



MEMBERS OF THE BOARD  
Brian Trushinski, Chair  
Michelle Santucci, Vice Chair  
J.L. Diaz  
Jane Nye  
Seema Chandra

# **REGULAR MEETING Minutes**

**October 24, 2024  
7:00 PM**

**Municipal Advisory Council  
Oak Park, California**

**Oak Park High School  
Room G-9  
899 North Kanan Road  
Oak Park, CA 91377**

**WEB ACCESS**

At: [ventura.org/oakparkmac](http://ventura.org/oakparkmac)

MAC Calendar, Agenda, and Minutes

## OPENING

1. Call to Order Chair Trushinski
  - Chair Trushinski called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM
2. Roll Call
  - Members Present: Chair Brian Trushinski, Vice Chair Michell Santucci, J.L. Diaz, Jane Nye, Seema Chandra. (Student Rep Madeleine Kim) Quorum present.
3. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America
  - Following the Pledge of Allegiance Chair Trushinski called for a moment of silence honoring former Oak Park MAC Chair Ron Stark, also known as “Mr. Oak Park.”
4. Approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council held on Thursday, August 29, 2024.
  - Discussion, Amendments, and corrections: MAC Member Seema Chandra made a comment referencing that her she did not see her comments from the previous meeting referencing her objections to Oak Park Mac meetings changing to quarterly meetings. She stated she would like to see her comments reflected in the previous minutes. J.L. Diaz also referred to including his objections as well.
  - Motion made by Michelle Santucci to approve the minutes with corrections and seconded by Seema Chandra. Motion passed unanimously.
5. Agenda Review
  - No changes to the agenda
  - Motion to accept the agenda as is made by Michelle Santucci and seconded by Jane Nye. Motions passed unanimously.
6. Consent Items 11-12
  - Michelle Santucci pulled item number 12 from the Consent Agenda the Sheriff’s report and move it to the Regular Agenda.
  - Motion to accept the Consent Items with the item #12 pulled made by Seema Chandra and seconded by Jane Nye. Motion passed unanimously.
7. Public Comments- Citizen Presentations regarding Oak Park Municipal Advisory Council related matters NOT appearing on this agenda. (See Guidelines above).
  - Deena Perry commented on creating a monument to Ron Stark to honor his contributions to the community, including his term as the first Chair of the Oak Park Mac. Secondly, she referred to the difficulty of reading the Oak Park bulletin boards especially when travelling by car. Asked if the

something can be done to make it easier to read. Finally, she referenced the trimming of Juniper trees on the corner of Kanan and Tamarind. Chair Trushinski commented that he had researched the issue and was informed by Ventura County Public Works that the trees are located in Los Angeles County.

8. Comments by Representative of Supervisor Jeff Gorell.

- Field Representative Israel Rodriguez spoke on behalf of Supervisor Gorell.
- Supervisor Gorell is glad to see that the Oak Park MAC is honoring Ron Stark also known as “Mr. Oak Park.” He served as the first MAC Chair and was instrumental in making Oak Park the beautiful community it is today.
- Field Representative Rodriguez reported on the Fire Insurance Town Hall and how that idea came out of feedback from the Macs. One of the goals that the Supervisor Gorell has is to continue the work of helping residents and communities to become fire safe by hardening their homes and communities.
- Supervisor Gorell held a press conference on Fentanyl and the impact it is having on individuals and their families. October is Substance Abuse Month. One of the startling statistics is that in our area of Thousand Oaks, 48% of overdoses were due to fentanyl.
- This weekend October 26th is the first annual Santa Rosa Valley Fall and Halloween Festival. He mentioned that the proceeds will be used to benefit Stepping-Stones Riding Program a program that provides low-cost riding lessons for children who want to learn about caring, riding and competing in horse shows.

9. Written Comments – Chair to read written comments received by the MAC prior to the meeting.

- Chair Trushinski read a letter written by Oak Park resident Steven Kozel to the new Director of Ventura County Public Works Greg Strakaluse. Mr. Kozel’s letter is included on the next page.

