



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

April

newsletter 2019

VL Hosts Meeting of Groups Worried about Overdevelopment April 30

With the recent changes in the composition of the City Council resulting from November's PAC-funded election and the consequent challenges to Laguna's community development process, there is growing concern that we may be entering a period of intense pressure to alter the pace and intensity and, ultimately, the character of development in the city. In response, Village Laguna has invited members of more than 15 community groups to participate this month in a meeting about ways of protecting Laguna from overdevelopment and threats to our heritage and environment. Each group is being asked to prepare a brief presentation, and after a period of Q and A about them there will be breakout sessions for discussion of possible approaches to the issues raised. We'll meet at the Neighborhood Congregational Church, 340 St. Ann's Drive, on Tuesday April 30, for appetizers and getting acquainted at 6:30 p.m., and the program will begin at 7. (Note: This is **not our usual day, time, and place.**)

Talk on Sustainable Urban Forest Scheduled for May 1

Barbara MacGillivray calls our attention to a lecture next month that will interest those who care about preserving our community's trees. Sponsored by the Laguna Beach Urban Tree Foundation, the lecture will feature Matthew Wells, public landscape manager for the city of Santa Monica, and the topic will be "Building a



Sustainable Urban Forest for All." Among other things, it can be expected to spell out the role of trees in a sustainable landscape and the best practices for choosing, placing, and maintaining trees to maximize their benefits. The event will be May 1 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

April General Meeting

Tuesday, April 30, 6:30 p.m.
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship
429 Cypress Drive

May Board Meeting

Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m.
Home of Barbara Metzger

Charm House Tour

Sunday, May 19 noon to 3 p.m.
Festival of Arts Grounds

Lessons from the Paradise Fire

At our March meeting, we heard from City Manager John Pietig and Emergency Operations Coordinator Jordan Villwock about what they learned on a trip to Paradise shortly after the devastating fire there last November. The wind-and-ember-driven fire burned 80 acres a minute and ended up covering 150,000 acres, killing 86 people and destroying 18,000 structures. Emergency personnel on front-loader tractors cleared evacuation routes of downed wires and abandoned cars, provided gas along the route to cars that ran out of it, and directed people to open parking areas and large buildings that the fire could pass over safely. Cell towers burned down faster than the warning system could use them. The four-lane road from Paradise to Chico became an eight-mile-long parking lot as the incoming traffic overwhelmed the capacity of the streets of the neighboring town.

Our 1993 fire was, fortunately, much smaller in every way than the Paradise but produced its own lessons. Since then the city has acquired two additional reservoirs and installed technology that helps maintain water pressure (a significant problem at the time), and we now have more water in storage than the city of Anaheim. Orange County has acquired two helicopters dedicated to dropping water on fires and two others that can do the job when required. Fuel modification programs cover much of the urban-wildland interface and are being extended. Both the county and the city have alert systems to our phones and/or computers. The city has a Community Emergency Response Team of more than 300 volunteers trained to be helpful in an emergency. An evacuation plan has been developed, and computer modeling is expected to improve it. A campaign initiated a year ago has so far enrolled 700 households committed to being prepared for emergencies. Villwock reminded us that warnings and plans will work only if we're prepared to follow directions quickly when the time comes.

A City Council committee consisting of Bob Whalen and Sue Kempf is working with staff on a fire safety plan of action that is expected to be presented for

discussion in July. Pietig indicated that it will involve prioritization of issues and probably present some "difficult choices" (among them some with regard to the future of Laguna Canyon Road).

Cultural Arts Consultant Judges Work/Live Facility Infeasible

A detailed study by Artspace, a nonprofit developer of artists' work/live facilities, has concluded that such a facility for Laguna Beach is infeasible under current conditions, citing as major obstacles restrictions on density and, most important, the cost of land. Instead it has recommended developing shared creative space in the form of the multiuse art center that is envisioned in the city's 2016 Cultural Arts Plan.

