Meeting Notes  
Logtown Fire Safe Council  
July 13, 2019

1. Call to Order: Chairman Pat Dwyer called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Board members present were Pat Dwyer, Rod Repschlaeger, John Erickson, and Marc Regelbrugge. Board member Chris Olson joined the meeting a few minutes thereafter. Dwyer began the meeting by leading the Pledge of Allegiance. He reminded the assembled public to sign-in, to avail themselves of coffee and treats, and to see John Erickson to purchase Logtown hats, T-shirts and coffee mugs.

2. Public Comment: Dwyer introduced the Public Comment segment of the meeting by noting that the Logtown Fire Safe Council is a satellite of the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council, a non-profit, Section 501(c)(3) corporation. As a private entity, Dwyer noted, the Fire Safe Council does not fall under the requirements of the Brown Act (CA Gov’t Code § 54950 et seq.) regarding conduct of meetings or provision for public comment. Nonetheless, the Fire Safe council always welcomes Community participation, comments and suggestions.

Stope Way resident Lyman Dennis noted his recent excellent experience with Freehand Farm’s brush-clearing sheep. The farm brought in about 60 sheep and portable fences to clear grasses and ladder fuels on his property. Lyman recommends their services, especially for clearing hilly terrain, and you can find out more by calling Melissa and Spencer Tregilgas at (530)295-9458, or by e-mailing freehandfarm@gmail.com.

Another resident noted she was experiencing difficulty with Cal Fire’s smartphone app. Apparently, information on current incidents cannot be displayed properly. Several residents had noted similar issues. Dwyer offered that he was meeting with Tom Tinsley of Cal Fire on July 17th, so he would bring the issue to that meeting.

3. Vice Chairman’s Report: Vice Chairman Rod Repschlaeger announced that District Two Supervisor Shiva Frentzen will be speaking to the Logtown Fire Safe Council meeting on August 10th. Rod is also working to get the Director of El Dorado County Department of Transportation (DOT) to speak at a subsequent meeting. Pat Dwyer reminded attendees that Supervisor Frentzen has been a strong advocate for the Fire Safe Councils and for the health of Fire Protection districts in the County.

4. Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer John Erickson reported income of $106.00 from sales of coffee mugs, T-shirts and Caps. Adding to a $26.50 cash balance leaves cash-on-hand at $132.50. With $8,009.15 in the bank, the Fire Safe Council’s total assets come to $8,141.65 as of this meeting.
Erickson also displayed our current Cap designs, featuring diverse styles, colors and logos. Secretary Marc Regelbrugge modeled the newly designed T-shirt, featuring the Logtown name, silhouette tree logo and location map (“Highway 49 between Mud Springs and Pokerville”) in black on a tan shirt. Sign-up sheets for the various cap and shirt designs were provided for orders from the public. The hope is to place orders shortly after our August meeting for September delivery – just in time for October’s Logtown Hot Dog Social!

5. Old Business: Dwyer reported that a Cal Fire CCI Fire Protection Program grant for Logtown’s LT-10 project has been awarded and signed. The Resource Conservation District’s Mark Egbert will manage the ca. $450,000 project to construct a 105 acre shaded fuel break on the east side of Monitor Ridge within the area bounded by Monitor Ct., Monitor Rd., Galena Dr., Dolomite Dr., Sam Hill Mine Ct. and Union Mine Rd. The LT-10 project is the last, and perhaps most difficult, clearing project to complete Logtown’s “Ring of Protection,” a network of fuel breaks and fuels reduction zones surrounding Logtown that have been constructed over the past decade. The current LT-10 grant must be completed by March 2021.

Dwyer also reported a successful Spring Clean Up Day on June 8th. The event provided four green-waste dumpsters and 3½ household trash dumpsters free of charge to area residents. Showline Hospice was also on hand to collect lightly used donations, e-waste and small, recyclable articles. A Chipper Day was also scheduled ahead of the Clean Up, whereupon nine local residents had piles of limbs and branches chipped for free. Dwyer noted that he had hoped for greater participation, and vowed to advertise the Chipper Day more extensively in the future.

In response to a question regarding the Chipper Program, Dwyer noted that folks can still sign up for free chipping service under the County Fire Safe Council’s Chipper Grant. To do so, visit edcfiresafe.org and select “Chipper” from under the “Action” menu on the home page.

How the Chipper Program Works:

The Chipper Program has been funded over the years by several sources, including the US Forest Service, Cal Fire and PG&E. Grants form these organizations provide free chipping services to El Dorado County residents to assist in their construction and maintenance of fire-resistant landscapes and residential defensible space.