To: Greg Strakaluse C/O The Oak Park Municipal Advisory Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written comments regarding the new Ventura County Public Works Director, Greg Strakaluse. My name is Steven Kozel and I am a resident of Oak Park in Ventura County. I write to extend a welcome to Mr. Strakaluse and to share some observations and expectations regarding Ventura County Public Works and our community of Oak Park. As you become familiar with our community you will find residents appreciate the opportunity to live in an area with abundant open space and many opportunities for outdoor recreation. We value our environment and have a strong desire to preserve what makes Oak Park special. You will also find a significant number of folks in the community pay attention and have a deep knowledge of the history of the community and a deep knowledge of the surrounding environment. We are ready to step up and work with the Ventura County to protect our community and its surrounding open space. We are proud of the fact the open space including Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks Department is also a destination for many in the Southern California region.

It is in this context I share the following experience with Ventura County Public Works and our beloved Medea Creek. Medea Creek drains the Oak Park community and ultimately its water enters the Malibu Creek and the Pacific Ocean at Surfrider Beach in Malibu. The Malibu Creek watershed is one of the southernmost ranges of the steelhead trout. Folks in this area are dedicated to restoring the range of the steelhead, and critical to that is the health of the Malibu Creek watershed. When Medea Creek is adversely affected so is Malibu Creek.

Actions by Ventura County Public Works adversely affected the northwest tributary of Medea just south of Kanan road along Oak Hills Drive last October. Apparently, concerns were raised about potential flooding of residences along Hollytree Dr. north of Kanan Road due to a blocked storm drain and culvert that drains water from a natural drainage north of the residences. This area experienced flooding in the past, so action was warranted. It was the extent of that action that is at issue. Over many days, about 250 feet of Medea Creek streambed and riparian habitat was "clearcut" by contractors to mitigate potential flooding. Keep in mind no flooding had occurred during tropical storm Hilary in late August 2023 (rainfall during this event exceeded 4 inches). The necessary mitigation should have only required the removal of a few willows blocking the Kanan Road culvert and removal of some small brush and sediment from the Oak Hills culvert draining the area above the Hollytree residences. Community members including folks with practical and professional expertise walked the site after the work was completed. Significant damage to the habitat occurred and it was stunning. The area has not recovered. What were some of the system failures contributing to this outcome?

1. County Public Works assumed it had a permit from CDFW to conduct the work. The existing CDFW permit did not apply to this stretch of Medea Creek. Local

residents did not observe a biologist on site during the time the work was performed. It is incumbent on the leadership of Ventura County Public Works to ensure policies and procedures ensure compliance with the law.

2. When community members contacted various Public Works departments during work, staff did not seem to be aware of the work and could not respond to concerns raised by those members. There was also a question of jurisdiction. Was this Ventura County or was this Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks Department ordering and subcontracting the work?
3. When community members asked to see the county CDFW permits, documents were not produced in a timely manner. Only recently did members of the community receive the CDFW permit documents. A quick read of these documents established the affected stretch of Medea Creek was not included in the permits.

In my opinion this event demonstrated communication failures, jurisdictional responsibility failures, and a lack of transparency. From a community perspective, we ask, how can you assure us system changes have been made so this will not occur again?

In my opening comments I mentioned we are members of a community with in-depth knowledge of our surrounding open space. Residents are ready and willing to contribute information that may not be known by Public Works leadership. When the community experiences a situation similar to work performed on Medea Creek in October 2023, we have questions. Questions typically require an after-action report which requires additional resources from the county to address the issues raised by the community members. This is not an efficient use of resources.

We are all stakeholders; we will step up. Community members in Oak Park can provide input. We are ready to work with Public Works to address issues constructively and achieve productive outcomes. We all benefit by doing so. Please give my comments some consideration and thought. Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Steven Kozel  
Oak Park-Mae Boyar

#### 10. Council Comments -

- Seema Chandra expressed her thanks to Supervisor Gorell for hosting the Fire Insurance Town Hall and highlighting this important topic.

