



Friends of Sierra Rock Art (FSRA)

PO Box 1409, Nevada City CA 95959 • www.sierrarockart.com • info@sierrrockart.com
a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

WINTER - JANUARY 2022




Carson Peak, California

FSRSA is honoring our group's history, remembering past activities, and promoting future endeavors. We have been working on several projects: improving monitoring, focusing on new forms of public outreach and education, and establishing a **Five Year Plan**. We hope you will join us on our ventures.

MONITORING PROGRAM DONATION

Our last newsletter featured an article on an August outing to the Wabena Point site. The outing was created as a "thank you" for Ned and Carol Spieker who hosted FSRA at their Saddleback Ranch in Yuba County in 2019. Their ranch has a number of rock art panels as well as other cultural resources.

After visiting Wabena Point, Ned approached us about making a donation through a foundation he is involved in. FSRA board member Nolan Smith and president Bill Drake created a couple of proposals that were submitted to him. The proposal Ned selected focused on supporting our site monitors. Ned's foundation donated \$2,000 that will be used to reimburse monitors for lunch and mileage costs.

As well as supporting our present monitors, we hope this money will encourage others to join our monitoring program. This program is one of our organization's greatest priorities. 

A Letter by Bill Drake, President of FSRA



As we end another year, I want to express my gratitude for each of you who are our members and friends. Your continued support for our important work of protecting Native American resources is much appreciated.

Our end of the year/New Year's newsletter is later than intended due to a heavy winter storm in late December. Jane, our newsletter editor, and I were out of power for almost a week and one-half.

We are delighted to welcome Amber Nelson, the Tahoe National Forest's new District Archaeologist for the Yuba River District, working out of the Nevada City office. She replaces our friend Bill Slater who was District Archaeologist and FSRA's main TNF contact

throughout our first 30 years. A few weeks ago, FSRA board member Nolan Smith and I were able to take Amber and her two assistants, Luciano and Emma, to visit sites in Bear Valley and on Spaulding Ridge. This was her introduction to our region's rock art. "Virus permitting," Amber will be our featured speaker at an FSRA public event in May. As for other TNF personnel: Jesse Krautkramer serves as District Archaeologist on the Foresthill District, Nolan Smith's old position. And, to our good fortune, Carrie Smith continues in her role as Forest Archaeologist. (See article on Amber in this newsletter.)

The year 2021, with COVID and California's fires, smoke, and unusually high temperatures, has had its challenges for us. In spite of this, we did fit in some outings as well as monitoring visits, and were able to do a couple of on-site monitor trainings. In addition, FSRA produced a YouTube video on regional rock art (www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTSukCMsBew). This fall we received a \$2,000 grant. The money will be used to support our site monitoring program.

**Welcome Amber
Nelson, Tahoe
National Forest's
new District
Archaeologist!**

Our board has been working on a 5-year plan for FSRA (see separate article). The goals we wish to achieve are based on input from members (solicited last year) and board members. A long range project is the creation of a thorough site record for the Many Panels (AKA Byers Lake) site, which is accessed by a long, semi-strenuous, hike out Grouse Ridge. Many Panels has, as the name implies, multiple panels of petroglyphs spread out over a large area. (Our newsletter at the end of last year included a photo of an area of rock art that was stolen from this site.) The recording project will involve two stages. Initially, a small crew will make a simple survey of the area of concern to obtain a better sense of the site's features.

Members are encouraged to mail in ballots for next year's board and membership renewals. Please **MAIL YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND BALLOTS BY FEBRUARY 5**. Related forms are at the end of this newsletter. In addition, members who want to make a year end donation to our site protection/preservation endeavors are welcome to do so.

Wishing you the best for 2022!

Warmly,
Bill Drake

FSRA'S FIVE YEAR PLAN

Last year, members were asked what they would like to see FSRA do or do more of. The board added their own input to what was suggested. As a follow up to that work, the board drafted a five-year plan, which it is still in the process of reviewing.

