



Soheila Bana <soheilabana@gmail.com>

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## From 94803 Community: Hear Us and Act for Our Safety

1 message

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Soheila Bana <soheilabana@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 16, 2021 at 2:13 PM

To: "Butt, Tom" <tom.butt@intres.com>, Gayle <gayledirect@gmail.com>, Gayle McLaughlin <gayle\_mclaughlin@ci.richmond.ca.us>, Nathaniel Bates <natbates@comcast.net>, Eduardo Martinez <eduardo\_martinez@ci.richmond.ca.us>, Demnlus Johnson <johnsondemnlus@yahoo.com>, Demnlus Johnson <demnlus\_johnson@ci.richmond.ca.us>, Melvin Willis <melvin\_willis@ci.richmond.ca.us>, Claudia Jimenez <Claudia\_jimenez@ci.richmond.ca.us>  
Cc: City Clerk Dept <cityclerkdept@ci.richmond.ca.us>

Dear Mayor Butt and Councilmembers Martinez, McLaughlin, Bates, Jimenez, Johnson, and Willis,

I am writing to you on behalf of the community group 94803 Emergency Preparedness Alliance as I feel obligated to inform you about the issues and concerns of our community because you are their representatives and should know their most urgent requests regarding their SAFETY.

The following is a) report to you of the needs of the community wrt wildfire safety, and b) a request for your strong budgetary support for Richmond Fire Department to back-up our requests and make them meaningful in practice.

The report is about the new Fire Chief's tour of our area where the community had a chance to express their requests and concerns.

The request to you is to provide the means for Chief Montoya to exercise his leadership and address the requests of residents on issues of wildfire safety, emergency preparedness, and post-disaster recovery.

### Report:

On 2/9/2021 Fire Chief Angel Montoya took a tour of the area to see the concern issues of 94803 EPA members in person. Battalion Chief Bontempo, Karen Fenton, Marilyn Saarni and myself accompanied the fire chief and visited different locations and met with two homeowners to hear their specific concerns. The 90-minute tour went over 2 hours, visiting the area and seeing uncontrolled vegetation that is a great concern to the community in this Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone area. Announcing the tour a week before it happened, provided an opportunity for the community to provide their comments. Consequently, 94803 Emergency Preparedness Alliance has come up with a wishlist for the Fire Department to implement.

The following is a wishlist summary of the most important items related to wildfire safety, not including many items related to emergency preparedness and post disaster recovery.

### Wildfire Safety Issues:

- Create Fire breaks behind El Sobrante Valley
- Define main evacuation routes with horizontal & vertical vegetation clearance (map)
- Provide Online Platform for Public Access\*
- Add Surveillance Cameras & Drone
- Install CWS Siren at Fire Station 63
- Clear & Maintain Fire Access Roads
- Educate/Encourage/Enforce Vegetation Management & Defensible Space by hiring more Fire Inspectors and Contractors

*\*Please note the rent board has an online platform, but the fire department, which is the most important factor in our public safety, does not have it yet.*

**Note:** At the bottom of this email you see some of the specific requests from the community members.

**Request:**

Although Fire Chief Montoya is new to the job and may not be completely aware of all of our budgetary issues, we the residents are familiar with the issues and can predict that lack of budget may be a main obstacle to public safety, and, specifically, to addressing the above wildfire safety issues.

We are asking the City Council to **increase the budget of the Richmond Fire Department** to implement all the above items.

The RFD needs the budget to enforce vegetation management, including on the lots owned by the City of Richmond! Currently, the City is the greatest violator of public safety! PLEASE allocate sufficient budget to the Fire Department to implement the main measures for ensuring our minimum safety wrt a wildfire BEFORE the next fire season begins.

The unused budget of the vacant positions in the city is one of the sources that could be considered for this purpose.

Thank you for your caring,  
Soheila Bana  
94803 Emergency Preparedness Alliance  
(510) 779-7280

NOTE: Please see below requests from residents to Fire Chief Montoya and note that the actual list of requests is much longer than the above short wishlist. That is, we are very understanding of the budget shortcomings and have prepared the above list as our minimum requests for the RFD for our wildfire safety. We are talking about **our lives** being in danger of wildfire, as well as our homes as our lifelong savings. Please hear us and understand the value and importance of PUBLIC SAFETY as well as your role in ensuring it.