- Student Representative Madeleine Kim talked about the upcoming football game this Friday and depending on the outcome it may be their last game of the season. There is a PSAT and Halloween Night event which is a big and important fundraiser for the school. The event is open to the public.
- Jane Nye spoke about the Fire Insurance Town Hall and wanted the Supervisor to know it was a good event. She mentioned Monday October 28 is an event hosted by the Triunfo Water & Sanitation District. The event is an artist recognition event. Out of 26 submissions the winner is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader.
- Vice Chair Michelle Santucci shared a new tool that can be used as a tickler that the MAC and staff can be followed up. Provides an opportunity to follow-up on significant issues. Items are identified by topics, ownership and status. There are currently 13 items on the list.
- Chair Trushinski spoke on the tickler program as well, he provided a report on Ranch Simi projects. As of September 12<sup>th</sup>, Rancho Simi completed their weed abatement project, and he mentioned the Deer Hill pickle ball court is in the plan check process. Once the permit is issued Ranch Simi Recreation will put out the bid to contractors. Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks received a \$1 million dollar state grant for the removal of evasive plant species that are highly flammable. They are also working with Fish and Game to make sure procedures are followed.

11. Supervisor Jeff Gorell Comments – Staff Member Israel Rodriguez will be operating the 10/24 Meeting and will make comments on behalf of Supervisor Gorell.

- Field Representative Israel Rodriguez spoke on behalf of Supervisor Gorell.
- Supervisor Gorell is glad to see that the Oak Park MAC is honoring Ron Stark also known as “Mr. Oak Park.” He served as the first MAC Chair and was instrumental in making Oak Park the beautiful community it is today.
- Field Representative Rodriguez reported on the Fire Insurance Town Hall and how that idea came out of feedback from the Macs. One of the goals that the Supervisor Gorell has is to continue the work of helping residents and communities to become fire safe by hardening their homes and communities.
- Supervisor Gorell held a press conference on Fentanyl and the impact it is having on individuals and their families. October is Substance Abuse Month. One of the startling statistics is that in our area of Thousand Oaks, 48% of overdoses were due to fentanyl.
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riding lessons for children who want to learn about caring, riding and competing in horse shows.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER BUSINESS**

- Process for Community Volunteers on Oak Park MAC Committees
- MAC Request to Invite Mr. Eric Lundstrom (District 5: Rancho Simi Recreation & Parks District) to November 21, 2024, MAC Meeting.
- January 2025 California Brown Act Training for the MAC.
- Oak Park MAC Request to Provide Input for Ventura County Watershed Protection District (2025-30) Draft CDFW Routine Maintenance Agreement at November MAC meeting.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Consent Agenda items are routine and non-controversial. Items are reviewed and approved together by the Council as recommended and without discussion unless an item is pulled for separate action by the Board on the Regular Agenda. Consent items are heard at the Council's discretion and may be heard at any time during the meeting.

## **RECEIVED AND FILED**

### 11. Ventura County Fire Department Report

- October 6-12 is Fire Prevention Week. This year's national theme is Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work for You. Fire Prevention staff will be engaging residents about the importance of smoke alarms at several locations throughout the county, including Lowe's Home Improvement at 1027 Academy Drive in Thousand Oaks on Oct. 5 and The Oaks Mall Farmer's Market in Thousand Oaks on Oct. 10. Additionally, the department is hosting a social media Smoke Alarm Challenge in which residents are challenged to share a short video of their creative ways to test their smoke alarms.
- VCFD put a replacement ladder truck into service at Station 41 in Simi Valley on September 13. The new ladder truck is equipped with a pump that can provide water for fire suppression efforts, which is an upgrade over the previous ladder truck. The previous truck now joins the reserve apparatus fleet to maintain operations should one of the first run trucks break down.
- Recruiting for seasonal fire control workers will begin November 4. These employees are an important part of VCFD's fire suppression capabilities. Their primary role is the physical labor associated with fighting wildfires, such as digging lines to stop the spread of fire through light grasses and vegetation.

- Forecasts by the National Geographic Area Coordination Center indicate a developing La Niña pattern and a slight to moderate tilt in the odds towards above normal large fire potential in our area for October and November. All residents should remain vigilant with best practices to avoid potential fire starts.