Here are the proposed long term goals that FSRA members and the board came up with:

- Attract younger members (a big challenge for us)
- Involve members more
- Increase board size (possibly add an additional member; our treasurer would like to retire after years of valuable service)
- More public education/community outreach
- More work with or for (/outreach to) students
- Add to site stewardship efforts
- Secure more grant money
- Create more YouTube trainings/educational videos
- Create outing options that meet different physical needs (our membership is getting older!)
- Ensure outing leaders (and, if possible, site monitors) are reimbursed for expenses
- Offer educational scholarships to aspiring archaeology students
- Purchase a new laptop and software for site recording work, etc. (not currently needed)
- Purchase a drone to support site recording work (not currently needed)

While it may be overly ambitious given COVID and other factors, as a way of working toward those goals, here is what we'd like to achieve in 2022 as part of our 5-year plan, along with our usual site monitoring visits, outings, etc:

- Begin outreach to a college archaeology class (re: possible field trip/work project, possible ex-officio student member of FSRA board, etc.)
- Consider expanding the board
- High School outreach (we have done some of this in the past: having students design a handout on site etiquette, taking students on field trips, in-class presentations)
- Approach 1 local service club for a presentation on what we do
- May/October public presentations "virus permitting" (Throughout our history we have done annual public presentations, but they were curtailed when COVID hit.)
- At least one site recording/survey/work project; place containers with site etiquette information at key sites that are subject to vandalism
- Work with kids camps near rock art sites to educate kids to protect and not vandalize sites
- Offer at least 1 outing for members with limited abilities
- Ensure that outing leaders and site monitors are compensated for some of their expenses
- Apply in August for BriarPatch's 2023 "CAUSE" program (round up at the register to benefit a non-profit) to support site stewardship
- Complete a YouTube video on Martis Style 7 rock art



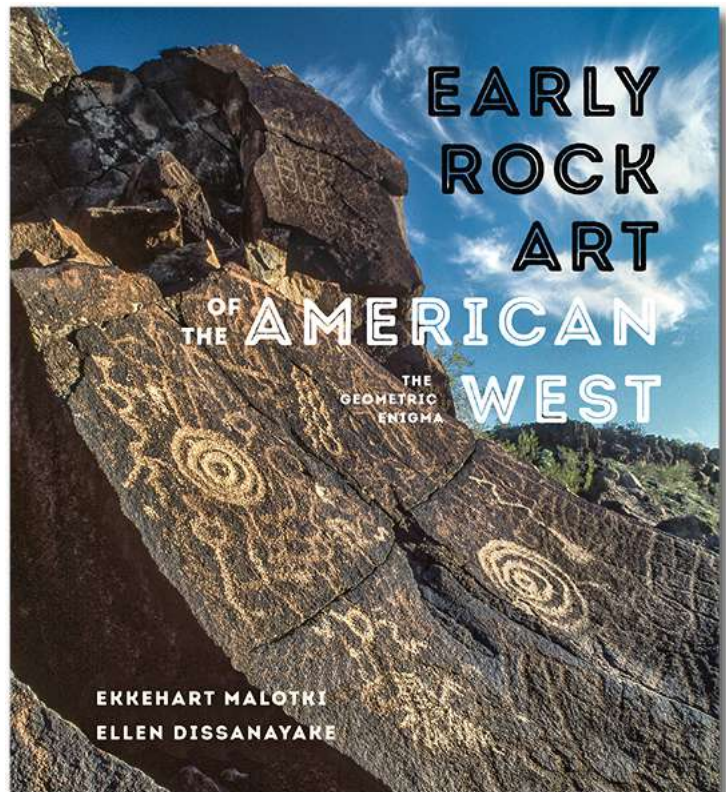
BOOK REPORT...CONTINUES

"20 ROCK ART DO'S AND DON'TS" FROM EKKEHART MALOTKI & ELLEN DISSANAYAKE, AUTHORS OF *Early Rock Art Of The American West*. PRINTED WITH PERMISSION

In past newsletters, we featured reviews of *Early Rock Art of the American West: The Geometric Enigma* by Ekkehart Malotki and Ellen Dissanayake (referred to here as "ERA"). We recommend this book because it offers an important and fresh perspective on what is called the "Western Archaic Tradition" of rock art, which encompasses the Martis sites of our region.

