

MINUTES
Inverness Ridge Association General Meeting
January 21, 2023
Via Zoom

Introduction: Tim Stanton

Tim Stanton welcomed attendees (40+ logons with many representing two community members) of the 40th annual general meeting of the Inverness Ridge Association via Zoom, extending a special welcome to new residents who had joined our hillside community in 2022. New residents were invited to wave to us on screen and to send messages via chat with their names and local addresses. Tim also introduced John Levy who ably assisted us with the technical details involved in taking the general meeting online. Tim then referred participants to the IRA website <http://invernessridge.info/>. There is information available there about IRA board and PRERAB membership, the road paving project, and fire safety.

Treasurer's Report: Tim Stanton for Patty Wimpfheimer

As of November 11, 2022, our balance was \$25,697.34, including \$15,000.00 in restricted funds donated to support our repaving project. Total income since that date was \$2.70 (interest earned). The sole expense was for Square Space (\$72.70). The balance as of December 25, 2022, was \$5,628.04.

Nominations and Election of IRA Board Members: Leah Light

Our By-Laws specify that we should have a minimum of 9 board members and a maximum of 16. At present we have seven continuing board members who were elected in 2022 for two-year terms and who will continue to serve on the board this year: Joe Burgess, Chris Eckert, Jennifer Howard, Julie Liss, Michael Ongerth, Jim Wagner, and David Wilson. Six board members were elected in 2021 and their terms are ending: Ron Bennett, Sydne Bortel, Leah Light, Julie Merk, Tim Stanton, and Patty Wimpfheimer. Ron Bennett will be retiring from the board; we are very grateful for his board service. The remaining five board members have all generously agreed to be nominated for additional two-year terms. In addition, Christian Winslow has been nominated. These six community members were nominated, seconded, and elected for two-year terms.

Road Paving Task Force: Ken Drexler

Last year, after Measure R to fund the road repaving project passed, bid specifications for the work were prepared. By early September the 90-page bid specification had been completed and approved by the Marin County Department of Public Works. The plan had been to obtain bids for the work, but we were apprised by the County that a timeline for getting bids could not be approved before late October or November. This created a problem because successful asphalt paving requires a dry road surface and air temperature of at least 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Given the projected timeline, the project has been deferred until 2023.

The next steps are as follows. First, a new civil engineer to manage the project must be hired because the one who worked with us for four years has retired. Second, the new project manager

will need to update the estimate for the repaving project so that we can have some assurance that the bids we receive in 2023 will cover the costs of the project. The current cost estimates were made in mid-2022 and are outdated. Third, Tim Stanton, Jennifer Howard, and Randy Merk will continue their efforts to work out terms for borrowing funds from the county to pay for the project; borrowed funds will be paid back to the county over ten years, using moneys from the parcel tax approved in April 2022 (Measure R). Fourth, after final approval by the County Board of Supervisors, the Department of Public Works will conduct a public bidding process and will accept the lowest bid received from a responsible bidder. Finally, within about a month after acceptance of the bid, actual work on the project is expected to begin. The Paving Task Force will keep PRE residents up to date on progress!

Paradise Ranch Estates Road Advisory Board (PRERAB): Randy Merk and Mike Ongerth

Priorities for 2023 road maintenance include (1) repairing Drake's View Drive as economically as possible, (2) maintaining unpaved roads to keep them safe for routine driving and emergency access, (3) keeping drainage operational (especially on unpaved roads) by clearing culverts and drop boxes, and (4) managing vegetation at road edges to enhance sight lines and ensure safe access for emergency vehicles.

Less than 5% of our property taxes, about \$60,000, comes back to us each year to maintain approximately six miles of roads. Doing so presents significant challenges. Many contractors see our road repair and vegetation management projects as too small or remote to be profitable. Also, the County Department of Public Works and the Finance Department have increasingly required paperwork and contractor bids so that work often takes longer to accomplish than would be desirable.

This year, we were lucky in that clearing of culverts and drop boxes took place just before the heavy rains began. Residents can help by doing clearing when they spot problems and by repairing potholes using gravel available on Drake's View Drive and Douglas.

Firewise Committee: Tamia Anderson

Measure C funding has enabled us to carry out critical clearing, brush removal, and sight-line improvement along Sunnyside, Douglas, Dover, and Drake's View Drive. We are grateful to Jordan Reeser and Gavin Albertoli of the Marin County Fire Department for working closely with cooperating neighbors. Weather conditions have slowed down the work but it is scheduled to recommence on January 24. This project is a one-time endeavor and we will need to fund continuing efforts in the future.

