



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

Newsletter

THE VILLAGE LAGUNA NEWSLETTER • MARCH 2005 • ESTABLISHED 1971

March 28 Membership Meeting John Montgomery and Dennis Myers to Discuss Traffic and Parking Management Plan

At our next general meeting, Community Development Director John Montgomery and Parking, Traffic, and Circulation Committee member Dennis Myers will discuss progress and issues related to the development of a traffic and management plan for downtown and Laguna Canyon.

Recognizing increasing parking and circulation problems in downtown Laguna, the City has undertaken a study for a master plan for the area and the adjacent Civic Arts District in Laguna Canyon. The study is an attempt to understand the area's complex issues and develop potential solutions that can be embraced by the community. The consultant hired by the City is collecting a wide array of traffic and parking data, including private and public parking supply; commercial, resident, and tourist traffic and parking demand; public transit ridership and routes; pass-through traffic on Coast Highway and Laguna Canyon; pedestrian traffic and facilities; and downtown signage and signalization. Gathering community input is a major requirement of the study.

Come and learn how the study is progressing and share your ideas about the issues and possible strategies to resolve them. We'll meet in the Wells Fargo Bank 3d Floor Community Room on Monday, March 28, at 7 p.m.



33rd Annual Charm House Tour on May 17

Preparations for the Charm House Tour are well underway. Volunteers are the key to its success. Anne Caenn, chair of the tour again this year, will be happy to find you a job if you call her at 376-5188. Watch for the announcement of the first opportunity to do something to help — addressing the invitations — early in April. ≈

Experts Say "Buy It!"

How to Preserve Inner Open Space

At our February 28 meeting, we learned that the best way to save Laguna's inner open space from development is to get our neighbors together and buy it.

Derek Ostensen of the Trust for Public Lands explained that the TPL is working with the City and the Coastal Conservancy (which administers the City's \$10-million share of the most recent state park bond) to buy open space for recreation, habitat protection, and views. His job is persuading owners of large parcels of land (28 acres and up) that are adjacent to public open space and susceptible to development to sell it at their fair market value. Acquisition of inner open space, he said, is a separate task, and he pointed to the importance of developing a strategy, identifying specific targets, and mobilizing public support.

City Manager Ken Frank told us that Arch Beach Heights, which has what he considers the greatest development potential of any part of the City because of its many small lots, is currently under close scrutiny by speculators. An impediment for developers is the requirement that the access road have no more than a 15% grade. Two recent lawsuits seeking road extensions to permit development have recently been won by the City, and several others are pending. The City takes the opportunity to buy these properties as they come onto the market, and the Council has just added \$500,000 to the Open Space Fund with a view to buying land in the area for a park.

Beyond this, Frank said, the City will facilitate information gathering for groups that want to undertake the purchase of open space
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Inner Open Space, continued from page 1

in their neighborhoods and will pay 50% of the cost. In his experience, it has been difficult to get the participation of anyone but the immediate neighbors of the property, and therefore a number of opportunities (for example, at the corner of Canyon Acres) have been lost. Elisabeth Brown of the Laguna Greenbelt reported that she and her neighbors had purchased adjacent lots together for preservation as open space and pointed out that placing a conservation easement on such property results in lower taxes on it.

Ron Chilcote of the Temple Hills Community Association, who was unable to attend the meeting, reports that some time ago the Association and a group of neighbors pledged \$350,000 for the purchase of a parcel in Temple Hills and obtained a commitment from the City as well, but the owner pulled back at the last minute. The Association is now pressing for the acquisition of a large parcel above Park Avenue and a dozen or so parcels at the bottom of Rimrock Canyon, which have the advantage of being linked to lands of the Greenbelt and so would meet the TPL's criteria. It also envisions restoring some of the public pathways between streets that were built into the Temple Hills subdivision years ago. ≈

Council Moves to Rein In Public Comment

At a retreat held in the school district offices (at which the only member of the public present was Barbara Diamond of the *Coastline Pilot*), Councilmembers adopted a number of measures to limit public comment in the interest of making their meetings shorter. Among them were enforcing limits on speaking times (using warning lights and turning off the microphone when the time is exceeded) and requiring prospective speakers to fill out cards at the beginning of a hearing. The League of Women Voters has protested the absence of public participation in these decisions, and Mayor Elizabeth Pearson, speaking to the Laguna Canyon Conservancy on March 7, suggested that they might be revisited in a forthcoming meeting. Public discussion might well produce solutions to the problem of long meetings that are more in keeping with Laguna's village character. ≈