Karen:

- Please support our request that the fire station on Valley View have a **CWS siren** installed for rapid notification, better than the CWS & Nixle notifications done by cell phone. The 94803 residents should be trained to respond to the CWS sirens to Shelter-in-Place immediately and tune on radio/TV or now Zonehaven AWARE for local information. Wildfire response should be added to the CWS alert system. Chevron & the other oil companies in CCC pay for the CWS system as part of an agreement with Richmond in the 1980's. The CAER budget is also funded by that industry.
- The Zonehaven evacuation map and plans should be implemented by the RFD in 94803. There should be more training exercises connected to these zones.
- The battalion chief and his fire fighters at the Valley Station should be instructed to meet and collaborate with the 94803 residents (Richmond portion.) They could be assigned to zones to do more public education. This could be integrated with vegetation maintenance. When I visited the firestation, the firefighters on duty appear to have more leisure down time, unlike the RPD police on duty.

Katrinka:

homeless encampments on the county property east of Castro Ranch - seems to be an uptick of dumping and activity in the area - concern for potential fires there.

Also, the fire access sites in Carriage Hills area are all overgrown and not sure any truck would be able to access the open spaces.

Laurent:

I think you know better than we do what the concerns are.

We need a comprehensive plan to mitigate the fire danger along San Pablo Dam Rd and Castro Ranch Road.

This needs to include, other than Richmond officials and Fire Dept:

1. The regional park service that runs El Sobrante Ridge. They require funds to clear dead trees, not just dead brush
2. EBMUD with whom we are in touch - removal of pines (there are hundreds of dead ones at this point and all of them have to go)
3. A neighborhood-based evacuation plan, one for each neighborhood, which could include traffic coordination. I don't know who would be doing the coordinating, police or fire dpt. The plan itself is not a HOA function due to liability as you know, but there are groups of volunteers including the ones you already know
4. Access to real-time information, like Zonehaven.
5. Education and subsidies for people to "harden" their homes, create defensible perimeters etc. Also a "what to do in case of emergency" document
6. Maybe some sort of fire package that would recap all this with critical phone numbers, URLs, resources (sounds like a job for Yokes)
7. How to make sure insurance companies don't drop California homes and don't gouge us either - that's at the state level

That's just off the top of my head and I have a cold, so I'm sure I'm missing stuff.

Ariellah: (visited her house)

Here are my concerns/requests/thoughts:

1. I'd love for him to see the sobrante ridge area and how vast it is and that there doesn't seem to be any fire breaks in our area and that the vegetation care up there is almost nill(minus the upkeep of the road/trails) and also that our homes are backed up to that vast area up there.
2. I also would like for him to see or be made aware of how our backyards are butted up to the sobrante ridge area/watershed. For example, my backyard and the fallen trees, tall grass, basically kindling that is just on the otherside of the fence of my backyard. I currently maintain it but its very expensive, but is also only about 20 feet in length which may not do much good and may not help prevent anything...and especially if none of the other neighbors are not doing the same/caring for the area beyond their fence....
3. I am also concerned about the evacuation routes and also if we are even included in anyone's jurisdiction when there is threat of a wildfire...will anyone be coming to stop the spread of it up here? and also what are our evacuation routes, as I was going to go to the 80 freeway area but per the meeting we had, turns out that is not a route, though I guess we could go to side roads near to the bay. It just doesn't seem safe or logical to take san pablo dam road towards orinda in an emergency/wildfire/fire situation.

Thresa:

Is it possible to apply for this Fire Prevention Grant:  
<https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/fire-prevention-grants/>

Susan: (visited her house)

Here are our suggestions.

Vegetation management on the hills behind the homes on our block and probably neighboring blocks, that gets very long and dry. The county cuts a small amount of a few feet, that isn't nearly enough behind our houses. I believe the Possibility of goats here would be a great asset, or help to the people who live on this street and the street that parallels us and is above us. This whole area needs to be managed and cut during the dry season, not just a few feet behind the houses that parallel the street and the dry hill.

Forest management of dead and fallen trees and brush that lines the trails between the trail that starts at end of Morningside drive (the Pinole Valley trail that goes down to the Pinole Valley dog park and soccer field. Between that trail and the Sobrante ridge trail has a valley that is full of dead trees and shrub. Homeless people camp there in summer and all of these areas are fuel intense.

Inspection of people's yards and help with what they need to do to make it firesafe and then help making it happen, especially for the elderly, disabled, or people who cannot afford to do it themselves.

There is a fire access road around the corner on Skyhawk Drive that has a pole in front of it that would make it difficult for any fire vehicles to drive up it.

