

Fire Safe Sonoma

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 27, 2003

Time: 12:00 Noon

In Attendance: Tamara Boulton, Miriam Hodgman (Department of Emergency Services), Kathleen Kraft (West County Fire Safe Committee), Jack Rosevear (DES), and Ed Shriver (CDF)

Jack opened the meeting

Tamara updated the group on Fire Safe Sonoma's current financial status. The bank balance is the same as last month's.

Kathleen Kraft provided a grant update.

The West County Fire Safe Committee event in Occidental on July 23rd was very well attended by 55 local residents, local volunteer fire departments, and CDF. There was a video of the Oakland Hills fire to show a worst case scenario of what could happen here. This was followed by a lively question and answer period with personnel from CDF and volunteer fire departments. A second meeting is planned for the end of September or the beginning of October in the Graton area. Kathleen discussed the importance of collaboration with the professional fire community, and prioritizing resources. She would like to see similar events set up in Occidental, Freestone, Bodega, Camp Meeker, and Forestville.

Kathleen also stressed that the West County Fire Safe Committee wants to stay within the grant's specified timeline.

She is interested in having Fire Safe Marin co-founder and ecologist, Ray Moritz, speak at their next presentation, scheduled for September 27.

Jack asked for a copy of the press release.

Kathleen Kraft stated that Kurt Erikson could write the press release.

Ed Shriver also recommended Harry Martin as a resource for writing the press release, as he has a big file of previous press releases.

The press release will be sent to FSS members for review before release to the media.

Kathleen had questions regarding the grant reporting to the Sacramento Foundation.

Jack recommended that Kathleen speak with Theresa Russo and Pete Martin about the reporting, as they have experience working with the Sacramento Foundation.

Kathleen expressed an interest in expanding the West County Fire Safe Committee into the Sebastopol area.

The FSS members in attendance supported the idea of more discussion on the idea.

Jack asked if the West County Fire Safe Committee event was videotaped, and recommended that Ray Moritz be videotaped. Jack commended the event for having good participation from “fire folks.” He asked if West County had contact with District 5 Supervisor Mike Reilly’s office.

Kathleen Kraft responded, “Mike Reilly’s office had not been officially contacted.” The event had not been videotaped.

Jack then referred to the previous meeting discussion concerning volunteer liability issues, and mentioned that County volunteers are covered by workers’ compensation.

Kathleen asked for an update on Fire Safe Sonoma’s insurance status.

Jack responded that FSS is continuing to research the matter. FSS has no general insurance, but possibly could obtain short term insurance.

Ed Shriver offered the idea that a funding for insurance could be written within a grant proposal.

Jack recommended looking at grants to see if they cover both administrative and insurance costs.

Dialogue ensued when Jack brought up the question raised by PRMD’s David Dearden regarding Sonoma County’s NFPA ranking required for the FEMA “Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant” application. Jack expressed skepticism about NFPA ranking as a standard. Sonoma County’s NFPA ranking is unclear, although Jack knows, “we’re ahead of a lot of other places.”

Jack then brought up the “old business” agenda item.

Pete Martin continues to work on the fire safety-prevention power point presentation, and is collaborating with Sonoma County Red Cross to clean up graphics. The new presentation will be ready by October.

Jack raised the issue of board member liability, and will continue to research the issue, particularly for the fuel reduction program being implemented by West County Fire Safe Committee.

Ed Shriver asked about CSA40 coverage, and whether FSS activities could be added to an existing policy. Jack noted that County volunteers and the volunteer fire departments are covered by Workers’ Compensation. Jack will continue to research options.

Jack then stated that, "FSS will need to find an accountant to assist Tamara." He said that he would speak with County Auditor-Controller, Rod Dole, because the Auditor-Controller's office had offered assistance previously.

Tamara recalled that Marge had mentioned the accountant employed by the Soroptimists at the previous FSS meeting.

Jack has spoken with the County's Information Services Department, and they will build the Fire Safe Sonoma web-site. It will have links to appropriate agencies, including State FSS and homeowners' associations. It will play slide shows, and have maps, minutes, press coverage, and board minutes.

Jack reiterated the importance of establishing FSS connections with All State and State Farm representatives.

Ed Shriver mentioned that they (insurance companies) are going out and canceling policies in Sonoma County, and that FSS needs to dialogue with them. Some of it appears arbitrarily based on zip codes.

Jack would like to expand FSS connections with other interest groups, such as PG&E, CCC, and State Parks.

Kathleen Kraft is attending a State Parks meeting, and said she could raise the issue with Brendan O'Neil. She mentioned that, "they're cutting staff right now."

Jack says it's helpful for interest groups to have a selfish issue to encourage them to come to the table. For example, PG&E attendance would demonstrate good faith.

Kathleen Kraft asked if there were capacity building grants out there to work on nonprofit partnerships and organization.

Ed Shriver and Miriam Hodgman stated that there are.

Jack noted Fire Safe Marin's success, and that Fire Safe Sonoma encompasses a more spread-out service area.

Kathleen stated that there is a strong need for regional groups.

Tamara remembers Vern Losh gathering contact information sheets of homeowners, realtors, etc. "Maybe we should go back to that list," Tamara said. She would like to see realtors involved in FSS, and contacted several to distribute the Living With Fire Guide. Their response was not proactive.

Kathleen recommended a strategic planning process to break down organizing efforts into, "bite sized chunks." She stated that organizing could be, "wedded to specific geographic area issues, such as watershed groups."

Jack felt that by addressing the insurance issue (companies canceling policies) FSS would be at the forefront, and gain more recognition as a community resource.

Ed Shriver brought up the Living With Fire publication as a terrific resource. He then shared copies of additional free fire prevention material he had obtained from the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), which can also be shared with the public. Their web site is www.firewise.org.

Tamara liked the graphics on the IBHS posters Ed had arranged. She noted that one poster illustrated both fire prevention applications and full mature landscaping.

Jack returned to the issue of insurance policies being yanked from home-owners.

Tamara felt the insurance companies need to be involved.

Jack said that FSS would have to find out what the insurance company standards are.

The meeting was closed after agreeing that the next meeting would be September 24th (the last Wednesday of the month), at 12:30. The West County Fire Safe Committee meeting is also slated tentatively for the 24th of September.