## RECEIVED AND FILED

### 12. Ventura County Sheriff's Office Report (Item Moved by Council Member Michelle Santucci to the Regular Agenda.)

- During the month of September, deputies working the Oak Park Community responded to 95 calls for service in September. They took 17 crime reports and 9 incident reports in July. They took 11 crime reports and 16 incident reports. Incident reports are generated from calls for service where deputies were unable to establish a crime but documented the incident. Those incidents are reviewed by Detectives to see if any further follow-up is required.
- Vandalism: There were two vandalism reports taken. Victim believes a suspect(s) sprayed lawn killer on his grass causing a usual dead spot. Investigation was conducted by East County General Investigative Unit and no suspects were located.
- The second vandalism report was graffiti to the Triunfo Water and Sanitation water storage tank. The graffiti was illegible. The case was investigated by East County Major Crimes and closed with no suspects located.
- Forgery / Fraud cases: The victim fell prey to a Facebook scam and suffered a substantial financial loss. This case was investigated by the East County Financial Crimes Unit. Due to the suspects requesting and receiving crypto currency this case was forwarded to the FBI for further investigation. Social media and telephonic scams are frequently occurring.
- As a reminder banks and other legitimate businesses will not ask you to provide your personal information such as social security number or bank information. Also, if you are asked to pay the subject on the phone by gift card or crypto currency this is a scam. Call the Sheriff's Office immediately.
- Auto Crimes: There was a burglary from a motor vehicle. The actual burglary occurred in the month of March but was not reported until this month. The case was investigated by the General Assignment Unit and closed with no suspect information.
- Burglary: There were two burglary reports this month. First a known suspect entered the victim's home and stole their dog. The second was a residential burglary that occurred during the evening hours. This M.O. is consistent with our Trans-National Theft Groups. These cases are still under investigation by the Commercial Residential Burglary Unit.



- Thefts: Victim's license plate was stolen from their vehicle. The location of the theft is unknown. There are no suspects in this case. The case was investigated by the General Assignment Unit and closed.
- To help prevent theft from vehicles, we encourage everyone to lock their vehicles and remove all their valuable items. Remove it, Lock it, Keep it.

## RECEIVED AND FILED

### 13. California Highway Patrol Report

- The CHP Moorpark Area continues to send Special Enforcement Units (SEU) to conduct targeted patrol throughout Oak Park. Citations are being issued for unsafe turns, unsafe passing, posted signage violations, unsafe speed, and various parking violations. Targeted patrols help saturate an area where multiple violations are known to be happening at once so multiple violations can be addressed in the area simultaneously.
- CHP Moorpark is hosting a Start Smart class in early November (please check our social media pages for the exact date, it is not yet scheduled). The class will be from 6:00pm-8:00pm at the Moorpark CHP Office at 610 Spring Rd. in Moorpark. This is a FREE class offered to current and prospective teenage drivers and their parents/guardians to discuss important issues such as tips on how to avoid crashes, safe driving habits, dynamics of a crash, consequences of a poor choice behind the wheel, parental roles and responsibilities, and legal and civil liabilities. Call the Moorpark CHP office to reserve your spot at (805) 553-0800.
- CHP Moorpark will be focusing patrols on distracted driving violations during Distracted Driver Awareness Week, October 21<sup>st</sup> through October 27<sup>th</sup>. Anything that diverts our attention away from driving, however slight, is a distraction. Safe driving requires 100% of our attention 100% of the time.
- The California Highway Patrol will be conducting a Maximum Enforcement Period (MEP) over the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend. The MEP will run from Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. A focus for this MEP will be seatbelt violations.
- The California Highway Patrol is hiring 1,000 officers to help make California's roadways safer. If you or someone you know would like to join the CHP, visit [www.betheCHP1000.com](http://www.betheCHP1000.com) for more information and to speak with a local recruiter. Also, the CHP is hiring more than just officers. We are currently looking to fill 165 dispatcher vacancies across the state and are also looking for Commercial Vehicle Inspection Specialists to inspect the growing number of commercial vehicles on California highways. The CHP will provide you with the training for all three of these positions. More details and applications can be found at [www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov).

