

CVCA Board Meeting – June 6, 2021

Participants:

Board Members:

- Bud Miller
- Maureen McEachen
- Laura Speakman
- Bill Vogelpohl

CVCA Members:

- Liz Chornesky
- Judy Feisthamel
- Liz Gianola
- Robert Kahn
- Charlie Wahle
- Tempe Wennerholm
- Judy Wong

Open Comments:

Members of the Association were invited to address the Board on any issue. No comments were offered.

Approval of Minutes: Board Meeting, March 6, 2021:

Maureen McEachen made a motion to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote of the Board.

Reports by Membership:

FireWise -- Liz Chornesky

Liz summarized the status of Carmel Views Firewise planning, which is proceeding on schedule and with the expectation of submitting our completed application to the National FW Program by early Sept. at the latest

An Advisory Committee has been convened to assist Carmel Views with the application process consisting of three community members (Liz, Peter Nosler, Susan Greenbaum) and representatives of three external fire partners (Richard Bates from the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County, Jamie Tuitele-Lewis from the Resource Conservation District, and Shayon Ascarie from the Cypress Fire Protection District). Two members of the Board – Laura

Speakman and Bud Miller –have been invited to serve as *ex officio* attendees at the meetings to help keep the Board in the loop. The committee met for the first time on May 3.

66% of Carmel Views residents returned the surveys that were sent out with the annual dues statement. These provide a solid base for developing the community Wildfire Risk Assessment – a required element of our Firewise application. The survey results were discussed at the May 3 Advisory Committee meeting. Liz has drafted the Risk Assessment and distributed it to the Advisory Committee for comments. It will soon be posted on the Carmel Views website.

Next steps will include updating the community in the next “Fire Preparedness Update” that will be distributed via email to everyone in Carmel Views. That will provide information about the Risk Assessment and invite input from the community into our Action Plan. The Board and the Fire Team will also be invited to provide input to the Action Plan, as well as feedback on the draft plan once it is completed.

CSA-47 -- Charlie Wahle

Charlie summarized the committee’s progress. It delivered final recommendations to the County in Feb. focused on 3 high priority needs: (1) Removal of roadside vegetation; (2) Repair of cracked and damaged road areas; and (3) The need for adequate emergency egress routes from the community. The committee has not yet received a substantive response, but their understanding is that Supervisor Adams’ staff has been working closely with the County to spur action. A County crew marked road areas for repair a few weeks ago and recently painted lane stripes throughout much of Carmel Views.

It’s not yet clear, however, when the road repairs will actually occur. The committee will stay on this and will be submitting a request to the County on Monday for a timeline for road repairs and for completion of the lane stripes.

The committee’s submission put the County on notice that they will be focusing on egress issues once the road repairs get underway. Although many players are now engaged in the problem, the solution is not yet clear. What’s needed is to first understand who is doing what, what opportunities exist to move this forward, and then for the CSA-47 and Carmel Views to engage with the right parties and urge action. Bill Vogelpohl pointed out that Cypress Fire is already doing work relate to the route that goes up to the water towers above Outlook Drive. That road could serve as a way to bring in fire equipment in an emergency, though it is not serviceable for homeowner evacuations.

Judy Feisthamel asked how much money is in the account.

Charlie explained that the funds are collected every year with property taxes. The money goes into a pool allocated to our neighborhood for infrastructure and general welfare. The CSA-47 role is to advise the County on how to spend the funding. Historically, the County has not been particularly responsive to the community and has not spent the money on infrastructure needs

– although the County has regularly drawn on the account to pay for administrative expenses. Bud Miller estimated that there was less than \$100K in the account.

Tempe Wennerholm asked whether the funding could be used to create a second or third egress from Carmel Views. She also asked whether secondary egress is a requirement for Firewise recognition. Rancho Tierra Grande put this into their overall Firewise approach. Liz Chornesky said that each Firewise program is specific to each community. The Action Plan depends on the community's priorities. So, there is no explicit requirement related to egress.

Tempe also praised the CSA-47 for getting action on the yellow road lines. Charlie attributed this Dinesh Nayak's suggestion.

