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# Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe Council Minutes

**Date:** January 21<sup>st</sup> 2022

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Virtual meeting

- 8:55 **Join Zoom Meeting:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88050986991>  
**Dial by Telephone:** 1 669 900 6833  
**Meeting Access ID:** 880 5098 6991
- 9:00 **1. Call to Order: 9:02 A**  
**a.** Introduction of members Frank U, Kathy B, Bob K, Keri AB, Richard H, Danielle, Bob S
- 9:03 **2. Approval of Agenda:** M/S – Unanimous approval
- 9:05 **3. Review of Minutes:** December 17<sup>th</sup> 2021  
M/S – Approval w/ Danielle abstaining
- 9:15 **4. Public Comment:**  
Any member of the public may address the Council on any matter that is NOT listed on the agenda. Comments will normally be limited to 5 minutes.  
**Bob Anacker** – Express appreciation for interagency cooperation during last storm.  
**Daniel Berlant** – Previous forum was successful and informative. Video is posted to City’s web page and he will distribute through GAAFSC as well. Kathy echoed.
- 9:40 **5. Old & Unfinished Business**  
**a.** Board Elections and Installation: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer  
Nominations for Chair – Rob K (Kathy/Daniel) – Unanimous approval  
Accolades and appreciation from Daniel B and GAAFSC members generally  
Nominations for VC – Frank U (Kathy/Daniel) – Unanimous approval  
Nominations for Secretary – Keri (Kathy/Robert K) – Unanimous approval  
Nominations for Treasurer – Kathy (Robert K/Daniel) – Unanimous approval
- 10:00 **6. New Business - Action/Discussion Items:**  
**a.** Chief Spencer – Consultant Findings  
Rohde Wildfire Risk Assessment Report presented to Council recently. Firm has significant experience in wildfire assessments (250+ in State). Requested they validate direction and provide suggestions. 9 “study findings” identified, strategic plan validated as relevant. Key among the findings was: The greatest risk of wildfire loss in the City of Auburn is currently lack of structural hardening and defensible space on private property.” Chief notes a lot of focus currently on the canyon, but the bigger challenge may be within the City itself. Smoke plumes contain ember casts and that has the potential to drift into City and create structure-to-structure impacts. The chief danger in reality is “urban conflagration”.
- 10:25
- 10:30

Fire forecast model predicts impacts within a few hours (3-5) into the City itself with ignition assumed at the confluence. With roadside ignition along Highway 80, impacts are similarly rapid.

Studies of Paradise fire do show hardening of structures and maintaining defensible space does in fact provide protection. Mobile homes are particularly vulnerable with slopes being another vulnerability. Vertical clearance and roofing and decking are also important. Top safety measures include defensible space, protective measures around venting, and better building code standards. Fencing can provide protection in some circumstances as well along with multi paned windows.

Bob S: Some improvements seem to provide little benefit. Chief Spencer notes that likely ineffective general home improvements not focused on fire hardening specifically would provide fewer benefits than those targeted to the specific purpose.

Bob S: Question about how fencing reduces risk so significantly, why does that apply to ANY fencing material? Shouldn't we focus on specific materials? Chief Spencer responds he is not in a position to create the science.

Bob S: How can the report say attic venting is bad when that is a requirement of the building code? Chief Spencer notes the required air flow can be accomplished through a number of technologies.

Bob S: By his view of the photos shown of Paradise seem to make no sense in terms of specific factors of the surviving homes. Chief Spencer notes that the consultant used specific characteristics of surviving homes to come up with recommended strategies.

Bob S: What is the most important thing we can be doing in Auburn? Chief Spencer – home hardening and defensible space.

Bob S: Notes lack of sustainable funding is a problem. He has noticed that in prior years and asks if anything is happening to shift us from periodic grant funding to longer term funding? Chief Spencer has observed significant resources into fuels management in recent years, and while we do have a long way to go there does appear to be recognition among some policymakers of the longer term needs.

Robert K: Beyond home hardening and defensible space, are there other goals GAAFSC can help with? Chief Spencer believes education is critical. We now have data and the report recommendations and helping the broader community access and understand that information is the biggest problem so GAAFSC can help there.

Bob S: Recommends “score card” for communities within fire risk areas. From Chief’s perspective, is that useful in getting the community mobilized? Chief Spencer believes so. A version did exist in the past, but currently there could be value not only in terms of safety but in terms of addressing issues like insurance.

Chief Spencer will provide link to the report and some contacts if folks have questions.

