

June 2, 2020

Santa Rosa Fire Department  
[CWPP@srcotu.org](mailto:CWPP@srcotu.org)

Re: Comments to Draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan

I am President of the Board of Directors and CEO of Oakmont Village Association (OVA) and this letter is in response to the request for comments to the Draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (The Plan). Given the deadline of June 2, this letter will only be sent by email.

### Background

Oakmont Village was mandatorily evacuated at the outset of the 2017 fires. Many of us heeded that order, quickly grabbed what we could and drove away. There are only two ways out of Oakmont Village: Oakmont Drive and Pythian Road. Both empty onto Route 12, so no matter which way we drove, as soon as we got near Route 12, there was gridlock. Route 12 was jammed in both directions, and traffic was moving extremely slowly. *Some of our residents reported it took over an hour just to get onto Highway 12.*

We were lucky. The fires weren't on us instantly, as in Fountaingrove, and we returned unscathed to our homes after eight nail-biting days. But it brought to light the need for an alternative emergency egress that does not empty onto Route 12. The next time we might not be so lucky, and the gridlock at Route 12 could cause a *mass casualty event* as hundreds or thousands of Oakmont residents, business workers and others perish in their cars while waiting to exit the community.

The best alternative is Channel Drive, which leads to Montgomery Avenue. There is already a gated connection road between Wild Oak and Channel Drive that requires some upgrades, but would make a wonderful back door for all of us.

However, the Office of the Santa Rosa Fire Marshall has forbidden us from even considering using Channel Drive because fire emergency vehicles have priority, the road is narrow, and oncoming evacuees would interfere with the fire vehicles. While we understand this perspective, *it devalues the importance of saving lives in deference to what we believe is a convenient but overly broad policy.*

Bottom line: there is plenty of room for accommodations that will meet the needs of all parties.

Having this back door ready to use in an emergency does not interfere with the right of emergency officials to declare, in an appropriate situation, that Channel Drive is open only to emergency vehicles, and we cannot use it to evacuate. We understand the need for road closure to Oakmont and Wild Oak vehicles if a raging fire in Trione-Annadel State Park was moving north, but there are other emergency situations in which a Channel Drive exit for our community could be a priceless life saver.

The Plan considerably understates the population and makeup of Oakmont Village and the associations known as Wild Oak. Thus, the need for an alternative evacuation route appears much less important than it is.

### Factual Inaccuracies

On page 92 the plan states that Oakmont Village consists of “Thirty-two compartments organized by existing neighborhoods and HOAs within the overall Oakmont Village community comprise this Unit of more than 1,500 individual parcels.” (page 92). In fact, Oakmont Village has 3,206 residential units, and 4,750 residents, of which 163 are apartments in Oakmont Gardens, an independent and assisted living facility. Oakmont Village also contains two golf courses with a restaurant and banquet facilities, two private RV storage lots with dozens of RVs, trailers and other vehicles, and 12 commercial buildings with restaurants, professional offices, banks, and other businesses involving dozens of owners and employees). Most days, there are at least 5,000 people in our community.

On page 93 the plan states that “Wild Oak” consists of “a single compartment” of approximately “131 residential lots developed with single family homes” with “two one-way in-and-out travel routes, Wild Oak Drive and White Oak Drive.” In reality, there are two homeowner associations involved, Villages of Wild Oaks and Wild Oaks Homeowners Association, with a total of 192 residential units and approximately 340 residents. White Oak Drive and Wild Oak Drive are two-way roads.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

These are not minor details. As written, The Plan considerably understates the need for us to have an alternative egress to Route 12. We recommend The Plan be revised to include correct information about our community, and most importantly, we recommend The Plan conclude that accommodations can be made that will allow the Oakmont and Wild Oak communities emergency egress on Channel Drive *while preserving the priority of emergency vehicles in an appropriate situation*. Lastly, we invite representatives of the Office of the Fire Marshall to meet with us to discuss an arrangement that meets the needs of both parties.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Steve Spanier, President and CEO  
Oakmont Village Association

cc:

Tom Schwedhelm, Mayor  
Victoria Fleming, Vice Mayor  
John Sawyer, Council Member

Chris Rogers, Council Member  
Ernesto Olivares, Council Member  
Jack Tibbetts, Council Member  
Richard Dowd, Council Member  
Sean McGlynn, Manager, Santa Rosa (CMOffice@srcity.org)  
Tony Gossner, Fire Chief, Santa Rosa Fire Department (srfd@srcity.org)  
Scott Moon, Chief Fire Marshall, Santa Rosa Fire Department ([smoon@srcity.org](mailto:smoon@srcity.org))  
Susan Gorin, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors  
Kevin Hubred, Association Manager, Oakmont Village Association  
Dawn McFarland, Executive Assistant, Oakmont Village Association  
Hugh Helm, Chair, Oakmont Community Development Committee  
The Press Democrat