



## **Montclair Safety and Improvement Council (MSIC) Public Council Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, September 3, 2015, Montclair Presbyterian Church, 5701 Thornhill Drive

**Steering Committee Members Present:** Carolyn Winters (Chairperson), Michael Tigges (Vice Chairperson), Jim Clardy (Treasurer), Nick Vigilante (Secretary), Dan Swafford (Community Representative), Nancy Havassy (Community Appointed Representative), Doug Mosher (Community Representative), and Nicki Kaiser (Community Representative),

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Jeff Diamond (Community Appointed Representative), Josh Shaw (Community Representative), Mimi Rohr (Community Representative), Stan Weisner (Community Appointed Representative), and Barry Klezmer (Community Appointed Representative).

**Advisory Members Present:** Kristine Jurgens-Duenas, Community Resource Officer (CRO), Oakland Police Department (OPD), and Patricia Rose, OPD Neighborhood Services Coordinator.

**Other Attendees Present:** 9

A quorum of MSIC Steering Committee Members was achieved at approximately 7:00 p.m. and the meeting was called to order at that time by MSIC Chairperson Winters.

At the beginning of the meeting, CRO Jurgens-Duenas received a call from OPD dispatch to respond to a police issue and had to depart the meeting. She expressed her regrets for not being able to make her presentation about Montclair Crime Reports and Back-To-School Safety as planned.

Chairperson Winters stated that she would be able to discuss some of the topics that CRO Jurgens-Duenas was planning to cover.

### **(Open Forum)**

Chairperson Winters opened this segment of the meeting by asking attendees if anyone wished to bring a matter of concern or problem not on the meeting agenda to the Council's attention.

1. A Montclair resident involved in a neighborhood effort to oppose the proposed LePort Montessori School to be built at 1650 Mountain Boulevard (the current location of the Montclair Women's Club) provided a status report about the proposed School. LePort's application to the City of Oakland for the proposed School is a minor conditional use permit application. The initial traffic study submitted by LePort was rejected as incomplete by the City of Oakland because it did not include a comprehensive traffic study. A new study scope was established by the City of Oakland Traffic Engineer. LePort has submitted a new traffic study, and the City of Oakland is currently reviewing it. Once the review is completed, the City of Oakland will issue a decision about the accuracy and completeness of the new traffic study. Thereafter, the City of Oakland Planning Department has the discretion to make a decision on the minor conditional use permit application. Minor conditional use permit applications are rarely referred to the Oakland Planning Commission. The City of Oakland Planning Department decision is appealable to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission decision would be final unless a lawsuit is filed. If the Planning Department defers the matter to the Planning Commission, their decision is appealable to the Oakland City Council.

The resident stated that an on-line petition was established to oppose the proposed School. To date, over 900 residents have signed the petition. On August 17, 2015, the petition was presented to the City of Oakland Planning Department, along with 37 pages of comments and concerns from the residents. The minutes taken by the MSIC at the June 18, 2015 Community meeting regarding the proposed School were also presented. The resident thanked the MSIC for holding the Public Council meeting on June 18, and for preparing thorough minutes from that meeting.

The resident stated that there will be a meeting with Councilmember Annie Campbell-Washington and her staff, and there will also be a meeting with Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf about the proposed school.

The resident stated that if anyone wants updates on the proposed School, and/or if they want to sign the petition opposing the proposed School, to please send an e-mail request to [karabo@igc.org](mailto:karabo@igc.org)

In response to the status report about the proposed School, Secretary Vigilante asked if the City of Oakland Plan Review Process contains a review of a planning application for the impact of the proposed project on evacuation and emergency response during a disaster, such as a major fire or earthquake. Many residents remember that during the 1991 Oakland Firestorm, Thornhill Drive was a major artery for evacuation, as well as egress into the affected area by emergency responders and others including parents trying to pick-up their children at several nearby schools. That was a long time ago, and the area has grown in population, and more cars and more schools, since then.

The resident stated that she was not aware whether or not the City of Oakland Plan Review Process considered such factors, but the resident expressed an opinion that

maybe the review process should consider such factors.