In particular, ERA's concept of "artification" makes a significant contribution to the study of archaic, abstract, rock art. Artification focuses on the act of making rather than the result. Dissanayake writes, "Artification refers to what people do when they make images, engravings, paintings, and so forth....[It] is not a method for identifying or interpreting individual marks or styles."

She points out that just making simple marks on rock may change the surface and make it extraordinary or special, or, as she says, "artified." This does not exclude the fact that some markings can be symbolic, aesthetically pleasing, and have other attributes. She states, "Considering the behavior of artification as a common denominator of all the arts, including mark-making, allows us to address in a new way the origins, functions, and meanings of the arts." ERA also has 200 stunning photographs of western petroglyphs taken by Malotki.



After I (Bill Drake) posted a review of this book on Amazon, I received emails from both of the book's authors. In the process of trading messages, they shared their following list of rock art "do's and don'ts." Elaborations on almost all of the items can be found in their ERA. The kokopelli reference applies to SW rock art. Information on that specific subject can be found in Malotki's book Kokopelli: The Making of an Icon.

Whether you agree with, or understand, all of these suggestions or not, you are encouraged to give them some thought. Which make sense or feel true to you? Some of these 'do's and don'ts' can help us better understand the desire of early humans to make petroglyphs, pictographs, and other forms of expression.

1. Ancestral rock markings (petroglyphs and pictographs) are best not characterized as “art,” a parochial and confusing term introduced in 18th Century Europe.
2. When dealing with ancient rock markings, replace the Western term “art” with “artification” (a new concept that signifies the activity of making, rather than the finished or made object), which describes the innate biological predisposition of humans to make ordinary things extraordinary.
3. Avoid applying criteria like beauty and pleasure, originality and creativity, harmony, decoration, and imagination to petroglyphs and pictographs; these terms are best reserved for the modern Western concept of art with its irrelevant corollary of beaux arts or fine arts.
4. Do not view ancestral rock markings as art for art’s sake; rather they reflect a kind of behavior that helped people survive: they were art for life’s sake.
5. Don’t automatically assume that every (or any) mark by a prehistoric human on a rock surface is a symbol; the ability to make and use marks symbolically is a subset of the universal predisposition to artify.
6. Refrain from making unverifiable interpretive claims; we are not privy to the minds of paleoartists; rock art is fossil art.
7. Do not presume that the modern identifying label of a rock art motif (e.g., “bighorn sheep”) automatically specifies its meaning; without direct interpretation from the mark-maker or reliable ethnographic information, the cultural significance of an iconographic depiction is not recoverable.
8. Keep in mind that the minds of paleoartists were not, like ours, conditioned by reading, writing, and abstract analysis, so that modern interpretations of certain rock art motifs (e.g., as maps, directional markers, calendrical notations, and recordings of astronomical events) are likely to reflect the “rewiring” of our analytically oriented “left brain” and the relative neglect of the “right.”
9. Enigmatic graven or painted paleomarks should never be treated like inkblots in a Rorschach test; pareidolia, eye-balling, and mindsight are neither testable nor falsifiable.
10. Do not apply dismissive words like “doodles” or “graffiti” to indeterminate lines and nondescript markings on rock surfaces; the majority of surviving paleoart is non-figurative.
11. Focusing solely on representational [as opposed to abstract] rock art motifs is unwarranted; world- wide, simple non-iconic graphic primitives precede figurative markings.
12. The proposition that the abstract-geometric markings of preliterate humans represents some kind of proto-writing is unjustified; literacy is a recent cultural acquisition; early geometrics are by their very nature dead-end signs that cannot be decoded.
13. Human-made cupules [cup-shaped indentations in rock] are an integral part of the inventory of surviving paleoart; omnipresent throughout time and space, they are unique and archetypal examples of artification.



