

**Woodside Fire Protection District
Board of Directors Meeting
Administration Building
808 Portola Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028
March 26th, 2024**

The meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 7:00pm by Director Miller

Directors Present: Miller, Holthaus, Cain

Directors Absent: None

Staff: Chief Cuschieri, Pub Ed Officer Brown, Chief Douthit, Chief Zabala, Chief Nannini, Chief McKenzie
Zoom Attendees: DFM Hird, Chief Hird, FM Giuliacci

Other Attendees: John Foster, Dave Burrow
Zoom Attendees: WFPD General Counsel Rubin Cruse (RPLG); Rich Dean, Sherry Lund, Wynn White, Craig Taylor, Daniel Warren, Karen, Karen Vahtra, Gamiel Gran, Bernadette Castor, Lynna, David Madison, David, CO, iPhone, Jonathan Kaplan

Public Comment Non-Agendized Topics: (Written as transcribed)

There were no public comments made on Non-Agendized Topics.

Consent Agenda: The Board considered the following consent agenda items:

- C1. Approval of Minutes of the February 27th, 2024, Meeting of the Board of Directors.
- C2. Accept Financial Reports February 2024
- C3. Accept Statement of Accounts February 2024
- C4. Accept Warrant List February 2024
- C5. Accept Fiscal Year Spreadsheet 23-24

Director Holthaus motioned to approve the consent agenda and approve Items C1, C2, C3, C4, and C5 as submitted, 2nd by Director Cain. Motion passed 3-0.

Regular Agenda:

Item R1. 1st Reading: Introduce and waive the reading of Ordinance 24-01 (formerly numbered 23-03), "AN ORDINANCE OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHING FUEL MITIGATION AND EXTERIOR HAZARD ABATEMENT STANDARDS IN ALL STATE AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY AREAS WITHIN THE DISTRICT, REQUIRING DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLIANCE PRIOR TO SALE OF THE PROPERTY, ADOPTING FINDINGS OF FACT, AND DETERMINING THE ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT," altered to remove defensible space requirements on parcels that are adjacent to parcels with structures.

Public Comment: Written as transcribed.

David Burrow – "My name is Dave Burrow. I'm a resident, the longtime resident of Woodside. And, again, I served on the council for eight years, was mayor twice and served on the Woodside Portola Valley Firewise Committee when it existed, when Chief Ghiorso and Denise Enea were sponsoring

that. So, I have been tracking this, but I have to admit, over the last few years, I lost track. And again, my feedback is, I mean, I'm all for fire protection. I think, you know, getting rid of the fuel and all that is -- we need to do that. I think that -- I would encourage you to communicate much better with the public about this. I mean, and I know when you had people in Portola Valley who thought they had good outreach. But in Woodside, we didn't really have any outreach or fire-wise or fire-ready committees didn't really do anything with us, and we just had the one meeting most recently. And then, again, having read the ordinance and looked at the presentations that we weren't able to see in Woodside, but I was able to find them on your website, that the information is still very confusing. It's not at all clear to me, as a member of the public, whether -- if I have to -- if I do have to have five feet around my house, do I have to cut down living trees? I mean, it's not clear. And so, because of that, I mean, I think there's a lot of fear around this, right? Especially just reading this, picking this up in the lobby, this would scare the hell out of most people in our jurisdiction, right? Because they don't have houses that look like that, right? We're not in a suburban area. So, I would just really, would like to -- I'm not here to make changes, (Inaudible) for changes to the ordinance, but I, you know, encourage that you have a much better outreach and really go through your materials and try to figure out how to allay the anxiety that people are going to have when they see you're to see some of these things. And, I guess that's really my message, is that you need to do a better job. On your website, you can't find any of this stuff on the website very easily. That even finding the agenda for this meeting on the website was not that simple. So, I mean, you really ought to think about the website as something for the general public to navigate and not your community of people. I mean, you've got a big community of your people, volunteers as well as professionals. But it's very hard for us to navigate. So, and again, it's kind of an odd mix, because this ordinance doesn't really -- only really addresses defensible space. It doesn't really address the little, you know, I'm struggling for the word. Events and things like that that harden your house. The hardening aspects, although I understand the inspections do cover hardening. So, the interaction of this and the hardening is, again, very hard for, I think, the public to try to understand how these things interact, and how are we with them.”

