

February 6, February 13 & February 14 Firewise Committee Meetings

03.06.2025: Gary and Ruth met with our Burke County Ranger Chris Moss at the Morganton NC Forest Service Office at 10:00 a.m. Ranger Moss replaced Wesley Skete as our Forest Service representative. Ranger Moss is no stranger to the Forest Service or to Pine Mountain but he is relatively new to working with recognized Firewise Communities and to the requirements of a Firewise Community such as Pine Mountain to remain in good standing as a recognized community. Gary provided Ranger Moss with a copy of our most recent Pine Mountain site plan which was approved by Firewise.org and runs from 2025 through 2028. We had a good discussion about fire prevention for residential structures for communities located in a Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI) area, which Pine Mountain is. Ranger Moss was invited to attend our upcoming May 3 Firewise Community Event Day and Ruth will send him an invitation via email with the specifics of this event along with a follow-up email of the gate code for May 3 once that is available. Ranger Moss suggested we should attend a meeting that was to be held on March 13 in Morganton at the Foothills Higher Education Center, hosted by Carolina Land and Lakes, a nonprofit organization that was working with the 19 fire districts in NC to develop new and/or update existing Community Wildfire Protection Plans for all the fire districts. The presentation on the 13th was to feature The South Mountains Fire District Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which includes the Pine Mountain community. Our meeting with Ranger Moss was enlightening on both sides and lasted about one hour.

03.13.2025: Gary and Ruth attended the presentation by Carolina Land and Lakes of The South Mountain Fire District Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Present at this meeting were numerous firefighters and first responders from many of the Morganton area fire departments, to include the South Mountains Fire Rescue Department which services Pine Mountain. Ranger Moss was also present. Gary and Ruth were actually the only “civilian” participants at this meeting, but Ruth had confirmed our request to attend with the Executive Director of Carolina Land and Lakes prior to the meeting date and we were assured we were welcome to sit in on this presentation. We were also able to secure a hard copy of the plan as well as the QR code that provided us a digital copy. The South Mountains CWPP is one of only about 4 of these plans that has been completed to date. In addition to providing us with a copy of the plan and numerous other handouts, Christina Newhouse, who revised the South Mountains plan and who conducted the presentation, offered to attend our upcoming May 3 Firewise Event Day on May 3 and provide a brief presentation to our residents of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Ruth will send Ms. Newhouse a confirmation email with date, time, and event plans and will follow up closer to the event date with the gate code. We also met the new fire chief of SMFR, Chief Kelly, at this event and invited he and any of his firefighters who would be able to come. Chief Kelly said he would also see if former Chief Alan Hudson would be available to attend. This meeting started at 6pm and concluded around 7:30pm.

03.14.2025: 4:00 pm Gary and Ruth met with Devan Cardin, Committee Chair for the Pine Mountain Events Committee, to help us plan and coordinate the May 3 Firewise Community Event Brunch on the events schedule for Pine Mountain residents. Devan informed us that her committee was able to handle all the heavy lifting for this event in terms of shopping for the

food, setting up the pavilion and preparing the food, advertising the event for Pine Mountain Residents via our Facebook Page, PM Bulletin Board, Event Flyers and PM webpage. We were delighted to know what a huge help the Events Committee will be with helping us with this Brunch. We discussed our invitations that would be going to Chris Moss, Christina Newhouse, and to Cpt Kelly at SMFR and Lance Huss, new superintendent at South Mountains State Park. We hope all will be able to participate and say a few words to our residents about fire safety and wildfire mitigation strategies. Devan learned our goal for PM Residents is for them to be made aware of what efforts at fire mitigation need to occur at their homes and on their property to defend against a wildfire. We will have handouts and brochures about our Firewise program here at Pine Mountain available at this event and an opportunity for our residents to introduce themselves to our local firefighters and first responders. This event will last approximately two hours. Devan will update Chase Billow, PM POA Board of Directors President, regarding our plans for this brunch and she will secure the necessary Board approval for the purchase of food items and supplies needed.

After Devan departed, Gary briefly discussed that he would be suggesting to the Board at their March 30 meeting that Pine Mountain discuss and designate locations for water points to support firefighters. One item that came up a couple of times in the Carolina Land and Lakes presentation is how critical it will be in fighting wildfires for the fire districts to have water points where they can refill their firetrucks when fighting wildfires in Wildfire Urban Interface zones where fire hydrants are unavailable. Gary made note that there are no fire hydrants in the State Park where trucks can refill and where having multiple water points available to them from Pine Mountain would be a huge help... If PM has the access to water points but lacks the dollars to make these locations a reality, then it is a possibility that the funding for developing these locations could be picked up by the State and/or the State Park.

There being no further items to address, this meeting ended around 6pm. Next meeting date to be determined after the upcoming March 30 POA Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Robertson
PM Firewise Committee Secretary