14. To assume that shamanism (or any other monocausal explanation) is the sole motivation for the origin of rock art is misguided and reductive.
15. Never call the flute-player anthropomorphic rock art motif “Kokopelli”; that name has been mistakenly derived (and anglicized) from the Hopi kachina, Kookopolo, who carries no flute.
16. Respect all forms of ancestral rock markings; they constitute humanity’s artistic, intellectual, and cultural heritage and, like all the arts, are an evolved and indelible part of human nature.
17. Vandalizing or causing physical harm of any kind to rock art panel is inexcusable; unprotected in mostly open-air sites they deserve our committed protection and conservation.
18. Do not disseminate GPS coordinates of [or any other location information for] rock art sites that are not in the public domain.
19. Resist putting credence in the myths, fantastical claims, and fringe theories that surround rock art iconographies; they are not comparable to sign language, do not portray dinosaurs, and were not the work of intergalactic visitors.
20. Don’t adhere to the fallacious claim of a “Big Bang” (or “Creative Explosion”) origin for rock markings in the European Early Upper Paleolithic; an engraved zigzag on a fossilized shell at a Homo erectus site from Trinil, Indonesia indicates that at present the oldest example of mark-making dates to nearly a half million years ago, or even earlier if human skin is regarded as the “first canvas,” no trace of which has survived.

While there are similarities among cultures over time, there are also important differences. We need to be careful about looking at rock art with our present day perspective. Past cultures had very different outlooks and means of expression that related to their environment, social organization, and other factors.

Ekkehart Malotki is professor emeritus of languages at Northern Arizona University. He is the author of *The Rock Art of Arizona: Art for Life’s Sake*, and *Stone Chisel and Yucca Brush: Colorado Plateau Rock Art*. **Ellen Dissanayake** is an independent scholar, author, and lecturer. She is the author of *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began*; *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From, and Why*; and *What Is Art For?*



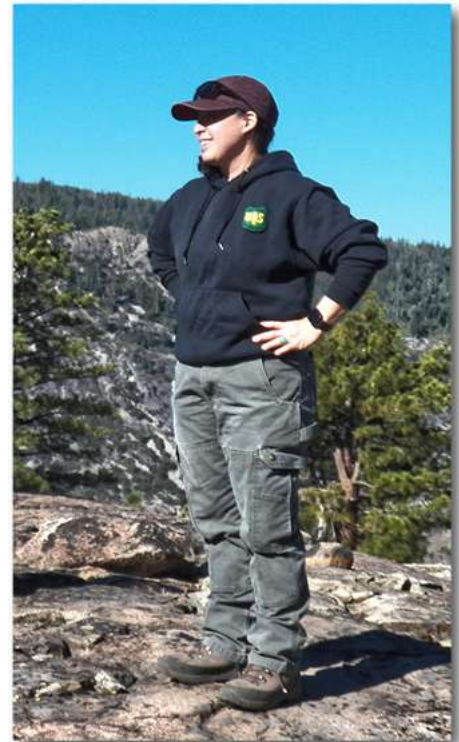
AMBER NELSON: NEW TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST DISTRICT ARCHEOLOGIST IN NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA OFFICE

My name is Amber Nelson and I am excited to be joining the heritage program at the Tahoe National Forest as the Yuba River Ranger District Archaeologist.


My educational background includes Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from the University of Arkansas (go Razorbacks!), with an emphasis in GIS^[1] and Remote Sensing.^[2]

I have worked for ten different National Forests over the course of my career, most recently hailing from the Umpqua National Forest in southwest Oregon.

I feel privileged that during my time in Oregon I helped to protect and manage the archaeological resources on the Umpqua, which include several rock art sites and some resources recently found to date over 10,000 years old. I've always been passionate about archaeology which, for me, is always changing what it shows us about our past. I look forward to helping educate others about the resources on the Tahoe National Forest and protect them for the benefit of future generations.



Amber enjoying the vista from Spaulding Ridge

Bill Drake and Nolan Smith escorted Amber Nelson on an introductory tour of some of our region's petroglyph sites. We look forward to working closely with Amber on both site recording and monitoring projects in the future. 

[1] GIS (Geographic Information Systems Analysis) technology...from a brief synopsis of an academic brochure: Predicting the Locations of Relevant Sites, Predictive Modeling is a vital application for GIS in archaeology. By incorporating historic map data, physical details of an area's landscape and known information about past inhabitants, archaeologists can accurately predict the positions of sites with cultural, historical or agricultural relevance. This technique was particularly helpful in an analysis of Arizona's Santa Cruz County located near the U.S.-Mexico border. Archaeologists had solid evidence of long-standing populations in this area and were confident they could find additional information if they just knew where to look. Researchers hoped their findings could lead to the sites being designated as National Heritage Areas. Archaeologists used GIS mapping to bring together information gathered from the AZSITE Arizona archaeological sites database, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Arizona State Land Department, and local environmental conditions, such as water sources. They were able to create an archaeological sensitivity map that pinpointed likely locations for ancient settlements both in areas that had been studied in the past and others that had not yet been scrutinized. Guided by geospatial information, the researchers developed and implemented a predictive model that could reliably identify regions of interest.

