



Established 1971 To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach

January 2022 newsletter

Via Zoom

January General Meeting

Monday, January 24,
7 p.m.

February Board Meeting

Saturday, February 5,
9 a.m.

Conversation on Affordable Housing Scheduled for January 24

Concurrently with the update of the Housing Element of the General Plan, which is in the hands of outside consultants and will eventually produce a set of objectives that conform to the state legislature's idea of how to solve the housing problem, a subcommittee of the City's Housing and Human Services Committee has been studying possibilities for creating some housing that is in fact affordable. The committee's Alex Rounaghi and Laura Sauers will join us via Zoom on Monday, January 24, to tell us what they've learned and how we might help move things along. We'll gather virtually at 7 p.m. via the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82382870743?pwd=aklQUFFVYWVqWm9LM292Sk05e-jRCQT09>.

Coastal Commission to Review Historic Preservation Ordinance

The City's flawed historic preservation ordinance is expected to be heard by the Coastal Commission in February. At issue is the dismantling of Laguna's 30-plus-year-old historic preservation program by

making it entirely voluntary, in violation of state environmental law. The Laguna Beach Historic Preservation Coalition will be e-mailing us talking points for what will ideally be a flood of letters explaining the importance of historic preservation to the character of the community.

Downtown Specific Plan Changes Conditionally Approved

The City's revised Downtown Specific Plan, including relaxed parking requirements and a provision that will allow adjustment of permit requirements by resolution of the Council, was approved by the Coastal Commission in November provided that it be modified. Among other things, the commission wants clarification that the adjustment of permit requirements does not apply to coastal development permits (where structural changes to the building are involved) and that adaptive re-use of parking spaces for partial street closures and parklets when the 85% target occupancy requirement has been met will be limited and temporary. A Council hearing on the required modifications is expected in March.

Fifty Years of Village Laguna: Part 4, The Past Decade

In the past 10 years,, among many other things Village Laguna members have spoken at a number of public hearings in support of the designation of marine life preserves along our coast and have been gratified by the eventual designation of the coast from Abalone Point to Secret Cove/ Table Rock as a state marine reserve or its equivalent.

Since 2013 Village Laguna has made annual donations to community groups with values are compatible with its own: Laguna Food Pantry, La Playa Center, Friendship Shelter, Laguna Beach Community Clinic, Laguna Bluebelt, Laguna Canyon Foundation, CCC Laguna Day Workers' Center, Laguna Beach Historical Society, South Laguna Community Garden Park. It backed Friendship Shelter's proposal for City involvement in permanent supportive housing for the homeless (eventually rejected by the Council but ongoing on the Shelter's initiative). It was part of an ad hoc committee of downtown businesspeople and others on the updating of the Downtown Specific Plan. It helped put together a successful community effort to keep short-term lodging out of residential zones. It was represented on a task force on Laguna Canyon Road that persuaded the Council to reject the idea of adding lanes to it.

Over the years, Village Laguna has advocated for the preservation of a number of buildings on the City's historic inventory that were threatened with inappropriate development or demolition (notably the William Wendt house, the Ilsley house, and "Stonehenge"), producing historical materials to support its case. When the City began an update of its 700+-house historic inventory and a revision of the historic preservation ordinance in 2015, members attended all of the workshops and made a number of recommendations for improving the process. The City Council ended up adopting an ordinance that, in violation of state environmental law, removes protection from most of the community's historic resources. In response, Village Laguna, for the first time in its history, was forced to resort to litigation against the City in the hope of getting a law that protects historic resources and is easier for homeowners to manage.

When the earlier-mentioned SUPER project for damming Aliso Creek was revived in 2017, Village Laguna held several public meetings about it and encouraged the City Council to seek expert testimony about its unsuitability under current conditions. (A "locally preferred alternative" worked out by a citizens' committee appears to have taken its place.) Members joined other concerned Lagunans in testifying at the Coastal Commission hearing against Southern California Edison's planned storage of nuclear waste at the closed San Onofre power plant indefinitely and encouraging the City Council to pass a resolution opposing it. They supported an initiative proposing to purchase open space in Laguna's interior canyons (which unfortunately failed) and joined the South Laguna Civic Association in opposing the reconstruction of a sewage sludge pipeline in the Aliso and Woods Canyons Wilderness Park (which unfortunately was approved and constructed).

Village Laguna has encouraged the City Council to honor its commitment to the U.S. Mayors' Agreement on Climate Change and, with Transition Laguna, conducted a "recycling tutorial" that showed us we can recycle much more than we think. It has spoken up whenever public trees have been threatened with removal, both one-by-one and when the Fire Department proposed to apply fuel modification requirements to all properties in the very high fire hazard severity zone (nearly 85% of the city) and when the Council entertained a plan to remove and replace nearly all the trees in the downtown. It has joined neighbors of major development projects on the Coast Highway and in the canyon in objecting to their intensification of use and lack of neighborhood compatibility, in one case eventually seeing the abandonment of plans for a massive rooftop deck and pool on a historic hotel. Most recently it has been monitoring the redevelopment of the Hotel Laguna and urging the Council to require that the City's rules be followed. In May 2019 Village Laguna invited 15 like-minded local groups to a "Save Laguna Summit" that brought together some 200 Lagunans worried about the imminent threat of overdevelopment and led to the creation of Laguna Residents First, an organization that is now proposing an initiative to require a popular vote on any major development project.



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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Remembering Arnold Hano (1922-2021)

Arnold Hano, a founder and the first president of Village Laguna and what some have called Laguna Beach's most influential citizen, was born in New York City, and his first job was as a copy boy at the *New York Daily News*. After serving in the army in the Pacific during World War II he became managing editor at Bantam Books and then editor-in-chief of Lion Books. In the early 1950s he and his wife, Bonnie, looking for a better place to raise their daughter, happened upon Laguna Beach and were immediately struck by the beauty of the place and the congeniality of its residents. They settled here in 1955 and quickly became involved in local issues. Bonnie helped establish the Free Clinic, and Arnold discovered that a black man couldn't get a haircut in Laguna and helped to change that. When in 1971 the City Council began negotiating with a developer who envisioned high-rise hotels along the coast, the Hanos and others passed an initiative that limited building heights to 36 feet citywide. Arnold taught writing at the University of Southern California, Pitzer College, and the University of California, Irvine, and wrote hundreds of newspaper columns (some of them collected in his *It Takes a Villager*) and magazine articles and 26 books, among them the classic account of the first game of the 1954 World Series *A Day in the Bleachers*

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