John Foster – “My name is John Foster and I live in Ladera. You know, I think following your comments that there is a lot of anxiety out there, right? We're seeing it from neighbors and from in the newspapers and something like that. And I would just suggest that maybe we go real slow with this, and particularly, you know, consider making this kind of advisory guidelines, initially, to get people -- to overcome people's anxiety about it, so they understand what's going on, what they have to do, how the remediation is supposed to work, all those kinds of things. I think you'd find that people, once they understand it better, will feel like complying is in their interest and something they want to do, rather than something that they're forced to do. And I think we'll get better cooperation from the community by taking that kind of approach. So, my suggestion would be to implement this as advisory, to begin with, so that people can start to participate and comply, and figure out what it means for them.”

Director Miller acknowledges ongoing worries but emphasizes the need to move forward with inspections. He mentioned previous adoption cycles and reassure that the impact is often less severe than feared. He stressed the importance of residents caring for their vegetation to create a safer ecosystem. He also mentioned the necessity of home hardening regulations but highlight the role of fuel reduction in fire prevention. Director Miller encourages understanding and engagement in the process.

Wynn White – “I do want to reiterate the comments that John has made already about some of the anxiety that a number of people have with this ordinance. I also see us barreling down a track, to get this thing passed. And, you know, I think we all -- we appreciate a lot of the considerations that have been made to the revised ordinance. They cover a number of the things that we've raised as a

community. The one thing that I think continues to cause a lot of angst and a lot of actual issues within the neighborhood is, really, the one size fits all approach that the district is taking with this ordinance. And, you know, when we've discussed this and we've talked about, say, severity levels and this sort of thing, the answer we've been shared is that, listen, the Cal Fire has not updated its maps, so we can't really share what the different severity levels are across the district. I do want to just, you know, call out and make folks aware, if we are going to proceed down the path to make this -- get this ordinance read and complete, I do feel we still need to take into consideration, the various -- the differences across the district. Especially, you know, again, the Ladera community, I think as we spoke of in the past, is very different from the rest of the community. And while we need to also create defensible spaces, do we need to be creating the same dispensable spaces that are required for larger acreage properties that are not so densely together? And I guess what I would like to point out is that, as we move down this approval of this ordinance, that as the Cal Fire maps are updated and released, that the district takes that into consideration in some of the areas within the community that may not need to take as drastic precautions. I mean, these come with a cost. And I just heard a few minutes ago that, you know, these are relatively straightforward, you know, changes to your home. Well, you know, when the fire marshal came out to my home, he says that; you got to take down these arbors that you have, you got to cut back your wisteria, you have to trim back the trees. It's not an insignificant cost. I mean, estimate is going to be somewhere between 5 and \$10,000 to comply with the ordinance. So, I guess I'll leave it at that, but I do see us moving down with this ordinance. And I do think we need to give some consideration to the one size fits all approach that's being sort of pushed through at this point."

Fire Marshal Giuliacci, addressed the concerns of residents, acknowledged widespread anxiety regarding Ordinance 24-01 and emphasized the necessity for community adaptation to wildfire risk. She clarified that the ordinance isn't a one-size-fits-all solution but aims to prepare homes in Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas for potential wildfires. Giuliacci stressed the importance of defensible space and home hardening in this effort. She highlighted the misconception that the ordinance only applies to high-fire severity zones, emphasizing that all communities in the WUI need to take precautions. Giuliacci assured residents of ongoing education, outreach, and phased compliance with the ordinance. She discussed upcoming mailers and workshops to provide detailed information and acknowledged website navigation challenges but encouraged residents to use the search function for relevant information. She emphasized the importance of ongoing support, collaboration, and adaptation in facing wildfire challenges. Giuliacci invited direct communication for clarification rather than relying on media interpretations.

Daniel Warren - "Thanks. Hi. I live in Ladera. I want to express our gratitude that this latest draft removes the adjacent parcels requirements. I think it'll get us on the path to reasonable, defensible space, without as much conflict. This is an important journey for our district as we were all saying, and we want to be on board and moving forward together. Today, I'd like to talk about a few remaining items that I hope can be addressed before the ordinance is adopted. First, I heard Fire Marshal Giuliacci's impassioned and emotional stories from her work. The fire in Paradise sounds like a harrowing experience. We appreciate her efforts, her expertise, caring, responsiveness, and we're fortunate to have her protecting us. We don't want to end up like Paradise, of course, but we do want to make sure that the rules adopted here match our appropriate risk levels. Let's not overshoot the target. You know, we thought the fire hazard severity zones would be a good proxy. More making sense than uniform. If you guys have good data saying it doesn't, maybe it's appropriate to commission more detailed maps that will say on more of a neighborhood area or parcel by parcel, which will make sense. The laws that were cited seemed, at least to us, to need parcel by parcel determination of applicability, not something that can be blanket for all. We're not all adjacent to a grassland, forest, etc., etc. Some parcels are, but some are not. If home hardening is more important for places like Ladera, like I've heard mentioned tonight, please let's make the defensible space requirements a little bit less urgent for our area, and let us focus our limited funding on things like improving home

