



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

September 2023 newsletter

Via Zoom

September General Meeting

Monday, September 25, 7 p.m.

Hybrid

City Council

Tuesday, September 26,
after 5 p.m.

Appeal of Car Wash
Redevelopment

Village Laguna Supports SensibleLaguna Against Intensification on Park Avenue

Given its mission of helping to preserve and enhance Laguna's village character, Village Laguna is concerned about the scale and scope of the changes the School District is proposing for the high school area. In particular, we support SensibleLaguna's position on the pool size. The organization's outreach to aquatic sports consultants has shown that a 50-meter pool is simply not needed unless the proponents envision Laguna as a hub for Olympic-sized aquatic events. Beyond this, there is no room for a 50-meter pool without completely altering the character and look of the surrounding area and negatively impacting an already tight traffic area during construction and during years of large events for which, by the time of completion, the proponents' children will have already graduated from the high school. We support SensibleLaguna in asking, as taxpaying citizens, that LBUSD pursue a professional needs/use assessment by an unbiased qualified professional organization as to the need for this very expensive remodel. The public deserves transparency and clarity about this excessive use of taxpayer dollars. We deserve a cost/benefit analysis

for a 35-meter pool. We also deserve a report on the impact of future huge events on the surrounding neighbors' right to the peaceful enjoyment of their homes.

ADUs and the Future of the Village

The state legislature's recent focus on affordable housing has created something of a building boom in Laguna Beach that raises serious concerns about the future of the village atmosphere. New laws that permit lot splitting and the addition of units to R-1 lots without discretionary review are changing neighborhoods and blocking views, and there is nothing in them that requires that the new units, known as "accessory dwelling units" (ADUs), be affordable or even that they be rentals. Many appear to be serving as additional living space, often with new views obtained at the expense of one's neighbors. At our next general meeting, we hope to host knowledgeable elected officials, staff, and neighbors in a conversation about how the new law is working in Laguna and whether there might be a better way to solve the housing problem. We'll convene at 7 p.m. on Monday, September 25. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82920154214?pwd=MTJ1bmNRRU8zb1M5Q3lrakFtMmxRUT09>



PO Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

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Coast Liquor Paint Job Receives Bad Reviews

The recently remodeled Coast Liquor store was supposed to look like the original, which was stained redwood, and it certainly doesn't. The project is to benefit from substantial parking credits for historic preservation, and both the Planning Commission and the Council were clear in specifying that to deserve those credits the restoration had to be thorough. When Village Laguna pointed out the problem, the Council agreed that painting the building red wasn't the answer. Staff has been tasked with preparing a memo on next steps for the Council's consideration.

Privatization of Hotel Beach Challenged by Coastal Commission

Lagunans who have been asked to leave the beach in front of the Hotel

Laguna, which the hotel is treating as private property, and wondered how this could be may appreciate knowing that the Coastal Commission is on the case. The property owner is citing vested rights that he says come from the existence of a beach club there long ago, but the commission disagrees and is threatening fines.

Contract Approved for Fire Station 4

When the Council approved a contract for the plans for a new fire station in South Laguna on July 25, public input was enthusiastic about the idea of a new fire station but highly critical of the bidding process, which excluded opinion from the public and the local architects. The Council agreed to add to the planning process a meeting between the contractors and local architects and other interested parties and a public workshop to solicit the views of the broader community.

Disaster Averted, Hope Still Grows

The South Laguna Community Garden Park purchase was very close to closing escrow when the title company found that the purported seller could not be verified to be the true owner of the property. Fortunately, with diligent local professionals on the case, this attempted scam was discovered and disaster was averted-- approximately \$1 million in donations and \$500,000 in city funds remain in safe accounts. The South Laguna Civic Association, South Laguna Community Garden Park, and Laguna Beach Community Foundation are now in the process of contacting the true owners with hopes of applying the financing package already in place to a fruitful sale. Check SouthLagunaGarden.org for the latest information or call 949-499-1804.

LCAD Proposes Big Student Center Adjacent to Open Space at Big Bend

On September 20 the Laguna College of Art and Design will present to the Planning Commission the plans for a 22,000-square-foot student center that it introduced in concept three years ago. At the time commissioners expressed concern about the intensification of use in an environmentally sensitive area and recommended that, rather than increasing parking space to accommodate the development, the college pursue ways of reducing the number of cars involved. The proposed parking lot has spaces for 187 cars and places motorcycle parking along the edge of the adjacent City-owned open space and wildlife corridor recently restored by the Laguna Canyon Foundation.

The facility is to have three multipurpose meeting spaces, a gallery, a café with outside tables, and a number of classrooms and administrative spaces. All of this suggests a degree of activity that is likely to be incompatible with the intended regular movement of wildlife through the property next door.

Council Supports Relocating San Onofre's Spent Nuclear Fuel

Since the decommissioning of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station began in 2020, the question has remained what is to happen to the spent nuclear fuel that remains on the site. A 1982 law required the federal government to dispose of it, but this hasn't happened. In 2021 Southern California Edison released a three-volume set of plans by a team of independent experts

for the permanent relocation of the spent nuclear fuel on the California coastline to a federally licensed off-site facility. A stakeholder coalition known as Spent Fuel Solutions was formed to promote this objective, and last month the City Council formally reaffirmed its commitment to the coalition's work.

Redevelopment of Car Wash Property Appealed on Intensification of Use

The approval of a proposal to demolish the Sweetwater Car Wash at 1890 S. Coast Highway and replace it with an 8,204-square-foot two-story building over a subterranean garage has been appealed by the neighbors, citing excessive intensification of use. The appellants are arguing that the project greatly exceeds the average lot coverage of buildings in the neighborhood and raising concerns about its scale and about lost views. They also argue that the history of soil contamination associated with the property's original use as a gas station requires an EIR and the removal of any contaminated soil. They are particularly worried about the effects on neighboring businesses of a two-plus-year construction process involving the removal of 7,380 cubic yards of earth. The appeal is scheduled for Tuesday, September 26.

More Outdoor Dining OK'd for Forest

The temporary use permit program for outdoor dining has expired, but when it is reinstated (as scheduled) in November there will immediately be yet another "parklet" in the street on Forest Avenue. Despite input from local retailers disturbed about the loss of parking spaces near their businesses, the City Council voted to allow the owner of a new restaurant at 305 Forest to use two parking spaces at the corner of Forest and Glenneyre to double the number of seats available to his customers.

Hospital Administration Agrees to Report on Its Plans

After receiving persistent requests that, as liaison to the hospital, he try to get the bottom of the rumors that it's closing, last month Bob Whalen, in response to the most recent request, said that he had asked administrator Seth Tiegen about his plans. Tiegen appears to be ready to meet with the Council oversight subcommittee after Labor Day and then schedule a presentation to the Council in October. Bob assures us that what's involved is not the closing of the hospital but "a change in the mix of services." We've already lost the lab. Perhaps soon we'll know what comes next.

Picnic at Alta Laguna Park



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To satisfy new campaign reporting regulations for contributions of \$100 or more, I am supplying the name of my employer (or specifying that I am retired): _____

Mail to: Village Laguna PO BOX 1309 Laguna Beach, CA 92652