

El Cerrito - Kensington Fire Action Plan Summary Working Session #3 – March 30, 2016

I. Introduction. Ms. Miller welcomed the group and attendees introduced themselves.

- Fire Marshal Michael Bond, El Cerrito Fire (also serves Kensington Fire Protection District)
- Ralph Boniello, Friends of Five Creeks
- Division Chief Robert Chew, CAL FIRE Santa Clara Unit
- Jean Durham, Kensington Fuel Reduction Group
- Tom Gehling, El Cerrito Trail Trekkers
- Katie Gluck, Friends of Kensington Community Center
- Peter Liddel, Friends of Kensington Community Center
- Fire Chief Dan McCormick, East Bay Regional Park District
- Larry Nagel, Kensington Fire Protection District Board of Directors
- Cheryl Miller, Executive Coordinator Diablo Fire Safe Council
- Stephen Prée, City of El Cerrito, Arborist
- Fire Prevention Officer Chris Renshaw, El Cerrito Fire
- Ciara Wood, Kensington Fuel Reduction Group and DFSC Board

2. Stakeholder Meeting 1 & 2 Recap .

Cheryl Miller, Executive Coordinator, Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) provided an overview of the first two stakeholder meetings. Two written summaries were also provided highlighting:

- What is a CWPP and a fire safe action plan
- Project planning process and schedule
- Existing Assessments – CAL FIRE, local agencies, others
- How we address risk - Current projects and unfunded programs
- Preliminary recommendations to reduce fire hazards and risks
- Expanding participation in the planning process

3. Action Plan Discussion:

The group reviewed preliminary project ideas and recommendations for addressing fire hazards and risk that were discussed during the first two stakeholder meetings. The recommendations were grouped into 9 different activity types (see 3/3/2106 meeting summary).

The group also reviewed the attributes that will be used to select recommended priorities for implementation and funding. The preliminary list of attributes was developed from the 2014 Contra Costa County CWPP Update (page 3.1 – available at www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/2014-Draft_Contra_Costa_County_CWPP_Update.pdf). The group did not recommend any additional attributes.

Most of the discussion centered around which activities should be recommended as Priority Actions in the Plan. At the last work session participants highlighted several interest areas. Four potential Priority Actions were discussed for further development. Each Priority Action will appear in the plan with detail about the recommendation, implementation actions, lead and partners, time frame and estimated funding need.

1) Fire Prevention Education. Education is a force multiplier and should be a high priority.

Additional topics might include:

- How a home can ignite. Show the ignition chain of how a wildfire or adjacent house fire could be transmitted through the landscape or from house to house.

- Importance of neighborhood defensible space. Reducing the potential of home ignitions depends upon each home reducing fuels to calm potential fire behavior, especially critical on dead-end streets or where homes are close together.
 - Fallen trees could serve as habitat or could be fire hazard if lighter fuels grow into the dead tree.
 - Demonstration Garden. This should be part of education rather than a separate topic area. There is interest in developing a demonstration garden at the Kensington Community Center, but there are challenges to making this happen. Other options discussed were:
 - Identify parking strips and other small public spaces that could demonstrate what to plant (and what to remove). These areas could be distributed throughout the communities.
 - Juniper replacement campaign. Provide incentives to remove juniper and offer ideas on alternative plants.
 - Showcase gardens. Ask homeowners to nominate theirs (or neighbor's) gardens that show what plants are more or less flammable. Provide tours, open houses or guide.
 - Video of how juniper burns (like a gasoline can in the form of a shrub), invasive plants increase fuel loads.
 - Various approaches – carrot or stick. Incentives to make changes or develop policies banning certain plants. It was felt that policy approach was difficult and that incentives were perhaps a more effective strategy.
 - Adopt a spot. Showcase the Trail Trekkers model - they take care of portions of Hillside Natural Area and various open space in public right-of-way (paths).
 - Other locations for a demonstration garden – side of Jr. High (Navallier)
 - Education on Home Ignition. This should also be part of education.
 - How to make your home ignition resistant.
 - It was noted that WUI codes are not required for a remodeling, but are required for new construction in both El Cerrito and Kensington. (WUI codes are the building code that requires specific building materials and techniques to make a structure more ignition resistant. It is also referred to as “7A” due to the chapter number where the building code occurs. See www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_codes for details.
 - Dissemination/ delivery methods could include permit counters.
- 2) Geographically Based Projects. A preliminary chart was reviewed and updated (attached).
- 3) Evacuation Planning and Preparedness. Evacuation was seen as a priority.
- There was a question if fire and evacuation (road capacity) modeling could be done to show scenarios of where the fires could start and what would happen.
 - State of the art fire modeling was developed for large-scale, uniform landscapes (forest fires). To try to use it in for small-scale analysis in an urban setting (such as El Cerrito and Kensington) would push the model beyond its intended use and accuracy.
 - We can prioritize working with our local fire agencies to plan for evacuation and response, as well as working with residents etc. so they know what to do.

- Evacuation during a wildfire is dependent upon fire behavior. Pre-designated evacuation routes could lead residents into the fire. Situational awareness and ability to respond to changing conditions is critical. Law enforcement is in charge during the evacuation.
- Related discussion:
 - Parking, especially during parties, restricts access for fire equipment and evacuation.
 - Maintenance along roadsides is critical– having the full road width available for emergency access and evacuation.
 - Ready, Set, Go program to work with residents on their role preparing/ during wildfire and evacuation. , protocols for where to go for information, knowing many routes away of your home (not just one).
 - Community warning systems – understanding what the sirens mean, Nixel, Community warning system etc.
 - Lessons learned from Valley Fire. Don't wait to evacuate. Many of the fatalities in the 2015 fire were because people waited to be told to evacuate. Sometimes there isn't time for notification.

4) Build the link between education and projects: Provide the link between the education and the proposed projects. What are we trying to achieve if we implement the wildfire safety projects.

- Wildfire safety requires partnership of homeowners and agencies (fire department, EBRPD park district, PG&E, EBMUD etc.)
- Role of defensible space and fuel reduction on public lands. How removal of vegetation works to calm a fire. Why are some plants targeted and not others – juniper, eucalyptus, pine.
- What would our community look like if the recommendations for fire safety are implemented. What are the intermediate steps that we need to take.
- Provide one on one walk-through services to talk with individual homeowners about the actions they need around they home.

4. Admin Draft Outline of CWPP: The group review the Table of Contents for the CWPP. All participants were asked to provide photographs highlighting various locations with examples of both good and bad wildfire safety situations.

5. Community Outreach

The group reviewed flyers regarding the community survey that is active on-line at http://fluidsurveys.com/s/El_Cerrito-Kensington_wildfire_recommendations/. A preliminary report of the first 5 responses was circulated. A draft flyer was also reviewed. It was agreed to run the survey through May. A second version can be run again during the Plan's public review period (if desired).

Upcoming community events include:

- Flyers for KFPD shredding event on 4/16
- Flyers for KFPD pharmaceutical disposal on 4/30
- Participation with the Kensington Carnival on 5/7
- Participation with the Kensington Property Owners Association on 5/14
- Participation at the Hillside Festival Sunday 5/15

5. Next Steps

The next meeting is on Wed, May 25, 2:00 – 4:00, Kensington Community Center (to be confirmed). We will continue review the Administrative Draft Plan is shaping up to be circulated for comment in June. Following review we will ask for letters of support from the Kensington Fire Protection District Board, El Cerrito Fire Department and CAL FIRE. Then forward to the El Cerrito City Council and Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors for adoption.