Guest speaker Susan Piper, Chair of the Oakland Firesafe Council, who would soon be presenting a segment about fire safety at this meeting, stated that contact can be made with the City of Oakland Fire Department. Ms. Piper recommended contacting Mr. Vincent Crudele, Assistant Fire Marshall. Mr. Crudele might be able to assist in presenting this question to the right officials in the Oakland Fire Department for assistance.

2. A Montclair resident stated that she often walks her grandson to and from Montclair Elementary School using Thornhill Drive and Mountain Boulevard. It is difficult to cross the street at the intersection of Mountain and Thornhill. There are times when cars making turns do not slow down to let pedestrians cross the street. Almost daily, she observes parents with their children J-Walking, and that adds to the current traffic and pedestrian safety problems along the Thornhill Drive and Mountain Boulevard corridor. The almost daily commuter back-ups on Thornhill Drive contribute to the J-Walking and pedestrian safety issues. She felt that something should be done about it by the Oakland Police Department.

Secretary Vigilante stated that it might be useful to also coordinate with the nearby School Parent/Teacher/Student Groups. Parents have definite viewpoints about these problems and can assist in solving them.

Ms. Piper stated that consulting the School Principals would also be useful as well.

3. Secretary Vigilante stated that a resident had contacted him about dogs being walked without being on leashes along the Montclair Railroad Trail. The resident was unable to attend the meeting to present the problem due to a childcare issue. The resident advised Secretary Vigilante that his child almost had a bicycle accident along the Trail due to a dog not on a leash that ran in front of his child. The resident has noticed regularly that people are walking dogs along the Trail without the dogs being on a leash which is required by the City of Oakland Municipal Code. The resident was wondering if the OPD could ticket offenders.

A resident was present at the meeting who is involved with a volunteer group which does work along the Montclair Railroad Trail, including outreach about Trail safety. She confirmed the resident's claim that people are, from time to time, walking their dogs without being on a leash along the Trail. She recommended that outreach would be helpful, as well as ticketing. She will bring this matter up when the Montclair Railroad Trail volunteers meet again.

Chairperson Winters stated that the MSIC will also raise this matter with CRO Jurgens-Duenas to see what can be done to address it.

4. A Montclair resident stated that with the drought conditions, animals living in our Oakland Hills wilderness are not getting the necessary amount of nutrition and water

which is causing them distress. Some animals are dying from this. The resident asked what could be done about the problem?

Chairperson Winters stated that if anyone observes such a situation, they should call the City of Oakland Animal Services Office for guidance and assistance.

5. A Montclair resident stated that Volunteering For Oakland, a community action group, will have a Volunteer Fair on Saturday, September 12, 2015, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Lakeview Campus Auditorium, 746 Grand Avenue, in Oakland. The purpose of the Volunteer Fair is to learn how to help Oakland's students and youth and to volunteer for areas of interest.

### **(Montclair Crime Report and Back-To-School Safety)**

In the absence of CRO Jurgens-Duenas as explained above, Chairperson Winters facilitated this segment of the meeting.

Chairperson Winters stated that the "casing" of neighborhoods in Montclair continues by those planning to commit burglaries and robberies. This is a challenge for our Montclair residents. The various e-mail and list serv groups are being used to educate and inform our residents about the problem, and what can and should be done about it. Residents have become more watchful as a result, and are using their e-mail groups and list serves to post information about suspicious people, activities, or crimes that have occurred. Chairperson Winters stated that she routinely monitors most of Montclair's e-mail and list serves for the above information and has been sending a regular summary of that information to CRO Jurgens-Duenas.

Solicitors continue to be a problem in Montclair. If they are attempting to sell something or raise money for something, they need to have a permit and they are required to show it to you if you ask to see it. If they don't have a permit or won't show it to you, you can call the OPD and OPD will try to apprehend them. If you do not feel comfortable confronting solicitors, then don't do it. Don't open the door, just tell them you are not interested and to leave.