- Follow CHP Moorpark on social media for traffic updates, sig alerts, evacuation notices, roadway closures, and general information on what the CHP is doing in your area.

**RECEIVED AND FILED**

14. Landscape Committee Report

**RECEIVED AND FILED**

15. Board of Supervisors Approved Municipal Advisory Council Policy Adopted June 2024.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**Regular Agenda items are heard at the Council’s discretion and may be heard at any time during the meeting.**

16. MAC Candidate Introductions. 5 minutes per person. No questions.

- Three candidates for the Oak Park MAC General Election came forward and made their presentations. The candidate speakers included:
  - Brianna Adams
  - Harmeeth Nijar
  - Jane Nye

17. Oak Park Landscape Request for Proposal – Joan Araujo, Director of Central Services for Public Works gave a presentation on the Fiscal 2024 and 2025 Community Service Area 4 Budget.

- CSA4 finished 2024 with a surplus of \$9,328 making it a tight budget.
- The CSA4 fund balance has a healthy reserve balance of \$2,117,114.

**2024 Revenue & Expenses Review**

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Make</b>	<b>Up</b>
Special Assessments	\$ 17.28 /	parcel
	\$	92,024
Property Tax	\$	954,064
Insurance Recovery	\$	14,506
 <b>Major</b>		<b>Expenses</b>
Utilities (water & power)	\$	311,774
Landscape Maintenance	\$	170,370
Landscape Repair/Replacement	\$	128,602
Crossing Guards	\$	264,000

- Utilities is currently the largest expense item at \$311,774.
- Revenue from Property taxes has remained fairly flat the past few years due to slow increase in property taxes.
- There is a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the renewal of the Oak Park Landscape Contract. Oak Park’s current bid for a new landscape contract is at \$394,012 as compared to \$128,000. There was also a request for non-toxic

chemical pest management that added significantly to the contract and brought it up to \$454,500 dollars.

- Renewals on landscaping contracts countywide have seen an average increase of 84%, Oak Park was double the average renewal expense.
- The proposed landscaping budget poses the greatest impact to the future budget. The increases in the landscape contract being driven by time and materials that include:
  - Higher labor costs than previous contract.
  - Higher product costs such as fertilizer, and other landscaping products.
  - The language used in the type of services requested, specifically “garden like” are perceived by those submitting the RFP would require more time/labor to achieve that desired result.
- Crossing Guards is also another expense that impacts the budget and is over \$250,000.
- These increase lead to a projected budget that would come in at \$1.3 million with a relatively flat income projection. The increases of those four main items represents and increase of somewhere between \$377,000 and \$437,000 to the current budget.
- The good news is that the current landscaper has agreed to continue under the existing contract during the RFP process so services will continue, and the MAC has a healthy reserve balance.
- The County’s lead landscaper from General Services is going to drive the area and look for areas to drive the projected reduction in costs.
- We could go out to the market with a new RFP with a new set of service levels and requirements.
- If we could bring back this landscaping contract to be more in with the average increase of 84% rather than 130% it would help a lot.
- As a result, to stay within budget guidelines there needs to be a review of income and expenses. Reducing expenses can be painful because they can be viewed as a takeaway of services.
- Council Comments on the Report:
  - Jane Nye asked for clarification on an error on page one budget.
  - Jane Nye stated that an increase of 130% unacceptable. The increase was again related to the level of service and time and materials tied the contract requirements. In order to go for a new RFP, the scope of the RFP would have to change.
  - JL Diaz asked when was the RFP submitted? It has taken about ten months and is concerned about whether we have enough runway in the budget.
  - Field Representative Israel Rodriguez asked about clarification on what would determine a “New Scope” as part of new RFP?
    - Joan Araujo explained a new scope would include changes in frequency of services, certain types of plantings, cycle of tree trimming. She would rely heavily on the County’s Lead landscaper.