[2] Remote Sensing, simply put, involves any technique that allows archaeologists to study sites remotely. This includes the use of Lidar, which uses laser technology to view what is hidden beneath the ground surface.

SITE MONITORING PROJECTS & TRAINING

F SRA has received from USFS Forest Archeologist Carrie Smith several “ammo cans” to place at endangered sites, with visitor’s logs and site etiquette information in order to encourage appropriate behavior and track site visitation as a part of ongoing monitoring work. One such site is the Many Panels/Byers Lake site, which has been vandalized in recent times. Pictured is an example of vandalism at this site, where someone removed petroglyphs...



In 2022, if there are enough participants we might have another site monitoring training. For the classroom part students would watch a video FSRA created. This would be followed by field training. We will be assigning or re-assigning sites to our monitors in the spring. Nolan Smith and Bill Drake have been working on obtaining and cataloging the site records for all of the sites available for monitoring. Nolan will work with our new archeologist Amber Nelson to prioritize assignments. There will be more information in our spring newsletter. 🍷

SIERRA NEVADA PETROGLYPH IMAGE SERIES

This is first in a series of articles that looks at the types of markings that constitute “rock art” or petroglyph forms in the Sierra Nevada mountains of our area. The general style of the images allows us to associate sites in our region with the Martis Complex and their time period of 2,000BC to 500AD. This article focuses on two unusual images that are on the representational end of the spectrum of imagery in Louis Payen’s categories of Northern California “Style 7 High Sierra Abstract-Representational” rock art.

Bears & Rattlesnakes: Two Unusual Images at CA-PLA 26

by Bill Drake along with images from his photograph collection.

CA-PLA 26 is located on a large outcrop not far from a river and a mineral spring. It was created by the Martis Complex (2,000BC-500AD) and is on private property. With 750 images, it is the largest site in the northern Sierra. (The site designation CA-PLA-26 is called a “trinomial.” In this case, it notes the 26th archaeology site recorded in Placer County, California. Trinomials are used by many states in the U.S. The Tahoe National Forest uses a series of numbers to identify a site and its general location.)

While most Martis images are abstract in nature, some are what is called “representational.” Those of this later category can be seen to represent something recognizable to the modern viewer, such as an image of the sun (a round disc with rays radiating out) or a deer track, or a bear paw or bear track.

Even when we can identify a Martis image as representing something familiar, we cannot know what that image meant to its maker, or necessarily how it fit into the panel or grouping of images it may be a part of, or how it might have related to the overall environment the site is located within.

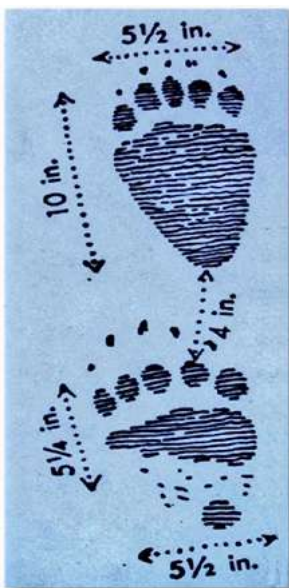
At CA-PLA 26, among the hundreds of images, two representational ones stand out as being unusual at Martis sites.

One consists of a bear track. Images of the bear paws or bear tracks are common at Martis sites, suggesting that the powerful animal may have had a special meaning for the ancient hunters and gatherers. But almost all such designs at these dozens of sites, while having some variation, are more of a gesture than an exact replica, for example a “D” shaped image with several lines to represent the claws extending out from the flat line of the “D.” (Variations might have two or three parallel lines that are inside the “D” and are either parallel or perpendicular to the flat part of the “D.” In a small percentage of cases the main shape is more square or rectangular than “D” shaped.)

