



**Membership Meeting
& Potluck
Future Direction
By-laws**

Monday, September 29
6:30 p.m.
412 Jasmine St.

Council Meeting
Tuesday, September 23, 5 p.m.

**Design Review Board
Meeting**
Egan historic house
Thursday, September 25
5:00 p.m.

**Planning Commission
Meeting**
1110 Glenneyre St.
Wednesday, October 15
6:00 p.m.

**City meetings all at
Council Chambers
City Hall**

September 2025 newsletter

General Meeting Monday Sept. 29, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for our general members pot-luck meeting at the home of Amy Jackson, 412 Jasmine Street. Please bring deserts, appetizers or side dishes (for 10 people) or drinks.

During this meeting members will be voting on changes to the Bylaws, so only members who are current with their 2025 dues are eligible to attend.

Merrill Anderson, president, and Joy Berry, vice president will share some exciting news about a new direction for Village Laguna. For the past few months the Board has taken a fresh look at our strengths and opportunities to chart a new strategic direction. Our mission remains the same as it has been for 54 years; it's our strategy that is changing to make us even more effective in achieving our mission. We'll need your vote to make our strategy a reality. We look forward to seeing you there!



Ora Sterling and Rob Gage share history of the John Lautner designed home.

Village Laguna Hosts First Icons of Design Tour

The first "Icons of Design" tour, was held September 7 at the John Lautner-designed "Johnson House" in upper Woods Cove, owned by professional photographer Rob Gage. While Laguna Beach is famous for its beach cottage, craftsman, and period revival buildings, it also has a generally uncelebrated trove of Mid-Century Modern architecture in its hillsides and canyons. Lautner is considered one of the most important and innovative architects of the Mid-Century era, and guests were treated to a beautiful slice of that history in Laguna Beach.

The tour featured talks about the history of the house by the homeowner, Rob Gage, who purchased the home in 1974 from the original owner, Stan Johnson, and by Ora Sterling who told how her aunt's recommendation resulted in the Lautner—Johnson connection. Gage showed original drawings for the house, hand-drawn by John Lautner in preparation for the beginning of construction in 1956.

The event was limited to 72 guests, and by 2 weeks before the event it was sold out. Thanks to Rob and Ora for welcoming guests and for all their work in preparing for the tour, and to organizers, Bob Borthwick, Anne Caenn and Ann Christoph. We are also grateful to Rosemary Boyd, brochure design; Darrylin Girvin and Vicki Borthwick, refreshments; greeters Mary Ives and Jane Jaquez; and docents, Bob Borthwick, Jacob Cherub, Ann Christoph, Regina Hartley, Toni Isemen, Amy Jackson, Trudy Josephson, and Cathy Jurca.

Another Historic House in Jeopardy

Last month the 1914 blue cottage at 359 Third Street was demolished. Sadly, this could have been prevented if just one more councilmember had recognized its historic value. We thank Mark Orgill and Hallie Jones for voting against demolition.



The Egan house as seen from the Toovet trail which passes through what was the Egan homestead.

On September 25, another historic house is being considered for demolition by the Design Review Board. The Egan house, at 31526 Valido Road in South Laguna, is the last remaining homestead house in Laguna Beach. The house was begun in 1909 and, with two additions, finished in 1928.

All of Laguna Beach south of Broadway was available for homesteading as result of the Homestead Act signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1862. Unclaimed by the Ranchos, it was considered government land. Individuals could lay claim to up to 160 acres at minimal cost. Homesteaders had to demonstrate they were making beneficial use of the property and were established on the land, not just holding it. Many of the parcels never had homes built on them, but of those that did, only the Egan dwelling is extant and in its original location.

William Egan claimed 40 acres above West Street and his uncle James Shrewsbury 160 acres above Scenic and Sunset Drives. Both built homes and outbuildings. They cleared parts of their claims for agriculture and also rented land from the neighboring homestead, then owned by Blanche Dolph, to extend their fields. They grew beans and melons, dry farming. The Egan family was part of the community from then on. Willam Egan died in 1930, but his wife Bertie and their two daughters Frances and Esther lived most of their lives here in Laguna Beach. The former Egan homestead includes sites for two important water reservoirs, conveyed to the then newly formed South Coast Water District. This site contributes to the important story of homesteading in southern California, and how this family contributed to building the community we have today.

