

REVISED AGENDA on 11/18/2019 at 11:02 a.m.

**KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
NOTICE OF A MEETING OF A STANDING COMMITTEE**

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: November 21, 2019
Time of Meeting: 3:00 p.m.
Place of Meeting: Arlington Community Church, Fireside Room
52 Arlington Avenue, Kensington, CA 94707

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Office Administrator, 510/527-8395. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Kensington Fire Protection District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title 1).

Committee Members: Kevin Padian, Larry Nagel
Lisa Caronna, Cortis Cooper, Katie Gluck, Peter Guerrero, Peter Liddell, Paul Moss, David Spath
Staff: Andrea Ausberry

AGENDA

1. Call To Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of October 24, 2019 Committee Minutes
4. Old Business
 - a. Fire Danger Signs
 - b. Emergency Radios
 - c. Determining chain of command and protocol for county emergencies
 - d. Possible coordination of efforts on CERT training, home hardening, FireSafe communities
 - e. OES control of possible sensory and warning devices in Kensington: This topic was tabled due to lack of time
 - f. What have we learned from the recent PG&E shutoff? Translation to EP?
 - g. Community education: what should our next steps be?
 - i. mailers
 - ii. email / NextDoor notifications
 - iii. ads in the Outlook and elsewhere
 - iv. other approaches
5. New Business
 - a. Cortis Cooper for the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD)
 - b. To where do Kensingtonians evacuate? (and how to find out)
 - c. Discussion about advising Fire Board on hiring a grant writing consultant
 - d. Request from traffic consultants about helping with a survey
6. Reports on Activities (various members)
7. Agenda Items for Next Meeting
8. Scheduling Next Meeting
9. Adjourn

KENSINGTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date of Meeting: October 24, 2019
Time of Meeting: 3:00 p.m.
Place of Meeting: Arlington Community Church, Fireside Room
52 Arlington Avenue, Kensington, CA 94707

Committee Members: Kevin Padian, Larry Nagel
Lisa Caronna, Cortis Cooper, Katie Gluck, Peter Guerrero,
Peter Liddell, Paul Moss, David Spath

Public: Robin Noda

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes – The agenda was adopted by consensus. The minutes of the September 25, 2019 EPC meeting were approved by consensus.
3. Public Comment – None
4. Old Business
 - a. Paths: Lisa Coronna reported on the activities of the Kensington Pathkeepers. They are working on improving public awareness of the paths and held a path walk for citizens which was attended by Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia. The Kensington Pathkeepers are holding meetings with residents whose homes adjoin the a path with the goal of understanding resident’s concerns. At present, the committee is focusing on the Willamette, Ardmore, and Beloit paths. The problem the Pathkeepers are struggling with is that Kensington groups have a problem affiliating with a nonprofit organization. Lisa noted that the KCC is avoiding meeting with the Pathkeepers. Another problem Lisa noted was that there are no surveys of the paths and the cost of surveying the Kensington paths is steep.
 - b. Sirens: Katie Gluck reported that she has met with Berkeley Fire Department Deputy Chief Keith May to obtain information about the Berkeley sirens. She also will meet with Contra Costa County OES personnel to obtain information about the County Community Warning System (CWS).
 - c. Fire Danger Signs: Kevin Padian reported that the major issue with procuring and installing Fire Danger Signs are determining who will maintain the signs and be responsible for the upkeep. Kevin will be meeting with Chief Mike Pigoni to attempt to solve this issue

