

Cambria Forest Committee August 16, 2024 meeting summary

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM. In attendance were CFC Chair Crosby Swartz, Secretary Christine Heinrichs, Treasurer Laura Swartz, CFC Director Julie Jorgensen, CCSD Board Director and PROS Parks, Recreation and Open Space Committee (PROS) Chair Michael Thomas, FFRP Executive Director Kitty Connolly, Greenspace Board Vice President Donni Morgan, Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel, California Native Plant Society local representative Neil Havlik, and CCSD Board member and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.

Crosby began the meeting with a brief announcement regarding CFC Officer and Director liability insurance. He stated that having the insurance probably was not needed as the Committee was not involved in anything controversial, plus it's fairly expensive. He added those involved had a couple of months to consider the situation, and he was leaning to not renewing the coverage. There were no comments on this item from those in attendance.

Crosby then stated that for those who wished to read the minutes of the monthly meetings to access the CFC meeting summary reports written by CFC liaison and CCSD Board member Harry Farmer provided in the first CCSD monthly Board meeting Agendas.

Laura Swartz provided the Treasurer's Report, stating there was nothing outstanding to provide, and she would reference the potential grant for the Invasive Weed Guide under Unfinished Business.

Under Organizational Reports, CNPS representative Neil Havlik had little to say other than the local chapter is still a participant involved in litigation regarding the Dana Reserve Project in Nipomo, and while negotiations are occurring not much progress is taking place at this time. As there was no one representing the Cambria Fire Safe Focus Group, Crosby informed us that the featured speaker at their August 28th meeting would be Registered Professional Forester Steve Auten presenting an update on forest work being done in the surrounding area including Cambria and San Simeon. Crosby added that the SLO Fire Safe Council did acquire some grant funding to pursue Forest Management projects that were already approved.

FFRP Executive Director informed us that daily progress is taking place regarding construction of the linking Boardwalk trail on the Ranch which is quite encouraging. She added that some of the plants from the FFRP tree nursery damaged in recent storms were being moved to Rancho Marino, and thanked Keith Seydel for his assistance in this. She also expressed appreciation to CCSD Facilities and Resources Supervisor David Aguirre for updating the trailhead signs on the Ranch. She was also grateful to report that no further poaching of rare plant species had been noticed on the Ranch since the initial unlawful activity had been observed and acted upon. Kitty also mentioned that both California State University Bakersfield and the California Native Plant Society have been active in recent years taking a census of plants in our nearby coastal area including Cambria.

Greenspace Board Vice President Donni Morgan reminded us of the upcoming move of the Greenspace office to their new, roomier location on Main St that will likely take place in mid September. She also informed us that, as a result of the recent tagging (likely gang related markings) at various Greenspace properties around the July 4th holiday, that volunteer stewards would be needed to watch over the roughly 13 Greenspace properties throughout Cambria to be alert for any further activities of this nature. Some of these properties, known as "pocket parks", have benches for relaxing that have been marked up. Volunteers would be observing every few days and reporting on graffiti as well as downed trees, trash, garbage, and so forth.

So far half the parks have been covered, and eight still require oversight. Greenspace will be having a meeting in the coming week to discuss the matter and determine how to recruit more volunteers, mainly folks who live close to the properties and therefore would not be inconvenienced. Ms Morgan then brought us up to date on Strawberry Canyon, including the the water drainage issue at the Burton Drive entrance. The culvert located there has been problematic for years, with water draining into the trail area instead of the nearby stream area. This location is not owned by Greenspace but is county owned land, yet it appears the County is not interested in dealing with the problem. AS a result, the repairs required would likely need to be done by Greenspace, but as this would be an expensive project fundraising would be needed. Christine Heinrichs

suggested that Donni connect with Christina Galloway, the environmental representative of the North Coast Advisory Council, to see if she could interact with County on this issue. Michael Thomas said contacting County Public Works might help. CFC Director Jorgensen commented that in her experience with Public Works they were quite responsive in dealing with culvert and drainage problems, and perhaps more of an effort needed to be made in this situation.

Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel reported the Fuel Reduction project on the Reserve, presently on hold due to crews fighting fires throughout California, would likely resume in mid September once workers were available. He added that work on the fuel break was “pretty much done, less than a days worth left on Randall”. He added that permits would still be needed for upcoming pile burning that will be scheduled sometime in December or January.

There were no reports from the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo or the Upper Salinas Las Tablas Resource Conservation District.

Under New Business, Crosby referenced the recent article in the publication The Hill by Dr Chad Hanson regarding Fuel Reduction and Forest Management, including being skeptical of the efforts and practices of Cal Fire in interacting with the natural world, essentially being more aggressive than cooperative in dealing with fire as much caused by human behavior than anything else.

"Under Unfinished Business, Updating and Reprinting the Invasive Weed Guide”, Crosby and Laura announced the Forest Committee has received a \$500 grant from the Cambria Community Council. Crosby suggested getting together with the author, Christine Heinrichs, to determine what information, and how many pages, might be added. Michael Thomas suggested he might be able to provide assistance in this area. The number of copies reprinted and the number of pages added both determine the funding needed. The Committee plans to order 100 or 150 new copies. Kitty Connolly humorously added that "a weed fundraiser" might be very popular, depending on how you pitch it. Kitty added that the California Invasive Weed Council recommends "plant this, not that". It was pointed out that commercial nurseries in the area were more inclined to selling invasive plants due to requests from customers. The suggestion was made that the Forest Committee approach the local nursery regarding making the Invasive Weed Guide available for purchase at their business."

Donni Morgan informed us that Greenspace was continuing with their Speaker Series, with the next guest being naturalist, author and artist Obbie Kaufmann. He’s written books such as “The Forests of California”, “The Coasts of California”, including wonderful photographs and illustrations. Donni said this would be an incredibly enjoyable as well as informative presentation. The event will be on Sunday, October 20th from 5:00 to 6:30PM at St Paul’s Episcopal Church, with the cost being on a donation basis.

After a very brief reference to Future Agenda Items, Crosby adjourned the meeting at 11:00AM.

The next Cambria Forest Committee meeting will be on Friday, September 13, 2024 at 10AM via Zoom.

This summary written and submitted by CCSD Board Director and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.