

“The mission of the Topanga Canyon Boulevard Roadside Committee, an ad hoc advisory group, working collaboratively with related public agencies and community organizations, is to plan and execute sustainable solutions by April 2013 to manage roadside brush clearance along TCB/State Route 27 that promote public safety and best management practices for fire safety, invasive plant management, and protection of the natural environment of the Topanga Creek Watershed, by using methods, other than herbicides, consistent with the goals and policies of the Topanga Creek Watershed Plan of 2002.”

Topanga Canyon Boulevard Roadside Communications Subcommittee

MINUTES

June 11, 2013

10:00 – 12:00

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky’s District Office, Calabasas

PURPOSE: establish a communication plan that reaches all stakeholders to gain support of the mission to create a sustainable roadside vegetation plan without the use of herbicides.

ATTENDEES: Kara Seward (Pavley), Joseph Rosendo (Chamber), Ben Allanoff (TCWC), Patrick Chandler (Caltrans), Lauren Wonder (Caltrans), Stacy Sledge (Town Council), Susan Nissman (Yaroslavsky), Susannah Shaw (Yaroslavsky), Beth Burnam (NTCFSC)

WEBSITE: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/travel/projects> (Click on route shield 27). CalTrans is still developing the website and will create a simpler web link name/address. The web page will include information pieces such as the brochure, letter of consent, implementation plan, and the Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Alliance calendar.

MINUTES: Minutes from April 30, 2013 were reviewed and accepted, with ‘native and natural’ clarification below:

Native or Natural: Prefer “natural” when referring to the environment and “native” when describing the plant palette that has been approved by the Fire Department and the TCB Roadside Committee’s BMP’s.

Lauren and Susan re-capped discussions from the last meeting regarding branding.

MESSAGE BRANDING:

SLOGANS: The group generally agreed that “Act like you live here” is a good message; it addresses both property owners as well as commuters, implying a sense of ownership and responsibility. The message could be expanded and used in many different ways, regarding the preservation and protection of the town. The group felt it was important to remain focused on the *Town* of Topanga with ideas relating to the town including: “Our Town, Your Town.”, “This is your road”, “Natural is not by accident.”, “Slow Down Through Town.”, “Welcome to our Town of Topanga.”, and “It’s our way or the highway!”. There was hesitation expressed regarding the slogan, “Do it Topanga style.”

There was further discussion about revisiting the “Slow Down through Town” campaign to increase awareness of the town and using it to encourage the ‘beautification’ and ‘protection’ of Topanga.

MESSAGE: Underlying message for branding includes: “safety, community, consistency, integrity, environment, and enhancement.” These components should be included in communications. For the use of the TCB Roadside Communications Subcommittee, enhancing refers to preserving scenic beauty, with proper planting and maintenance. Messaging should invite Topangans to partner with them in preserving and protecting the local environment through the use of BMPs. The group also discussed the importance of making sure that visitors to Topanga feel welcome. With the hundreds of thousands of visitors traveling to Topanga, it is important to welcome them and not admonish them. Beth Burnam also suggested that it is important to acknowledge property owners who are already implementing BMP into their landscaping.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

MAY 2013 COMMUNITY OUTREACH: The group discussed the recent community outreach. According to the group, booths at the Topanga Days event (5/25-27/13) and Theatricum event (5/4/13) reached a minimal audience, but good discussions resulted with those who showed interest. The Topanga Messenger (5/30/13 edition) printed a story on the group's progress and signing of the Implementation Plan (including group photo) along with statements from local organizations serving on the Committee. Susan Nissman will obtain extra copies.

COMMUNICATION: The group then proceeded to discuss how they would further reach out to the community to inform them of BMPs and encourage their participation in taking responsibility to preserve and protect TCB. A FAQ, along with a “how-to” regarding implementation of BMPs that could be given to property owners was discussed. This brochure would be a guide to property owners along the boulevard informing them about the plant palette, how to plant, and why to plant (from an environmentally sustainable point of view). The idea of a cover letter in addition to a brochure was introduced. The group felt that giving the property owners a letter of explanation as well as “collateral materials” that could be continually handed out would be an effective way to inform.

The specifics of the proposed cover letter and the brochure were discussed. Ideas of placing seed packets (from the palette) with the letter, as well as including photographs from around the area that help to explain were also discussed.

Another point of concern was how to inform property owners about the potential need for a permit, while making the process as simple as possible, and encourage property owners to implement BMPs. It was suggested that a paragraph on safety in the cover letter be included to explain the permitting process. Additionally, it needs to be noted that a one-day, no-fee encroachment permit is required to clear vegetation along TCB's public rights-of-way, and we need to identify a contact name and number to obtain the permit.

The group then discussed how to make available the proper permitting forms in an effective and efficient manner. Suggestions included placing the appropriate forms

online on the website and offering pre-filled out forms. This would only be necessary for the limited amount of property owners along the Boulevard who would need to get permits.

Susan Nissman agreed to send out these letters from the Supervisor's office. She will need a database of addresses along Topanga Canyon Boulevard from either the assessor parcel number map or the county tax assessor listing.

Phase One – Developing Property Owner Partnership and Participation along Topanga Canyon Boulevard:

Send message (cover letter & brochure) to every TCB property owner. Acknowledge those who are already meeting the standards. For those who are not, invite them to become a partner in our vegetation management program and to take pride and participate in preserving the natural environment of TCB. Caltrans will write another press release and there will be further outreach through the Messenger, OneTopanga, letters to property owners, and other website links.

Letter: A cover letter to be included in mailing with brochure. Ben will provide the FAQs on BMPs. Permit info to be included in letter (if you need access from the roadway, here are the steps, etc.) Permit application linked to Caltrans special website page).

Brochure: This is a BMP brochure. This brochure should be generic so that it can be handed out throughout the canyon in later phases. Tell them what will be needed to fulfill BMP (water needs and weed removal). Show photo examples. Potentially put 'seed card' in packet.

Additional materials in mailing: TTC/T-CEP weed whacking postcard will be included or integrated.

ROUGH TIMELINE FOR PHASE 1:

July:

- Need photos to show approved plant palette, illustrate BMPs
 - Use Topangans in photos.
- Develop our website content
 - Informational pieces, links, press releases, statements, charts, forms, etc.
- Consider use of TTC bridge flower boxes as a demonstration of approved plants?
 - Need to remove graffiti on bridge. (Caltrans responsible?)

August:

- First Draft - complete brochure and letter content
- Need names and addresses from tax assessor's database
 - Beth & Ben to pull parcel numbers and give to Susan.
- Printing estimate
- Caltrans to design

- TTC to request grant from Zev to pay for printing.
- TTC & Chamber to coordinate printing 3,000 brochures.

September:

- Design Completed (Caltrans)
- Print (TTC to request grant from County)

October:

- Mail out to all 90290

Phase Two—Partnership:

Once the first phase is complete, the public outreach campaign will extend its reach to all of Topanga. More discussion of this in detail will occur at a later date: one idea that was briefly mentioned was the potential use of TTC and perhaps Theatricum banners to promote.

Adjournment and next meeting:

The meeting adjourned at 12 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: The next TCB Roadside Communications Subcommittee meeting will be on WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., downtown at the CALTRANS OFFICE. The office is located at 100 S. Main Street, Los Angeles.

There will be a carpool leaving from Pavley's office. Reserve space with Kara Seward for the carpool if interested. Please call Patrick Chandler ahead so he can arrange parking in the garage.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Brochures

Website