Nancy:

I'd like the Chief to make sure all fire hydrants are being routinely checked for functionality/ sufficient pressure.

I also wonder about vegetation and types of shrubs, etc that would burn quickly in a fire. As part of fire safety, can we be educated about this?

Thomas:

I am concerned about the thick vegetation along Castro Ranch Road from Olinda Road and going towards Carriage Hills. Transmission lines surrounded by vegetation also run along Castro Ranch Road.

Patti: (We did not have time to visit her house)

**EBRPD Cooperation/Coordination:** Fuel breaks on EBRPD park lands between La Colina Hill and Tilden have had deferred maintenance over the past 10-15 years. Also, the park district has acquired parcels in the years since its most recent vegetation management plan. It is unclear how the park district is managing all of its land in this region. How can the City and County work with the District to identify and address fuel breaks with deferred maintenance and update its vegetation management plan?

**ALERT Wildfire Cameras:** We need more wildfire monitoring cameras in El Sobrante. Frequent high winds from spring through summer coming off the bay moving over the ridge above La Colina Hill elevate fire danger on many days that are not designated as Red Flag days. At present there are no cameras that monitor this side of Wildcat Canyon park from La Colina toward Tilden.

Angela:

I would like to see them make the Fire Road at the top of Painted Pony actually accessible and create more of a fire break from the open space along the ridge. That and figure some way to for the city to allow them to use drones to catch someone these people who set off fireworks because it's going to start up again with New Years coming.

Patti:

There are various RFP's coming out--I wish the City of Richmond had a grant writer to apply for these resources:  
<https://scc.ca.gov/files/2021/12/Wildfire-Resilience-RFP-Final.pdf>

Adrian:

To summarize already mentioned on ND fire prone areas:

1. Neglected and overgrown side yard of 1 Christopher Ct. property that faces Valley View Rd. (Almost across from Richmond Fire Station #63)
1. Right side of Valley View Rd. starting from Via Giramita (Ct.) onward toward De Anza School. Neglected vegetation of property owners on Harrison Ct. (and others onward, toward De Anza School), whose backyard properties are facing Valley View Rd.
2. Overgrown parcel owned by City of Richmond between Amend Rd. and Fascination Circle. Majority of dead Monterey Pines were finally cut down few months ago, but all of the cut down trees were not removed from the site. Remaining Monterey Pines also died/in process of dying within last month. All of them should have been cut down at once. This parcel of land is a very high fire danger area, that has been neglected for decades. Now with added fire fuel in form of cut down trees on the ground. This is a major fire hazard, that City of Richmond appears to completely neglect. This slope should be cleared of all dead vegetation, especially since there was a fire ten or so years ago.
3. An entire area of PG&E sub-station with overgrown vegetation and some overhanging Eucalyptus trees (danger of falling on cars/pedestrians during winter storms) on Amend Rd. across from Simoni Ct.
4. Some Fire Hydrants at/splitting off of Amend Rd. streets are not maintained and covered in overgrown vegetation. I think Fire Department should make a full maintenance check on existing fire hydrants around Amend Rd. area.

Some photos of mentioned above areas.

PG&E sub-station surroundings and a land parcel of City of Richmond, between Amend Rd. and Fascination Circle:



433432023



I want to...

### Description

#### Identity

APN	433432023
Prime Owner	RICHMOND CITY OF
Ownership Percent	100
Secondary Owner	FINANCE DEPARTMENT
Parent Parcel	0000028233
PARCEL ID	305254

