



July 2022
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SPOA Meeting Spurs Interest

OUTSTANDING ATTENDANCE FOR FIRST MEETING IN THREE YEARS

For the first time since 2019, the Strawberry Property Owners Association held an all members meeting for the benefit of the community. Earlier efforts had been stymied by various factors, including restrictions on the size of public meetings due to the coronavirus pandemic, the closing of the Stanislaus National Forest in September 2021, and general concerns about the health risks of gathering. By shifting the timing of the meeting to Memorial Day weekend—and coupled with pent-up demand because of our inability to meet previously—attendance at the May 28 meeting at the Pinecrest Expedition Academy School was at or near a record.

One hundred twenty homeowners and interested parties attended and heard from an excellent line-up of speakers. The focus of the program was on fire safety and fire preparedness. The speakers included the following individuals:

- ◆ Chief Neil Gamez, Chief of the Strawberry Volunteer Fire Department
- ◆ Sarah LaPlante, District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service
- ◆ Karen Caldwell, Tuolumne County Coordinator, FireWise
- ◆ Carol Hallett, Program Manager, Tuolumne County CERT
- ◆ Richard Combs, Coordinator, Strawberry Radio Alert Teams
- ◆ Dee Martin, President, Strawberry Volunteer Fire Department

BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

Thanks to the gathering of members, SPOA was able to formally elect its board of directors. (Please see the full list of board members on Page 5 of this newsletter.) This was an important step, as the make-up of the board has changed in the three years since the members had last been able to meet. Many thanks to all members who attended and gave the board their support for renewal of terms for existing board members and formal election for first-time board members.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- SPOA All Community Meeting Held May 28
- Fire Safety the main topic of presentations
- Community members urged to form FireWise communities



NEIGHBORHOOD RADIO WATCH (NRW)

Tuolumne County Neighborhood Radio Watch in Strawberry is continuing to grow. Our thanks go out to all who expressed interest at the SPOA General Meeting. We've conducted two training sessions in Strawberry, and have 21 members of the community signed up, most with radios. For those with FRS, or GMRS radios, we will be trying out Channel 7, Tone 1, which not coincidentally is the Strawberry Fire Station number. Station

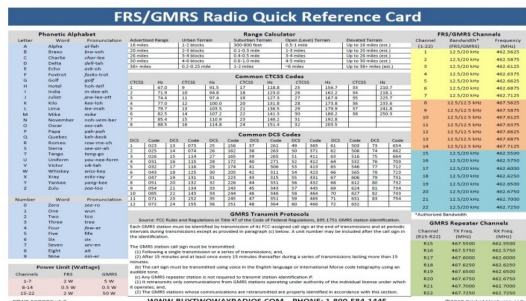
71. If that channel gets busy our alternate will be Channel 1, Tone 7, the inverse. We'll be advocating this Station Number/Channel number-Tone convention throughout the county.

The results of coverage tests have been very encouraging. Roughly 90% of Strawberry can be reached

with FRS radios, although that does not currently include Summerhill. We have a plan to work past this issue, centered on better antennas and GMRS radios. Stay tuned.

NRW shared a display area with TCARES, the county amateur radio club, at the Father's Day Fly-in event in Columbia. By the time you get this we will also have had the first training in Groveland on July 9th. We expect NRW to grow quickly in Groveland, due to demographics, and since they are often quite isolated. Additional areas with a few core individuals are Columbia, Crystal Falls, Phoenix Lake, and Twain Harte. We'll grow as fast as resources allow!

To sign up and get on the mailing list go to TCARES.net, look for Neighborhood Radio Watch, and fill out the brief application. Questions are always welcome at TuolumneNRW@gmail.com



"The need for defensible space preparation has never been greater because the danger of massive wildfires in our area has never been greater." Chief Neil Gamez

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The critical need for volunteers is especially true in small rural communities like Strawberry. Without volunteers Strawberry would not have the services that are usually taken for granted and readily available in all communities. The fire department needs volunteers to keep growing and to continue providing reliable emergency services. Please consider doing your part – the fire department currently has openings for the following positions

- 1st Responders for both fire and medical.
- Operational Support - folks that can provide support to responders, e.g. driving the engine, running the pumps, delivering equipment and resources to an incident.
- Board member - there is an immediate opening to fill the 5th board seat.
- Clerk of the Board – attends meetings, prepares and preserves the public records of board meetings.