PG&E/Substation -- Liz Gianola

Liz Gianola's understanding is that PG&E has made a commitment to put up the sound wall during the summer.

Laura also mentioned that she recently had a conversation with Buzz, who is concerned about additional vegetation removal near the power plant. She explained that PG&E is continuing to cut back vegetation on property that is owned by PG&E. But Carmel Views members are starting to discuss what options might exist for making the area more attractive. Any actions on this should be undertaken after the sound barrier has been installed.

Reports of Board Members:

Fire Abatement -- VP, Steve Berardo/Bud Miller

Laura thanked Bud for all of the work he has done.

Bud presented several maps identifying the contractor projects that have been funded by the remaining funds in our grant and by CVCA dues. The work has consisted of pulling out Genista, clearing 30-foot-wide strips in the common areas behind people's houses, and taking down dead trees. In some places, brush removal is being done beneath PG&E fire lines. Explanatory maps are appended at the end of these notes.

According to Bud, from now on, we will attempt to remove Genista by pulling, not mowing. Bushes that have been cut back in previous years just re-sprout. They have had to remove some of the bigger ones using picks because of extensive roots.

Many pine trees are dying right now. CVCA removes some, and then a few weeks later, more die. So, for now the trees are being downed and their branches removed but not chipped. That way, CVCA can wait and see if other trees die right away and defer further fuel removal until then.

CVCA also has paid to take down trees on common areas near the water towers and is removing brush – with the owner’s permission – behind Outlook Court in a canyon that belongs to a homeowner living in the Loma Alta neighborhood north of Carmel Views. This area is directly connected to the Carmel Views common area.

Bob Kahn asked if would make sense to plant ice plant or other fire-retardant plants to crowd out the Genista, once it has been pulled. Bud pointed out that even ice plant can become a fire hazard if the dead material is not removed. Maureen also pointed out that there are scenic easements on all of the common areas. This places limitations on what can be planted.

Liz Chornesky asked about treatment of the coyote bush. Is any of it being left as habitat for nesting birds? Bud said no, they are mowing it to the ground and may apply herbicide in some places.

A discussion ensued about whether Carmel Views should be trying to retain wildlife habitat while we reduce fire risks. Liz C. offered that our current approach is really triage to reduce fire risks. Jamie Tuitele-Lewis from the Resource Conservation District has advised that we should, over the longer term, obtain funding and develop a forest management plan for the common areas. That could be designed in a way that allows Carmel Views to achieve multiple goals.

Treasurer -- Maureen McEachen

Maureen summarized the current status of the budget. Overall, CVCA is operating within its planned budget.

3 members have not paid dues. One has indicated this is due to financial hardship. The other 2 have not responded. CVCA’s next step will be to send certified letters to the 2 non-respondents. As a consequence of non-payments, the budget has \$1050 less to work with this year. Voluntary donations for fire abatement amounted to about \$6K.

Bud and Maureen discussed the funding available for all fire abatement activities. The ~\$39K that was allocated is available, as is the additional \$6K in donations, but we should be careful not to over-commit. That does not look like a problem at this time.

Infrastructure -- Bill Vogelpohl

Bill focused on the problem of community egress during emergencies. He recently walked the old fire road at the end of Outlook with several other community members. Nothing has changed. It no longer functions as an escape route or as a route for fire personnel to bring in equipment. In places it is as narrow as 6’, and some areas may wash out further in future rains. His understanding is that the Cypress Fire Protection District currently believes they can use the road that goes up to the water towers above Outlook for bringing in equipment in an emergency. But that road cannot presently serve as an evacuation route for community members.

Bob Kahn asked for clarification about where the old fire road is located.

Bill identified ownership as a challenge. Some of the potential egress routes for Carmel Views go over private property. Tempe asked, “who owns the road that goes to the water tower?” Bud explained that it goes through two private lots (one inside and one outside of Carmel Views), over a CVCA common area, and through an area owned by Cal Am.

According to Bill, Cypress is aware of this problem. A route needs to be identified and made passable for cars, and then CVCA members need to be trained about how and when to use it. But, as Bud pointed out, currently we don’t have any good alternative egress routes other than driving down to Carmel Valley Road. Note also that the CSA-47 Committee (Bill and Charlie are both members) is following up on this issue.