The house and garage/barn are little changed since the Egons left them. The city commissioned a historic evaluation that concluded the property is eligible for the National and California Historic Registers. The developer who proposes to demolish the buildings and build a new house hired his own historian who disputed that finding. Now the Design Review Board will have to decide whether the property qualifies as a historic resource under the revised preservation ordinance. We believe the property is manifestly historic for its association with the National Homestead Act and for the Egons' significance as a founding family within what is now Laguna Beach. Please urge DRB and the city to work to preserve this historic resource.

The New Coastal Commission

As expressed at their hearing on August 15, today's Coastal Commission has a new philosophy on parking. Several years ago, they required our city to replace one-for-one any parking spaces lost. For example, the city provided additional parking by angling spaces on inland Cliff Drive, to make up for parking spaces lost in the area of the Village Entrance.

Then when the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) was amended and approved by the Commission, it didn't include permanent closure of lower Forest Avenue, because the city's own study by consultant IBI recommended against it. They stated,

"Due to the high occupancy in summer months, it is not recommended to remove spaces from the public supply, as occupancy is beyond the 85 percent practical capacity; removal of public parking spaces would result in over capacity occupancies."



This merry band of Lagunans before the Coastal Commission hearing in Calabasas on August 15 included former mayors Toni Iseman and Ann Christoph (representing the appellants), city manager Dave Kiff, councilmembers Mark Orgill and Sue Kempf (representing the city), and Merrill Anderson, president of Village Laguna (representing the appellants). Yes, we can smile despite fundamental disagreements on the Promenade and fire station.

Now the Commission's attitude is "Never mind!" Village Laguna and Friends of Forest Avenue appealed the Promenade project on lower Forest Avenue to the California Coastal Commission, objecting to, among other problems with the project, the loss of 48 parking spaces in that prime downtown area. Commissioner Raymond Jackson expressed a view that was shared by his colleagues that the Commission should not let parking stand in the way of approving projects they like. So much for studies and planning!

There was a similar reaction to the loss of four parking spaces on Coast Highway because the South Laguna fire station plan replaces them with a wide exit driveway onto Coast Highway. The Commission rejected an alternative plan presented by the appellants that provided an entry/exit driveway onto 5th Avenue, with the comment that they were not considering alternatives, only the plan before them. Both appeals were rejected as presenting "no substantial issue" by the Commission.

1110 Glenneyre Returns to Planning Commission October 15

Thanks to those who notified the Planning Commission of objections to the damaging remodel proposed for the Chris Abel-designed building at 1110 Glenneyre.

Responding both to public comments as well as Council direction, the Commission continued the item until their October 15 meeting and instructed the applicant to keep ALL the crazy quilt brick work, including the chimney. But many other bad changes are still on the table, including removal of the half-timbering, truncated roof eaves, and installation of a standing-seam metal roof. The building as Chris Abel designed it will be gone. In addition, the applicant proposes to remove the mature rusty leaf fig trees that define this corner of Glenneyre and Oak.

Please mark the October 15 date on your calendars and be prepared to write in and ATTEND. We can save this important building, which the City's historic preservation consultant found met the criteria for listing on the Laguna Beach Historic Register.

The proposed remodel lacks design integrity and neighborhood compatibility. The building as is reflects the design themes of the neighborhood and celebrates and extends the village character of Laguna Beach, a theme of the 1970s. It exemplifies the quirky charm of Laguna where commercial buildings were designed to look like residential ones, and the Period Revival styles of the past were resuscitated in new and creative ways.



The existing Chris Abel designed building framed by the threatened rusty-leaf fig trees.



The remodel as requested on August 20.

The existing brickwork is to be kept according to the Commission, but the trees are still proposed to be taken down, and removal of half timbering, cutting back the eaves and modernizing the roofing will obliterate the Chris Abel design.



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