FIRE CHIEF GAMEZ SHARES RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Chief Neil Gamez was the 1st guest speaker to kick off the SPOA general membership meeting. Chief spoke about the importance of defensible space and wildfire preparation. The responsibility of all property owners to step up and clean up their properties has never been greater, because the fire danger—particularly for massive wildfires as we have seen in recent years in California—has also never been greater.

Chief Gamez encouraged everyone to stay informed on County issues. Property owners should make a regular practice of visiting the Tuolumne County government website at <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/>

Decisions being made during the Board of Supervisor meetings directly affect our quality of life. Chief, as well as other speakers, advised the membership to contact our district supervisor, Anaiah Kirk, with their concerns about the lack of reliable communication systems in case of emergency. He also encouraged folks to use the County website to follow the Board of Supervisors meetings and other committees/commissions making decisions, especially those related to fire protection, a proposed vegetation ordinance and the emergency alert system.

Chief Gamez shared some news about some of the recent equipment the Strawberry fire department has been able to purchase. One of the biggest improvements the fire department has made is purchasing and installing a repeater on Strawberry Peak that improves emergency communications in Strawberry, Pincrest and much of the upper 108 area. The District has also purchased a LUCAS that provides CPR compressions to a patient while awaiting transport to a hospital. Look for more information on these items and other upgrades/additions in the Strawberry Fire Protection District newsletter to be published and mailed soon.



FireWise © is a registered trademark of the National Fire Protection Association

FIREWISE COMMUNITIES IN STRAWBERRY IN EARLY STAGES OF FORMATION

One of the best ways to “harden” our properties in this era of extreme fire danger is to form and develop FireWise Communities throughout Strawberry. FireWise is a national program operating under the aegis of the National Fire Safety Council (NFSC). Under this program, residents agree to work together to keep their properties free of dry fuels such as fallen tree branches, pine needles, and other natural debris; remove low-lying vegetation that can serve as fuel such as grasses, deer brush, and other shrubs that can catch fire; and keep their properties free of this debris throughout the dry months which typically stretch from May through October.

As members of a FireWise community, homeowners work with their neighbors. This is especially important for those of us who are seasonal visitors to our vacation homes. While we may not always be visiting when a tree branch falls or some other event—either natural or human-caused—occurs, our neighbors can be looking out for us and address the hazard. A key side benefit of this is that our neighborhoods are more secure since we’re more diligent in looking after our neighbors’ properties as well as our own.

Since the Memorial Day weekend annual meeting of the homeowners of Strawberry and the introduction made regarding FireWise, we are pleased to see that at least two FireWise communities are being formed—at Tanager Drive and on Lower River Drive. The Tanager group has already appointed a chairperson and work is being done to address the mapping and other requirements for approval by the NFSC to be officially designated as a FireWise community.

Once these communities are approved, their members will be eligible to receive discounts on their fire insurance as well as a host of other benefits mentioned in the sidebar accompanying this article.

We encourage many other homeowners to join together and form additional new FireWise groups. There is no issue more pressing in the so-called High Mountain communities of Strawberry, Cold Springs, and Pinecrest than fire safety—and becoming FireWise is a great first step toward making our beloved community of Strawberry safer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FORMING A FIREWISE COMMUNITY?

FireWise © is a national organization that encourages homeowners to work together to ensure their communities are both prepared and “hardened” against dangerous wildfires. The benefits are many:

- Approved FireWise communities homeowners can receive discounted rates on fire insurance. A complete list of these companies is posted on the SPOA website.
- FireWise encourages homeowners within the community to work together to not only ensure they have created their own defensible space, but that their neighbors are doing their part as well.
- As seasonal homeowners, sometimes it’s difficult to get to know your neighbors. This kind of cooperative spirit encourages all of us to work together, get to know each other, and help each other whenever one of us is visiting our cabin while others are away.
- Those within a FireWise community feel safer than those who are not. They know they’ve done all they can to “harden” their properties.
- Sadly, firefighters are often forced to choose which properties to defend and which to abandon. Properties within a FireWise community have been properly prepared for fire, and have less fuels than a property that has not been cleaned up. When firefighters arrive on the scene and see a property that has been properly prepared, they are much more likely to vigorously defend that property.
- FireWise members have built connections with each other, have developed a plan, and know how to communicate with each other when a fire breaks out.

