

From: Hilda Gastelum [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2021 8:48 AM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <City.Clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Wild fire vegetation

Suggestions for February meeting.

For many years I have reported to the fire prevention unit areas where owners do not remove the brush or dead trees or fire hazard plants like bamboo and grasses. In the last 20 years Residents i Increasingly have been planting bamboo in their yards. These plants are very combustibile and reproduce so fast thus increasing the risk of fire.

It would be ideal if the council would consider banning these plants and enforcing owners to remove them

Thank you for your consideration

Hilda Gastelum

From: Hilda Gastelum [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, January 30, 2021 9:04 AM
To: Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Board meeting / February 1st.

Hello Lindsey

Would you be so kind to pass this note to the council for their consideration.

I would like to bring to your attention the importance of banning the fire hazard plants.

In the past 20 years the San Rafael residents have been increasingly planting bamboo and grasses. This vegetation is extremely combustible and invasive causing sewer pipes to break and damages to sidewalks and structures. Many cities in California have banned Bamboo plants. Please consider implementing an ordinance to eliminate existing fire hazard plants and banning them for future residents.

Thank you for your attention,

Hilda Gastelum



February 1, 2021

Mayor Kate Colin
San Rafael City Council
1400 Fifth Street
San Rafael, CA 94904

RE: Comments on Item 7.a Amendment to Fire Ordinance

Dear Mayor Colin and Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity for the Fire and Environment Resilience Network (FERN) to comment on the San Rafael's amendment to the Vegetation Management Plan Ordinance (Ordinance). FERN represents the Marin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, the Marin Audubon Society and the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. Our organizations and other conservation groups are concerned about potentially adverse environmental consequences of vegetation management projects. FERN was formed to help the Marin Wildfire Protection Authority (MWPA) address environmental in the implementation of Measure C. We support the Marin Wildfire Protection Authority (MWPA) and its mission and remain ready to assist in formulating an environmentally sound approach to this important task.

FERN requests the San Rafael amendment include the following.

1. Add a *Whereas* to the agreement that states what is in the JPA for MWPA:

***WHEREAS**, intensifying climate change and extensive fuel build-up are contributing to the increasing threat of wildfire throughout Marin County and, to the extent possible, should be addressed through ecologically sound practices that minimize release of greenhouse gases and protect the biodiversity and resilience of Marin's landscapes*

2. Add Ecologically Sound Practices to your Education and Outreach program. The Ecologically Sound Practice Partnership (ESPP), which is affiliated with MWPA, is currently developing such practices for defensible space projects; when complete, these will be posted on the MWPA website.

3. The Ordinance identifies that this program complies with CEQA, and identifies Class 4 Categorical Exemption 15304 (b) (New gardening or landscaping, including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire-resistant landscaping). It also identifies Class 4 15304 (i)

- (i) Fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that the activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. This exemption shall apply to fuel management activities within 100 feet of a structure if the public agency having fire protection responsibility for the area has determined that 100 feet of fuel clearance is required due to extra hazardous fire conditions.

Although this provision exempts fuel management activities within 30 feet of structures if other conditions are met, any portion to 100 feet needs approval by the public agency and any project that extends beyond 100 feet from a structure is not exempt, requiring further CEQA documentation. Please note this in the Ordinance. In addition, please note in the Ordinance that a requirement for the exemption 15304 (i) is that the project shall not result in:

- the taking (loss or destruction) of special status species
- significant erosion and sedimentation of surface water

Any area identified with this Categorical Exemption should document that the project will not take sensitive species or cause significant erosion both before and after the project implementation

4. The Ordinance specifies that the following action must be taken within the 100' zone of a structure:

4.) Remove all combustible vegetation, provided that single specimens of combustible vegetation are permitted if separated by a distance equal to two (2) times the height of the next adjacent combustible or noncombustible bush on slopes 0 to twenty percent (20%), four (4) times the height of the next adjacent combustible or noncombustible bush on slopes twenty-one (21) to forty percent (40%), and six (6) times the height of the next adjacent combustible or noncombustible bush on slopes exceeding forty percent (40%) as measured from the most outer edge of both bushes.

An unamended section of the ordinance has a definition of “combustible vegetation:

4.12.020 – Definitions. "Combustible vegetation" means vegetation that ignites readily and burns intensely as more specifically identified by resolution of the city council.

It is not clear what, if any, specific plants fall within this definition (other than perhaps the four listed in subsection B.5) or where a list of such plants may be found. Furthermore, we would have serious concerns if this provision required or justified destruction of native plants and wildlife habitat beyond what was necessary for protection of structures. It is our impression that most lists of “combustible” or “pyrophytic” plants are based on as much anecdote as science. For this reason, current fire safety vegetation management strategies tend to focus on

plant placement, spacing, maintenance and hydration rather plant classifications such as “combustible”.