Bill identified John Trenner as his contact at Cypress, in response to a question from Liz Chornesky.

Communications -- Bud Miller

According to Bud, the CVCA website is generally up to date. There is an updated description of what to do with Genista – which can’t be put out for Chipper Days. Genista can only be put out for special removal days that are sponsored by CVCA. Liz pointed out that many CVCA members said they depend on the website for fire abatement information in their response to the Firewise survey: this is an important resource for our members.

Tempe Wennerholm said she greatly appreciates the maps that CVCA is using to explain fire abatement work on the common areas. The numbering is very helpful. She thanked Bud and the fire committee for all of the work that has been done in common area 8. It looks better than it has in years, and the Association’s efforts have inspired owners to pull out Genista on their own properties in areas she has never seen cleared. She uses the maps in talking with her neighbors. Her sense is that there is a lot more communication going on – Carmel Views is really coming together to work on this complex and involved problem. She is feeling very good about our progress.

At the same time, Bud pointed out, there are people in the community who just “don’t get it.” There are at least 3 lots on Pine Hills full of fire hazards. How do we reach these homeowners?

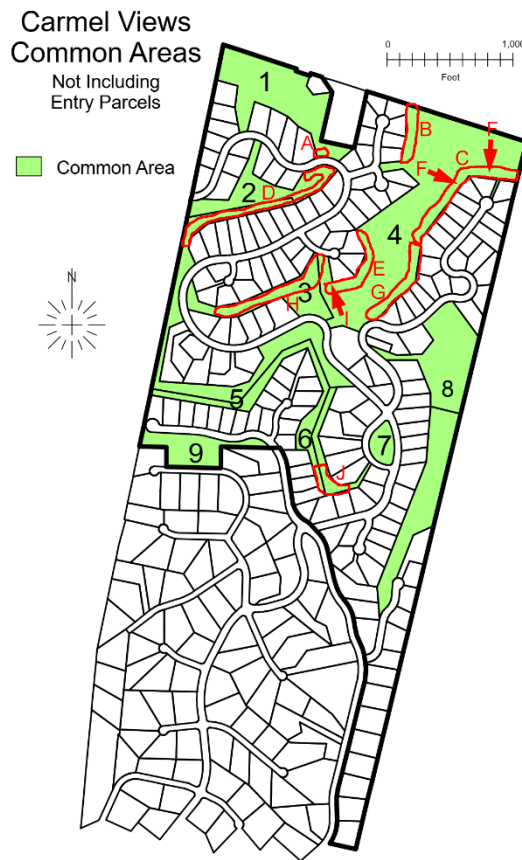
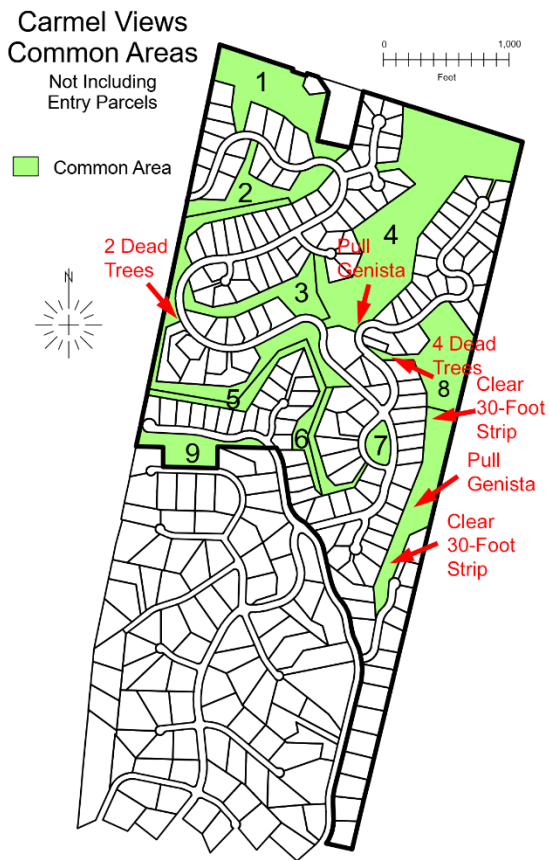
Various options were discussed. Bud, Bob, and Laura discussed the possibility of adjusting the CC&Rs to address fire hazards. Liz C. suggest the possibility of making expert advice more easily available to homeowners. Judy Feisthemel brought up the recent letter from Cypress about property inspections. Tempe and others agreed that it would be very helpful if Cypress could take an aggressive approach to ensuring homeowners are in compliance with the recent ordinance.

