

Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado

Meeting Notes

March 24, 2009

Present: **Pam Wilson** (Firewise Neighborhood Ambassador Program Coordinator), **JT Coyne** (Vista de Oro), **Bob Koenig** (Mesa Vista Estates), **Jigger Staby and Bill Vaughn** (Shenandoah HOA), **Jack Cannon** (Enchanted Forest), **Les Kole and Jon Robison** (Deer Valley Estates), **Cherry Miloe** (Forest Lakes), **Joy Mathis** (Tripp Ck), **Gary Rottman** (Shenandoah Highlands), **Ken Kurz** (Rock Ridge), **Archie Hanson, Russ Sweezey, and Curt Mangan** (Indian Camp Ranch), **Judy London** (Ponderosa HOA), **Anne Schrier** (Forest Lakes), **Donna Nazario and Paula Mathias** (Cougar Mesa), **Odin Christensen** (Elk Stream Ranch), **Leslie Melton** (CR 203 near Trimble Lane), **Byard Peake** (Falls Creek Ranch), **Craig Goodell** (San Juan Public Lands), **Ben Cordova** (LPEA), **Dave Abercrombie and Chief Dan Noonan** (DFRA), **Mike Kane** (M&M Enterprises), **Steve Ellis** (Col. State Forest Service - Montrose), **Butch Knowlton** (La Plata County OEM)

Mini-Grant Update: Pam reported that three more mini-grants have been approved. There is now \$3200 of our \$10,000 mini grant fund remaining. This money needs to be used by Sept. 1, so please contact Pam (385-8909) if you would like to apply for a mini grant. Congratulations to the following subdivisions:

Forest Lakes: \$1200 for mass mailing of mitigation brochure and letter from Fire Chief to all property owners. Grant covered copying and mailing.

Durango West: \$2500 to hire a contractor to finish up their CWPP

Deer Valley: \$2000 to hire contractor to complete mapping for their CWPP

FEMA Grant Update: A brief overview on the recently submitted FEMA grant was presented. Funding for two projects was requested. Project 1 would be the creation of two mitigation demonstration sites. One site on the east side of the county, ponderosa pine/oak forest and one site on the west side of county, pinion/juniper forest. There are several factors that weigh into demo site selection, but a primary factor is that a subdivision has a CWPP done and a mitigation project identified. Project 2 would fund the Firewise training program "Home Ignition Zone." The Council would hire a contractor to teach the two-day workshop and all Ambassadors could attend for free.

Committee Reports:

Ambassadors – This is our 5th Anniversary of the Ambassador program, now 60 Ambassadors! Recent Ambassador training for Durango West 1 and Bear Creek subdivisions.

Education- New and updated brochures will be ready for May Wildfire Prevention month. We could use a couple more volunteers to work the Booth during the Archuleta Safety Expo, May 2, 0900 – 1500.

Mitigation – Committee redefining its objectives. Suggested training in grant writing as an objective. Then the committee could seek mitigation grant funds.

May – Wildfire Prevention Month: Six speakers presented material helpful to Ambassadors as we prepare for the upcoming wildfire season.

Craig Goodell- Craig discussed this year's fire season outlook. With a strong La Nina weather pattern we can expect to see low moisture and above normal temperatures through June. See attached handout. Pre-green-up fire season is right now; Mid-May to late June low fire risk, Late June to mid-July high fire risk and the heart of our fire season. There were two small fires on Animas City Mountain last weekend – one on top and one near the trailhead.

Butch Knowlton – Reverse 911 system works great here in La Plata County, not able to discuss how other counties are doing. When an evacuation is necessary, the EOC Communication Center can send a computer-based message to all phones within a designated area. The message would be something like “This is a message from the La Plata County Sheriff's Department...” Monies have been appropriated to enhance the 911 system to allow calls to cell phones and should occur in late 2009 or early 2010. You will be able to register your address and cell phone with the system to receive alerts.

Dave Abercrombie – What to do with slash -- chip or burn. There is no open burning within Durango city limits. Homeowners should check covenants before burning in their subdivision – some do not allow burning. Also should check weather and not attempt burning on red flag days. Dave suggested burning early in day before wind picks up and while humidity is low. Have tools on hand to control fire, call the Communication Center non-emergency phone number in Durango 385-2900 or in south La Plata County 563-4401. Some fire departments may be willing to help with burns – another great reason to get to know your Fire Chief!

Joy Mathis – Joy displayed two Go-Bags. See handouts for contents list. Bags have all the essentials to help keep you comfortable if you are forced to evacuate your home for an extended period of time. She stressed practicing an evacuation with your family or neighbors, so it will go smoothly when and if the day comes you need to evacuate.

Archie Hanson – Archie described how their subdivision in cooperation with the local fire department is making laminated signs that show utility locations and distances to fire hydrants to post at driveway entrances. He also displayed an ingenious way to store a small kitchen fire extinguisher because 70% of all house fires start in the kitchen. The extinguisher is hidden inside an empty wine bottle. It can then be displayed in the kitchen without the ugly look of an extinguisher.

Kent Grant – Kent gave a brief overview of the local beetle problems, complete with “life-sized” models of the beetles. See handout for all the details.

Websites – We ran out of time for Pam to present Website info. See attached list.

Chief Dan Noonan, Missionary Ridge fire – It's been 5 years since the devastating Missionary Ridge fire and Chief Noonan took us all back to those days through a wonderful PowerPoint presentation with a day-by-day description of the events. As we approach our wildfire season it was very helpful to look back at that fire, to see the photos again and to rekindle the feelings we had during those days. Chief Noonan's second presentation -- photos set to music -- was a wonderful presentation and everyone was motivated to start getting ready for fire season.

Great meeting – thanks to all our attendees and speakers!

Next meeting – May 26th, 4:30 pm, LPEA Boardroom