

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

September 13, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

INTRODUCTION

VRA Secretary Maile Urbancic led the meeting. We started by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Officer Brian Parsley addressed us:

- As expected, bike thefts increased when Section B was demolished. People come in to steal copper from the demolition site and end up stealing other things as well. Prevent yourself from becoming a victim by investing in a HIGH QUALITY bike lock, or simply taking expensive bikes inside. Also lock up children's bikes and scooters (or take them inside) because they are easy targets for thieves. Always lock your doors, always lock your cars, and don't leave valuables in plain sight in your car.
- For police matters, don't call the Village office. Police dispatchers need to speak with the person reporting the crime personally. Instead of calling the office, call the police themselves at 642-6760 for non-emergencies, or 911 for emergencies (642-3333 is the emergency number when calling from a cell phone).
- Homeless people are not committing a crime when they dig through the trash. The garbage is public property, and it is legal for anyone to dig through it. In any case, the individuals who dig through the trash tend not to be the same individuals who steal things or commit other violations in the Village. If you see a homeless individual making a mess in the garbage, or going into courtyards, then you can report it.
- There was an incident with a student of Albany Middle School in which a girl was taken forcibly from her house by a man but then returned later on. The man hangs out near Albany Middle School and has befriended the students. *Update: This crime did not happen in the Village, but in the Albany area. The man in question was arrested shortly after the incident occurred.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Section A Beautification. There will be a community project to improve Section A on September 23. Picnic tables will be placed around Section A, and large planters will be filled with flowers and herbs. Residents from Section A, East Village, and West Village are invited to participate. Everyone will meet at 10:00 am on Saturday, September 23, in the Community Center café. Refreshments will be served.

Parent Discussion Group. The Village Parent Discussion Group will meet at 7:00 pm in the Four Corners room in the Community Center every 1st and 3rd Wednesday. The next discussion is on September 20.

Family Friday. Every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month is Family Friday. On these days a family-friendly video will be shown in the Community Center, with free fruit, drinks, and popcorn. Pizza is also available for \$1 per slice. Bring the kids and have a nice evening together!

Partners and Spouses in Transition. Moving to the Village is a transition for everyone, particularly for the spouse who is not in school. There are programs that help with parenting skills, but the spouse needs some support too. Former VRA Secretary Esther Wyss-Flamm is trying to start a program dedicated to inspiring creativity and innovation for spouses of students. There will be a \$50 registration fee, but the VRA will fund need-based scholarships. Contact Esther at 527-5052 for more information.

Infant/Toddler Care Center. We are trying to set up a task force to advocate for the establishment of an infant/toddler care center in the Village. If you are interested in being part of this group, please contact us at vra@berkeley.edu. We will have a public meeting regarding this issue shortly.

Towel and Blanket Drive. We will be holding an ongoing towel and blanket drive to benefit a local homeless shelter. If you have any old towels or blankets, instead of throwing them away, bring them to the next VRA meeting to donate to a good cause.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cristobal Olivares from the TANG Center introduced the Village Health Worker program.

Health Workers are volunteers from the community who promote healthy living through publishing newsletters and organizing events related to family health. The topics of focus are chosen by the Health Workers to be anything of value to their community. Past topics have included ways to cope with common family illnesses, dealing with stress at exam time, nutrition, etc. Although Health Workers are not paid, they are eligible for up to 2 units of credit at UC Berkeley. You do not have to have a work permit to take this position.

The Health Worker program is currently looking for 5 – 10 Village residents. These can be students, spouses, or adult family members living in the Village. You do not have to be proficient in English, nor do you need to have a health-related background. The only requirements are that you are enthusiastic about healthy living and are willing to spend 8 – 10 hours per month serving to make the Village a healthier place.

If you are interested in joining this exciting team, contact Cristobal at (510) 643-9061 or cmo@berkeley.edu. The online application is available at: <http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/students/healthpromotion/hwapply-index.shtml>

ISSUES IN THE VILLAGE

Tavie Tipton, Village Manager, addressed us about a variety of issues in the Village. She first discussed a list of questions compiled in advance by the VRA, and then took questions from the audience.

