

## CAMBRIA FOREST COMMITTEE

### TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE THE NATIVE FOREST OF CAMBRIA

Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2015

Meeting was convened at 6:30 PM at Rabobank in Cambria.

A quorum of directors was in attendance: Crosby and Laura Swartz, JoEllen Butler, Bruce Mumper, Amanda Rice and Christine Heinrichs. Vari MacNeil, Tony Church,, Mark Miller, Dan Turner and Jeff Walters also attended.

Approval of minutes deferred to corrections, which will be accomplished via email.

Treasurer's Report from Laura Crosby: \$1,137.39 includes the \$500 grant from the Cambria Community Council. The bank has eliminated further monthly charges to the account and will repay those deducted in January and February but cannot refund any fees paid in 2014. The application for a \$200 grant from the bank is still pending.

Education/Planting/Mitigation/Operations:

Pine Forest Interpretative Sign Location: Crosby and Laura Swartz walked Fiscalini Ranch with JoEllen Butler March 10 and took photos of appropriate locations for the signs. They will meet with the FFRP Board to discuss on Thursday.

PG&E Reliability Program: No information on tree mitigation planting.

Forest Management: The Cambria Forest Management Plan has never been funded. With costs of the emergency Water Project passing \$12 million, it's unlikely that money will be made available for the forest.

Dan Turner, business manager of the Fire Safe Council, reported that the Fire Risk Reduction Project Grant Application SRA Fee grant application was not funded. However, the Cambria Forest Health Project Grant Application Greenhouse Gas Reduction grant application has been recommended to go forward. He will report to the community at the meeting Wednesday, March 18, Vets Hall 9-11 am. Other funding may be available, such as \$50,000 designated for the Park Hill area in the event that project was not funded through SRA Fee. Park Hill was funded, so that money may be reallocated to Cambria.

Amanda Rice asked "What does forest health mean?" the group discussed various aspects of forest health: appropriate density of trees, sufficient water, reduction of invasive species, removal of excess deadfall to reduce fuel. A catastrophic fire is possible. Fire Chief Mark Miller made the point that Cambria does not have adequate fire fighting ability in the event of a fast-moving, wind-driven fire. He is focused on eliminating ignition sources such as overhead power lines, vegetation fires near homes, any open burning, weed whackers and mowers without spark arresters. "Everyone has to be cognizant of those ignition sources," he said. "We've had enough rain to get a good crop of weeds. That's your flash point."

Vari MacNeil suggested more signs about not smoking on trails. Chief Miller also wants more signs warning of fire danger along the highway. She reported that Neil Ingraham, the Fresno State University scientist she has been working with on the fog project, has described Cambria's Monterey Pine forest as a relict, at the edge of its historic limit. If it burns down or dies, it will probably not be able to regenerate.

Monterey Pine is a fire dependent species that requires the high temperatures of fire to open its cones and drop seeds to grow new trees.

Dan Turner said that trees that have survived infestations and disease but are now dying from the drought.

Amanda Rice suggested having an evacuation drill. Chief Miller is exploring that idea.

Laura Swartz suggested asking the CSD to allocate money to take down dead trees on private property as well as dead trees on their own. "I'm trying to shift some responsibility to our local agency," she said.

Amanda Rice suggested that the Forest Committee act as an information resource for Cambrians with respect to dead trees, defensible space, weed abatement and other fire safety issues.

Jeff Walters suggested reopening the public easement to the Covell Ranch, where the public previously maintained the fire break by removing understory. Chief Miller said that project was near and dear to him because "it's the best insurance this community has." Walters suggested that the Fire Safe Council might approach Covell about reopening the easement on fire safety grounds.

Fog Moisture Project Planning: Vari MacNeil reported that the study is moving forward. She submitted questions to Neil Ingraham collected from the Forest Committee and Greenspace and awaits his answers. Rick Hawley sent a message that he is reworking the fog collection device to be less vulnerable to wind.

The possibility of burning dead wood in a cogeneration plant could supply power to the water plant, which is using \$30,000 of power a month. PG&E is not always willing to buy power. That remains to be explored.

New Business: Greenspace is pursuing a grant for a workshop and flyer on defensible space. Amanda has worked on that in the past and will forward materials to Vari MacNeil. Flyers could be sent out with water bills to every address in Cambria and given to real estate agents to give to their clients. The Forest Committee could also produce brochures for tree professionals to inform them of the legal requirements for getting permits to cut trees and advice on best pruning practices. Mark Miller has brochures on weed abatement he wrote with Galen Rathbun's input.

Chief Miller suggested that the Forest Committee could apply for a grant to create a demonstration garden. The Botanical Garden and Arroyo Grande have demonstration gardens to

show the public how to landscape to reduce fire danger.

Locations for Tree Planting: still looking for recommendations. The Forest Committee will create zones where new trees are needed and can be planted with an expectation that they will survive.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.

Next Meeting April 8, 2015