hardening. Second, we still yet to see the draft standards and guidelines document that details how the inspections will view various scenarios and how enforcement work. As Marshal Giuliacci said, it's still in progress. And to my knowledge, the Portola Valley town committees, like conservation wildfire, also have not seen even an early draft. I think sharing this document and allowing feedback should come before attempting to pass the ordinance that lacks the level of detail that belongs in this other document. And just to expand on a comment made about trees in zone zero. If the trees are healthy, but a majority of branches are within 5 to 10ft of the house, at least from the walking tour we had, that means that healthy trees would need removal. So, I don't want to harp on this one example, but like, yes, the standards and guidelines document is going to be important to understand how these different things are going to be treated. I mean, and if I'm wrong on that, I would love to be wrong on that, and please correct me. Third, we still think there should be an independent escalation path, beyond just the fire department. Members of the Woodside Town Council made great points during their meeting earlier in the month, that the fire board members are explicitly not neutral and have a strong bias towards fire safety at the potential expense of many other factors. It might be helpful for the board members, for all you here to attend meetings of some of the other local governments and committees, to hear these concerns directly. Finally, we'll need help to afford this. Estimates for even the most basic, non-controversial mitigations like removing wood chips in zone zero are very expensive. I got a few estimates for myself already, because even though I haven't had my inspection yet, it's clear I will need to do at least that. We would implore you to look in the budget, to find money -- in your budget, to find money for a matching program, similar to how Los Trancos or Woodside have found it in theirs, or to find grant money from other larger organizations and governments. Please have something like that set up before attempting to pass rules with unknown financial implications, as has been established in previous meetings. I urge you to delay the passage of the ordinance to address these issues and improve community outreach, or make it advisory, instead of effectively threatening misdemeanors and jail time if we don't comply fast enough. Please keep doing the inspections, encouraging voluntary compliance, and help keep us safe. But don't pass a punitive law that isn't fully baked. Many people in the community are still aware this is coming, as was expressed here in this meeting and was strongly expressed during the Woodside Town Council meeting recently. Thank you.”

Karen – “Yeah. I don't really want to address the ordinance or discuss it. I was just coming here to listen to it, but I thought I had some information that would be useful for the community. I've kind of become, sort of, the person in Portola Valley that people talk about their insurance problems with. And I just wanted to share a recent report that I got from somebody who is in probably one of the safest areas in town, in terms of wildfire. Has a lot of distance from the neighboring homes, is in a almost flat area, and they got canceled by their insurance, and their only option is to go to the fare plan or not admit a carrier. But their insurance carrier offered them; well, we might keep you if you go to the wildfire prepared plus. And that would mean, not only -- and I know this particular carrier, I don't want to name this person or the carrier, but that would mean doing more than the WFPD requires, and also removing their relatively new truck stacks, which they couldn't get -- which is not in the Portola Valley current regulations. You couldn't do that. They have to replace a relatively new deck with a noncombustible deck, at least part of it, and do some home hardening, and some very strict defensible space. So, there's going to be the cost. Unfortunately, if we're just going to have to be, somehow, doing this to our homes, whether it's through these ordinances or through the insurance company or paying a lot more for insurance on a yearly basis, and the admitted market could be 2 to 3 times the current rates of insurance, and that's going to be something to pay annually. So, I just kind of wanted to offer that for people to understand the severity of the complications of wildfire, but also the complications of the insurance regulations in California are really hitting us this year.”

Director Miller responded by highlighting the importance of fire safety measures in communities, emphasizing discussions at the state level regarding insurance requirements. He reiterated that adherence to fire safety standards, similar to those being discussed, may become mandatory for

insurance coverage in the future. Director Miller stressed the necessity of communities getting on board with such measures for both safety and insurance purposes. He emphasized that this initiative aligns with efforts across the state to ensure fire safety compliance.