#### Location

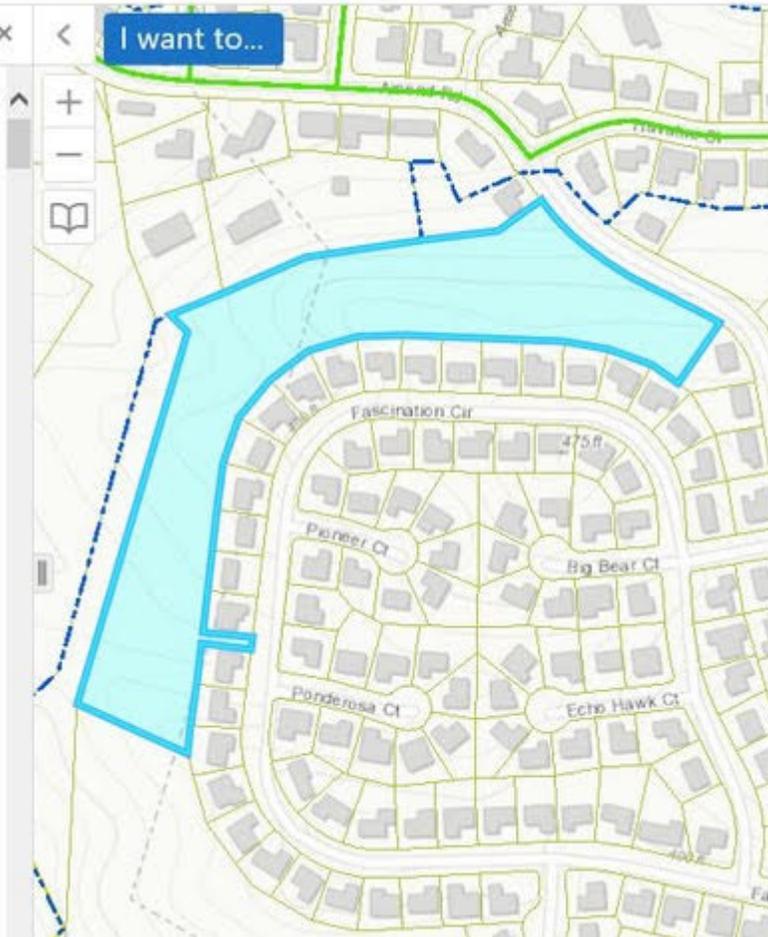
Site Address	, Richmond, CA 94802-None
Notification Address	1401 MARINA WAY S, RICHMOND, CA 94804-
Latitude	37.965
Longitude	-122.274
Subdivision/Minor Sub	4833
Brief Legal Description	TRACT 4833 POR PCL B

#### Tax

Tax Rate Area	08004
Land Value	\$216770
Improvement Value	\$0
Personal Property Value	\$0
Non-Taxable Code	CY

#### Administration

Use Code	79:
Ownership	I
Deed Reference	10085109
Recording Date	19801110







PG&E sub-station area with overgrown vegetation and some overhanging Eucalyptus trees on Amend Rd.:





Valley View Rd. starting from Via Giramita (Ct.) onward, toward De Anza School:





Intentionally discarded and piled up dead vegetation by property owners:



Property of 1 Christopher Ct. side yard facing Valley View Rd. (Fire Station on the right, across the street):



Also, corner of 4350 Valley View Rd. and Fleetwood Dr. with dead Monterey Pines:

Corner of Valley View Rd. and 3301 May Rd.:

More from Adiran:

Just wanted to also mention the unkept surroundings of Fire Station #63 itself. Overgrown and dead shrubbery, dead trees by the main entrance, neglected weeds in summer and constant litter around premises. I have contacted Fire Station on several occasions to address this ongoing situation with their unkemptness and for not being a good 'role model' to our neighborhood by their own negligence. I've been told that they will keep surroundings clean in the future. Despite this, litter still keeps popping up on weekly basis and won't be removed by staff unless I do it myself.

Someone has also decided to butcher, by topping, healthy oak trees on Amend Rd. across from side entrance of Fire Station. Not only they have ruined trees with this barbaric pruning, but whoever did this (property owner of 5265 Amend Rd.?! ) has piled up all the cut down tree branches on the side of his/her private driveway. Apparently there is no intention to remove this fire hazard pile. The tree that should have been fully removed from site is a dead Monterey Pine, that now will be sticking out from the rest of butchered tree grouping.

Address:

Private driveway/street of 5247 or/and 5265 Amend Rd. Richmond:

Arrow showing location of the cut down tree branches. Fire Station is on the right.

Amend Rd. Circled trees that got butchered, with remainings of dead Monterey Pine. All cut down branches are piled up at the entrance of this private street, marked with arrow. (Not shown in photo). Star indicates an entrance of the private street. Fire Station is on the right.

Dead Monterey Pine looking opposite direction from Amend Rd. toward Valley View Rd. intersection:

Dead trees by Fire Station main garage doors:

Driveway entrance of Fire Station:

Setting an example of well maintained surroundings of Fire Station itself, should be the first step to address and minimize fire danger in our neighborhood.

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### 3 attachments



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59K

**C927E05C-B431-4F8F-8DEA-AA93D7F4BF0D.jpeg**  
126K



655FDDAD-259D-4847-B33C-C446FCF74FB2.jpeg  
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