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERT)

Your community needs you! Find your niche and volunteer to be a CERT member.

The 20+ hour CERT training course is delivered in the community by a team of instructors and first responders who have the requisite knowledge and skills to instruct the sessions.

*For More Information
Please Contact:*

**Carol Hallett - Program
Manager**

Twain Harte Area CERT
Email: twainhartecert@gmail.com



SPOA LEARNS ABOUT CERT AND HOW VOLUNTEERS HELP OUR FIREFIGHTERS

Carol Hallett from Twain Harte CERT gave an excellent presentation to the membership at the SPOA meeting. What is CERT you ask? CERT stands for Community Emergency Response Team and is a dedicated team of community-based volunteers who are trained to a minimum level and support emergency responses and community preparedness programs. CERT members provide a valuable service to firefighters and other community agencies, residents, and visitors in times of need. Carol spoke of the variety of services they can provide – firefighter rehab and support while responding to incidents, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) data gathering and reporting, triage in times of emergencies, event parking and safety services, school crossing guards, and much more.

CERT training will benefit anyone

who takes it, better preparing them to respond to and cope with the aftermath of a disaster. CERT can provide immediate assistance to professional responders with prioritization and allocation of resources following a disaster.

It takes all of us to make our community safe and to keep Strawberry that special place we have all come to love and appreciate. Many attendees seemed interested in volunteering for this program. Currently there is one Strawberry resident on the CERT team and we are looking for more. You can learn more about this program by visiting [Twain Harte Area CERT - Twain Harte Community Services District \(twainhartecsd.com\)](http://TwainHarteAreaCERT-TwainHarteCommunityServicesDistrict.twainhartecsd.com).



DEL ORO NON-COMMITTAL ON TIGHT WATER SUPPLIES THIS SUMMER

In these years of severe drought, Strawberry homeowners are legitimately concerned about fresh water supply, especially toward the late summer and early fall months before the winter rains arrive. Last year, the community experienced a near miss as Del Oro Water Company was barely able to continue supplying fresh water to bridge the dry season.

SPOA Chairman Barton asked Del Oro to respond to three questions. Here are the questions and written answers given:

1. What is the likelihood Strawberry will have water throughout the 2022 dry season? Answer: We are unable to predict the amount of water that will be available. Last year, water rights affecting Herring Creek were curtailed by the State. It is possible DOWC will be curtailed again this year.
2. Because the State will not allow Del Oro to draw water from the Stanislaus River, will the company purchase water if Herring Creek runs dry? Answer: Yes, we have a tentative agreement to purchase water from TUD. Should this step become necessary, additional use restrictions will have to be applied to all customers.
3. Given that use restrictions are a possibility, what recommendations does Del Oro have for its customers this summer? Answer: 1) Use water wisely; 2) Practice voluntary conservation; 3) Check www.delorowater.com for up to date information.

NEW BUSINESSES IN STRAWBERRY

If you haven't checked out the Strawberry Store recently, you're missing out! New owners Bob and Gina have turned the store around and have an awesome supply of groceries available as well as fishing gear, water toys for summer, hardware and much more. There's a fresh pot of coffee available and free wifi. The store is open 7 days a week from 7am to 7pm.

A big welcome and hello to Karl and Audrey who are the new owners of Dodge Ridge. There have been some changes at Dodge and the upgrades are awesome! Summer activities include disc golf, mountain biking, yoga, chairlift rides to the top for picnicking and hiking. Horseshoes, Cornhole tournaments and other games are available for play as well as live music and food. There is a free shuttle running every 30 minutes from Pinecrest to Dodge. Check out their website for more info at www.dodgeridge.com.

