



January 2025 newsletter

Membership Meeting

Election of Officers

Save the Seagrave

Councilmember Hallie Jones

Monday, January 27, 5-7 p.m.

Community & SusiQ Center

380 Third St.

Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 28, 5 p.m.

Council Strategic Planning

Workshop

Saturday, January 31, 8:30 a.m.

Council Chambers

City Hall

Membership Meeting—Election of Officers

Village Laguna members will be asked to vote for two officers and to learn about the new slate of officers and direction for Village Laguna. We are asking all members to attend this important meeting. Please pay your dues for 2025 in order to vote.

Save the Seagrave

Retired Laguna Beach fire fighter Eugene “Diz” D’Isabella was the champion for protecting the 1931 Seagrave fire engine that served our city until 1950. After it was put in “reserve” status it was driven with pride in parades and appeared for community events, mostly with Diz at the wheel. Often he would mention how the Seagrave needed care and protection. Now there is a vigorous campaign by firefighters and community members to restore it and keep this mascot telling the story of fire protection in our town. The council has committed to supplying half the funds from the city budget, and the Laguna Beach Firefighters Community Assistance Fund 501 (c) (3) is in the process of raising the rest. We’ll hear all about it at our membership meeting from Battalion Chief Andrew Hill, introduced by former councilmember George Weiss who has championed the project. Village Laguna will be presenting our

donation as an organization and we encourage you to donate too at lbffa.org



Diz drove the Seagrave to the South Laguna Community Garden Park event in 2012.

New Councilmember Hallie Jones Speaks

Hallie will have attended two council meetings and will be preparing for her third when she visits with us at our January 27 meeting. Let’s hear her preliminary thoughts, suggestions for our participation, and her responses to our questions and concerns. We are grateful to Hallie for speaking up so strongly to protect the Chris Abel designed building at 1110 Gleneyre at her very first meeting! Hallie voted alone, urging recognition of the building’s historic status while the rest of the council voted only partial support for protecting it by returning the project to the planning commission for further consideration. They instructed that the building’s brickwork be protected, but left it without historic recognition.

Neighborhood Congregational Church Historic Buildings



Village Laguna asked architectural historian Francesca Smith to evaluate the buildings slated for demolition at the Neighborhood Congregational Church property at 340 St. Ann's Dr.—the parsonage (Montessori School), Bridge Hall and the Sanctuary, built between 1948 and 1963. In her 12-page evaluation she found them eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources and for the Laguna Beach Historic Register. The buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of three architecture types—Minimal Traditional, Tudor Revival and Mid-Century Modern with Organic/Expressionist influences—and represent the work of two important local architects: Aubrey St. Clair and Bill Blurock, whose substantial bodies of work influenced the built environment of Laguna Beach and southern California. Extraordinary artistic values are expressed as well in the Mogens Abel and Harold Eckman wood carvings. The property is directly associated with the spiritual, communal, collaborative educational and historical development of Laguna Beach.

Attached to the report are photographs by Greg O'Loughlin and Hunter Fuentes, and a 1984 brochure describing the Symbols and Memorials that enhance the church and listing the donors. For example, the large blue glass panels in the Narthex, were donated by Bette Davis in memory of Ruth Favor Davis, her mother.

Neighborhood Congregational Church is not just a collection of generic buildings primed for demolition to make way for the next development. They are an expression of the values and aspirations of the congregation over decades.

Like many Lagunans, we lament the possible loss of this historic property, noting that it is beautiful, well-designed, and important to the community. Our goal is to foster appreciation of the historic buildings by the community, city leaders, the developer and church members and the report was sent to them as well as to the local press. We hope that it will stimulate discussion and a decision to retain buildings while accommodating other beneficial uses, such as affordable housing, on the property.

