

Minutes of the Palomar Mountain Planning Organization 2018 Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 26, 2018 at the Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire Department

Board Members Present: Cecelia Borland, Glenn Borland, Robert Carlyle, James Ewen, Don Grant, Katie Michelmores, Michael Pique, Alan Serry, Yvonne Vaucher, Michael Walsh, Jack Weisgerber.

Board Members Absent: Elizabeth Getzoff (at daughter Betsy's graduation), Sue Hanson, Rosemary Johnston, Mark Wisnosky.

The PMPO 2018 Annual General meeting was convened at the Palomar Mountain Fire Department 10:08 A.M. Saturday May 26, 2018. In addition to the Board, about 40 members were present along with six firefighters. The Chair, Glenn Borland, thanked the Palomar Mountain Fire Department for hosting the Pancake Breakfast and Annual Meeting, Katie Michelmores and Susan Humason for organizing and producing the newsletter, Cecelia Borland and Yvonne Vaucher for being breakfast chefs, and John Lesac, Gary & Linda Lockard, and Rigel Rafto for meeting setup.

Secretary's Report (Michael Pique):

The minutes of the May 27, 2017, annual general meeting were distributed and approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report (Michael Walsh):

As reported in the PMPO spring 2018 annual newsletter, with corrections, our balance carried forward from December 31, 2016, was \$44,851.35 (checking: \$11,475.88, savings: \$33,375.47). Expenses included purchasing 120 Highway to the Stars signs (\$2,913.97) and income included sales of 94 such signs (\$2922.00). Our ending balance (Dec 31, 2017) was \$46,329.40 (checking: \$12,939.34, savings: \$33,390.06). The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

San Diego Gas and Electric (SDGE) Fire Weather Response Plan (Joe Cabalda and Brian D'Agostino) The 2007 wildfires (including the Poomacha fire on Palomar) triggered a revolution in how SDGE prepares for fire season. A dedicated SDGE meteorology group works with the community to monitor fire-prone conditions. Over 170 power-pole-mounted weather stations (three on Palomar) report wind, temperature, and humidity to SDGE and to the public through SDGEweather.com. Automatic pan-tilt-zoom cameras along with fixed-position mountain-top cameras watch for smoke and flames, viewable through <http://www.alertwildfire.org/sdge>. In a collaboration with UCLA, a daily fire protection index is computed, incorporating weather, live fuel moisture, dead fuel moisture, and (through satellite measurements) greenness of the annual grasses. This data feeds a computer simulation Wildfire Risk Reduction Model that prioritizes electrical system hardening efforts.

2016-2017 was a rarely-seen heavy rain winter, then 2017 saw the hottest summer in some years, followed by one of the driest winter since San Diego record-keeping began in the 1850s. Our system began warning of danger during a 13-day Santa Ana wind event, with northeast winds 50 MPH and above. We alerted 170,000 people living east of Interstate 15, and by December 6, had alerted millions of customers. By the next day, fires were north and south of us and we began de-energizing large parts of rural San Diego county. We had already hardened many miles of power lines, replacing wood poles with steel and using stronger wires. But flying sheds can't be stopped. We positioned field crews at critical sites. By December 10, we had seen gusts on Crestline up to 47 MPH, and at Cuca Ranch up to 53 MPH.

After the winds subsided, power was restored. Cecelia Borland asked if Palomar should be self-sufficient for electricity. How long should we be prepared in case of wildfire or earthquake? Borrego Springs apparently plans for three weeks. Elizabeth Zerbe suggests locating generators permanently in Julian and Palomar.

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Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire Department (PMVFD) (Cliff Kellogg and Dean Kowalski): Cliff Kellogg, president of the PMVFD Board of Directors ("Fire Board"), said that the county has approved \$1,800,000 for improvements to the station, including new crew quarters in the back and repairs to the existing equipment bay and the little house. We now have two CalFire firefighters here all the time, often supplemented by San Diego County Fire reserves. Since the summer, one of the CalFire crew has been a paramedic, on duty around the clock.

See the PMVFD web site at <http://www.palomar-fire.org>

Chase Hartley of the Palomar Christian Conference Center (PCCC) updated us on moving the office trailers from behind the fire station to make room for the new crew quarters. Finding a moving company turned out to be difficult; last week the PCCC did receive and approve a quote for the job.

