

MINUTES
JUNE 3, 2019
WILDFIRE PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE
REGULAR MEETING

Chair Chuck Page called the Wildfire Public Safety Task Force Meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. in the Linda Callon Conference Room at Saratoga City Hall at 13777 Fruitvale Avenue.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Chuck Page, Vice Chair Paul Hansen, Members Bill Cooper, Arun Venkatachar, Michael Zhang
ABSENT: Member May Lu
ALSO PRESENT: Crystal Bothelio, Deputy City Manager
Chief Jason Falarski, Santa Clara County Fire
JR Call, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council
Eugenia Rendler, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS ON NON-AGENDIZED ITEMS

None

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Recommended Action:

Receive presentation on the City of Saratoga Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
Discuss the CWPP.

Chief Jason Falarski with the Santa Clara County Fire Department provided a status update on the strategies and action items identified in the City of Saratoga CWPP.

Council Member Page commented on the effectiveness of the recent Santa Clara County Fire community wildfire workshops.

The Task Force discussed the common ages of attendees at the workshops.

Member Venkatachar suggested targeted outreach on wildfire prevention and preparedness to local schools, including both students and parents. He proposed carving out 20 to 30 minutes of presentation time on wildfire during a school event or activity when parents are a captive audience. Children could also be taught similar wildfire preparedness and prevention information.

Vice Chair Hansen suggested teaching students skills, such as how to use a fire extinguisher.

The Task Force discussed shake roofs and incentives for reducing the number of shake roofs.

Chair Page shared that many insurance companies may increase rates or decline to offer a policy for homes with shake roofs. As a result, fewer people are installing these types of roofs. Many insurance agents are proactively seeking to educate their clients about the risks associated with shake roofs.

Vice Chair Hansen raised questions about the level of involvement of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space in fire prevention efforts.

Chief Falarski noted that County Fire is creating wildfire preplans that include Midpensinsula Regional Open Space parks and has offered to share resources to avoid duplication of effort.

Chief Falarski noted that there are services and resources available to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with low income through organizations like the FireSafe Council. However, education and awareness of these resources is a problem.

Chief Falarski shared limitations with the Brush Abatement Program, which included the inability to enter private property to perform inspections. As a result, inspections are done from the street.

Member Cooper suggested that those who have homes that are poorly maintained may not have the resources or ability to take care of their homes and meet Brush Abatement requirements.

Member Venkatachar suggested more public education on available resources.

Member Page added that he has seen many instances where new homeowners do not address issues like shake roofs or landscaping, because they have prioritized other property improvements first.

Chief Falarski emphasized the importance of fuel reduction and some of the challenges associated with performing this work, including a reduction in hand crews and changes in funding.

Member Zhang raised questions regarding risks for mudslides.

Chief Falarksi noted that the evacuation plan identified in the CWPP will be an all hazards plan to address other types of risks, such as mudslides. He then shared the efforts of other communities in the County Fire District.

2. Firewise Communities

Recommended Action:

Receive presentation on the Firewise Communities program and efforts of the Santa Clara County FireSafe to encourage neighborhoods to become Firewise Communities.

Eugenia Randler with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council provided a presentation on Firewise Communities.

3. Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Fuel Reduction/Break Projects

Recommended Action:

Receive presentation from the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council on past and future fuel reduction and fuel break projects in the Saratoga area.

JR Call with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council provided a presentation on past and planned fuel reduction and fuel break projects in the Saratoga area. He noted that these projects are cyclical in nature and need to be revisited every few years to be maintained. He noted that the FireSafe Council agreement with the City of Palo Alto simply calls for fuel management to be done on the same 3 roads year after year.

Task Force Member Cooper noted that there are limited fuel reduction efforts in the southern part of the City and above Monte Sereno and Montalvo. He also raised questions regarding availability of water.

Vice Chair Hansen raised questions about collaboration with regional partners, such as Midpeninsula Regional Open Space.

4. Development of a Proposed Work Plan

Recommended Action:

Begin developing a proposed work plan for the Public Safety Task Force based on Council priorities and timeline of the Public Safety Task Force.

Chair Page facilitated discussion on the Task Force's proposed work plan, starting with a review of all the ideas and topics generated during the presentations on the CWPP, FireWise Communities, and past and planned fuel reduction/break projects. The Task Force then identified further ideas and work plan elements.

The ideas and work plan elements identified by the Task Force included:

- Outreach and education to older adults, individuals with disabilities, or people with limited resources on resources that are available, the importance of defensible space, and home improvements to improve fire resiliency (such as replacing wood shake roofs)
- Outreach at schools to educate both parents and students about wildfire risk and prevention; and, to teach students important skills, like how to use a fire extinguisher
- Public education on shake roofs
- Increase engagement and coordination with local partners, such as FireSafe Council, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space, law enforcement, CERT, and neighboring communities on fuel reduction and wildfire prevention
- Promote Firewise Communities program, set target number of neighborhoods to become certified as Firewise Communities by November 2020
- Understand dangers of other types of risk, such as mudslides or landslides
- Conduct a survey on resident desires and priorities related to wildfire and emergency preparedness
- Test the City's ability to respond to a wildfire or disaster, including evacuation of people and large animals
- Develop a method to measure progress towards improvement

Vice Chair Hansen suggested that the ideas generated thus far could be broadly grouped into the following categories:

- Education
- Fuel Reduction
- Enablement
- Resources (for the City, for the Fire Department, for the community)
- Alliances
- Testing
- Measurement

Chair Page noted that the Task Force may choose to schedule future informational agenda items, such as a presentation from the Sheriff's Office on their role during a disaster, if desired.

Chair Page then described the next steps in the work plan development, sharing that Deputy City Manager Crystal Bothelio will use the initial set of ideas and categories to start a draft work plan to be shared at the next meeting.

5. Future Agenda Items

Recommended Action:

Consider agenda items for upcoming meetings and decide whether to schedule a special meeting in July 2019.

The Task Force agreed to hold a special meeting on July 8, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. Agenda items for the meeting will include:

- Minutes
- Firewise Communities assessment template
- Process for creating wildfire foundation
- WUI information
- Proposed Task Force work plan

The Task Force also requested presentation from the City's Building Official and County Fire prevention staff at the August meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Page adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted:

Crystal Bothelio, Deputy City Manager
City of Saratoga