Community Representative (CR) Kaiser stated that many of the young people being used for solicitation activities are disadvantaged or "at risk" youths who are being manipulated and used for this human trafficking purpose. They are pressured to do the work because they have no other alternatives to support themselves. Some may also be used at the same time for prostitution, committing burglaries and thefts, and/or other crimes. It will actually help these youths to call OPD and have OPD apprehend them because then they can be removed from this negative environment and get the help and services they need to turn around their lives in a positive direction.

Mr. Randy Price, owner of a security patrol service which has clients in Montclair, agreed with CR Kaiser's statement. You might actually be helping these youths turn around their lives in a positive direction by calling OPD and having OPD apprehend

them. Then they will get services and help which they desperately need. Mr. Price stated that the OPD has a section, part of Patrol Unit, for Oakland Schools. The Officers assigned there are called Oakland Public School Officers. One of the functions is to deal with school traffic and pedestrian problems. He provided this information in connection to the problem of J-Walking raised during the Open Forum segment of the meeting.

Chairperson Winters stated that residents are continuing to leave valuables in their cars, and that the "smash and grab" thefts are continuing. She noted that she is exploring the idea of signage in Montclair Village to inform people to remove such items from their cars to prevent these thefts.

Mr. Price stated that OPD has been doing a lot of outreach and collaboration with local private security companies to stem the tide of residential burglaries and thefts. They have monthly meetings. Many of the perpetrators of these crimes are amateurs, young people, some are female, and many are disadvantage youths. They have no other alternatives. They travel in groups of 2-3 individuals, and there is always a look-out person. In connection with the "smash and grab" problem, they case and target the cars for break-in first, and then come back and do the smash and grab thefts. If you see suspicious people casing cars, call OPD 911 immediately.

Mr. Price stated that some of the best prevention steps for home burglaries are to have a dog that barks and/or leave a TV or radio on if you leave your home. The bad guys will hear the noise and think someone is home. Burglar alarms help, but criminals seem less concerned with them than they use to be and, thus, they are not as effective a deterrent as they were in the past.

Chairperson Winters stated that it is extremely important for residents to report all suspicious activity and all crimes that have occurred. These statistics are used by OPD to allocate resources and sworn staff to our community to fight crime.

### **(Approval of Minutes For MSIC May 7 and June 18, 2015 Public Council Meetings)**

This item was inadvertently moved from item 2 on the meeting agenda to item 3 on the agenda.

Secretary Vigilante stated that the drafts of these minutes were posted to the MSIC website as tentative minutes pending approval in July 2015, and the public was asked via the MSIC Yahoo! Group to review and provide comments on them. A few comments were received, and they were incorporated into the drafts of minutes.

Secretary Vigilante and CR Kaiser explained the process of submitting and approving these minutes by the Steering Committee at this meeting. Attendees were asked if they had any comments or corrections to offer in connection with both sets of minutes. No comments or corrections were offered.

Thereafter, Chairperson Winters submitted separate motions to approve these minutes. The motions were seconded. A Steering Committee vote was taken on each set of minutes, and the votes to approve them were unanimous.

**(Fire Safety and Prevention – Susan Piper, Chairperson of the Oakland Firesafe Council)**

Ms. Piper presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding fire safety and prevention.

Ms. Piper discussed the risk of fires in the Oakland Hills. She noted that for several years we have experienced the worst drought in California history, and that the fire season has been continuous since 2013. There has been a 44 percent increase in fire activity statewide. Approximately 90 percent of all fires are caused by people. The three causes of fires by people are: (1) improper use of equipment, (2) vehicles, and (3) camping.

Ms. Piper discussed what a Red Flag Warning was, what to do when such Warnings are issued, and what not to do as well.

Ms. Piper stated that use of fireworks in Oakland is illegal and violators can receive a fine of \$1,000.00. Three fires were started this year in Oakland due to the illegal use of fireworks.

Ms. Piper discussed in detail how to protect your home from fire, including how to reduce the potential of fire ignition near your home.

Ms. Piper discussed the practice of creating defensible space around a home to prevent or reduce fire damage. She discussed the three defensible space zones and what to do to prevent or reduce fire hazards in each zone.

