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Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe Council Minutes

Date: August 18, 2023 **Time:** 9:00 a.m. **Location:** Auburn City Hall Room 10 & Virtual

- 9:00 | **Meeting Location:** Auburn City Hall, 1225 Lincoln Way, Auburn CA - Room 10
Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4647233700>
- 9:01 | **1. Call to Order:**
- a. Introduction of members – Kathy Baxter, Erin Gallawa, Rita Paiz, Becky Johnson
 - b. Non-members – 11 stakeholders and public members in attendance.
- 9:02 | **2. Approval of Agenda:** Motion by Erin, seconded by Kathy.
- 9:02 | **3. Review of Minutes:** Both June and July minutes approved, motion by Erin, seconded by Kathy.
- 9:03 | **4. Public Comment:**
- Newcastle resident Jon Anacker shared that he is in the process of trying to persuade his insurance underwriter to reverse their decision to not cover his property, despite a new roof and about \$50,000 worth of improvements. He asked how it's going for other people who are self-insured.
- 9:04 | **5. Action/Discussion Items:**
- A. Member update: Danielle Hardesty has resigned. There are two county seats open, and applications can be obtained by the Placer County Supervisors Clerk of the Board.
 - B. Election of a Treasurer: Kathy nominated Becky to serve as treasurer for the rest of the year, which was passed unanimously.
 - C. Fiscal Sponsor: The Auburn Chamber of Commerce is willing to remain the fiscal sponsor; however, their bookkeeper works only once per week, which can delay transactions. Daniel Berlant spoke with the Placer Community Foundation, and they have not acted in that capacity before. If anyone has any other suggestions, please contact Kathy. A fiscal sponsor needs to have the ability to accept, hold, and disburse GAAFSC funds.
 - D. California Fire Foundation Grant: The California Fire Foundation has granted a \$4,000 in-kind award for co-branded Fire Fighters on Your Side assets, including banners, signs, printed materials, and social media graphics. The materials contain general awareness messaging about having a five-minute plan to evacuate. Discussion entailed how and where to use these materials and how it can complement messaging to increase participation in the Placer Alert notification system. When discussing how to measure the efficacy of such campaigns, it's not possible to determine the increase in Placer Alert sign-ups, as many individuals sign up for alerts on multiple devices or for alerts about multiple sites. A

9:30

subcommittee of Kathy, Erin, and Becky will work on a plan for how to use the in-kind materials and ideas on increasing awareness of the Placer Alert system. Ideas captured in the meeting for further exploration include increased use of social media, locations where materials can be distributed (e.g., senior centers, libraries), and potential partners (e.g., realtor associations, homeowner associations, tax assessor).

6. Presentation:

- Steve Hawks, Director of Wildfire Policy, Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS)

The IBHS performs research to engage citizens and businesses on how to harden their buildings and to inform the insurance industry. Steve shared and discussed a presentation showing lab simulations of damages caused when embers contacted various structures, explaining the 90-95% chance that if a structure catches fire that it will be destroyed. 70% of all structures destroyed are residential structures. 18% of all destructive fires cause 95% of the destruction. Steve explained that mitigating the effects of wind-driven embers consists of a system of preventive controls so embers don't result in a fire in the first place, plus controls to prevent the spread and severity of fire from embers. Any one weakness in the system creates vulnerability. He focused on the zero-to-five-foot distance from a structure as the critical zone, stressing the importance of avoiding mulch, vegetation, and wood attachments (e.g., fences, decks) to buildings. Property owners should focus on removing, relocating, and reducing potential fuel sources, such as vegetation, sheds. Steve noted that areas where leaves and debris tend to accumulate are where embers would tend to land, so pay particular attention in keeping those areas clear. Vent screens should have no more than 1/8-inch openings, so embers that get through the openings likely don't have the sufficient energy to spark a fire. In instances where neighbors' homes are close together, structure-to-structure fires, caused by embers, direct flame, or radiant heat, are harder to prevent, but the risks can be lessened by staying on top of home and yard maintenance. Steve concluded by describing the wildfireprepared.org designation, which is valid for three years, contingent on annual landscape reviews. Property owners are encouraged to review and complete the checklist before paying the \$125 fee and scheduling an inspection.