What is unique about this particular image at CA-PLA 26 is how accurately it represents a bear track. It is as if the animal just put its paw to the ground and left the mark. You see the front and rear pads of the foot as well as an arc of dots (as opposed to a series of straight lines) where the tips of the claws would touch the ground. You could open a copy of Peterson’s Field Guide to Animal Tracks and find the same image in the “bear section” of the book (left).



Typical Martis Bear Paw/Track Images at CA-PLA-26



Drawing in Peterson's Field Guide

The second unusual image is of a rattlesnake, another powerful creature to inhabit the world of ancient (and modern) people. There are not a lot of what are obviously rattlesnake images at Martis sites. Among the thousands of abstract Martis designs, squiggly lines may represent the reptiles, but it is hard to know. In the case of CA-PLA 26, you can see the design on the snake skin and a rattle on the right end. With a length of about 6' the image is remarkably long for a Martis petroglyph, and surprisingly the head is intentionally missing...



Contrast the above image with that of an actual rattlesnake (left) against a similar rock background. Photograph taken at the Wabena Point petroglyph site.

What did these two unique images mean to the ancient people that made them? Were they any more significant than the hundreds of abstract images that surrounded them? We will never know the answer to these questions. But at least from our modern day perspective, it is interesting that they were made in such a prominent and detailed manner. Regarding the limits of "our modern day perspective," see Ekkehart Malotki's and Ellen Dissanayake's *20 Rock Art Do's and Don'ts* in this newsletter. 🐍

FSRA WAS HONORED TO BE THE FIRST NON-PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION TO RECEIVE THE SOCIETY FOR CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY'S HELEN C. SMITH AWARD FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Friends of Sierra Rock Art promotes the conservation & study of Native American Rock Art in the Sierra Nevada region. In fulfilling this mission, we:

1. Assist public and private land management agencies or businesses by monitoring rock art sites to assess site conditions, especially in terms of weathering and human impact, and recommending mitigation measures.
2. Provide educational outreach about prehistoric rock art sites to promote appreciation of these sites and of our region's past.
3. Foster a community of those interested in the northern Sierra Nevada's archeological resources.

We invite you to participate, volunteer, become a new member, or renew your membership in support of our on-going efforts & programs...**Thank You!**





Friends of Sierra Rock Art

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a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

Recipient of the Society for California Archaeology's Helen C. Smith Award

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (RENEWAL)

DATE: _____

(write-in the dollar amount per category)

DUES: _____ \$25 INDIVIDUAL _____ \$ 40 FAMILY/COUPLE

_____ \$20 SENIOR (65+)/STUDENT

_____ \$150 SPONSOR

\$ _____ SPECIAL DONATION TO RESTRICTED SITE
PRESERVATION FUND

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO FSRA. Dues are for the calendar year. Thanks!

(please print)

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____

(additional Last/First Names if Couple or Family) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

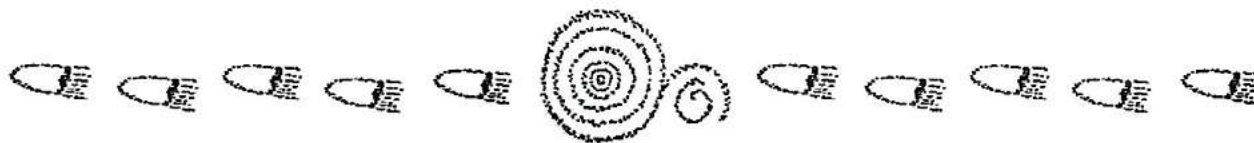
HOME PHONE _____ CELL PHONE _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

NEWSLETTER DELIVERY OPTIONS (check one box):

E-mail (no extra cost) ☐

USPS (\$10 additional annual fee) ☐



BALLOT FOR ELECTION OF FSRA BOARD-MEMBERS

Vote for 6 candidates • Terms are yearly

_____ Bill Drake (President)

_____ Agnes Walker

_____ Cicely Brookover (Treasurer)

_____ Karen Ostergard

_____ Jane Punneo (Secretary)

_____ Nolan Smith

_____ (Write-in Candidate) _____

Please mail your Renewal & Ballot by February 5, 2022 for election purposes.