

Wildfire Prevention Assessment District
Ad Hoc Planning Task Force
Summary

Monday, December 9, 2013

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Goals: WPAD FOCUS IS ON CITY PROPERTIES

1. City meets own Fire Code requirements for defensible space on its own properties
2. Contracts for clearing City property completed by July 4, 2014.
 - a. Start contracting sooner
 - b. Agree to funds on hand
 - c. Enrich contractor pool—advertise and market to increase number and quality of contractors
3. Public Works to manage the contracting process
4. Comply with all public notifications, minutes posted on the website in a timely fashion:
 - a. Agendas
 - b. Written Reports
 - c. Minutes
 - d. Financial Reports
 - e. Metrics
 - f. Fix and maintain City Website
5. City must have a cohesive compliance component as outlined in the City Auditor's Report
 - a. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
 - b. Adequate staff of full time inspectors and others
6. Contract with a communications consultant to develop a plan to implement the 2012 community outreach recommendations, including revising the website

Action Items:

1. Request a written opinion from the City Attorney concerning the role, continuation and replenishment of the WPAD Citizens' Advisory Committee
 - a. Need to replace current vacant positions
 - b. Need to appoint replacements for seats expiring on June 30, 2014
2. Move forward with hiring a part-time ecologist, paid for with WPAD funds, for input into developing the 2014 Vegetation Management Plan.
 - a. WPAD Citizens' Advisory Committee needs to review and approve the RFP for this position
3. Transfer funds allocated for Program Analyst to Public Works to staff contracting process (to implement Goal #3)
4. Ask City to have a clearly defined due process schedule for private **and** public properties out of compliance to ensure that these are expedited in a timely fashion
5. City develop 2014 Vegetation Management Plan to be reviewed by the WPAD Citizen's Advisory Committee at its January 16 meeting

- a. Use the 2006 Vegetation Management Plan as a template
- b. Incorporate the goals as outlined above
 - i. Early completion of contracts by July 4, 2014
 - 1. Widespread mowing in April to be completed by July 4
 - 2. Do later mowing in the summer, and remove debris
 - 3. Hand pulling of Broom regrowth during the rainy season
- c. Define what is to be contracted---roadside clearing, defensible space around structures on city property according to fire code requirements for all properties; include specifications
- d. Start with habitually out of compliance properties first
- e. Direct supervision for any place known to have endangered species such as Clarkia and Pallid Manzanita: work with Park stewards and ecologist trained to deal with vegetation management and endangered species
- f. Ensure goats are being used efficiently and effectively without over grazing. Goat grazing contract needs same informing by ecologist as do other contracts.
- g. Contracts monitored and authenticated before payment
- h. Reports on performance of contracts at every meeting

Advocacy:

Committee members will be asked to bring up the following points with their Council Member prior to the January meeting:

- 1. City must comply with its own fire code on city properties.
 - a. *Challenge:* Private property owners are held to a high standard; the city has not been held to the same standard.
 - b. *Challenge:* Ever since formation of WPAD, responsibility has fallen to WPAD inspectors and contractors (goats, etc.) rather than City Departments. As WPAD winds down, the responsibility does not go away.
 - c. *Recommendation:* City must prepare for other departments to assume responsibilities for ensuring that the City itself complies with the fire code.
- 2. Contracting:
 - a. *Challenge:* Tying WPAD contracts to the City budget cycle automatically makes contracting late—City budget cycle starts July 1; High fire season starts May 1 and runs through end of October—and our goal is to complete work by July 4.
 - b. *Recommendation:* Contracting should be tied to Fire Season, independent of City fiscal year
 - c. *Challenge:* Need clarification on contracting “guidelines” vs “requirements”:(i.e. preference for local contractors vs. pool—there were 16 “city approved” contractors responding to bids; now there are only 8 because few locals do this specialized work.)
 - d. *Challenge:* The pool of contractors is so small that we often don’t have 3 bids, and the city’s usual process for dealing with this causes such a delay that the work is often very late in the high fire season.
 - e. *Recommendation:* Fire Department’s expertise is not really in managing contracts. As WPAD winds down, the City is going to need to manage contracts. Therefore, WPAD is recommending

that contract management for the WPAD be moved to the Public Works Department, which has the experience and the staff to do the work. Utilize the Vegetation Management Supervisor as a consultant for his/her expertise.

3. Private and public properties must continue to be inspected.
 - a. *Challenge:* There are inspection inconsistencies across the district when we use firefighters instead of fire inspectors for first round of inspections
 - i. Firefighters are trained, but must be monitored so that one standard is used throughout the areas inspected.
 - b. *Challenge:* Too few inspectors. Currently only 1 full-time inspector and one full-time Vegetation Management Supervisor. Due to budget cuts, the remaining 4 inspectors are part time and limited to 1000 hours a year.
 - i. Contracting for the part time inspectors has traditionally begun in July, when the inspections need to be completed by July 4.
 - ii. Part-time inspectors have to be trained each year both in the standards and in understanding the areas they are inspecting. They often don't return the following year, so it is always a new pool with a learning curve.
 - c. *Recommendation:* *Because the linchpin to the Wildfire Prevention program is timely inspections, Council should budget for additional full-time inspectors to manage inspections on both private and public properties.*
 - d. *Recommendation:* *Inspectors should be in the field early in the year in order to complete inspections before High Fire Season.*
4. Due process for out of compliant public and private properties is long and cumbersome. Apparently, the law provides flexibility: Walnut Creek uses a 30-day notice, and then much shorter time frames at each citation.
 - a. Clarify and streamline the due process schedule, as in the case of Walnut Creek.
 - b. Designate responsibility to a specific person or department experienced in code compliance.
 - c. For transparency and accountability, designee needs to make monthly status reports to WPAD or Public Safety Committee concerning number of properties out of compliance, number of properties in process and where, and final resolution.
5. Silo Issues
 - a. *Challenge:* Departments tend to be very narrow in their focus whereas the public sees the City as one unit.
 - i. Posting Agendas, Minutes, Financials on website:
 - b. *Challenge:* The public relies on the City and WPAD website for information, including the latest agendas, minutes and financial reports of the WPAD Citizen's Advisory Committee. The public has not been able to find these documents—either not posted on

the WPAD website in a timely fashion or buried in the City of Oakland website user interface.

- c. *Challenge:* The Vegetation Management Supervisor has had to assume WPAD Public Information responsibilities in addition to all his other duties; this area is not really his field. There appears to be no one else in OFD who is trained to do this. And when he asks for help from IT or other departments, he is told "Not my job." These need to be posted for greater transparency.
- d. *Recommendation:* *Shift WPAD Public Information duties to a skilled PIO in city administration OR train an OFD department administrator to perform these duties.*