This recommendation would seem to conflict head-on with the conclusion of an earlier set of consultants (AEA Consulting, which evaluated opportunities for "creative placemaking" last year and presented its final report to the City Council September 12, 2018) that a new mixed-use cultural facility of 24,850 sq. ft. would cost approximately \$20 million to build and \$2.6 million annually to operate and would likely operate at a deficit of approximately \$1.5 million annually and that there is no clear workable site for such a facility, no evidence of sufficient demand for it or the capacity to raise the money to pay for it, and no obvious candidate to operate it with the possible exception of the City. The Artspace study didn't reference the AEA study, and Councilmembers didn't comment on the clash of views when, in approving the Artspace feasibility study March 19, they directed the City Manager to pursue the development of a project concept for such a center. We can hope that the earlier detailed assessment will be consulted in the process.

Housing Bill SB 50 Passes Senate Committee 9-1

Senate Bill 50, which would increase density in areas close to jobs and transit in cities throughout the state by overriding local zoning where multifamily housing

is proposed, received the go-ahead from the Senate Housing Committee on April 2. A revision of a bill that died in committee last year, it would guarantee waivers of local height and density limits and parking requirements for the construction of multifamily projects that include 20% of low-income units (or payment of an in-lieu fee) in “job-rich” areas near “high-quality bus corridors” or “major transit stops.” Given the qualifications, it’s not clear how deeply Laguna Beach would be affected, but the proposal seems like a big step in the wrong direction. Increases in density have implications for public safety, the environment, and quality of life and need to be carefully considered at the local level. This one-size-fits-all approach to the state’s shortage of affordable housing seems unlikely to work in any case, and the League of California Cities and the city, among others, are lobbying against it. Our senator, John Moorlach, voted yes. Former OC supervisor Pat Bates was the single no vote, pointing to the parking-waiver provision as her reason. The bill moves to the Finance Committee on April 24 and then to the Appropriations Committee on its way to the full Senate. Perhaps in the coming days we can still get the senator’s attention. The bill itself is available online, and there are sample letters of opposition on Village Laguna’s website (villagelaguna.org). Moorlach’s address is senator.moorlach@senate.ca.gov.

Council Decides to Make Ocean Avenue One-Way from Beach to Coast Highway

Modifying the downtown traffic-circulation improvements approved last March, City Councilmembers have decided to make the section of Ocean Avenue from Beach Street to the highway one-way. A supplemental traffic study has persuaded them that the change will improve circulation by facilitating left turns from Ocean to the highway without ill effects as well as creating ten new parking spaces to compensate for the ones being eliminated next to Main Beach Park. The crosswalk will be moved to the north side of the intersection and the streetcorner reconstructed to accommodate the necessary ADA-compliant features.

The results of the “extensive public outreach” requested by the Council before moving ahead with the project were summarized as follows: 350 notices were mailed to business owners and tenants in the downtown, and a public workshop was held on December 11 that was attended by 8 people (2 in favor, 4 opposed, and 2 undecided). An online survey soliciting input that was distributed via workshop notices and social media (perhaps this is how some residents may have been consulted?) produced 29 responses (20 in favor, 9 opposed). Five e-mails (1 in favor, 4 opposed) were also received. Adding up the responses, staff concluded that the majority (23 to 17) favored the conversion and recommended that it proceed.

Renew your membership!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ Email _____

I have enclosed my check for the following membership (I understand the amount is not tax-deductible):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student - \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer - \$250/family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basic - \$40/individual, \$60/family | <input type="checkbox"/> Preservationist (\$500 family) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter - \$150/family | <input type="checkbox"/> Villager Extraordinaire (\$1,000+)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please send me my newsletter electronically instead of by mail. | <i>*includes two Charm House Tour tickets</i> |

Contact Treasurer Richard Picheny at 295-0545 or rpicheny@gmail.com to arrange for automatic monthly or quarterly payments.
Mail to Village Laguna, PO Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652



P.O. Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Charm House Tickets Available At Outlets, by Mail, or Online

Tickets for this year's Charm House Tour on May 19 are now available for \$50 (compare with \$60 the day of the tour)



by mail (P.O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652), online (www.villagelaguna.org), or at one of the following local outlets: Fawn Memories (384 Forest Ave.), Cottage Furnishings (802 S. Coast Highway), Laguna Beach Books (1200 S. Coast Highway), and EGO Salon (Monarch Bay Plaza). The homes range from one of Laguna's earliest cottages (built in 1918) through a mid-century modern with an extraordinary garden to a beautiful contemporary. Parking will be free at ACT V, along with bus transportation to the Festival of Arts Grounds, where tour busses will depart from noon till three.

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