7. Agency and Stakeholder Reports:

10:18

- CAL FIRE/Placer County Fire - Peter Moffett provided an update on fire weather, that 2023 has been an abundant grass year, and lightning strikes increased – with more than 1,000 reported in recent days. Defensible space inspections are underway. He reported an increase in lightning strikes in the past week. Staffing-wise, for CAL FIRE, some resources have been sent to cover Lightning Complex fires, and local resources include 15 engines, 5 crews, 3 dozers, air tankers, air attack, and helicopters. Placer County is sitting on six engines, one truck. Burn ban is still in effect. The forecasted cooler weather is an ideal time to work on defensible space.

10:20

- Auburn Fire – John Rogers reported that Auburn Fire is working to backfill Battalion Chief Rob Zaucha, who left for a neighboring agency. Auburn Fire entered into a

JOA with Placer Hills, Foresthill, Newcastle, and Penryn to share resources and personnel. The process has begun to determine protocols for staffing, training, etc. Two captains recently returned from Wisconsin to perform final inspections on a new Type 1 engine, anticipated to go into service in November. Lindsay Davidson reported on a grant for fuel break work in the Baltimore Ravine area, taking place over four years. The first year will consist of treatment, mastication, and removal of fuels, followed by three years of secondary treatment. Work will be led by a forester. The United Auburn Indian Community will perform work on their land. Auburn Fire will coordinate with the Grand Oaks Neighborhood Association. Auburn Fire will also coordinate with Union Pacific, who owns land in the area; PG&E owns overhead line assets the area. The grant is for \$745,000 with a local match of \$52,000. The California Fire Foundation provided \$20,000 to perform fuel reduction work in the Jordan Lane between Borland Avenue and 193. Auburn Fire is also reviewing a parcel review of city-owned land to prioritize work. In total, about \$800,000 worth of fuel reduction work is underway.

10:31

- Newcastle Fire / Penryn Fire - Mark D'Ambrogi reported they are fully staffed. There are 23+ Firewise Communities in the area, and a new one in Newcastle is almost completed. With the Firewise Communities, vegetation complaints are down because they're taking care of their own work. Call volume across the three agencies is at about 1,600 year-to-date, which is normal. Consolidation between Placer Hills and Newcastle is still pending while the municipal service review is performed by Placer County. The contract with the Penryn District is still in place.

10:34

- Placer County / Fire Alliance / Firewise Community Report – Kathy read notes provided by Jacqui, which included a message to be mindful of the heat. A pre-season meeting was held last week among cooperators. In the Greater Auburn boundaries, there are eleven Firewise Communities, two pending – one in Auburn and one in Penryn. One is inactive (Castle City, a mobile home park near Newcastle), so the GAAFSC should reach out to them. A new Firewise boundary map is coming soon; Placer County's IT department is working on it. Foresthill/Iowa Hill has several grant fuel mitigation projects set for this fall. The creating a Firewise Committee to identify areas that would benefit from marketing and education, and they have a five-year goal to have Foresthill covered by Firewise Communities. Placer Sierra secured a PG&E grant for work in the Kearsarge area. They are working to on-board two new board members, and they're working on their I-80 project and are working with Caltrans. North Auburn/Ophir is recruiting for two seats. Greater Lincoln has a re-appointment later this month. Later this month, a defensible space workshop will be held by the UC Cooperative. The County process for recruitment has been updated; everyone must apply and be approved before being placed on the Board of Supervisors for appointment.

10:39

- Placer County Resource Conservation District – Cordi Craig introduced herself and provided an overview on prescribed burn training and education. The program is in its infancy and is funded by CAL FIRE. It includes classroom instruction and small-scale training burns on less than three acres. Monthly workshops will begin in October. Contact Cordi to join the prescribed burns listserv. Cordi handed out the "RX Fire Field Guide for Landowner and Agency Use" booklet.

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8. Roundtable:

- Discuss how to impact the Placer Alert system and see if it fits within the California Fire Foundation grant

- A science teacher at Placer High School recommended some educational component related to fires

10:49

9. Next Meeting Date and Adjourn: Next meeting; September 15, 2023 - 9:00 AM