- d. Working with KFPD Board & EBRPD toward faster hazard mitigation: Larry Nagel reported that he and Cortis Cooper attended the last EBRPD Board meeting on October 1, 2019 and spoke during the public comment session on the need to update the EBRPD Fire Protection Plan, which now is ten years old. Larry reported that after the meeting, EBRPD Director Beverly Land (Ward 7) requested more information on which areas of the plan need improvement. Larry and Cortis will present a draft report at the next EPC meeting.
 - e. Next KPSC Forum: Katie Gluck noted that KPSC will wait until spring for the next forum. There was some discussion about how the KFPD could assist in KPSC forums.
 - f. Emergency Radios: Kevin brought two demonstration emergency radios. There was some discussion about whether the radios should be provided to residents free of charge or whether KFPD should charge for them. This needs more investigation.
5. New Business
- a. Possible coordination of efforts on CERT training, home hardening, FireSafe communities: This topic was tabled due to lack of time
 - b. OES control of possible sensory and warning devices in Kensington: This topic was tabled due to lack of time
 - c. What have we learned from the recent PG&E shutoff? Translation to EP? This topic was tabled due to lack of time
 - d. Community education: what should our next steps be? This topic was tabled due to lack of time
 - i. mailers
 - ii. email / NextDoor notifications
 - iii. ads in the Outlook and elsewhere
 - iv. other approaches
6. Agenda Items for Next Meeting: It was agreed that the agenda was way too long, and we'll probably need next meeting just to catch up. No new items were suggested for the November 21, 2019 meeting.
7. Scheduling Next Meeting -- Because of the holidays, it was decided to schedule the November meeting for November 21, 2019 (to avoid Thanksgiving) and the December meeting for December 19, 2019 (to avoid Christmas). Kevin agreed to reserve a room for these meetings.

8. Adjourn – Meeting was adjourned at 6:05 PM.

These minutes were prepared by Larry Nagel and approved at the Committee meeting of 21 November 2019.

Attest: _____
Emergency Preparedness Committee Member

The Case for an Updated Fuel Reduction Plan for EBRPD Parks

14 November 2019

Background. In 2009, EBRPD issued a plan for fuel reduction in its parks in the East Bay Hills¹. At over 400 pages, the report provides a review of historical fires, the relevant ecological setting, and possible treatment scenarios. Most importantly, it provides a detailed treatment plan that consists largely of cutting shaded fire breaks roughly 100 feet wide along the interface between the Park and neighboring cities. After a number of legal challenges and permitting delays, EBRPD began executing the plan in 2018 and rapidly accelerated the process in 2019. Completion of the plan is expected by 20XX?

One of the most interesting figures in the 2009 Plan shows pictures of Wildcat Canyon (just east of Berkeley) circa 1900 and 2000 (see below). Trees and brush have proliferated during the 100-year period, much of it highly volatile pines and eucalyptus. The picture illustrates that the natural state of the Canyon (and virtually all the EBRPD Park lands) was largely grassland. This grass land was maintained by fires occurring every few years which cleared brush and young trees. The larger trees survived in part because the grass fires burnt quickly and with limited heat intensity. In short, the frequent fires removed vegetation and kept a natural balance.

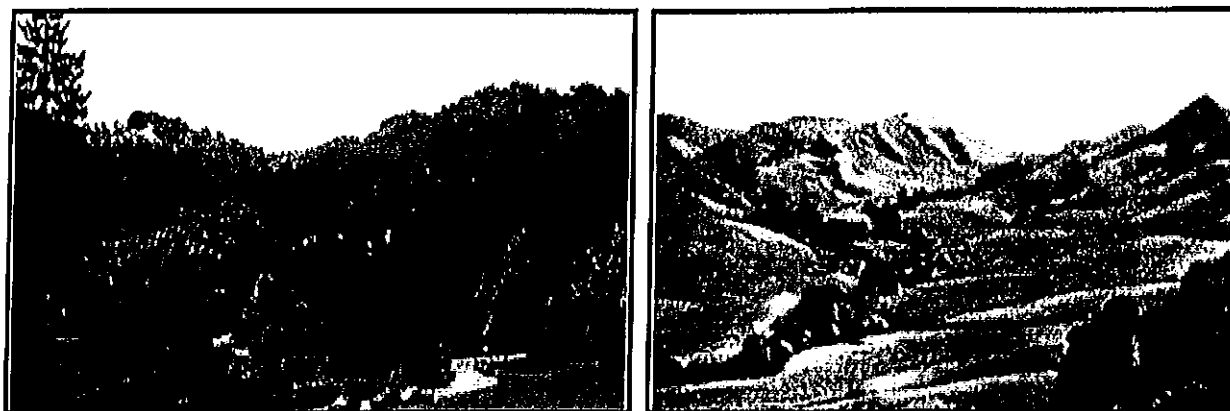


Figure taken from 2009 EBRPD Plan showing Wildcat Canyon in 2000 (left) and 1900 (right).

