

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

November 1st, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

INTRODUCTION

Steph Burt led the meeting. We began by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Officer Brian Parsley addressed us:

1. **Thefts.**

- Four thefts have occurred around the Village from unlocked vehicles, so be sure to lock your cars. It may seem safe, but people take advantage of that. Don't store items of value (purse, iPod, cell phone, etc.) in your car.
- If you leave for Thanksgiving Break, make sure to lock everything, keep your blinds down, and close all your windows.

2. **Parking.**

- Police have to date towed five cars from the Village that had expired registration or were non-drivable. If you leave a vehicle for more than three days in a guest spots, the car will be towed.
- Guest parking is available in the evenings at Ocean View.

3. **Dog.**

- The dog that has been spotted living in the village is still running around and cannot seem to be caught. Animal control has been coming daily and trying unsuccessfully to trap the dog. The dog hasn't hurt anyone and runs away whenever anyone approaches it. The dog does not seem dangerous at all.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Tavie Tipton, the Village Office Manager, addressed the following issues:

1. **Abandoned Bikes.**

- The Office is reluctant to remove abandoned bikes because, without fail, as soon as the bike is removed, the owner seems to pop up. If a courtyard can agree among themselves which bikes are abandoned, the Office will remove it.

2. **Construction.**

- The first phase of the West Village construction is a little ahead of schedule and is on track to open up on July 1st 2006.
- The second phase of the West Village will be completed in 2008.
- There will be models of new buildings open for residents to tour before West Village opens so that residents can get a feel for what the new apartments will be like.
- The Office has received permission to turn a two-bedroom apartment in West Village into a study center. The center will hold up to 30 people to study. There will be no charge to check out a key to the center.
- Section A demolition will not be before December 2007. The Office will do some repairs on Section A, particularly safety hazards, but the Office does not want to pour money into Section A.
- The Office is working on a proposal to start an English language class in the Village for families of international students. The classes would teach a variety of functional, useful things (how to shop, how to use the buses, etc.) More information will be forthcoming in the future.

Ron Bialkowski announced the following upcoming events:

1. **Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner.** The Thanksgiving dinner will be held in the Community Center from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 24th. Bring a dish to share with others.
2. **Holiday Party.** The party will be held on December 9th. There will be food and Santa will make an appearance. Children will be able to have their photo taken with Santa, and will receive a small gift.

MICHAEL BEER FROM URBAN ROOTS

Michael Beer, a teacher at Ocean View Elementary School who has been involved with Urban Roots, addressed us. Urban Roots is a group of Albany and Berkeley residents who support the idea of turning the Gill Tract into an educational farm. Michael showed us a video about the history of the Gill Tract and spoke to us, making the following points:

1. **Donated Land.** The Gill Tract was donated to the university for agricultural purposes. Unfortunately, the deed did not stipulate that the land be used exclusively for agriculture.
2. **Educational Uses.** Numerous elementary schools, as well as other groups in the area, would be able to take tours and learn about the process of growing food.
3. **Self Sustaining.** A professional farmer would be hired to run the farm, with produce sold to support the costs of the farm. The farm would be planned to be self-sustaining.
4. **Based on Successful Model.** An educational farm of this type exists in California and has been found to be economically self-sufficient.

VILLAGE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Maile Urbancic led a discussion regarding the Community Garden, with Garden Manager Walter Baum answering questions. We first talked about the history of the interactions between the Garden and J.R. Roberts, the construction company responsible for building West Village, then discussed possibilities to put in a proposal to J.R. Roberts from the Community Garden.

1. **History of Interactions With J.R. Roberts.**

- There was a re-adjustment to development plans mandated by the Regents months ago, increasing housing density. Consequently, J.R. Roberts must take approximately 40 feet from the eastern side of the Garden to build a parking lot to accommodate more cars.
- In addition, J.R. Roberts would like to temporarily (for two years) take approximately 60 feet from the western side or 190 feet from the northern side of the Garden if the Gill Tract is developed before current construction plans for the West Village are completed. This space would be used as a staging area for the storage of containers and tractors.
- Currently UC does not have the money to relocate the maintenance yard (thus pushing the staging area from Dowling Park to the Garden) unless development plans for the Gill tract make funds available for its relocation. As long as J.R. Roberts can use Dowling Park as the staging area, the impact on the Garden will be mitigated.

2. **Discussion.**

- *Question:* Why must we negotiate with J.R. Roberts and not the university?
Answer: Maile and Steph answered that J.R. Roberts has greater flexibility and autonomy in selecting a staging area. The density increase is non-negotiable because of a Regent's decision.
- *Question:* Why can't the rock-and-sand area north of the garden be used for development space?
Answer: Walter answered that the developers have planned to use that area and Dowling Park for maintenance and parking for if the Gill Tract is developed.
- *Question:* Where is the best farmland in the garden?
Answer: The eastern side of the garden (the land that will be used for parking).
- *Question:* If J.R. Roberts uses the garden space, what improvements do they offer to make?
Answer: Walter responded that they have yet to make any formal offers. They have suggested that the garden could "ask" that special soil be put in place, a garden shed be built, and more benches installed.

3. **Proposal to J.R. Roberts.** Maile suggested that we ask for things in exchange for the forty feet we will lose to the parking lot (since we are unlikely to win a fight to get it back) and focus our efforts on preventing the use of the Garden as a staging area. Residents suggested the following be included in a proposal to J.R. Roberts:

1. We could have J.R. Roberts remove some blackberry bushes and relocate garden plots there.
2. Guarantee that plots that are lost to the parking will be relocated to new spots.
3. Improve and provide water lines to the western side of the garden.
4. Two new sheds.

5. Create two or three parking spaces for the Garden, perhaps spots with a fifteen or half-an-hour limits.
6. No trees on the east end of the garden (but bushes would be acceptable).
7. Fruit trees along the west end of the Garden.
8. A tall wooden fence.
9. A lock-in gate to the entry of the Garden
10. A designated play area for children. Someone mentioned the possibility of a gazebo, bulletin board, and playground in one spot.
11. An environmental or soil engineer to come look over the garden. Trucks could potentially leave a very deleterious impact on the Garden. J.R. Roberts would need to have a plan to prevent environmental damage to the Garden before using it as a staging area.

4. **Action Items.**

- *Discussion.* More discussion is needed, particularly among the Garden community. For instance, should we ask that water lines be extended to the western end of the garden? In this event, gardeners relocated from the east end would be shifted to the western end. However, the western end might be truncated in the event J.R. Roberts needs more garden space as a staging area. Walter thinks that we should ask for the water lines to be extended in any case, and go from there. That idea was met with general consensus.
- *Finding Who is In Charge.* Tom Nowak says that development plans could change within weeks if a developer is found. Tavie thinks that there are still no definitive plans for the Gill Tract. So it is quite clear that we should be talking with someone from Capital Projects who can give us more definitive answers.
- *Proposal.* The Garden needs to send a proposal to J.R. Roberts.
- *Public Display of Displeasure.* The best strategy is to write letters en masse and then follow up with a petition.

Secretary
Maile Urbancic
September 22, 2005