Craig Taylor – “Thank you. So, first of all, I want to thank Kim. I know how much time and effort she's been putting into this. I did have a couple of comments that I wanted to make. One is, I think we should start inspections immediately, but if there's some way to soften the blow until, at least, the mailing gets out and the guidelines or something that people read. I think it would go a long way to making it the appearance of the district being heavy handed. And I think, you know, when I talk with Kim, that's one of the things that I worry about the most is, you know, this is the defensible space, we've got home hardening next. And if we sort of create this antibody reaction where everybody thinks that the district are the evil people, sort of forcing all these things and didn't take their comments, etc., then I think we've kind of lost some of the public trust in a way that doesn't necessarily feel like we have to do. And while I'm sensitive to, you know, we're never going to get everybody on board and there's always going to be people that say; well, you know, you didn't let me know. It feels like a postal mailing going out. That set of Q&A, which Kim is committed to, sort of, you know, collecting everybody's questions and just having a running list and answering them all, and having the guidelines, and then basically start enforcing. I think you'd have a little bit smoother ramp. And certainly, in my mind, you know, as a public official, it certainly makes it easier for me to say; look, these guys have gone out of their way to make this adapted to your needs, but we do need to be a fire adapted community. So, I think that's the one thing I would ask the board to think about, is the timing still feels -- I think, to a lot of people, it's going to feel like we found out about this after the ordinance passed, and that's going to lead, sort of, to a negative, a pretty strong negative reaction. So, anyway, I'm strongly in favor of the ordinance overall, but I just, you know, if there's some way we can just soften this adoption process, I think it would go a long way toward improving that sort of public acceptance. Thank you.”

Fire Marshal Giuliacci responded by addressing concerns about enforcement timelines related to ordinance adoption. She clarified that even after adoption, enforcement won't begin immediately. FM Giuliacci explained that enforcement can legally start on June 1st, but inspections must occur first, a process that may take until the end of the year or even into January of the following year. She emphasized that enforcement won't begin until after inspections are completed, giving residents ample time to comply. FM Giuliacci reassured the public that the goal isn't to impose strict enforcement immediately but to provide education and outreach to ensure understanding and compliance. She mentioned upcoming guidelines and mailers to further educate residents about the ordinance's requirements.

Craig Taylor responded – “I think the only subtlety I was trying to get at is, the timing and Kim's willingness to work with people, in my view, has been fabulous. If it's possible to put off the second reading until the mail has gone out and everybody's seen the guidelines, I think you just end up giving people an opportunity to say, we've seen it before it's approved. Rather than, it gets approved, and then they've seen it, and then they kind of feel like you didn't give them a chance. And I'm not saying that they're right. I'm just, again, hoping we can soften the public reaction. So, that was all I was trying to get out (Inaudible). Thank you.”

Director Miller expressed the intent is to ensure that informational materials are available before any vote on the ordinance. Director Miller acknowledged the ongoing refinement of the process and revisions made to the ordinance, including adjustments to timelines and compliance measures. He emphasized the need for clarity in communication, particularly regarding the enforcement timeline and the understanding that compliance won't be immediately enforced and that this will be done in a soft approach. Director Miller expressed that we are not excited to enforce this, but we will enforce

it out of necessity of upholding the ordinance, ensuring a reasonable approach without excessive penalties.