We had two chipping days sponsored by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Agency (MWPA) this year, one in July and one in October. We have been told by MWPA that our response to this program has been exceptional. In previous years, we have had chipper days sponsored by the Inverness Ridge Association, but that was not needed this year.

Paradise Ranch Estates has requalified as a Firewise Community. This is an annual exercise, requiring us to summarize and quantify in dollar terms the efforts we have made as a community

to educate ourselves and to deal with fire dangers, defensible space, home hardening, etc. Qualifying as a Firewise Community is a prerequisite for a variety of funding opportunities.

The Marin County Fire Department has inspected every accessible dwelling in PRE and has advised owners and residents of steps needed to harden homes and maintain defensible space around them.

A recent development is the publication by state park authorities of proposals to deal with long neglected holdings in Tomales Bay State Park. These holdings include substantial acreage abutting PRE on the north and east. In 1995, these holdings were part of the corridor by which the Mount Vision fire reached PRE, destroying more than 40 homes. Firewise Committee members have met with state park personnel to express concerns over fire dangers and recently participated in a virtual public discussion of park proposals. The Committee plans to attend closely to further developments on this matter.

Emergency Preparedness Committee: Jennifer Howard and Christian Winslow

The Inverness Ridge Association emergency preparedness committee was formed to plan and execute a Wildfire Evacuation Drill, which many of you participated in on May 11th last year. The evacuation exercise was a very successful collaboration with the Marin County Fire Department and Marin County Sherriff, with participation from the Point Reyes Disaster Council, The County Office of Emergency Services, the CA Highway Patrol and the Marin Humane Society. Over 50 residents took part—apparently a record turnout.

The Fire Department was impressed with both our ability to coordinate the Wildfire Evacuation Drill last May and the engagement of this community. After this positive feedback and from our experience of working together on that project, the committee decided to continue efforts to prepare our community for emergencies.

The committee recently met with Senior Captain Ben Ghisletta to review our evacuation routes, discuss the potential use of our existing siren, and plan ways to improve our community emergency response. Ben would like to work with us on another Drill later this spring to build on what we all learned together. It would be great to combine this with a long overdue social event for PRE.

Another aim is integrating the Point Reyes Disaster Council into our community more coherently. Christian Winslow is leading these efforts for PRE and will be proposing a new neighborhood response structure that better fits the geography and skills of our community. This past storm was our first live opportunity to test the benefits of this new PRE model. Many thanks to Christian Winslow and his team with a special shout out to Mike Ongerth and Richard Dillman.

During the recent storms, the Emergency Preparedness Committee and neighborhood liaisons took steps to alert the community about anticipated weather conditions and available resources. In addition, roads were monitored for safety issues. Six incidents involving fallen trees and downed power lines were identified, with the fire department providing rapid response time to

manage the problems. One of the lessons learned was that when power is cut communications become difficult. In this situation radios are very helpful.

Question and Answer Period for All Committee Reports

One question concerned the length of time needed for the actual repaving project. Ken Drexler recommended that people anticipate a total period of 7-8 days. During most of the time, travel on side roads will be possible; when Drake's View Drive is cut off an alternative route out of PRE will be identified.

A second question dealt with reasons for the long power outage in January. No clear answer is available, but Dennis Rodoni noted that there were 101 outage points in West Marin, making it unsurprising that it took some time to restore service.

A third resident inquired about potholes on dirt roads. Mike Ongerth explained that these are a chronic problem caused by drainage problems. Paving some dirt roads, should we have the funds to do so, could alleviate some of the recurrent issues.

Guest Speaker: County Supervisor Dennis Rodoni

Dennis described his personal priorities for the county as a whole and for our area more specifically. With respect to the county, he hopes to make progress in areas concerned with affordable housing and homelessness, climate change, infrastructure, emergency preparedness, equity in hiring, and recruitment and retention of county employees.

