



*"To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach."*

# Newsletter

THE VILLAGE LAGUNA NEWSLETTER • AUGUST 2005 • ESTABLISHED 1971

## Design Review Task Force Recommendations, Redesign of Website, New Fundraising Project

### General Meeting Aug. 29

At our August meeting, we'll be discussing the recommendations of the Design Review Task Force with Matt Lawson and Marion Jacobs of the Council-appointed group. Charged with seeking "ways to reduce the animosity that can result from the design review process," the task force has produced a "roadmap to reform" that includes strengthening staff support, prioritizing and better defining standards of review (including building envelopes tailored to neighborhoods), establishing codes of conduct and procedure, articulating clear directions to applicants, improving community education and communication, streamlining the process, and bolstering Design Review Board training. The costs of the proposed changes are expected to be covered by an increase in fees. The details of the proposal will be the subject of a public workshop on Saturday, October 22, from 9 to 11 a.m. in the Council chambers. Our discussion on August 29 will help to prepare members to provide input to the Council on that occasion.

In addition, the Board will be presenting two proposals for consideration by the membership: the redesign of the Village Laguna website and a major new fundraising project.

Members are encouraged to come learn and make their views known. We'll meet in the Wells Fargo 3d Floor Community Room at 7 p.m. Arrangements are being made to allow parking in the Wells Fargo lot, but Plan B may be to park (free, with a City sticker) at ACT V and ride back to town on the free shuttle. ≈

## Save Your Treasures!

### Village Laguna Holds Flea Market Oct. 15 to Benefit Slide Victims

On October 15, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Village Laguna will host a flea market to raise funds for the Bluebird Canyon slide victims. All proceeds will be donated to the non-profit Laguna Resource and Relief Center, which has been collecting funds to aid Bluebird residents affected by

the slide. The flea market will be held in the parking lot of the Neighborhood Congregational Church on Glenneyre Street at St. Ann's (opposite the Woman's Club). Please clean out your closets and garages and donate any new or used items for the cause.

We are looking for antiques, furniture, children's toys and clothing, adult clothing, collectibles, gardening items, and appliances and electronics such as DVD players, televisions and cameras. This may be the opportunity to break the gift "recycling" habit! Call Doug Reilly at 494-4137 or Cathy Fry at 497-7330 if you have questions or want to donate. ≈

## Verna Rollinger to Head Village Laguna's Team for September Relay for Life



Verna Rollinger, bringing with her the skills acquired in organizing fund-raising teams for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life among City employees in recent years, has volunteered to set up a team of Village Laguna members for this year's event. The event will take place at El Morro School from Friday, September 16, at 7 p.m. until Saturday, September 17, at 7 p.m. Members of teams take turns walking around the track during the 24-hour period and raise funds by asking for tax-deductible donations from friends, family, and co-workers (all donations to be made payable to the American Cancer Society).

You can register or donate online at <http://www.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=91184> to join the VL team or to donate on behalf of the team. On the left column, click on Sign Up Here or Donate to a Participant, and follow the instructions. Alternatively, contact Verna Rollinger at 494-9878. ≈

### **AUGUST General Membership Meeting**

Monday, August 29, 7 p.m.  
Wells Fargo Community Room

### **SEPTEMBER Board Meeting**

Saturday, Sept. 3, 9 a.m.  
Home of Phyllis Sweeney  
2775 Temple Hills Drive

# Maintaining Village Character in The Era of Mansionization



Discouraged as we are by the trend toward larger and larger houses, we may lose sight of the fact that many people are refurbishing and remodeling Laguna cottages in their own terms and at their original scale. These photos show two of these recent upgrades. For a while, some years ago, Village Laguna gave design awards for houses that exemplified Laguna's village

character. If we were still doing that, these houses would be among the candidates for commendation. ≈

# Emergency Landslide Repairs to Be Paid For from Available Funds

The estimated \$7 million cost of restoring the drainage of the Bluebird Canyon creek, stabilizing the homes on the edge of the scarp on Madison Place, and winterizing the slide area is to be paid for from a variety of available funds rather than from any of the possible revenue sources listed last month for the Council's consideration. The City Manager reports that the state may contribute \$1.2 million to the effort if the federal government does not and plans to obtain \$1.2 million from the Water District, \$500,000 from the Madison Place homeowners involved, \$500,000 from the Open Space Fund (half of the fund's balance, not to be restored), and additional sums from the sewer fund and from deferred replacement of police and fire vehicles. The politics of the situation were highlighted in comments from the public: Bonnie Hano suggested that a tax of some kind would be preferable to the budget cuts proposed, while the president of the Taxpayers' Association commended the Council for not "sticking the taxpayers" with the cost of the repairs. The City Manager anticipates that an additional \$5-\$7 million will eventually be required to rebuild the hillside. ≈

# St. Mary's Church Presents Development Proposal

St. Mary's Church will present the Planning Commission (in its capacity as design review board for the downtown area) on September 14 with a proposal to demolish its Guild Hall and replace it with a three-level, 7,840-square-foot building fronting on Mermaid Street. The project has been

deemed an "ancillary use" of the church, and therefore no additional parking will be required. Earlier versions of the building, originally four levels and 14,500 square feet, that were presented for concept review last fall and winter created neighborhood concerns about mass, scale, traffic, parking, grading, and noise. The current version is still nearly twice the size of the existing Guild Hall and would exceed the height limit of the Downtown Specific Plan by about nine feet. A denial of the application is recommended. ≈

