



Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

YWPHI Annual Meeting Speakers September 1, 2019

Guests of YWPHI were introduced:

Mike Reynolds, Superintendent of Yosemite National Park
Kelly Martin, Chief of Fire and Aviation Management at Yosemite National Park
Rosemarie Smallcombe, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Kristina Rylands, Nature Bridge NESC (National Environmental Science Center)

Ted Williams recounted that last year, we had all just survived the Ferguson fire, and once again thanked YNP firefighters who defended our community. At the 9/2/2018 meeting, YWPHI presented gratitude plaques to Fire Chief Kelly Martin, Captain Parker Bevington, and Captain Russell Mitchell. The community also has made and encouraged donations in support of fallen firefighters Brian Hughes and Braden Varney. The silent auction today has raised over \$1300 as a donation to be given to the California Fire Federation, whose purpose is to support firefighters and their families.

Mike Reynolds gave some re-cap of the 7/26/2019 meeting, with water partnership proposals that have documented in the minutes and FAQ posted on the YWPHI website.

An additional clarification is that Mike Reynolds did confirm that indeed hydrologist Ken Schmidt had been involved in selecting the location for the existing NESC well (which now has diminished flow). The only comprehensive study of water aquifers in the area was performed back in 1982 by Ken Schmidt, and his document still is the only guide to guesses regarding potential well-sites in the Yosemite West area. The reality is our area geology is all rock fissures that are impossible to “map” and finding appropriate locations will always be challenging.

Kristina Rylands was asked about the current status of the NESC, and she explained that she has in general been instructed to “stand down” until there is a resolution to the water needs for the campus. The NESC fire-station construction will not be proceeding until the Nature Bridge board makes a decision to approve a fundraising strategy, which they have not yet done, so Nature Bridge is not yet accepting donations dedicated to building the NESC fire-station.

A member asked why residents of Mariposa County should be required to make “donations” to receive basic services such as fire protection, and why the County does not have more RESPONSIBILITY to fund fire protection for taxpayers.

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Gary Mazzone asked whether Nature Bridge could apply for grants to build the fire-station. Mike also clarified that YNP itself can't apply for grants, but can provide support and weight to an application.

The NESC buildings are held on the Nature Bridge balance sheet, but are also effectively gifted to YNP. Currently, Nature Bridge does pay for its own fire-insurance on the buildings as part of a larger insurance contract also covering other Nature Bridge properties throughout California.

Building a fire-station could help reduce improve the fire insurance risk-rating for Yosemite West, and possibly reduce fire-insurance rates. The criteria for determining ISO ratings is complex, and considers not just proximity to a fire-station alone, but a weighed formula that including categories:

- i. 9.5% on Emergency communications (911 response characteristics, jurisdiction sharing)
- ii. 47.4% on Fire Department (Distance, equipment capacity, staffing, training)
- iii. 37.9% on Water supply (Capacity, redundancy, piping and wells, Hydrant conditions)
- iv. 5.2% on Community risk reduction (Local building codes, enforcement, fuel removal, public safety, fire equipment, volunteer training)

Supervisor Rosemarie stated the County is very aware of the challenge to get fire insurance and even the state FAIR plan is not addressing the gaps that homeowners face. Rosemarie will be speaking to the California State insurance commissioner Ricardo Lara.

Chief Martin said that the white Chinquapin house has not kept up with the needs of the teams for fighting wildlands fires, and building a fire-station at NESC would definitely be an improvement both for YNP firefighters and possible volunteer firefighters. John Mock asked whether the NESC fire-station would be big enough to house the equipment needed to fight both wildland fire and structure fires, and the answer was yes that the fire-station was planned to be able to house 2 different-type fire engines.

Mike Reynolds also stated the NESC fire-station plans could still be modified to ensure it was large enough to address the recommendations from the NPS fire team from Boise.

Some Yosemite West property owners have requested permission from YNP to engage in clearing land for wildfire fuel reduction up to 100 feet from their structure, even if that radius extends into YNP lands. Chief Kelly Martin confirmed that she is processing a letter to confirm this authorization for Superintendent Reynolds signature. The letter will be sent to YWPHI and provided to owners who request.

Mike Reynolds briefly reviewed other projects happening in YNP, including the major road work on the Glacier Point Road that will close the road entirely during the summer of 2021. The roadwork will include widening and additional parking in the areas near Clark Range View and the Taft/Sentinel trailhead. The hairpin turns near Washburn point will be improved for safety. Winter access to Badger pass should remain unaffected during the construction years.

Traffic congestion in Yosemite Valley continues to be a number one concern of all YNP planning. Shuttles operated by Aramark have had capacity and staffing problems, and Mike Reynolds stated there are ongoing discussions that may include getting YARTS management involved in providing shuttles, or imposing new fees for private cars to enter Yosemite Valley.

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Requests from Nature Bridge for access to the Yosemite West water system will continue to be discussed at the 9/12/2019 YW DAC (District Advisory Committee) meeting. John Mock requested that the County come prepared with more figures to support analysis of the capacity and second-source requirements of state law and the California water board.

Mike Reynolds confirmed that Nature Bridge proposals do not include any proposal for water connection to the old Chinquapin house or the Chinquapin restrooms, so their previous connection to the Chinquapin well is separable and unrelated to the NESC water issue.

Bert Kroon asked whether there could be any possibility for NESC to be supplied with water by building a pipeline down from Badger Pass. Mike Reynolds replied that the distance is so much farther that the costs would just be too prohibitive, even with the Glacier Point roadwork on the horizon.

Kim O'Neil asked about the effects of the County Housing Element added to the Mariposa General Plan by vote of the Board of Supervisors on 8/20/2019. The Housing Element contains a new directive called "program 5.13" that requests investigation of amending the Mariposa General Plan to remove the "one residence per parcel" rule for RRZ (Rural Residential Zoning) parcels. Making the amendment would have the effect to allow cluster PRD (Planned Residential Development) proposals for RRZ parcels, which would still be governed by density rules (2.5 acres per unit) in the zoning ordinances. Supervisor Smallcombe stated that the County is engaging with an outside consultant for a re-write of those sections of the Mariposa General Plan, and expects report from the consultant in June 2020.

Ted Williams questioned why the County would acquiesce to developers by removing the "one residence per parcel" rule for RRZ parcels. It seems that lobbyists are pursuing an approach to change the law in the General Plan as an end-run around the normal process of applying for discretionary permits and application for re-zoning with proper public hearings.

Neighbors with property near new PRD could experience diminished property values from the high-density developments hurting neighborhood rural character. In particular, the possible PRD proposed developments here in Yosemite West south of the mailboxes are a concern to YWPHI members.

Proposed amendments to the County General Plan will have opportunities for public input at hearings before the Mariposa Board of Supervisors in the coming months. Yosemite West owners should have opportunity to protest changes to the General Plan that legalize cluster PRD housing without re-zoning.