President -- Laura Speakman

Laura mentioned that a banner will be put out for the Genista pick up days. There also should be an email reminder to members that they cannot include Genista in their piles for Chipper Days.

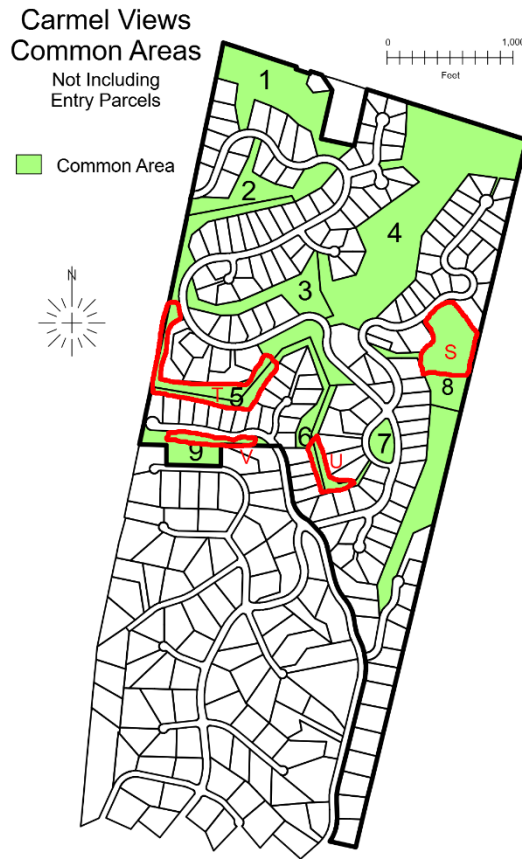
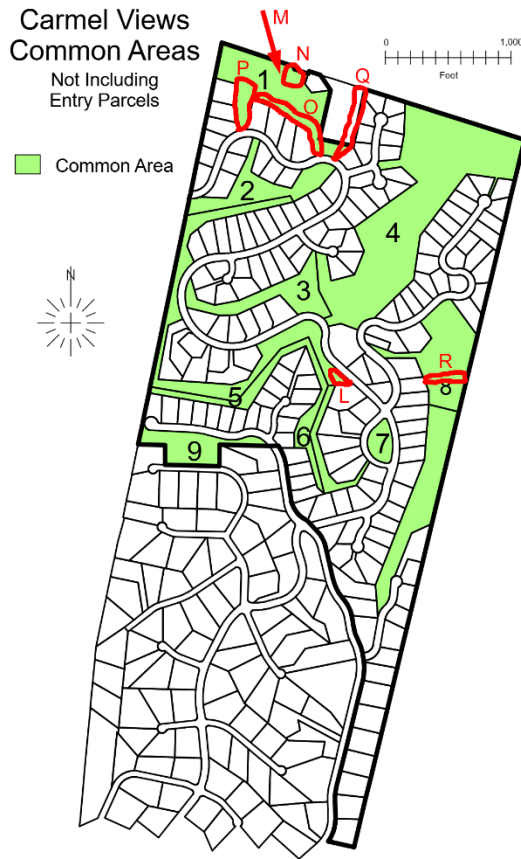
Maps of Fire Abatement Projects

Completed Projects



Most of the projects designated by letters removed brush and dead trees in strips of land 30 feet wide behind houses that border the common areas.

Current and Future Projects



The projects in the map on the left remove brush, genista, and dead trees from strips of land behind houses, along possible evacuation routes, and adjacent to PG&E power lines. Most of the projects in the map on the right cut down clusters of dead trees, remove and break up their branches, and cut down logs to make them decompose more rapidly.