

Cambria Forest Committee July 19th, 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 Director and PROS Parks, Recreation and Open Space Committee) Chair Michael Thomas, Greenspace Executive Director Karin Argano, US-LT RCD (Upper Salinas-Las Padres Resource Conservation District) Project Manager Spencer Gordon, Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel, Cambria resident Dennis Dudzik, and CCSD Board member and CFC liaison Harry Farmer.

Chair Swartz began the meeting by asking for Public Comment of which there was none. He then acknowledged the summary/minutes provided by CCSD liaison Harry Farmer available in the July 11th CCSD Board Agenda packet.

Treasurer Laura Swartz reported that no grant monies applied for had yet to be obtained or approved. Laura added that CFC recently spent \$92.43 to upgrade both the kiosk and the Forest Committee information provided at the grounds of the Cambria Historical Museum. She observed that other organizations have spruced up their presentations as well.

While there was no representative from the Cambria Fire Safe Focus Group, both Ms Argano and Mr Thomas acknowledged the focus of the meetings has mainly been on the community wide Evacuation Plan. Michael also reminded us that the CFSFG meetings are now permanently at the Veterans Hall and no longer at the Fire Department.

Greenspace Executive Director Karin Argano provided a thorough update, starting with the organization having found new office space on Main St across from the Cambria Community Health Care District office and Emergency Services, with the move in date being September 1st. She described the large educational library of reference material that will become more accessible for other organizations to take advantage of. Karin then expressed much appreciation to the Linn family for allowing for the use of the office space on Bridge St at such a reasonable rate for 10 years. She told us of the new Greenspace Speaker Series, with the first event occurring on Sunday July 21st at the Unitarian Universalist Hall from 4-5PM. Featured will be former Camp Ocean Pines Executive Director and multi talented consultant and activist Chris Cameron who will speak on the topic, "Working with Nature to Solve the Big Problems". Also upcoming on Wednesday, July 31st will be a presentation discussing different types of bats, taking place at the Greenspace Creekside Reserve Center St from 7-9 PM.

Greenspace is still waiting on funding from the Cal Fire Wildfire Prevention Grant for Strawberry Canyon. Also it's taking longer for fuel reduction assistance due to cost of labor and other issues. However, Karin says GS is "super excited" about a recent donation to create a new pocket park on Lodge Hill, closing escrow on July 24th. There will be a bench on it, another opportunity to enjoy a relaxing moment in nature here in Cambria courtesy of Greenspace and its generous donors.

Laura then commented on the increasing abundance of orchard grass in Strawberry Canyon and the harm it does to the natural understory. Karin then stated efforts have been made to lessen the influence of both orchard and kukuyu invasive grasses by using wood chips as well as grazing with sheep and goats. There is a maintenance plan in place to further address the problem in conjunction with the US-LT RCD, including using the California Conservation Corp. They are presently unavailable due to fighting wildfires and other demands.

Laura and Crosby then spoke to their deep affection for Fern Canyon, and the efforts they've made to retard the growth of invasive grasses in that area.

Rancho Marino Reserve Director Keith Seydel reported that no further work is being done in his area due to all work crews presently fighting wildfires throughout the state, and nothing will be taking place until their return

which of course is unknown. So far most all work has been done regarding the the shaded fuel break on Randall Rd and the road into Camp Ocean Pines, there is just a little bit of cleanup left to do.

Spencer Gordon then added a bit more information on Rancho Marino, saying that 25 of the 44 acres needing attention have already been worked on, and that the major effort was made to save small trees and saplings, as well as the retention of snags, shrubs and much vegetation for the critters living on the land. He's also contracted out to do spot applications of herbicides to deal with the weeds in the area, essentially trying to keep the area "better, safer and healthier". Much thinning and pile building has already occurred, and in the fall controlled burns will be happening to remove this hazard. Spencer said long before this takes place residents in town will be informed, and much monitoring of the burned piles will be part of the process as well to alleviate any fear of something unexpected occurring.

Under New Business there was then a brief discussion on the recently formed CCSD Climate Action Committee made up of Board Directors Michael Thomas and Harry Farmer appointed by former Board President Karen Dean and approved by the Board. Christine Heinrichs then informed us that the Climate Change Policy Ad Hoc Committee would be meeting this coming Sunday further discuss this very important issue.

As to Unfinished Business, updating and reprinting the Invasive Weed Guide so expertly put together a few years ago by Christine Heinrichs was considered at length. In talking with ASAP Reprographics who initially printed the Guide, turns out adding new pages will make the cost of printing the Guide now about \$11 each. Of course essentially the Guide is a public service of which Laura said Christine did "amazing work", including the abundance of descriptive information and color photos. Laura stated that we plan to add additional pages for invasive grasses and several new invasive plants. In addition, as in the past, it is hoped grant funding will be provided by the Cambria Community Council, especially to help with any new design work and printing. Christine also commented on connecting with Fiscalini Ranch Wednesday weeding overseer Michael Thomas regarding tools that are used in weed removal, describing their usage, and taking photos of them to be placed in the Guide. In fact, Mr Thomas remarked he'd like to have the Guide available for Ranch volunteers, and offered to fund any additional expense in this area. Laura offered the thought that having the Fiscalini Ranch mentioned in the updated Guide could possibly gather more interest from the residents of our community. Crosby speculated that perhaps 150 copies could be printed, remarking that there would be little price break with an additional number of copies. He also added that once again this endeavor is essentially a public service for our town and folks interested in addressing the weed problem, including on their own property. He then stated that before the next Forest Committee meeting the grant application would have to be submitted to the Community Council. Whether the grant will be obtained, and the amount, of course remains to be seen. Christine and Crosby reminded everyone that the Guide is actually available electronically on a smartphone as well as in printed form so it can more easily be used when working outside in one's yard or elsewhere. Laura adds it would be a wonderful gift for a new resident to our special town. She also added that the grant needed to be written and submitted by August 1st and presented to the Council on August 21st, and it would be a good idea for her and Christine to get together to discuss finances and design for the final draft, perhaps taking more picture in the meantime.

Crosby then asked for any Future Agenda items or comments, of which there were none. At this point Chair Swartz adjourned the meeting at 10:52 AM

The next Cambria Forest Committee meeting will be on Friday, August 16th at 10AM via Zoom.

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