Once EBRPD took control of the land it began suppressing wildfire in accordance with accepted forestry practices of the time. This broke the natural balance so that the vegetation has increased by orders of magnitude in the ensuing years. All western forests have experienced a similar imbalance, and this is one of the major contributing factors to the megafires seen in recent years. Of course, the warming climate is the other major contributor but the megafires could not have reached such intensity had the forests not been overgrown.

Limitations of 2009 Plan. While the 2009 EBMUD plan was laudable as far as it went, it primarily worked around the edges of the problem, both literally and figuratively. That's because the plan focuses on forming narrow shaded fire breaks between the parks and the urban areas. These firebreaks can stop small local fires, but they cannot stop a large fire starting in the interior of the parks fed by the dense overgrown forests and powered by Diablo winds.²

¹ Provide reference for the report.

² Assessment by Rachelle Hedges, forestry expert, U. of California Extension Service

It is important to point out that the 2009 Plan did not acknowledge that the proposed treatment meant vegetation growth would continue to outstrip vegetation removal. That's because the treatment areas represent a small fraction of the total park acreage, e.g. the total treatment area in 2019 represents 1% of the total acreage of the park lands being treated³. In fact, the percentage of vegetation removed is far smaller than 1% since the treatment leaves a lot of the larger trees in place including some of the invasive, incendiary species such as eucalyptus. The amount of fuel being removed in the present treatment effort is orders of magnitude less than the normal annual vegetation growth in the parks. In other words, the overall fuel load in the parks is still increasing – it is still far from the balanced natural state that existed before EBRPD took over stewardship of the land. How bad is the imbalance? We don't really know because EBRPD does not routinely track the areal coverage of vegetation in the parks.

What is needed?

Taming this human-created Frankenstein is not easy. Removing fuel from overgrown forest is expensive and the methods have major limitations. Removing large amounts of vegetation by hand or machine over hundreds of acres is far too costly to even contemplate. Controlled burns are cheaper but will face major objections from multiple stakeholders including the AQMD. Given all the constraints it is impractical to think that the parks can ever be returned to their natural state prior to fire suppression. On the other hand, continuing the present imbalance where vegetation growth outstrips removal ensures that the risk of catastrophic fire worsens over time as the climate warms. If the present, limited approach for fuel removal continues, it is only a matter of time before a fire erupts in the East Bay parks during Diablo wind conditions and kills dozens of people and consumes hundreds of homes. The recent megafires have clearly demonstrated that these fires will not only affect residents along the wildland interface but can reach deep within the city limits. EBRPD would clearly hold considerable moral responsibility for such an event and probably substantial legal and financial liability.

No easy answers exist to bringing the vegetation in the parks back to some semblance of balance and that further study is needed. An obvious vehicle for this is to update the 2009 fuel reduction plan. Many important things have occurred since 2009 and the update should consider the following:

1. Account for the lesson's learned from the recent megafires. Probably the most important take-away is that modern fires are far more intense and uncontrollable than in the past thanks to the overgrown forests and a warmer, drier climate. Another important lesson from the Napa fires is that a major wildfire in Tilden, Wildcat, etc. will almost certainly reach far into the interior of the adjacent cities.
2. Develop a strategic plan to bring vegetation growth to some kind of steady state over a multi-decadal period, perhaps 50 years. The plan should consider the latest projections on the warming climate from regional climate models. It should also look closely at the practicality and cost of the various treatment options especially controlled burns. The plan should also establish a large-scale monitoring program that estimates the amount and type of vegetation being added on decadal time scales which is essential data that dictates how much vegetation must be removed in order to maintain a sustainable forest in a warming climate.

We believe that along with earthquakes, the threat of a megafire originating from the East Bay parks represent the two most serious threats to our communities. Unlike earthquakes, much can be done to lessen the risk of a megafire, but it depends critically on EBRPD developing and implementing an updated, realistic, long-term strategic plan that addresses the overgrown state of its forests.

³ Provide details.