Our CalFire Captain, Dean Kowalski, invited residents to come by and talk with him, anytime. He says the defensible space inspections this year will be starting soon, saying "I realize you live in a forest here - some of the county statutes are difficult to comply with. What we look for is an effort to be made. Spread the word: be more active in clearing where you go in and around. We need to fit the fire engine down your roads, so we need clearing a little higher and a little wider than the engines are." He also pleads for clear easy-to-see address signs. Bill Leininger says you can order signs today at the CERT booth; CERT has just received the most recent batch: 53 signs.

La Jolla Indian Reservation East Grade Road Well Water Project (Richard Gant): Mr. Gant introduced himself as a former business partner of the late William Yale. The 7-acre parcel on the East Grade Road (about mile 9) formerly owned by them has become part of the La Jolla Indian Reservation (LJIR). LJIR and Gant are partnering to operate one of the wells there as a source of commercial drinking water. He said that although the current market demand for spring water is very low, they would like to be in position to go into production if the market recovered. He said they would not risk the mountain losing its supply of water for homes - they would do extensive testing to assure that. Their goal is to be ready with a production plan for when "San Diego goes toilet-to-tap". He wants to arrange a series of meetings with a committee of the PMPO board.

Traffic Safety (Alan Serry):

Burt Hulbert is picking up the traffic safety job from Alan next year. The U.S. Forest Service is working to change the Crestline group camp from "reserved for overnight camping" to "day use" for the public to park, play, and use the restrooms. This is great news that will free up this area for snow day parking and recreation.

Alan says when you have a traffic problem, call the CHP. Rex Roberson of the CHP points out that "it's an hour for us to get here. We can't be up here all the time. We're making it a point to be on patrol, more than chasing after to issue tickets. During business hours, just call 911." A discussion of decibel (sound level) meters concluded the meters are hard to use effectively and are not admissible in court. However, if you hear an illegal muffler, call it in as reckless driving.

Deeded Easement Project (Bonnie Phelps): Bonnie Phelps said that when she became a realtor she found that 90% of Palomar was landlocked - no legal deeded access. Sometimes this keeps you from getting a loan or a building permit. Now, after many years of effort, Palomar is 90% *with* legal deeded access. She says she can assist owners with getting their informal easements recorded - otherwise they will not show up on a title search. She will help at no charge; she can also help on road maintenance agreements. These agreements then qualify for letters from the county declaring the roads to be "public roads privately maintained". Please volunteer to be a block captain for your own little road on Birch Hill or Crestline and get these easements recorded once and for all. She will then turn to Bailey Meadows where the main road is itself land-locked.

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Fire Safe Council (FSC) (Yvonne Vaucher):

This year the Palomar Mountain FSC will have a free dumpster day on June 9, so bring those broken outdoor wooden chairs and other fire hazards to get rid of. We will again conduct, on August 25, an all-day Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) workshop on how to prepare your property to be fire-safe. We will also have, on September 23, a workshop on chainsaw use, care, and safety conducted by Tim Gray of the US Forest Service. Bring your own chainsaw and learn from a master.

We still have some funds to pay for chipping of downed trees and brush - sign up and get your property ready before summer. We also have Barricade Fire Gel available - ask.

A major FSC goal is to improve Crestline/Birch Hill emergency escape routes. We are working on a grant application to improve these roads, especially 32J that connects to Conifer Road, but need permission from owners as well as the money. For 2018, the FSC will submit grant requests for fuel reduction on the eastern slope below Birch Hill to Jeff Valley, including Conifer Road, to provide for contingency evacuation and a fire break. Clearing tree limbs and brush around the roads is your responsibility. A joint resolution of the FSC and the PMPO was mailed to 400 residents last year as a reminder. Note the Palomar FSC meets the third Saturday of every month at the Fire Station - please come.

Bob Uribe, Community Liaison with the San Diego County Fire Authority, spoke. He is helping our FSC on evacuation planning according to the "PACE" method: Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency. For example, a draft PACE plan for Crestline/Birch Hill might be Primary: South Grade and East Grade Roads; Alternate - Nate Harrison Grade; Contingency: 32J from Crestline to Conifer Road, 11E from Crestline to East Grade Road; Emergency: temporary refuge area across from the Lodge.

Mr. Uribe said only 4% of rural residents are signed up for Alert San Diego: you should be one of them.

US Forest Service (Phouva Vorapanya): Forest Service ranger Phouva Vorapanya said the seasonal fire protection staffing is active. The USFS completed a set of burns in Fry Creek last winter.

Neighborhood Watch (Katie Michelmores): Next month there will be a big meeting at the Palomar Mountain Lodge to discuss community security and policing. Add your name to her clipboard list to be notified of details.