5. Subsection C.4 of the Ordinance refers to “well-irrigated” specimen trees. This provision needs to recognize that native plants tend to use water more efficiently than exotic plants and need less water to be hydrated and that giving too much water to native trees such as our native oaks will rot its roots and weaken or kill the tree.

6. The ordinance ignores that hardening structures is at least as important as a vegetation ordinance for fire safety. This is important to address in fuels management and fire prevention.

7. As noted above, MWPA’s Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership is currently developing such practices and your regulations should follow their lead, because you will be receiving funding for at least some of your projects through that funding source.

Thank you,

Terri Thomas, on behalf of FERN

From: ROBERT CHATHAM [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 31, 2021 5:07 PM
To: Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>; city.clerk@cityofsanfael.org
<city.clerk@cityofsanfael.org>
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENTS

RE: Council Meeting on February 1, 2021

We support the passing of the "Amendment of the Current Vegetation Management Ordinance" and "Regulation of On-Street Parking on Narrow Streets, Hilly Streets" Ordinance. Wildfires and poorly maintained landscaping are a significant risk to our community. SAFETY FIRST!

Thank you.
Robert & Karen Chatham
[REDACTED]
San Rafael, CA 94901

January 31, 2021

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Ave
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Agenda Item No: 7.a, for February 1, 2021 meeting; regarding Vegetation Management Standards

Honorable Mayor Colin and City Council members:

I support everything the City can do to reduce wildfire risks and improve fire and emergency access and response times. As the City sees more in-fill development occurring in existing neighborhoods, I would like the City to adopt policies that require the same standards for all neighborhoods which *must* be met before any further development is approved. In particular, I recommend the City Council adopt the following policies:

1. Emergency response time. *Require emergency, fire and EMS services to meet NFPA Standard 1710 response time criteria for all new and existing development.*

2. Fire Apparatus Access. *Require CFC turning radius provisions to accommodate the turning around of fire apparatus, as required by CFC Appendix D, for all new and existing development.*

On January 4, 2016, around midnite, on a dark and rainy night, the Fire Department responded to a house fire at 55 Upper Fremont. The Fire truck had difficulty making it up the steep hill, so they parked at Marquard and Fremont and hand carried equipment about 800' uphill. According to the Incident Report (No. 2016-000110), it says that only M51 and B52 "will be able to access via Fremont/Upper Fremont" and at 1:42 am, it says "E54 and B52 are stuck unable to get out at this time." There is no Fire Truck turnaround on Upper Fremont, as required by CFC, Appendix D.

On September 15, 2020, the Planning Commission approved an application for a new home at 38 Upper Fremont. I was disappointed that the City didn't require a Fire Truck turnaround at the Y-intersection of Upper Fremont and a private access road that borders the development site. The City Attorney evidently advised against it (even though a Fire Truck turn-around is being required for a development at Ross/Clayton St in Gerstle Park). Public Works instead required a delivery truck turnaround; FedEx frequently refuses to deliver packages on Upper Fremont because of the inability to turn their trucks around.

The Fire Marshall provided the following comment re 38 Upper Fremont:

"The Fire Department is unable to provide emergency fire or EMS services that meets NFPA Standard 1710 response time criteria because the existing public roadway does not accommodate fire apparatus vehicles and does not meet CFC provisions for Fire Apparatus Access Roads. San Rafael Fire vehicles are unable to maneuver to this property due to unusual topographical

conditions, substandard roadway width, and hairpin type curves that do not meet CFC turning radius provisions. Additionally, there is no existing provision on Upper Fremont Drive to accommodate the turning around of fire apparatus as required by CFC Appendix D."

As City Council members, you are responsible for making safety decisions that protect the residents of San Rafael. These policies need to be adopted at the Council level in order for the application to be required by all City departments and eliminate disparate treatment among various neighborhoods. We now know that a fire started in any neighborhood in the City can quickly become a threat to the entire City, as this report states, "a wildfire in any area of the City could prove catastrophic".

Currently, the property at 55 Fremont has an accumulation of downed trees with dried leaves and brush and we notified the Fire Department in September, 2020. With compromised access on this hill, the removal of this "fire fuel" is critical. We have not received any indication of when this will be accomplished and are not aware of any action taken by the property owner.

Perhaps, there needs to be a rating system where critical areas are given a higher priority for compliance with vegetation removal or better compliance measures should be adopted. The previous fire occurred in January and we will soon be entering the dry summer months so clean-up of this property is top priority! In addition, there is a lot of scotch broom growing along the roadside. Note that Upper Fremont Drive, past #31, is a dirt road and is a City maintained Street, per my understanding. See attached photos of Scotch Broom and dry leaves and brush at this site.