# Free Shuttle to Have Permanent Parking Bay

Using funds from a grant from the Orange County Transit Authority, the City Council is moving toward the construction of a permanent parking bay on Broadway for the summer shuttle. The project is expected to facilitate traffic circulation and reduce vehicle emissions by allowing the turning off of the engines while buses are waiting. Its construction will require the removal of four of Broadway's signature eucalyptus trees. Staff argues that, "while consistent with the City's Landscape and Scenic Highways Resource Document," the trees "do not provide much shade for pedestrians and bus patrons," but is willing to mitigate their loss with other landscaping. Those of us who were once discouraged by the apparent lack of interest in the shuttle service on the part of some Councilmembers should perhaps be pleased to see it literally being set in concrete, but we might wish that some thought had been given to locating

## 2005 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Boardmember e-mail addresses are available on our website: [villagelaguna.org](http://villagelaguna.org).

the parking bay at the Village Entrance instead and, in any case, to saving the trees. The Planning Commission will be looking at the landscaping alternatives September 14. ≈

## New Streets Steeper Than 12% To Be Discouraged Under New Ordinance

An amended zoning ordinance that will discourage the creation of new building sites accessed by streets with more than a 12% grade and prohibit streets steeper than 14% was adopted by the City Council on August 2. The Fire Department had hoped for a 10% maximum grade, pointing to the increase in response times, difficulty of operation, and the safety of fire fighters and the public associated with very steep streets. Given that opposition was expected, City staff had recommended 12% as a compromise. In bringing the proposal forward in May, the City Manager had called attention to the recent refusal of the post office to serve a number of city streets because of excessive steepness and the repeated runaway truck accidents on Nyes Place (which has a grade of 20% in the first block and 14% for much of the rest). The Planning Commission had been unanimous in recommending adoption of the change.

The same proposal reached the Council five years ago only to be beaten back by threats of "taking" litigation from a dozen or so owners of currently unbuildable property that might be affected. Becky Jones, who was a member of the Planning Commission when the current maximum was set at 15% in 1984, told the Council that the opposition was much the same then. Many of the same property owners spoke at the August 2 hearing. The City Attorney made it clear that passing the ordinance would not in itself constitute a "taking" and recommended that a variance option be included and development proposals treated on a case-by-case basis. The Council initially split 2-2 on whether to include the variance possibility (with Elizabeth Pearson-Schneider and Steve Dictorow for and Jane Egly and Cheryl Kinsman against) but came to a unanimous resolution when the former agreed to reduce the maximum to 14% in exchange for including the variance.

No one who now owns a legal building site and no one whose development application is deemed complete when the ordinance goes into effect will be affected by the change. ≈



Historic home at 31351 Coast Highway

## Design Review Board Recommends Preserving Historic House

At the second formal hearing of the proposal to demolish the Edwards house at 31351 Coast Highway and replace it with a very large contemporary house, the Design Review Board came down solidly on the side of preserving the historic structure. Rather than exploring modifications to the design in the six weeks since the first hearing, the applicant had spent the time gathering expert opinion that for reasons of geology and deferred maintenance, the house was really a tear-down. Village Laguna joined the neighbors in urging the preservation of the building.

A rendering of the proposed 9,000-square-foot house was submitted that showed it almost entirely obscured by vegetation. Criticized by neighbors of the project as unrealistic, the drawing reminded board members of their disappointing experience with another recent project in the same cove in which the vegetation that everyone had depended on to soften the appearance of the building had failed to thrive, and in the course of the discussion a third member of the board concluded, apparently to his own surprise, that the proposal would have a deleterious effect on the ambience of the cove. The applicant has agreed to work on an alternative before the next hearing in September. ≈

**Join Village Laguna!** Pay annual dues of only \$20 per member or \$35 per family and receive our informative monthly newsletter, attend fun parties, stay informed at our monthly meetings, participate in our annual Charm House Tour, and support local city and school board candidates. (If you are already a member, check your membership status on your mailing label. For example, 1/1/2005 means your membership expired in January of this year.)

If you would like to join Village Laguna or if you need to renew, please clip and return this form with your check. If you are already a member, why not share this application with a friend or neighbor?

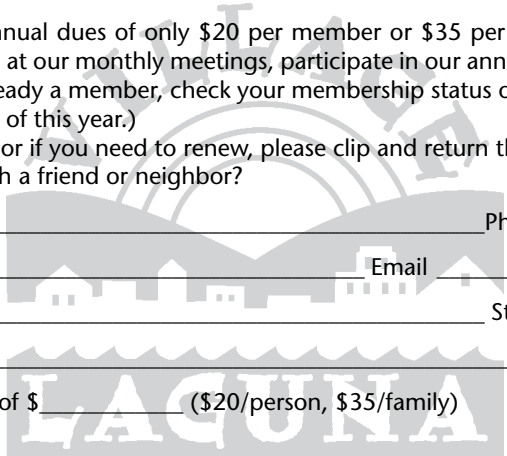
Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$20/person, \$35/family)





P. O. Box 1309  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

# AUGUST 29 GENERAL MEETING!

Design Review Task Force Recommendations  
Redesign of Website  
New Fundraising Project

## The Annual Picnic — Food and Conversation Under the Sun



Dean and Sheryl Harbold, Tom and Darrylin Girvin



Joan Collins  
Lyle Proctor  
Sally Rapuano  
Bonnie Hano



Helen Krugman  
Cathy Fry



Glori Fickling  
Doug Reilly