

Geyserville Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
October 24, 2017
7:00-10:00 pm

Present: Paul Connors, Ryan Petersen, Hal Hinkle, David Luebkehan, Okaya Tatsu,
Dallas Sanders and Daisy Damskey
Guest Speaker: Marshal Turbeville

Public meeting:

GPC President, David Luebkehan, made introductions; David gave a brief welcome to our guest speaker, the Geyserville Fire Chief, Marshal Turbeville. David thanked Marshal for his outstanding service during the Pocket Fire and the audience applauded. David explained that the reason he had asked Marshal to speak was to inform the community about the details of the fire and most importantly, to give members of the community suggestions and lessons learned from the fires that burned throughout Sonoma County and Napa starting on October 8, 2017.

Marshal gave a chronology of the fires, which started with a hurricane force windstorm that spread the fire (s) at an astounding rate. The Napa fires were named Tubbs Fire and Atlas Peak Fire. The Tubbs fire spread to Sonoma County causing devastation throughout Santa Rosa and the communities that have been built in the hills crossing from Napa to Sonoma. The Tubbs fire was the first fire identified as fire fighting resources from Sacramento, the greater San Francisco Bay Area, and Ukiah were called to the fire line by 11: 00 pm the evening of October 8th.

Because so many fire fighters, including Geyserville's crew, were called to the Tubbs fire Geyserville was left almost unprotected by the support that usually would be available in our region. The Pocket Fire, headed down the hills toward Geyserville was discovered and right away Ryan Petersen and four other volunteer fire fighters realized, that with limited resources available because of the other fires and with the fire rapidly encroaching on the community, their only course of action was evacuation.

The fire was too big to break the edge of the fire and the winds were blowing the fire directly toward the Geyserville neighborhood known as the Vineyard. With fire trucks and sirens giving warning the fire fighting team went door to door alerting citizens and telling them to get out of their house right away. By 5:00 am the Vineyard neighborhood had been evacuated and fire fighters were in place on the hillside fighting the blaze. The next day fire support arrived from other areas and the battles to save Geyserville's hillside houses begin in earnest. For the next week crews fought back the blaze. Teams came from both Oregon and Washington and a host of firefighters stayed at the Vineyard Club and Grange while fighting the fire.

Marshal recounted the daily work of the fire fighters with James Gore; meeting attendees applauded these morning updates.

Marshal then turned to lessons learned by the Pocket Fire and how the community can make Geyserville a safer place for everyone. In the early days of the Geyserville Fire Department finding volunteers was not a problem. Everyone chipped in and helped. Currently we only have 15-20 volunteers. Marshal called for a new group to be formed that can lend support without necessarily fighting fires this would be a *Geyserville Fire Department Axillary*.

Marshal said that this group of volunteers could provide services including: Driving the fire district roads on RED FLAG days: looking for signs of smoke or fire, staffing the fire house when fighters are on call, creating a system of pods where there would be a leadership team in every distinct part of fire district. Mapping houses and roads so fire department staff would know where the houses are located, look into preventive measures such as sirens, land lines, training for the community and preparation for the next earthquake. Marshal told the crowd that Geyserville will be truly alone in a big disaster and our ability to care for our town and neighbors is something that the *Geyserville Fire Department Axillary* can address.

Other fire safety lessons for folks who live in Geyserville and throughout Sonoma County include: When you are asked to leave do so! People who stay in place risk the life of fire fighters and take resources away from other people. In the Pocket Fire there were a few evacuees who refused to leave and this made fire fighting more difficult. Marshal said that if a sheriff tells you not to go back, once you are evacuated follow his/her instructions, that is the law.

Marshal listed the following jobs for the community: Remove all native plant growth (Coyote bush and Broom specifically) that is not part of an irrigated landscape. Property that is empty of housing is still the responsibility of the owner of the land. Weed eating for all grass, removal of all brush and cutting trees up to six to eight feet above ground makes spaces more defensible. Branches should be removed if they hang over a rooftop and very inflammable trees such as pines should be removed if possible. If a tree has dead wood or is dying cut it down right away. Marshal suggested a return to grazing could make a big impact of fire safety. Less fuel equals more safety for all involved.

Marshal concluded that brush is fuel and that hillside neighborhoods may want to hire someone to chip brush and dead wood. Marshal said to clean gutters on houses every fall, create firebreaks wherever possible and He also provided a resource for more information, *Firewise.org*. David and Paul suggested that the committee help coordinate and support the development of both the axillary and the community based training this requires.

Working Meeting:

David asked the group what they thought of the overlap between Dry Creek and the GPC. After discussion it was concluded that our committee is elected not appointed and therefore is expected to make recommendations based on expectations of

community. Paul gave the gas station as an example. Members of the committee ran on the issue of unplanned growth and the desire for a more active and involved GPC. Ryan said that if proposals are in our district we should respond and give a written option to the PRED regardless of any other group looking at the same proposal. We agreed unamously that we did not want to be limited in scope and that our job is to function as a town council for Geyserville and therefore did not want to see our role as narrowly defined as the appointed Planning Councils that were developed by Mike Maguire.

The 2020 General Plan must reflect the needs, wants and desires of the citizens that live within the Geyserville School District boundaries. Daisy asked the new board members for help in distribution, design and analysis of the Geyserville Planning Committee Survey for Geyserville. The goal of our committee was stated by David- that the committee function to engage citizens in the process of planning and to create an illustrated vision of the future Geyserville. David suggested using the talents of a design school such as Berkeley to start the conversation and to help members of the community to see possibilities. Hal Hinkle and Dallas Saunders offered their skills in using the program Survey Monkey and the GPC agreed that would be very helpful in disseminating our Survey. David is having Vickie Norris put all of our available e-mails in a useable form so we can communicate with the community via our website. Everyone agreed that we need to gather more e-mails. Dallas will seek permission from the Chamber, Daisy will provide Vineyard Club homeowners e-mails and everyone will look for other opportunities to reach out to the community for addresses and contact information.

Next meeting will be held on November 28. There will be no meeting in December