In addition, I would also like to suggest that the Fire Department, while making assessments throughout the City regarding vegetation management, that they also inspect street signage and address numbers and work with property owners and the Public Works department to insure that addresses are clearly marked and street signage is replaced or added where necessary to assist Fire and emergency personnel to quickly locate the destination property. I understand that Firefighters had difficulty locating 55 Upper Fremont the night of the fire.

Thank you for addressing these important safety concerns.

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt
Fremont Road resident

att: 2 Photos of dried vegetation at 55 Upper Fremont
Photo of Scotch Broom along Upper Fremont Drive (the dirt road portion)
Photo of Y-intersection where Fire Truck turnaround was suggested

cc: Fire Chief Darin White, Darin.White@cityofsanrafael.org
Quinn Gardner, Emergency Manager, Quinn.Gardner@cityofsanrafael.org









Sent: Friday, January 29, 2021 10:42 AM
To: Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: re: for the CC meeting 2/1

Mayor Colin, Members of the San Rafael City Council

Re: Agenda Items 7 a. and 7 b. before the Council on February 1, 2021

I write to express my support for the passage of both the (7 a.) Amendment of the Current Vegetation management Ordinance and (7 b.) Regulation of On-Street Parking on Narrow Streets ordinances.

As a citizen of San Rafael for more than 30 years and a former responder to fire incidents with the San Rafael Fire Department I probably have more than an average amount of experience with the difficulties of responding to emergencies on the narrow and windy streets in the hills of San Rafael. Many of these were developed a century or more ago to service what amounted to small vacation cottages belonging to families from San Francisco and other Bay Area cities. In the intervening decades many of the original cottages evolved into larger full time homes and other homes were built in the intervening spaces. In the early days little thought was given to the need for emergency access and when it was the access was considered adequate. But, with more homes developed closer to streets, larger and more personal vehicles and larger fire and ambulance apparatus access has become a bigger problem for firefighters, paramedics and police. I remember responding to a fire in the middle of a rainy night high in the hills which required firefighters to pull nearly 1000 feet of hose up the hill by hand because that was as close as they were able to get with an engine. Many situations like this are avoidable and the ordinance before you presents reasonable and prudent mitigation.

Through my experience responding with the San Rafael Fire Department to wildland fires in San Rafael as well as regular participation in out of county wildland fire training I probably have more than the average citizen's experience with wildland fire while nowhere near the experience of wildland firefighters or the victims of a wildfire. However, with even my limited first hand experience I'm very aware of the devastation that any fire can cause and particularly when it wipes out a whole neighborhood. Fire is a part of the natural environment and should be accepted as just that. However, that does not mean ignoring the impact on human habitation. Reasonable and responsible policies are the proper means of mitigating the danger to developed area and this ordinance a well-reasoned response.

Both of these proposed ordinances have the product of careful consideration by professionals who conducted extensive public outreach and involved the San Rafael community in the drafting process. I was a member of the Wildfire Advisory Committee that discussed and debated the issues and ideas that went into the creation of the ordinances before you tonight. The members of that committee were a diverse cross section of San Rafael. This was an active committee. There was no rubber stamping proposals from the administration. What you have before you has been well tested and well thought out. That's not to say it will meet with universal acceptance. There will always be those who feel their ox was gored. But, these serve the best interest of the community, they do the greatest good for the greatest number. Often, it is those most opposed who are the most grateful when way later they are the ones who have faced a personal disaster that was mitigated by the action taken.

This is important work and I urge you to pass these ordinances.

Larry Luckham

From: Pam Theroux [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 1, 2021 7:57 AM
To: Distrib- City Clerk <City.Clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Fire

I live on Park Ridge Rd in Terra Linda. Our street has open space all around, including on my side of the street towards the homes on Las Gallinas, so we are at the top of the slope/hill. As we know fire likes to travel upward, so if fire came from below or Las Gallinas it would zoom up the hill. In fact a few years ago a young boy accidentally started the hill on fire with a gopher smoke bomb in a gopher hill.

The house next door to me has numerous Eucalyptus trees, a half dead pine and a large Redwood tree. The owner tries to keep them trimmed and the ground cleaned up from debri, but if there is a fire, clearly it will be all over for our street as especially those Eucalyptus will shoot burning embers everywhere.

A couple of the trees, the way they are on the neighbors lot are actually closer to my house than to his. Is there anything I can do for that?

Ditto for a neighbor's pergola structure that is over 10' tall and used the fence between houses to hold one side up, has a HUGE Wisteria covering the top and it is so close that grows right over my roof.

What do I do? I've hardened all my surfaces but live between 2 houses whose vegetation threatens my house.

***Thank you!
Pam Theroux***

[REDACTED]