Mutual Water Company (Joanne Marugg, President)

A new 40,000-gallon tank will be installed on Birch Hill soon; there were some permit snags that are now straightened out. Your conservation efforts are appreciated. It's about time to read the meters: please pay on time when you get your bill. Remember - no irrigation systems, return your proxy cards, and update your emergency contact information.

Sheriff's Community Advisory Group (Alan Serry and Mike Appelman): Mike Appelman is taking over from Alan this year and will attend the various meetings with the sheriff's team. Contact Mike with your questions or concerns.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) (Bill Leininger):

CERT is sponsored by the Palomar Mountain Fire Department, to prepare and train community members for emergencies. CERT meets every month on the second Saturday, 10 AM, here at the Fire Station. Bill says to focus on *your* preparedness. The next event is June 16, a fire "Barricade Gel" workshop. Learn how to protect your house as you evacuate.

Community Center of Palomar Mountain (CCPM) (Rosie Lopresti):

The CCPM is working hard to arrange events Palomar people will enjoy coming to. Upcoming events are: September 1: Labor day weekend barbecue/picnic at the County Park, a potluck with crafts and information booths. September 14: a Star Party and dessert potluck at the Palomar Observatory. The CCPM Board needs help to keep doing this, and to secure funding. She thanked

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Burt Hulbert for putting a roof on the community bulletin board next to the Palomar Mountain post office.

Friends of Palomar Mountain State Park (Michael Walsh): The “Friends”, organized six years ago, are a full-fledged independent state park ‘co-operative association’. Thanks to the generosity of the community, they have funded the Doane Pond ramada reconstruction and hired a seasonal park aide for education and outreach. They helped with the Earth Day festival, which attracted 250 people, with the Palomar Christian Conference center bringing hot dogs. A new project is protection of mountain lions. Long term, the Friends want to renovate the park amphitheater and make a museum & gift shop. Every year, Rosemary Johnston has attended the Park Advocacy day in Sacramento. She reports that the November ballot will include Proposition 68, borrowing money for 280 California parks, about \$1,300,000,000.

Palomar Mountain State Park (Will Meyst and Jessica Murany): Will Meyst, Interpretive Ranger, says “Education is my job”. He leads hikes focused on seasonal highlights. Last year he reached 1802 people with 25 hikes and 14 campfire presentations.

Jessica Murany, Park Ranger, says the next big event will be the October 21 Apple Festival. The park hopes to have a new internet connection for education and to enable live videocamera feeds. They are doing burns in Doane Valley to prevent future fires from getting out of control. She heard that in the 2007 fire, lots of people stayed to protect their properties: please don’t stay. She says the park needs help on snow days with traffic and parking control. Burglaries seem to be on a cycle. She’s been here seven years: look out for your neighbors’ properties and share ideas. A South Grade felony was tried in June. Fireworks at the Kica Mik Overlook last July could have started a big fire; we put volunteers on patrol for several weekends. We will work with the Fire Safe Council more this coming year.

Relevant web sites are <http://palomarsp.org> and <http://www.parks.ca.gov> .

Goldspotted Oak Borer (GSOB): Michael Walsh has heard a rumor of a new spray to combat the beetles. Jessica Murany says she has not heard of any effective treatment yet. Bonnie Phelps says the newsletter has some information on this; last week saw sudden oak death on Panorama Trail, north of the East Grade Road. Bill Leininger says Conifer Road is seeing GSOB-caused oak deaths now.

Election of PMPO Board Members:

Three incumbents whose terms are ending are leaving the board (Don Grant, Sue Hanson, Mark Wisnosky). Alan Serry is retiring from the board a year early so we have six openings. Ballots were distributed with the two incumbents whose terms are expiring offering to serve again (Michael Pique, Yvonne Vaucher) and candidates for three-year terms John Lesac, Rigel Rafto, Linda Thorne; and Mike Appelman, who offers to serve out Alan Serry’s remaining one-year term. The candidates present gave brief statements. The slate was elected unanimously. Mary Ellen Harshberger was approved as alternate for Rigel Rafto.

The 2018-19 Board roster is:

(terms expiring May 2019): Mike Appelman, James Ewen, Rosemary Johnston, Katie Micheltmore, and Jack Weisgerber

(terms expiring May 2020): Cecelia Borland, Glenn Borland, Robert Carlyle, Elizabeth Getzoff, and Michael Walsh

(terms expiring May 2021): John Lesac, Michael Pique, Rigel Rafto, Linda Thorne, and Yvonne Vaucher

The meeting was adjourned at 12:42 PM.

Michael E. Pique, Secretary. secretary@PMPOinfo.com Minutes approved by PMPO membership May 25, 2019.