**7. Agency and Stakeholder Reports:**

- CAL FIRE/Placer County Fire
- Auburn Fire – Chief Spencer notes recent staffing issues have been resolved, but they have experienced COVID impacts as many agencies have.
- Penryn Fire Mark D – Getting back to normal after the recent storm. Received more than 120 calls in a 24 hour period related to the storm. In the process of conducting firefighter engineer vacancy qualification to create list of available candidates.
  - Newcastle Fire
  - Placer County
  - U.S. BOR Elizabeth D – Goat grazing on Auburn Shaded Fuel Break began on 1/14 and will likely be 8 or 9 week event. Richard notes the herd is currently in their neighborhood and they will work to document to help in future decision making. Elizabeth notes they do plan to ensure ongoing maintenance using the herds and to expand from 177 to 500 acres once they get cultural resources clearance. Bob S – Notes fallen tree on BOR land in Robie Point and he believes it is a fire hazard. Question on how they can address. Elizabeth – State Parks has a maintenance crew and there can be complications with agency land boundaries. Bob will connect off line. Additional discussion about options. Elizabeth also asks Chief Spencer to weigh in on whether a single downed tree within the shaded fuel break is as significant a risk as believed. Chief Spencer notes if the relative fuel load nearby is low, you have low risk. But if the fuel load is significant in the area then the risk is higher and the problem is much bigger than the single tree. Dead fuel is more susceptible to burning and ignition. Elizabeth notes an MOU has recently been signed with City of Auburn, Placer County, BOR. She will see if it has been released and provide if it has. The BOR is looking to partner with neighbors in the context of the MOU. The BOR will provide comprehensive report at next meeting on their 5 year project in the area more broadly.
    - State Parks
    - Fire Alliance Shawna reports County PIO pushing out information on the goat project. Recent storm was a big topic of conversation. Storm debris is an ongoing issue. Discussion of resources that may be available to communities to help with debris clean-up and removal. Despite State and Local emergency declarations, this was not Federally recognized so FEMA assistance is not coming. Other programs through State and County focus on public not private lands. Chipper program is an option along with return of burn days. Placer OES can be a resource for impacted households/property owners. Also can help with issues around inappropriate dumping of debris on private or public property. In February, County will coordinate Firesafe Council Chairs meeting. County also working on public events calendar so we should include any dates that would be appropriate for the calendar. Bob S suggests Robert share speaker series information for the calendar and Shawna notes she is already in touch. Also notes Kathy B is managing our PGE education grant activities and he would like to use Shawna as a resource, which she is willing to be especially since she has access to the County PIO.
    - Firewise Community Report Luanna reports she is currently working with 145 communities in County, 70 are approved and got renewals in this year. The other 75 are in process. Nationwide there are 2004 FW Communities, 499 in CA. GAAFSC boundaries have 9 recognized and another 15 are in process. The approved communities have contributed \$5.5 Million in 2020 and \$7 Million in 2021. Kathy asks for the most recent update on community activity so GAAFSC can support their efforts and Luanna will send to Council (not approved for public distribution). Bob S asks about Robert’s map showing locations of GAAFSC borders and borders of the recognized FWCs. Robert can share that. Bob S also asks where the \$7 Million would sit in terms of the overall need for work. Luanna is not aware of any sources of information for that type of comparison. On the mapping issue, Luanna notes the new Firewise data will include maps of individual communities.

- Placer County Resource Conservation District George reports chipper program is back to full strength. 4 months ago, the backlog led to waits of a month. Last week, requests could be accommodated next day. They received 60 calls this week and they are working to stay ahead of it. Working with the County to identify more sustainable funding to help keep the backlog low. He does need an updated project list from GAAFSC. They did carry over projects from last plan but need anything new. Just need very brief information (a few lines) that members of the public can easily understand. Kathy asks if GAAFSC could be helpful in the efforts with the BOS? George believes things are on track at the moment but he will reach out if they run into problems. They also have a bit of breathing room with their CalFire grant. Bob S suggests weekend community events so homeowners with smaller quantity of material could go to a central location where the chipper crew would be stationed. George believes it is an interesting idea. Weekends may be tricky, though.

- Natural Resources Conservation Service Allison reports they have been working on herbicide and fuel removal in Auburn Shaded Fuel Break. Grant expires in March and work is largely completed now. They are aware of storm related issues and are working on funding to assist with the efforts. Work ongoing on the Applegate Fuel Break as well. Bob S asks about funding and if there are ways we can help identify longer term funding for chipper and other fire prevention/safety programs that currently rely on annual grants. Allison notes they do get a fair amount of funding from competitive grants but they also have relationships with other agencies that bring partnerships and additional funding.

- Other

Frank is serving as the GAAFSC representative for the City of Auburn Wildfire & Public Safety Ad-hoc Committee. The committee is chartered with recommending funding solutions for the city's wildfire and public safety program and will be meeting biweekly for 4 months.

**8. Roundtable:**

Discussion of items of mutual interest, introduction of new issues, and proposed future Agenda items. Frank is serving as the GAAFSC representative for the City of Auburn Wildfire & Public Safety Ad-hoc Committee. The committee is chartered with recommending funding solutions for the city's wildfire and public safety program and will be meeting biweekly for 4 months.

- There are plans to restore the soccer fields at Kentucky Greens and can be considered as a possible evacuation point
- The GAAFSC is working with a free-lance writer to develop stories for the Auburn Journal and other media outlets. Kathy is interested in getting topics from the council to include for planning

**9. Next Meeting Date and Adjourn:** Next meeting; February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - 9:00 AM