

SSTOC Comments on Radke Wildfire Prevention Proposal Vote (6-2 in favor)
Link to SSTOC Meeting Video – August 10, 2022

<https://orindaca.ig2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=2264&Format=Minutes>

Final comments by the commissioners before the (6-2) vote in favor of recommending that the City Council proceed with Dr. Radke's proposal.

Chris Decareau (Yes) 1:45:45 – Questions (the commissioners had previously submitted questions to Dr. Radke) well answered. Something you don't normally get proposals like this, especially not the depth he gets into.

Paula Reinman (Yes) – 1:46:30 – Two reasons. (1) An innovation piece in our portfolio. CWPP deals with the day-to-day problems, but we want something in the “upper white corner of our graph”. (2) A little concerned about the “citizen science” element of it. How many people will actually participate. But if we got students involved. Miramonte has a climate change club. In K-8 teachers could get it into the curriculum. Good investment. Good piece of our portfolio.

Melanie Light (No) – 1:49:20 – I've spent 2 years working on the Firewise Council, over 40 hours a week, trying to get people involved. These campaigns can work but in this town we are not at that place yet. Secondly, I think it could be a distraction. I think it would be premature because of low citizen participation. With regards cost, points to the road maintenance drain of Measure R funds to show that we don't have that much money. I'd like to see it come back to us in a year. (note by SGC: Radke says that in a year if he is not doing this for Orinda he will be doing it for someone else or someone else will come in and it will not be a \$600,000 research project with directed grad students doing the heavy lifting but a commercial effort for much more money.) It's exciting stuff. It's powerful. But we aren't the right town for you Dr. Radke. We're not ready for you.

Chris Decareau – 1:53:45 – Metrics. I can harden my house and cut down all of my trees but if my neighbors don't, I'm up “the” creek. Radke's model gives me leverage to deal with that which Chief Winnacker's model does not. Radke's data base gives neighbors the ability to talk with other neighbors to get everyone on board.

Rachelle Latimer (Yes) - 1:56:00 – I'm for anything in the toolbox to get people to do this. I don't think we can say people will be “ready” next year, they may not be ready in ten years. And I don't think we can wait that long. We need to move now and take advantage of anything and everything to encourage people to do the work on their property.

Latika Malkani (Yes) – 1:57:45 – She asked Radke about the sensitivity to the results of the project by public participation, or lack thereof. Response from Radke was that the more response the more accurate machine learning would “fill in the holes” and as that happened and people who did not participate could see how the “machine” depicted their property, they might be inspired to go out and confirm (or refute). No other comment from Latika.

Jud Hammon (No) - 2:03 – It provides a rather stunning means of defining the wildfire risk in much greater detail. However, what I find lacking is any substantive addition of our real problem, of getting people to clear their property. I fear that as much as this plan has to offer, it has the potential of distracting us from the real problem to find ways to get property owners to reduce the

wildfire fuel on their property. We already know a lot about where the risks are and I don't think having more precise knowledge where those risks are I don't think will add a lot at this time.

Brad Barber (Yes) – 2:04:30 – Jud, I understand your position but to me it's just the other way. I'm despairing that we will never get the people of Orinda to do what we need to do with the approaches we have in mind. We need something dramatically different and this offers that possibility. We should go ahead with all of our plans for outreach. I don't think they are competitive. I think they can be additive. Makes a motion to recommend that the City accept Radke's proposal.

Alex Weinstein (Yes) – no comment

Yasaman Lee (Absent)

Observations by this website on the points those rejecting the proposal made.

Chris Decareau's second comment (at 1:53:45) was essentially in response to Melanie Light's comment. When Light said that because of her frustration that the town was not responding to her efforts to get more participation in Firewise and thus was not ready to respond to Radke's proposal, our thought was maybe this says more about Firewise than Radke's plan. One size does not fit all. Firewise may be the right answer for some but (obviously?) not for everyone. Orinda has great schools but still, some Orindans send their children to private schools. Brad Barber also commented on the "different strokes for different folks" aspect; another approach that will draw more people in.

Melanie also commented that the use of the recent use of \$2.3 million of Measure R funds for road maintenance demonstrated that we don't have excess funds to "waste". That is a circular argument: That we use money on what is not, or should not be, our priority concern, and then argue there is not enough money to try something different to address our primary concern. \$100,000 for Brookwood Road which is not wildfire mitigation but road beautification. \$200,000 for the 600 foot long Martha-Catherine walking path that has existed for years while costing nothing. There is plenty of waste to cover the cost of Dr. Radke's proposal. Measure R is generating almost \$300,000 a month. Orindans pay \$6.5 million in property taxes to Orinda and another \$20 million to MOFD. These two increased \$2.1 million this year alone. We can afford an additional \$300,000 a year for two years for wildfire prevention.

As for Jud Hammon's concern that putting another tool in our toolbox will distract us. If we are so easily distracted, we should find people in charge who can better multi-task. Most residents won't be distracted, they are not even engaged right now. Maybe this will engage them as their kids come home from school with a cool new app and want to walk all around the yard clicking on plants.