Ms. Piper discussed the use of drought tolerant and fire resistant plants, and provided a few examples of plant species which could be used in a yard or garden. She stated that there is a demonstration garden at the Gateway Emergency Exhibit Center ( in Hiller Highlands near the Caldecott Tunnel) which contains drought tolerant and fire resistant plants suitable to the Oakland Hills area. She noted that during the upcoming Oakland Creek To Bay Day, on Saturday, September 19, 2015, from 9:00 a.m. to Noon, there will be a volunteer event at the Gateway Emergency Exhibit Center to maintain and update the demonstration garden. She encouraged residents to attend and help-out and learn. To participate, please contact Ms. Piper at (510) 548-5729.

Ms. Piper explained briefly what the function and purpose is of the Oakland Firesafe Council. She noted that there are many resources available on the Oakland Firesafe Council website at [www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org) which can help educate residents about fire safety, and disaster preparedness and response.

Ms. Piper stated that she is also on the Board of Director for the United Policy Holders (UP) organization which provides guidance to residents and businesses on how to submit insurance claims and what to do when there are problems and issues with such claims. Since 1991, UP has helped individuals and businesses solve insurance problems after natural disasters and other difficulties. UP is having a fundraising event on October 26, 2015 at the Urban Hut in San Francisco, and she encouraged those interested in UP to participate. Information about that event and about UP, including useful guidance and information about how to handle insurance issues and problems, is contained on the UP website at [www.uphelp.org](http://www.uphelp.org).

Ms. Piper stated that the Oakland Public Works Agency (PWA) will have an educational event on Saturday, September 12, 2015 at its Edgewater Drive Office about drought and fire resistant plants. Information about this event can be obtained via the City of Oakland website at [www.oaklandnet.com](http://www.oaklandnet.com)

Ms. Piper stated that the next meeting of the Oakland Wildfire Prevention and Assessment District (WPAD) will be on Thursday, September 17, 2015, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Trudeau Center on Skyline Drive. The WPAD meets on the third Thursday of each month at that location. Residents are encouraged to attend and participate.

Ms. Piper stated that a Hiller Highlands resident, Dr. Robert Sieben, a 1991 Firestorm survivor and former Chair of the WPAD, has written a book titled, "The Homeowner's Guide to Wildfire Prevention" which deals with fire resistant landscaping and ways to make your home less vulnerable to fire. More information about the book is located at the Oakland Firesafe Council website at [www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.oaklandfiresafecouncil.org).

Ms. Piper noted that she had brought hand-outs on the subjects she had covered in her presentation, and those hand-outs were available at the meeting sign-in desk.

### **(General Announcements)**

1. Antioch Court Project – Chairperson Winters stated that the project involves improving Antioch Court, the street and the sidewalks and making the area safer for traffic and pedestrians. It also involves temporary street closures for special events. The project Architect will make final measurements for the work on September 14, 2015. Ground breaking for the project is anticipated for next summer. Fundraising is on-going. Donation can be made at [www.montclairbricks.com](http://www.montclairbricks.com).

2. Montclair Village Association (MVA) Updates – CR Swafford (also Executive Director of the MVA) stated that the MVA met last night, usually meeting the first Wednesday night of each month at the Montclair Presbyterian Church. Meetings are open to the public to learn about current events in the Village and share thoughts during the Open Forum segment of the meeting. CR Swafford stated that a new restaurant will open up by November 2015 at the current location of The Metro. The new restaurant is

called "Pour." An orthopedic shoe business will open up along La Salle. The annual fall Montclair Arts Festival will be held on Saturday, September 26, 2015. A Gateway Median Improvement Project will commence in and near to the Park and Mountain Boulevard intersection. This will involve median improvements and a mural. The mural will occur first. CR Swafford encouraged everyone to sign up for the MVA Newsletter which can be done by visiting the MVA website at [www.montclairvillage.com](http://www.montclairvillage.com)

The Meeting concluded at 8:40 p.m. and Chairperson Winters adjourned the Meeting.

*Nick Vigilante*

Nick Vigilante  
MSIC Secretary