Village Laguna invites you to be involved in urging alternatives for the property that take advantage of the existing buildings while designing an appropriately scaled project that fits in the neighborhood. Please contact Ann Christoph to join this effort (Ann@AC-LA.com). For the full report go to VillageLaguna.org



Fire Trauma

The terrible fires in Los Angeles spark so many emotions—sorrow, sympathy, fear, frustration, the desire to know what we can do to help, and how to prevent more such tragic and dangerous events. For those of us who lived through the 1993 Laguna Beach fire, it makes all those old feelings raw again. Predictably there will be more calls for removing more vegetation, both native and around structures. There are other approaches--protecting the buildings which are the most flammable. Is it really too expensive to install water systems at the urban periphery and within neighborhoods compared to the billions lost in these fires? We send partially treated wastewater out to the ocean every day from the Aliso Creek treatment plant. We have the ability to treat it to reclaimed standards, have a reclaimed water distribution and storage system to add to the water available to protect ourselves. Shirakawago, Japan decided they were going to protect their town from fire—see their sprinkler system in action! Here are two references: chaparralwisdom.org, <https://californiachaparral.org/fire/protecting-your-home/>



Water cannon fire protection system at Shirakawago, Japan

General Plan says to protect trees—not happening!


The council has responded to continuing complaints about delays in plan checking and has requested monthly reports on progress to reduce the backlog. But not only are there problems with timely processing, the quality of review, content, and orientation of the staff reports is questionable. A case in point is the residential proposal for 309 Hawthorne. There are five majestic Canary Island date palms on the property, clearly visible in the city's GIS photographs and they are listed as candidate heritage trees. Yet the staff said there were no significant features on the lot. The general plan says significant trees are to be preserved unless keeping them would prevent reasonable

use of the property. This was pointed out at the first hearing at the Design Review Board. Yet staff didn't address this at the second meeting's staff report and 2 of the 5 trees are still slated for removal. There are no tree protection conditions of approval for the other 3. The orientation of the staff reports is to recommend approval, not to discuss issues raised by general plan policies that need to be discussed and resolved by the Board. 309 Hawthorne will be considered for the third time at the Design Review Board on February 13.



50th Laguna Charm House Tour this year

The tour is the Sunday after Mother's Day, May 18. Now's the time to start planning and bringing your ideas for our best tour ever! Please contact Anne Caenn, (949) 376-5188. Many volunteer positions available!



LAGUNA CHARM HOUSE TOUR

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025
\$70 Presale
\$80 Day of Tour

Enjoy an afternoon in Laguna. Experience a taste of the heritage of Laguna Beach as you tour houses in neighborhoods dating from homestead days in the 1800s. Visit cottages and bungalows, working artists' homes and studios. Experience the rustic canyon environments and see how creative residents have crafted their home settings to reflect their own unique talents and interests.

STARTING POINT:
In front of the Festival of the Arts grounds,
650 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach.

Buses will leave continuously from 12:00 noon.
Last bus departs at 3:00 pm. All day parking is available
for \$4 at the lot directly across Laguna Canyon Road from the
Tour Bus pick up at the Festival of Arts Grounds.


For more information about the tour
call (949) 472-7503 or
go to www.villagelaguna.org/charm-house-tour

Tickets may be purchased:

- by sending a request and check to
Village Laguna Charm House Tour
Post Office Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652, or
- from any of the outlets listed here, or
- online at www.villagelaguna.org

Tickets available at:

- Cottage Furnishings
802 S. Coast Hwy. 497-3121
- Fawn Memories
384 Forest Ave. 494-2071
- Laguna Nursery
481 N. Coast Hwy. 494-5200





PO Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Time to renew your membership

Support Village Laguna—2025

Village Laguna is committed to: preserving and enhancing the unique village character of Laguna Beach fostering community spirit, addressing social needs, and restoring and protecting our ocean and coastal habitats...

What does it take to be effective in achieving these goals? Your participation and dedication!

Please join, donate funds, and get involved. If you love this town as much as we do – we need you! It's time to join for 2025—for Laguna forever!



If the date on your mailing label is 2026 you are paid up. Thank you! If it's 2025 or earlier please renew at VillageLaguna.org or by mail

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ **Email** _____

(please send me my newsletter by regular mail _____ by e-mail _____)

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+) |

To satisfy 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