- Seasonal flowers require more time to plant vs. perennials that only planted once a year.
- JL Diaz asked why we have to go to a new RFP?
    - Joan Araujo explained because if we change the scope, we have to request a new RFP and allow the vendors to bid again.
  - Jane Nye asked about drip services to improve irrigation and wanted to know if that was in the new contract.
    - Joan Araujo stated it was not in the current RFP. It would be an additional item.
  - Vice Chair Michelle Santucci asked if the RFP could be structured in a way to compare basic services versus the add “garden like” add on services that translate to hundreds of thousand dollars in increases?
    - Joan Araujo stated that the great deal of basics is in the maintenance, repair and replacements. I would say the language in the RFP impacted the RFP and simply changing the language would not be enough to request a new RFP.
  - Vice Chair Michelle Santucci asked if the current vendor was invited to participate in the current RFP.
    - Joan Araujo stated that the RFP was made public and that she cannot state which companies submitted RFPs.
  - Brian Trushinski stated that “words matter” and asked if there is enough runway/time if the Mac was to revisit the scope?
    - Joan Araujo stated that we could submit a new RFP ideally in November of this year.
  - Brian Trushinski asked if the idea of a new RFP should be on next month’s agenda and asked for a straw pole to be taken among the MAC members.
    - Field Representative Israel Rodriguez stated that a new RFP requires more information that Supervisor Gorell could organize and host a Special Meeting.
    - JL Diaz stated the expert’s input would be helpful for educational purposes.
    - Joan Araujo stated the Lead Landscaper will provide all the suggestions to the Supervisor’s office.
    - Field Representative Israel Rodriguez suggested this could come back to the landscaping committee, or special meeting or an Ad-Hoc Committee to then present to the MAC.
    - Chair Brian Trushinski stated as the sole MAC member of the landscaping Committee he did not feel comfortable and would like a Special Meeting of the full MAC participation.
    - Seema Chandra stated she would like an Ad-Hoc Committee so we could move quickly and not require a quorum because we could get the RFP out quickly.

- Field Representative Israel Rodriguez said that you could have a motion to form an Ad-Hoc Committee to research the matter and then form a Special Meeting to report on the findings.
- Brian Trushinski stated there are scheduling conflicts coming up and that impact the sch
- Seema Chandra motioned to form an Ad-Hoc Committee to look into the budget and specifically the landscaping budget. Seconded by Michelle Santucci. Discussion took place among the members.
  - Field Representative Israel Rodriguez suggested to make an amendment to form the Ad-Hoc Committee but set the date for the Special Meeting when everyone can attend and so that the public can be invited.
- Amended motion made by Seema Chandra to form an Ad-Hoc Committee and then hold a Special Meeting on November 12, 2024, at 7:00 PM. Motion Passes.

#### 18. MAC 2024 Achievements Draft

- Chair Brian Trushinski stated that Item 18 and Item 19 are tied together. Both Brian Trushinski and Michelle Santucci have created drafts for review. The request is to ask for a time extension from Supervisor Gorell's office to get a time extension to complete the final documents. The Chair mentioned that they would like feedback on the plans. Once the plans are completed, they will be submitted to Supervisor Gorell and then the MAC will vote on it in February. The plans are a trail and guide for the future.
  - Jane Nye thanked for the work that was done and thought it was well done.
  - JL Diaz asked about the new Mac members would have a chance to work on this.
  - Chair Brian Trushinski stated that the new members will have a chance to provide their input once confirmed early next year.
  - Members of the public will have a chance to provide input in November.

#### 19. MAC 2025 Draft Work Plan

- See comments on Item 18.

#### 20. Monument Sign & Lighting Quote

- The CSA budget does not include the cost of a new sign in the budget only repairs to the existing monument sign. Funds for this project will have to come from outside sources or fundraising events. The MAC members requested that the Supervisor's office still go forward with a quote from Public Works so the MAC can understand how much money would need to be raised.

#### 21. Oak Park Website

- Field Representative Israel Rodriguez spoke about the recent enhancements to the current page which includes the addition of the MAC Council Member pictures. In addition, he spoke about the new site which in the works that will provide more opportunities for constituents to interact with the Supervisor's office.

## **CLOSING**

### 22. Adjournment

- Chair Trushinski adjourned the meeting at 9:09 PM.

Next MAC Meeting November 21, 2024, 7 pm OPHS High School G-9