Crystal Cove Cottages to Be Available for Rent by Year's End

Laura Davick of the Crystal Cove Alliance has announced that the renovation of 22 of the cottages at Crystal Cove will be completed by September 1, and they will be available for rental by the end of the year. The Alliance conducts tours of the historic settlement on the second Saturday of each month, starting at noon in the Los Trancos parking lot. ≈

Council Backs Away from Time Limit on the Montage Parking Lot Permit

After a hearing that Jane Egly described as producing "not one new piece of information," the City Council, on a 3-2 vote, modified the conditions on the Montage's permit for the parking lot on Coast Highway, making the permit permanent. Despite the fact that the Council had waived the requirement of landscaping in the interim, the hotel argued that it needed the security of a permanent permit to make landscaping (and "water quality") improvements. The safety concerns some Councilmembers had expressed about egress from the reconfigured lot were dismissed after staff argued once again, citing its traffic consultant, that the traffic light at the hotel entrance would create gaps in the traffic through which cars could safely make left turns onto the highway. Steve Dicterow, revisiting his earlier initiative, was persuaded that the Council retains control over the Montage's approach to its parking problems in the form of the possibility of revocation of the permit, depending on the results of a parking study to be conducted in July 2006. It seems likely, however, that the parking lot is here to stay. Whether the parking problems the hotel has created are also here to stay is anybody's guess.

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Boardmember e-mail addresses are available on our website: villagelaguna.org.

Village Laguna at the March 5 Patriots' Day Parade



Evelyn Munro, Charlton Boyd, Betty Swenson (peeking), Verna Rollinger and Ginger Osborne get ready to roll



Arnold Hano, Doug Reilly, Ed Fry and Bonnie Hano were part of the 15-member VL contingent in the parade



Betty Swenson, Verna Rollinger and Ginger Osborne display part of the VL message, "Keep the Charm!"



Ginger Osborne, Phyllis Sweeney, and Judy Sinisgalli hold posters of charming homes displayed during the parade

Bette Anderson to Sign New Book

Past president of Village Laguna Bette Anderson has produced a second book, this one called *Faces You Meet*. She will be greeting fans and signing copies at Latitude 33 on Saturday, April 2, from 3 to 4 p.m. ≈

Renew Your Membership Now!

Annual membership dues were payable in January. If the membership date on your address label is 1/1/05 or earlier, please clip the payment coupon in this newsletter and mail it with your check today.

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)

Mail to: Village Laguna, P. O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652



P. O. Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Traffic and Parking Management

Monday, March 28, 7 p.m.

Alta Laguna Project Appeal Denied Unanimously

The appeal of the Design Review Board's rejection of a 6,000-square-foot house proposed for the northernmost site on the Alta Laguna cul-de-sac was denied unanimously by the City Council on March 1. Steve Dicterow cited lack of compatibility with the neighborhood, loss of public views, and safety concerns with regard to the absence of on-site turn-around capability, and Cheryl Kinsman pointed to the applicant's failure to participate in the design review process. ≈

Antimansionization Measures Reviewed

Taking a look at the antimansionization measures put in place last year at a recent joint meeting, the Planning Commission and the Design Review Board found that the new rules for measuring height are gradually having their effect. At the same time, members noted that projects still tend to max out the envelope, leaving the DRB to pare them down. Suzanne Morrison wondered if Realtors could be encouraged to give their clients more realistic appraisals of the development potential. She argued that the building envelope should be reduced even further and suggested that the City might consider establishing core historic districts to be preserved (for example, Woods Cove, parts of North Laguna). Norm Grossman pointed out that the precedent for this has been established in the downtown and said that what's lacking is a brief description of each neighborhood for applicants and neighbors to work with. ≈

Corporate Yard/Village Entrance Compromise on Council Agenda

The City Council will hear the compromise plan worked out by Elizabeth Pearson and Toni Iseman for the Corporate Yard and Village Entrance projects on April 5. ≈

Assembly Committee Considers Bills to Extend Leases at El Morro Beach

The Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife is considering two bills introduced by freshman Assemblyman Chuck DeVore of Irvine that would extend the tenants' leases for 30 years. The state of California purchased the land in 1979, and the tenants were given 20 years and then an additional 5 years to get ready to move out. Eviction proceedings are now underway. The plans for the restoration of the beach and the canyon are in place, and the governor's budget includes the park-bond money that will pay for the work. Village Laguna has written the committee urging it to reject the bills that would further postpone the opening of the park to the public. Members may wish to write their own letters to Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, Legislative Office Building Room 160, Sacramento, CA 95814. ≈