

Carmel Views Community Association Board Meeting

November 2, 2023, at 6 p.m. via Zoom or Call-in

Board members present: Laura Speakman, Michelle Nix, Bud Miller, David Kazansky, Alexis Speidel

Open Comments by Members

Bruce Neben wanted to know what the plans are for speed bumps. He supports speed bumps on Canada. Bud Miller explained that Cypress Fire opposes speed bumps because they destroy their equipment.

Chris Galy asked about the status of a red-tagged house on Canada Lane where trees fell through it. Does the Association have insurance to remove a tree leaning over the property of a neighbor? Laura Speakman said the County and Cypress Fire have looked at the house. CVCA is pretty limited in what it can do.

Agenda Items

Reading and approval of minutes of the Board Meeting Oct. 29, 2023. Michelle Nix moved to approve the minutes. Bud seconded the movement. The minutes were approved by all 5 Board members. The minutes are posted on the CVCA website.

Board Announcements:

The Board is looking into using a property management company to respond to complaints and requests from the members, obtain bids for fire abatement projects and confirm that the work is completed. CVCA has one bid, and another is pending. This service would help Bud keep track of fire abatement projects. It would also help Michelle and Laura, who work full-time. Some members have said they want the Board's duties to continue the way they are, but that isn't feasible. The work load has increased significantly, especially work associated with fire abatement. Some members have asked for member vote on this, but Bud Miller explained our lawyer has said this is a Board responsibility. The Board also needs help this fall assembling the annual packet, since Alexis is not able to do it. Michelle Nix expressed thanks for members who do attend meetings via Zoom. Larry Arthur asked how many Board members CVCA should have. The CC&Rs say the Board has six members, four of whom are 'officers.' No one has volunteered to come on the Board. David Kazansky did agree to serve as treasurer and said he'd like to step down, but will continue if no one else will volunteer. He will also help with the annual mailing. Larry suggested Board members train their successors. Bud said we should tell the members that we need volunteers who will accept specific tasks all year long, not just when they feel like helping. When he joined the Board, the annual fire abatement budget was approximately \$10,000. Now it's over \$100,000. It's big business, and the Board needs help managing it. Also, Cypress Fire now wants more specific tasks undertaken for the grants they give.

Updates:

1. Bud Miller: Cypress Fire has given us another grant for \$45,000, but it's a matching grant and they want everything done by June 30, 2024, at the end of their fiscal year. Michelle Nix said Bud got accolades from Cypress Fire for his grant proposal. Bud said we'll have a hard time paying \$45,000 for our share of the matching grant until members pay their annual dues. Cypress Fire has said they will front us some funds until we receive annual dues in March/April, but they will not cover everything. Bud is planning to break the work specified in the grant into smaller tasks, and hire several contractors to work simultaneously. Bud said we need a dues increase to meet our financial obligations for fire abatement. The unexpected storm damage this past winter increased our costs by \$40,000.
2. Michelle Nix stressed the dues increase is caused by the additional damage from storms, not by hiring a management company. She said we are almost finished with this year's fire abatement tasks. Last year we asked eight tree companies to bid, and got only one bid. She hopes that by breaking the scope into separate, smaller tasks we'll get more bids. Bud showed a map of the fuel breaks that will be cleared next year. We are now legally required to create a 30-foot fuel break next to a road even if it's straight down a canyon. Bud said we can do the work, but it will be tough on timing and getting enough money. Cypress Fire is already asking us for a proposal for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024. Buzz Joseph asked about the comment on abandoning fuel breaks next to the PG&E facility. Bud explained Cypress Fire says it is too remote to access with their equipment. We are substituting fuel breaks next to houses, as advised by Cypress Fire.
3. David Kazansky: Status of the Budget: Our checking account has approximately \$23,000. We have outstanding bills of \$2,000. There are still additional invoices coming from our contractor, Integri Tree. Laura said we aren't planning to tap into our savings account, because our savings are considered an emergency fund, and spending it needs a vote of the membership. That's why we need additional dues.
4. Bill Vogelpohl was not present to comment about infrastructure. Bud said Bill has a maintenance crew set up to trim roadsides several times a year. Now we are required to trim to 30 feet versus 10 feet, although we may only need to do the extra trimming once a year. Laura stressed that if a street light is out, any member can ask PG&E to fix it. It does not have to be a task for the Board. Michelle said she'll ask the County about trimming trees that are over the roads.
5. Laura said people are getting mail stolen. She'll contact Home Depot about possibly getting a discount for a large order of locking boxes, if there is enough member interest.

Joe Longo asked if the Board is thinking about 20-percent dues increase? Bud said yes.

A member of the Association asked if we can we pay local people to accept Board positions. Bud said he'd wonder about their motivation. What we really need are members to volunteer for the Board. About 130 households don't participate in the Association or on committees. One possibility is to charge everyone an amount and give it back to people who volunteer. Chris Galy offered to see if high school service hours could be used for some tasks. Bud noted that we need to get out a mailing and high school volunteers would be great for that. Alexis will see whom to contact.

Tiffany Scarborough said she is concerned about members being charged if they can't volunteer, perhaps because they're elderly. Laura explained the Board never would make a charge a punishment for not volunteering, but perhaps it could offer a discount in dues if members volunteer.

Bud moved to increase dues from \$350 to \$420. Michelle Nix seconded. All 5 Board members attending voted to approve.

Laura announced that the annual meeting in January will be in person, most likely indoors, but it will be a hybrid meeting with an option to attend by Zoom. She said it will be a Sunday afternoon.

Kirsten Hayes asked how we would decide what the management company would do. Michelle said the Association's lawyer said it is a Board decision to bring on a management company or not. Our lawyer gave us the names of four companies. Two responded and have been interviewed. Bud noted we're following up on their references. The problem is that we're a much bigger association than most neighboring communities. Laura noted many associations focus on outside maintenance. CVCA is all about fire abatement. The company would report to the Board about the fire abatement work. Larry asked about a price quote. Michelle said one quoted around \$1,500 a month. Larry said it's risky to take on another cost. Michelle responded several things are driving our decision to hire a management company. We have to figure out the timing issue of paying matching funds to Cypress Fire. Right now, we have \$45,000 buffer that we may not have next year. Michelle said the Board is making sure there is an exit clause in the contract with the management company that allows us to leave when we want to. Usually there is a notice period though.

Laura said she can't keep the pace she's been working on the Board, and if there is no help she will have to resign. Michelle said the same and that Bud needs relief. Laura explained a lot of what she deals with are very unpleasant contacts from members, and they are nothing that any member of the Board deserves. She will resign if she can't get someone else to take on those initial contacts. She loves being on the Board. She said she got some not-so-nice comments about hiring a management company, but none of the people making them showed up for this Board meeting even though we asked them to do so and share their concerns. Larry is concerned that an outside group won't have relationships with members. Bud said he'd tried knocking on doors to get members to volunteer, and got laughed at. Susan Miller explained she already volunteers four days a week for three non-profits, and doesn't need the additional job of acting CVCA secretary. She had contacted 12 people recommended by Board members about being secretary, and all declined. Laura said we're trying to recruit new homeowners as we get their email addresses.

Tempe Wenner said she is in favor of hiring a management company. She noted that fire abatement is almost a full-time job in itself. Public contacts are becoming more hostile. Civil discourse and common courtesy are becoming lacking. Whatever we need to do to support current Board should be done.

Meeting adjourned by Laura Speakman.

Minutes submitted by Susan Miller on behalf of Secretary, Alexis Speidel.