To take advantage of the Chipper Program, follow these steps:

a) Pile limbs (up to 4 inches diameter) and branches on the side of an accessible road- or driveway with the large (cut) ends facing the road.
b) Sign up for chipper services on the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council’s web site (edcfiresafe.org). Select “Chipper” under the “Action” menu on the edcfiresafe.org home page. You must read and acknowledge the terms describing how the program works before making a chipper request. When you submit your request, you should receive a job number, which you can refer to when inquiring about your request, if necessary. Please note, if you do not get a job number, your request will not be scheduled. If you are having difficulties, you may call the number listed on the request form.

c) The Fire Safe Council will schedule a chipper contractor to come to the location you specify on your request, chip the limbs and branches, and broadcast the chips on or near the site of your pile. Scheduling typically takes 1-2 weeks, but can take as much as 6 weeks in times of high chipper demand – particularly late spring.

What does the Fire Safe Council do?

A new meeting attendee also voiced the important questions of, “What is the Fire Safe Council? Why are we here?” Pat Dwyer explained that the Fire Safe Council is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization that works to provide Education, foster Cooperation, inspire Innovation and take Action to help prevent wildland fires and reduce fire’s impact on Communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

Our monthly Logtown Fire Safe Council meetings inform our Community of the necessities, methods and techniques to maintain defensible space, to harden our homes and other structures, to become and remain aware of wildfire threats in and to our Community, to understand, develop and refine contingency plans for evacuation in the face of wildfire or other disaster event, and to help our neighbors with their understanding of and preparations for fire-adapted life in the WUI.

The Fire Safe Council cooperates with County government, local Fire Protection Districts, Cal Fire, local residents and other groups to prepare and harden our properties and communities against the wildfire threat. Firewise adaptation of our community is often facilitated by innovation to transform the ways government and private groups work together to provide affordable, local benefits.

The Fire Safe Council also acts directly to improve fire safety of our Community by planning, acquiring and executing grants from local, state and national sources to provide shaded fuel breaks (e.g. LT-10 project – see above), reduced-fuels zones, robust access for fire fighting resources and assistance with defensible-space maintenance (e.g. the Chipper Program – see above). Additionally, the Fire Safe Council has developed and maintains our Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), which outlines the
characteristics of current and evolving wildfire risks to our community, and our plans for mitigating those risks. The CWPP is a living document that provides the relevant and actionable basis for planning and coordination of wildfire mitigation efforts among the Logtown Community, our fire departments (the Diamond Springs Fire Protection District and Cal Fire’s Amador-El Dorado Unit (AEU)) and El Dorado County. You can review Logtown’s CWPP on the County Fire Safe Council’s web site (find the site’s address on the Resources page at the end of these notes).

6. New Business: The Fire Safe Council holds annual elections in June of each year. However, as the Spring Clean Up Day took the place of our June meeting, elections were slated for this meeting instead. Chairman Pat Dwyer introduced the election process by indicating that three Board Memberships were up for election this year. Chairman Pat Dwyer, Vice Chairman Rod Repschlaeger and Secretary Marc Regelbrugge have held those seats for the prior, two-year term. Dwyer noted that Regelbrugge has indicated his preference not to continue on the Board owing to demands of his new job. Dwyer canvassed the attendees for interest in joining the Board. Finding none expressed, Dwyer suggested that he and Repschlaeger continue as Board Members for another two-year term, and that Regelbrugge continue to serve on a voluntary basis until another candidate comes forward. Dwyer’s proposition was unanimously accepted by the meeting attendees and the Board members. (Secretary’s note: After the meetings adjournment, Mr. Lyman Dennis volunteered to assume Regelbrugge’s position on the Board).

7. County Fire Safe Council: Dwyer reported that the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council is busy managing over $1M in grant work being executed by its satellites. Pollock Pines, Patterson Ranch and Logtown each have been awarded grants in the $400-500k range for fuels treatment and fuel break construction. The County FSC also manages the Chipper Program and a small program for County senior citizens and veterans who are physically and financially unable to complete their defensible space work. The Chipper Program is currently funded under a two-year grant from Cal Fire’s Greenhouse Gas fund. The Seniors’ and Veterans Assistance program is funded by several sources, including the annual Friends of Seniors spaghetti feed. The County FSC is also pursuing a grant from PG&E to fund a portion of this assistance program.

8. Public Discussion: The meeting’s planned speaker was to address homeowners’ fire insurance issues resulting from cancellations, non-renewals and reductions in coverage, but was apparently unable to attend the meeting. Local resident and Registered Professional Forester John Pickett volunteered to speak on his family’s experience with fire insurance, which quickly became a discussion involving many of the meeting’s attendees.
The Pickett family first encountered fire insurance problems when living in the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District. Pickett said their fire insurance was provided, then canceled, by Allstate, USAA and Lloyd’s of London. Apparently, none of these companies presently write residential fire insurance policies in the Tahoe Douglas area. As a result, Pickett gained some experience with the California FAIR Plan.

According to the Plan’s web site (www.cfpnet.com), the FAIR Plan (Fair Access to Insurance Requirements) is NOT a State agency, and is not funded by the State. It was established in 1968 as an association of all insurers authorized to transact basic property insurance in California, and serves as an insurer of last resort for property owners who are unable to obtain fire insurance in the “voluntary” market.