There was also a change in ownership at the Rivers Resort. Scott and Tammie Webb have been running the resort since taking it over from Martha and Tom Weathers. The cabins have never looked better. If you need a place for extra guests or know someone looking for a great vacation spot contact the Rivers Resort at 800-514-6777 or riversresortrentals@gmail.com.



“Welcome to all new residents and business owners. So glad that you have made Strawberry your home!” Dee Martin

YOUR SPOA BOARD—WE’RE HERE TO SERVE

Thanks to the actions of the SPOA members and community at the meeting held on May 28, the Board of Directors was introduced and elected to serve in their existing terms of office. These are the officers and board members of your association:

President: Don Barton

Vice President: Dee Martin

Secretary: Jan Barton

Treasurer: Lisa Riedle

Member: Dave Robertson

Member: Jim Pappas

Member: Ed Elliott

Member: Chucker Twining

Member: Dennis Kelley

Member: Marvin Taylor

Member: Garth Jolliff*

Member: Rick Shelton*

fill the two open positions on the Board on the day of the all members meeting. They will serve on a provisional basis until they are officially elected by the members at the Annual Meeting in 2023.

Each board member serves 3-year terms and are organized into “classes” that rotate to ensure continuity. Here are the classes, with their year indicating the year of their terms expiring:

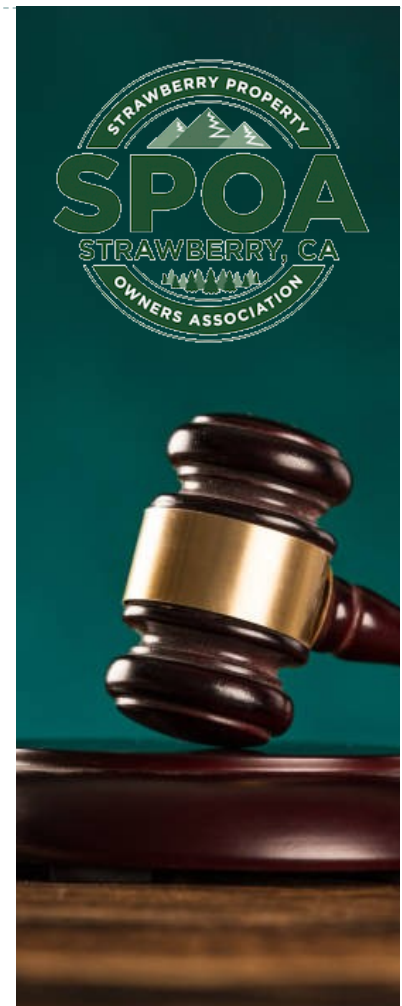
2023: Kelley, Shelton (filling the term of retiring member Don Prolo), Jolliff (filling the term of retiring member Michael Jackson)

2024: Robertwon, J. Barton, Pappas, Martin, Elliott

2025: D. Barton, Twining, Riedle, Taylor

Should you have any questions, problems, or concerns, we encourage you to seek us out if you see us in and around Strawberry or you can email your questions to us at jb4spoa@gmail.com. That email address is monitored by Secretary Barton.

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Jolliff and Mr. Shelton to the Board, both of whom volunteered to



**STRAWBERRY
PROPERTY OWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

The Strawberry Property Owners Association is a non-profit organization representing the homeowners of the unincorporated community of Strawberry in Tuolumne County, California.

The organization is led by a board duly elected by the association members. Board members serve for terms of three years and can be re-elected at the pleasure of the members.

SPOA operates on voluntary dues-paying basis. Annual dues are \$20.

LEE DEMPSEY

The Strawberry Volunteer Fire Department was extremely grateful that we were able to honor Lee Dempsey at the SPOA meeting. Lee made a huge impact on this community and specifically the fire department. We will be forever grateful for his inspiration and guidance. In remembrance, Lee's name has been added to Engine 711 and his spirit will forever ride along with us.



Strawberry Property Owners
Association
Post Office Box 1133
Pinecrest, CA 95364
Email: jb4sboa@gmail.com



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