Sherry Lund – “I live in Ladera with my husband, and actually, we find this ordinance to be a very helpful educational guide. And we also did the walk around with Ms. Giuliacci, and found that to also be very helpful and very illustrative. So, I think it's -- I don't know. I haven't heard a lot of, I guess, understanding, maybe, on the part of the fire board. I think people care very much about this. I think most residents are quite worried about not just the ordinance, but about fire danger and fire risk in their communities. So, I don't think people are looking for ways to avoid this or not work on it. We have, like I said, we found the education so far to be quite helpful. My husband and I just spent somewhere -- I haven't added it all up, but somewhere in the neighborhood of \$6,000, removing an enormous maple, not because of this ordinance, first proposed ordinance, but because it had just reached the end of its life. Plus two other trees that we did specifically remove because, you know, we have been walking around the property and starting to think about, you know, changes we might make and things we can do to harden our property. All that said, I personally find it difficult to understand the relationship of this ordinance in the fire district to the insurance industry. And as Karen pointed out not too long ago, a resident who lives, I know somebody who lives next door to the fire department, who has lost their insurance, who is a older, widowed person, and is looking at some just, you know, horrific, super expensive, super, you know, stressful, damaging kinds of things. I mean, fires are not the only way to, you know, ruin your house. And so, insurers are making decisions right now. They're not making decisions when the ordinance is implemented. And so, I appreciate the fire district's flexibility and desire to educate and help people come along. But when something's called an ordinance, it's a law. That's what it is today. And so, say what you will about when you can enforce it or whatever, that's what it is. Rebecca Flynn wrote some very thoughtful comments, I thought, in Portola Valley, in response to the ordinance. And one thing I agree with her very much is, I think if you're going to call it an ordinance, you might as well just make it law tomorrow, period. But if you're going to call it an educational document or home hardening guidelines or whatever, then let's call it that, because, well, I hear from the fire district and Ms. Giuliacci, is that's really your intent. So, I think you'll get a lot more, frankly, compliance from owners by really going deep into this as an educational document. And as I said, insurers, I don't understand the relationship between you and insurers. Insurers are already making their decisions, and the person I know who lost her insurance is having to comply with all of this already. So, to say that the insurers have, you know, you have nothing to do with insurance, seems a little bit -- I have a little disconnect about that. I find that confusing. So, I would encourage you to slow -- I encourage you to slow the process down a little and to go full blast on the education aspect. Because I think you're going to get the best results, and insurance companies are already doing what they're doing anyway. So, thank you. I appreciate all the time that's gone into this from everybody.”

A motion was made by Director Cain to Introduce and waive the reading of Ordinance 24-01(formerly numbered 23-03) “AN ORDINANCE OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHING FUEL MITIGATION AND EXTERIOR HAZARD ABATEMENT STANDARDS IN ALL STATE AND LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY AREAS WITHIN THE DISTRICT, REQUIRING DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLIANCE PRIOR TO SALE OF THE PROPERTY, ADOPTING FINDINGS OF FACT, AND DETERMINING THE ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT,” altered to remove defensible space requirements on parcels that are adjacent to parcels with structures, as submitted, 2nd by Director Holthaus. Motion passed 3-0

Staff Reports:
No comments.

Chief's Report:

Station Construction Update

Interim Station 7 –

- Demobilization has begun
- Both the backup generator and conex storage unit have been returned and leases have been terminated.
- 3 modular trailers were removed last week, and leases terminated. - flashing emergency lighting on Sand Hill Road was removed- two of the four were donated to King's Mountain Fire for use in front of their station.
- Should be fully completed by the end of the month.

Station 8 –

- Still working with the Town of Portola Valley to schedule the final inspection.

Station 7 –

- Station generator was delivered on March 13th and is being installed in conjunction with our fuel dispensing system. Final testing will occur on April 5th.
- Today the final furniture was delivered, and the gym equipment was installed.
- Cellular on Wheels (COW) waiting for T-Mobile to submit final plans to the Town of Woodside and PG&E – which should be soon – plan is to get the COW moved to the back of the station and run it off existing temporary power.
- Last week a second punch list walk through was completed with Mike and Bill from CPM and CJW. Last remaining items should be completed soon.

District Updates –

- Evacuation Plan – Chief Cuschieri would like to acknowledge the Fire Prevention staff on assisting with the contributions and development of PV's Evacuation Plan. The PV Wildfire Preparedness Committee extended their appreciation for moving this forward with a completion goal of May.
- Property Update – No new updated information regarding the 3117 Woodside Road property. Hope to have more information for you by the next board meeting.

Promotions –

- March 1st Captain Scott McKenzie was promoted to the Interim EMS/JPA/Med2 position taking over for Chief Dagenais while he is out on leave.
- Firefighter Anthony Armanino was appointed the Interim Captain position to replace Captain McKenzie's vacancy. He will start April 2nd.

Recognition –

- Like to congratulate Captain Joe Porter on completing his one year of probation.
- As of March 5th we would like to recognize FFPM Amanda Dale, FF Nico Morales, and FFPM Ben Zolnierok on completing their two year probationary periods. They all have now moved into permanent status.
- Chief Cuschieri gave a huge thanks to all the staff for the work they put into moving out of the interim station and into the new station.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

Letter from resident thanking the Fire District for their response on an incident.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 P.M.

The next scheduled meeting will be held April 30th, at 7:00 P.M at the WFPD Administration Building, 808 Portola Rd. Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Cuschieri – Board Secretary

DRAFT