.

Carlyle Ann Young asked Kellyx if she was the grant writer for RCD. No, but RCD can help with writing grants. When is the next chipper program for Moss Beach and Montara. In May. Cid says she has two contacts at the Pillar Pt air station for wildfire cameras. Asked if we can get wildfire danger signs (green-red with arrow) on the Midcoast. Rich said probably. Asked if Calfire would use airport in a local fire. Rich said probably. Asked what the \$170K fuel reduction in Quarry Park covered. Nicholas said it's fuel reduction maintenance in a number of parts of the park. Asked if there is any plan to spend money on the portion near EG Blvd. The South Ridge Rd project will involve creating some new sections of road. Asked Supervisor Horsley to help establish incentives to cut trees.

Fran Pollard asked that BBQ bits be removed from Quarry Park for this summer; says people build fires in them that are too large. Wants larger No Smoking signs. Supervisor Horsley said he'll consider.

Brian Levi thinks county should buy feller-bunchers that were mentioned by Dan.

**(22:45) End of public comment**

Dan - Thinks cutting more trees and chipping would be a good idea. Rich answered that chips don't enhance native plant growth, but they don't prevent it. They also don't prevent growth of new eucalyptus.

Len asked what is the best route to establish short term priorities (for all organizers and panel members).

Claire - Suggests MCC's best path would be to establish short term priorities. Would like to discourage new homes.

Dave spoke on hoping for an attitude of positive efforts towards solutions, rather than complaining, or being concerned that the Midcoast isn't getting it's fair share of dollars or other resources.

Jill wants to continue the discussion and feels community members are frustrated because they are shut out. She asked the presenters to think about how to involve the community in the solutions.

Gregg - Lots of issues, want permitting made easier, incentives to remove eucs, access to alternate evacuation routes such as the top of EG Blvd. Asked Nicholas, Supervisor Horsley, and others what they would like from the MCC in order to make progress on community concerns. Mentioned LHMP as a possible path to funding.

Michelle Not every action requires funding, some only require time and people. Interested in possible MCC participation in the Firesafe council. Interested in refuge areas, and shares Claire's desire for fewer buildings in dangerous areas. If MCC wants to comment on the LHMP we'll need to do that by mid-May.

**5. (23:00) Council Activity**

Len talked to Caltrans about the new plan for the emergency message VMS and the traffic monitoring. Suggested councilmembers comment directly. Gregg attended the PC meeting and spoke on streamlining the tree permit process. He forwarded a resident letter to the PC on the EG Blvd gate, and thinks we should write a letter of support.

**6. (10:28) Future Agendas**

April 28th - Wildfire Preparedness follow-up, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, Reelection of MCC Secretary and Treasurer

May 12 - zoom account renewal and virtual meetings

TBD – SAM, Zoom / Virtual Meetings

June - Claire suggested a presentation from EG neighbors that got the permit jointly to cut eucs.

Follow-up on tonight's meeting and also Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

**Adjournment (10:33)**

Moved Dave, passed 7-0