Public Comment
Tri-Agency Mtg 10/21/2024
Received 10/18/24 by 12:00 p.m.

1. Scott Whipp
2. Richard Stanley
3. Juana Rudati, PhD

From: Scott Whipp
To: Info
Cc: Steve Hoyt
Subject: Public Questions for Tri Agency Fire Safety Meeting on October 21
Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2024 7:48:56 PM

Regarding the request for public comment for the October 21 meeting to discuss the proposed 0-5 foot non combustible zone, I have the following questions/considerations:

1. What is the estimated cost for each homeowner to come into compliance for the removal of plants, vegetation etc and more significantly, for the replacement of attached wood fences and gates with non-combustible materials? Can MOFD offer materials and design options and estimated costs for non-combustible fences and gates within the 5 foot zone?

2. Does the 0-5 foot non-combustible zone apply to attached wood decks?

3. As respect's replacement of attached wood fences and decks with non-combustible materials, could this requirement apply only to new or new replacement construction? In other words, be required whenever a homeowner builds or rebuilds a new or replacement attached fence or gate? Or, are you proposing all homeowners will be required to replace attached fencing within a specified fixed time frame? If all homeowners in Moraga and Orinda will be required to remove and replace attached wood fencing within a predetermined timeframe, wouldn't this spike in demand cause an increase in labor and materials?

Thank you for your consideration of these questions.

Scott Whipp
[redacted]
Sent from my iPhone

From: Richard Stanley
To: Info
Subject: Question for 10/21 Meeting
Date: Thursday, October 17, 2024 3:28:03 PM

I keep hearing that the new recommended defensible space requirement around homes is 5 feet. Does this mean nothing but dirt or rocks or other non-combustible material can exist within this boundary? Does this include succulents? I have several fruit trees whose trunks are more than 5 feet away, but their branches invade the 5 ft space. Does that mean all tree limbs must be 5 ft away too?

Also, is TREX decking material considered non-combustible?

Regards,

Richard Stanley

From: Juana Rudati
To: Info
Subject: Public comment for Special Tri-Agency Meeting Agenda for Monday, October 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Date: Friday, October 18, 2024 10:37:00 AM

Hi, could you please include the following comment in the public record for the Special Tri-Agency Meeting on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.?

"Follow the facts

There is no evidence that removing vegetation reduces wildfire risk. In fact, it's highly unlikely since live vegetation is not fuel, despite being inaccurately referred to as such by fire chiefs. Anyone with basic knowledge of fire-building, like a Boy Scout, knows that you can't start a fire with freshly cut branches, no matter how hot, windy, or dry the conditions are. This is because live vegetation contains large amounts of water.

The fact that trees burn during wildfires doesn't make them the cause of the fire. Just like in the cremation of human corpses, anything will burn if enough external energy is applied. In the case of wildfires, that energy most often comes from power lines and oil-filled transformers.

When considering regulations to reduce wildfire risk, decisions must be based on solid evidence, not assumptions or opinions. This is especially true when discussing the removal of live vegetation, which can actually help cool the environment and reduce fire intensity. We've seen plenty of evidence that a vegetation-free parking lot will not prevent structures from burning, such as in the Paradise fire where a Safeway and church still burned. Unfortunately, many fire departments lack sufficient training in the physics and biology of wildfires and have pushed landscaping regulation based on urban myths with zero proof.

If vegetation were the driver of fire risk, every hot and dry day would pose the same danger. But we know that's not the case. Wildfire risk spikes on windy days because the real threat isn't the trees and shrubs, but power lines. Studies show that 90% of California's large wildfires are started or sustained by energized power lines and their oil-filled transformers. Even in Orinda, we've had powerlines start several fires which didn't spread thanks to the abundance of live vegetation between them and the nearest homes.

Live vegetation, with its high-water content, can't burn on its own. In fact, it acts as a natural water reserve, provides cooling shade, and serves as a windbreak. Removing it would expose homes to superheated air, making fires spread faster and burn hotter.

Without evidence to justify vegetation removal, we risk making the situation worse. Therefore, I oppose wildfire risk reduction measures that call for the removal of live vegetation. Instead, I support efforts to underground power lines and replace oil-filled transformers, which are the real sources of wildfire ignition and spread. I also support mandating undergrounded power lines in all new developments.

J. Rudati, PhD

Orinda Resident "