Pickett and other members of the audience discussed some aspects of note with regard to FAIR Plan policies:

a) FAIR Plan policies are not available for general liability, water damage, or latent/emerging defects. This means that other perils such as liability, water damage, theft, etc. need to be insured by other policies. Many carriers who are reducing or eliminating fire coverage in California already offer such supplemental policies, but the insured is responsible for obtaining one. This makes it all but essential to work with an insurance broker who can match the so-called Difference in Conditions policies with the FAIR Plan fire policy.

b) FAIR Plan policies are written for coverage from fire damage/loss, the amount of stated coverage is determined by the insured, and coverage is subject to reduction based on the ability of the Plan to pay losses at any given time. These factors place the onus directly on the homeowner to determine appropriate coverage needs. One resident noted that his mortgage lender did not understand the FAIR Plan, and that he had to increase his FAIR Plan coverage to convince the lender that liability for fire loss would be covered up to the requirements of the loan.

c) FAIR Plan policies are not inexpensive. Since the FAIR Plan provides insurance of last resort, its policies form a high-risk pool of insured properties. Most attendees who spoke to the cost of fire insurance indicated that folks should expect to pay 2-3 times what they were paying now for homeowner’s insurance.

d) FAIR Plan policy provisions require the insured to be in compliance with all State laws, including Public Resources Code Section 4291 which sets requirements and provisions for defensible space around habitable structures. Pickett noted that the Plan makes inspections to ensure compliance with PRC §4291.

As a Registered Professional Forester, Mr. Pickett has some informed knowledge of the effects of vegetation on fire spread and fire hazards to
structures. He noted that many insurance companies employ the International Wildland Urban Interface Code as the set of guidelines for defensible space and fire-resistant landscaping. The IWUIC is more stringent than PRC §4291 in some respects – particularly relating to spacing in the tree canopy. Pickett noted that the IWUIC does not provide an holistic approach to fire resilience. For example, certain tree species such as Alder and Willow actually help to protect a structure by absorbing significant amounts of thermal energy from an approaching fire. So while such species may be beneficial, the Code neglects such benefit in favor of a more uniformly applicable requirement.

Mr. Pickett also shared his experience with regard to identifying factors that favor structure survival in wildfire events. Some of these include:

a) Removing combustible materials from a (minimum) 10-foot wide area around the structure. This prevents spread of fire from external materials into the structure.

b) Preventing embers from entering the structure. This can be done by installing fine-mesh screens in vents, enclosing soffits and sealing around doors and windows.

c) Meeting the requirements of the IWUIC or, at least, those of PRC §4291. Both of these codes require elimination of ladder fuels for significant distances around structures, and seek to disrupt fire spread by increasing spacing between fuel concentrations such as bushes or highly flammable trees.

With respect to this last point, Mr. Pickett has prepared and uses an inspection form based largely on the IWUIC to advise his clients. The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council has also produced a similar form for Residential Clearance Evaluation based on Cal Fire’s PRC §4291 Inspection Form. For your reference, we have appended both of these forms, along with their instruction sheets, to these Notes. By reviewing each form’s instructions, you will be able to self-rate your home’s level of preparedness and compliance with the accepted and required standards for residential clearing in our WUI.

Mr. Pickett’s discussion closed by noting that there is great interest within the State to resolve the issue of homeowners’ fire insurance coverage. Such resolution is complicated, however, by the fact that the insurance companies view their underwriting and risk management practices as proprietary, all but ensuring that agreements on uniform inspection requirements and standards will not be forthcoming. In an attempt to circumvent these difficulties, Cal Fire is also beginning to work with the California Insurance Commission to establish such requirements as Regulations.

9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m. Please join us for our next meeting on Saturday, August 10th at 9:00 a.m. Supervisor Shiva Frentzen
will be our guest, and you can sign up to order the latest Logtown hats, shirts and mugs in time for October’s Hot Dog Social. See you then.
Logtown Fire Safe Council
On-Line Resources

http://www.edcfiresafe.org  El Dorado County Fire Safe Council


http://www.edcfiresafe.org/programs-grants-2/chipper-program  Chipper Program (FREE!)

http://ready.edso.org  Sheriff’s Office Emergency Notification System
Sign-up for “Code RED” (replaced reverse-911)

http://www.friendsofedcseniors.org/  Friends of Seniors, a private, non-profit advocacy organization supporting wellness, life enrichment, dignity and independence of El Dorado County Seniors and their caregivers through advocacy and financial assistance.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Southwest County Resident Sheriff’s Deputy Steve Wunschel  (530)957-3581

EDSO Dispatch (No emergencies. FOR EMERGENCIES, DIAL 911) (530)621-6600

Logtown Fire Safe Council LT-10 Project Coordinator Marc Regelbrugge  (415)640-3068