

Palomar Mountain Planning Organization Board Meeting

November 15, 2014

Board Members Present:

Glenn Borland [chair], Heather Beer, Robert Carlyle, Steve Clark, Donna Dose, George Evangelou, Brenda Fromlath, Elizabeth Getzoff, Bruce Graves, Michael Pique, Linda Thorne, Yvonne Vaucher, Michael Walsh.

Board Members Absent:

Rosemary Johnston.

The PMPO Board Meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM at the Palomar Mountain Fire Department, by Glenn Borland, chair.

Michael Pique reviewed the minutes from the August 23, 2014, board meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously with correction of Jessica Murany being the person invited to the next meeting.

Treasurer George Evangelou reported our current gross balance is \$42,064. George says he is being trained by outgoing treasurer Linda Thorne. The report was approved unanimously.

Fire Safe Council and Tree Removal Program:

Robert Carlyle reported that his crews got 12 to 15 calls to help clean up fire hazards identified by the Fire Department inspections. Applications are not yet being accepted for grants to fund work next season; his current funding dates to November 2013 and has run out.

He points out that winter months are a good time to get a burn permit and burn what trimmings cannot be chipped. If you burn pine or cedar in your fireplace or wood stove, be careful to keep your chimney clean: get help from the professionals at Pot Belly in Ramona if you need to. Oak firewood leaves less chimney residue, ask Pascal at the store for where you can get free oak; let it dry after cutting for 2–3 years.

Community Center of Palomar Mountain (CCPM):

John Lesac, CCPM Board Chair, was not present so Bruce Graves (Treasurer) reported. The Community Center remains inactive for lack of a building. They do have a current 501(c)4 not-for-profit registration and about \$6222 in the bank.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT):

Alan Serry was not present but Fire Department Captain Tilch says that Alan has organized a community service project to put up more of the new high-visibility easement number signs. Also, the next batch of the reflective house-number signs ordered by residents is now ready for them to pick up.

Palomar Mountain Fire Department (PMFD):

Chief Cliff Kellogg is away so Captain Richard Tilch gave his report. The Department is well, with 30 on staff now, with 4 more joining by the end of the year. They are training more drivers. The “extractor” – a special washer/dryer for turnout gear – is having its propane and electric connections installed. The main fire engine is temporarily only two-wheel drive instead of four-wheel because of a mechanical recall. He hopes it can be restored to full function before big snows. No news on long-term lease/contract with the county. Any new building would be in front of, or in place of, the little house. Linda Thorne asked if there would be insurance problems with having a community room. Captain Tilch said not that the department knew of.

Easement Project:

Bonnie Phelps explained that financial institutions and title companies now face new – or at least, newly recognized – rules requiring deeded access to a public road when refinancing or selling your property, or for rebuilding after a fire.

Crestline and Birch Hill properties were laid out in the 1920s through subdivision maps using language like “a 30-foot-wide easement for road purposes”. This language is not currently adequate, and we need to redo the deeded easements from every parcel all the way back to a county-recognized public road. Bailey Meadows has a different history (the roads themselves are separate parcels) but, similarly, any parcel not fronting Bailey Meadow Road is effectively land-locked.

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Until we have these easements, property transactions requiring institutional loans are dead in the water: your only choices now are to pay cash or have the seller carry the paper. The problem isn't Palomar-specific but nationwide; locally, Rainbow is also a total mess with Fallbrook not far behind. Worse, most of the land-locked parcels are *not* second homes.

Bonnie recounted her efforts with Western Resources Title to creatively resolve the problem. Mike Kovacs from their Orange County office came down and worked out several approaches, all of which met with failure to win underwriter approval.

The current hope is to find a way to "wave a wand" over the original early-20th-century recorded documents and have them be deemed adequate. Anything else, anything requiring a hundred new deeds to be drawn up and recorded, will cost a great deal – probably more than many of the parcels are worth – and unlikely to succeed.

Steve Clark moved we activate an Easement Committee to investigate the new regulation/requirement, report to the Board, and to represent the PMPO in meetings with elected officials. Seconded by Heather Beer, approved unanimously. Committee members are Glenn Borland, Yvonne Vaucher, Cecelia Borland, Steve Clark, Bruce Graves, and George Evangelou. The committee will try to schedule a meeting soon with Bonnie Phelps.

Palomar Mountain State Park:

Ranger Jessica Murany said the Park welcomes about 100,000 visitors per year, including walk-ins and conference center attendees. The campgrounds were, and are, full on weekends. The recent Apple Festival was a success, with at least twice the participants of 2013's: about 744 people, 260 cars, and a great band. Among recent renovations she noted fixing the leaky bathroom roofs. Vandalism has decreased, no theft issues. The new Park sign off of the Nate Harrison Grade looks good.

The continuing drought has us down to 50% of sustainable forest: new insect pests, fewer deer & turkeys. The creeks lack pools so we're losing our native trout from the Park down to the Pauma drainage.

Heather Beer suggests getting some grafts from the Kelloggs' orchard, whose apple trees date to the 19th century. Linda Thorne says there are other legacy apple trees in Pedley Valley. Libby Getzoff notes a middle-school golden-spotted oak borer class in Julian last week, which expects 80 students at the early December session.

Michael Walsh remarked that only three years ago the park lacked volunteers and was on the list of 70 parks to be closed. Michael introduced Rick Barclay, who founded the "Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park" specifically to fund the park over shortfalls and improve its visitor experience and provide improved interpretive activities.

Rick Barclay said the park's gap between costs and revenue is closing. He reviewed where we have been: in May 2011 the State of California was planning to close the park in June, 2012. The only option was to reach out to the community for help. In November, Rick and Michael Walsh met and started a pledge drive and concurrent paperwork & contracts to plug the gap. The "Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park" got a good start by being sponsored by CRISPIA - the Cuyamaca State Park Interpretive Association. In the spring of 2012, the Friends signed a contract with the state park and started calling in their pledges. Then the "scandal in Sacramento" hit, where the State Parks Department appeared to be hiding funding surpluses and didn't "look so poor". This hit our pledge-fulfillments hard; we caught our breath but the "scandal" was, for us, a blessing in disguise. The Palomar Mountain park was one of the ones offered matching funds for donations. Fortunately, the dollar-value of volunteer hours gets counted too, through the Friends' contract mechanism.

Our current status, Rick continued, is we've raised \$680,000: \$200,000 from (370) individuals, and \$100,000 from corporations and other associations like the PMPO, and \$384,000 from the state matching fund pot. The Friends have achieved their 501(c)3 incorporation and are on the cusp of becoming an independent cooperating association unit, like CRISPIA and 80 other units within California. Our proposed contract is now under consideration by the California Parks and Recreation department. We will be a fund-raising 'donor' association rather than an 'operating' association, with our mission statement "Keep the park open full-time, protect it, extend recreation and education programs".

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The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 AM.

Next board meeting is February 14.

Michael Pique, Secretary (email: secretary@pmpoinfo.com)
Minutes approved by PMPO board NOT YET