For our district, planning for affordable housing is moving forward with CLAM. Dennis is also hopeful that we will meet the deadline for submitting the state-mandated new housing plan, making us one of a handful of counties statewide to manage this. With respect to hiring, the goal is to increase employment of Hispanic community members to better reflect the population demographics of our area. Environmental studies for the fire station envisioned for the former San Geronimo golf course are in process. A short-term rental ordinance has been controversial and the hope is that in its ultimate formulation it will reflect community values. In Point Reyes Station, we have a water field station that is needed to provide safe drinking water for those without access to potable water. An ordinance is in play to promote reduction of plastic waste by requiring take-out eateries to provide reusable packaging or use recyclable/compostable materials. A three-county effort (Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino counties) will work on a cleaner coastline initiative to reduce waste. In the San Geronimo Valley, a streamside ordinance will address water runoff issues; the expectation of this pilot program is that it will become countywide in the future. In regard to fire prevention, the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority has entered the third year of a projected seven-to-nine-year operation.

Guest Speaker: Mark Brown, Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority

Jennifer Howard introduced Mark Brown, the Executive Officer of the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA). Mark was hired by the Marin County Fire Department as a firefighter/paramedic in 1991 and, after serving for nearly 30 years, retired to take his current

position. Mark also served on a Cal Fire Incident Management team for 15 years as a Type 1 Operations Section Chief and was qualified as a Type 2 Incident Commander. Mark has been at many of the fires whose names we have all come to know including the Mt. Vision Fire, Valley Fire, The Nun's Fire, The Soberanes Fire, the Camp Fire, and the Woodward Fire.

Before beginning a question-and-answer dialogue with Mark, Jennifer invited the community to an in-person follow-up event that will occur on either May 6th or 13th and will take place on the Bay View Fire Road. Mark will lead a discussion that he calls "Wildland Fire Behavior Awareness for Residents."

Mark described MWPA's chief goal as preventive fuel management, acting in concert with multiple agencies. It is funded by a yearly \$0.10/sq.ft. property tax assessment (Measure C). The assessment yields about \$20,000,000 per year. The moneys are divided by a formula with 60 per cent going to core projects (e.g., large scale vegetation management, evacuation route clearance improvements, grants to residents, education, chipper days, funding a Fire Safe Marin position). One current project is examination of all roadways used for evacuation to assess potential fire behavior, vehicle capacity, and communication efficacy. Creation of shaded fuel breaks in Ross Valley and Novato is underway. A shaded fuel break for West Marin is in planning stages with completion projected for 2025. This will entail thinning of diseased trees, removal of small-diameter trees, limbing up of larger trees, and removal of non-native vegetation and ground litter; the goal is to restore forested areas to an earlier condition in which the norm was smaller, more frequent, fires rather than infrequent, highly destructive, ones. The projected shaded fuel break for West Marin will extend to land adjacent to PRE.

Twenty per cent of MWPA funds are devoted to evaluation of defensible space around homes, including a grant program for residents to improve defensible space (see the MWP website for details). And 20% of the MWPA budget is used in support of local fire departments.

Jennifer asked Mark to address PRE evacuation routes. Mark noted that no road is designed to be used by all residents at a single moment in time, so the goal is to get everyone out as safely and quickly as possible even if there are traffic jams. The object is to move people from areas of higher risk to areas of lower risk; in our case the area of lower risk would be Sir Francis Drake. Thus, evacuation via Drake's View Drive is optimal in almost all cases, with use of the fire road to Limantour a last resort. Mark stressed that deaths in cars during fire were extremely rare and almost always due to such extraneous factors as encountering locked gates on people's own property.

Mark spoke about the role of MWPA in helping residents to lower home insurance costs. A new law requires insurance companies to reduce rates if residents are in compliance with fire safety regulations. This requires a for-fee inspection. However, MWPA has a pilot project which will permit residents to substitute its inspections, obviating the need for an additional inspection. Residents of Fire Wise communities are also eligible for insurance discounts.

Finally, Mark addressed a question posed by Jim Wagner about the meaning of "safe" with respect to wildfires in our community. In Mark's view, the extreme of a concrete jungle is not the goal. Rather, people should be sure that their vents are enclosed, their roofs are of class A

materials, the first five feet around structures contain no flammable plants, that smart landscaping practices are followed, and ideally that siding be of noncombustible materials. Mark stressed that it is necessary for everyone to follow these guidelines if we are all to be safe. However, doing so will not prevent structures from burning; rather, the hope is that fires will not spread past the first layer of houses in a given area.

Tim Stanton pointed out that safe evacuations require good communication in neighborhoods and encouraged all residents to keep their contact information current in the PRE directory.