Q: When will sod be laid in West Village?

A: It has already started and will be done shortly.

Q: When will all the landscaping in West Village be completed?

A: The majority will be done by the end of September. The last thing they will be doing is hydro-seeding the bioswells. Bioswells allow rainwater runoff from the parking lot to filter through several layers of material before it seeps into the creeks. As the grass grows, the bioswells will turn a strange color of green, but that is on purpose.

Q: Construction workers have been leaving a lot of tools and other dangerous things on the dirt in West Village, in places that kids can access. It has gotten better lately, but still happens. Would it be possible to talk to JR Roberts about this?

A: Certainly. I'll do that.

Q: How many residents in West Village paid the \$75 for a year of cable service?

A: I don't know right now, but I'll email Maile so that she can send them out in the minutes.
Update - 163 resident units out of 256 total units in West Village subscribed to the cable deal. That is approximately 64% of West Village units.

Q: I received a survey that talked about a mandatory \$8 - \$11 fee for cable service. Is that the same thing as the West Village cable deal?

A: No. The West Village cable deal expires in July of 2007. The fee is scheduled to start after that.

Q: What about cable in Section A?

A: Section A is not wired for cable, and in any case, it is slated to be torn down in the summer of 2007.

Q: What channels will be included in the Housing and Dining basic cable?

A: We don't know yet. In October, Housing and Dining will be polling all residents to develop a basic menu for a unique cable package specifically designed for the Village. It will also include a Village channel where we will be able to post announcements and emergency information. Those announcements could also be shown on the main channel selection page.

Q: Why did Housing and Dining want to make the cable fee mandatory?

A: Billing people individually makes it substantially more expensive. The university has decided that it can't put it on the CARS account because it does not qualify as an "educational expense." There may be another way to bill individually, although this will increase the cost for Village residents choosing to sign up.

Q: Although the laundry rooms are very clean and nicely maintained, it is a pain to have to use quarters. Can we get change machines in the laundry rooms?

A: There used to be change machines in the laundry rooms, but they kept being vandalized. Even when the machines were moved to the community center, vandalism happened. It ended up costing the Village more money to fix the machines than it was worth.

Q: What about using ID cards in the laundry rooms?

A: I've actually been pushing that idea already. That's how it works in the dorms. West Village laundry facilities are already wired to make that transition. We would have to have some sort of card available for spouses as well, though. In any case, I am working on this.

Q: Why are there no disposal units in the apartments?

A: There used to be, but there were so many maintenance problems with people who didn't know what they were for that they cost too much money to keep. People tried to put diapers down them, big beef bones, glass...

Q: Why are we not allowed to have dishwashing machines?

A: Flooding. They used to be in the apartments, but there were so many big, costly floods that they were not included in the design plans for the new apartments. When a dishwasher flooded on a second story apartment, the water would seep down to the first story and a great deal of property was destroyed. Along these same lines, I pushed for installing a laundry room on every floor in West Village, but was overruled because of the potential for multi-story flooding.

Q: Why are there extra sinks in West Village apartments?

A: Because they didn't cost any extra to install.

Q: Why were the laundry rooms more expensive in West Village than in East Village for a while?

A: It was a mistake made by the subcontracting company responsible for the laundry machines. It has since been rectified and standardized Village-wide.

Q: Why do we have such small recycling bins in West Village?

A: We were promised large recycling dumpsters by August 1 but still haven't seen them. I'll contact the recycling agency again to remind them about it.

Q: Why can't we pay rent at the Village office?

A: We used to collect rent at the office, but we were banned from doing so by campus auditors because it violated their financial procedures.

Q: How is family housing linked to decisions made on campus by Housing and Dining? It seems that they always want to treat us like undergraduate dorm housing.

A: We spend a lot of time trying to teach upper administration that we are different from campus housing. There is not currently a student representative arm of Housing and Dining. In the past the VRA has taken the role of advocating for the interests of family housing.

Q: Many people are not respecting the reserved parking spots on Kinkaid. What can be done about that?

A: (From Brian Parsley.) We have posted signs on the street, but we can't post signs in front of every single spot. We are trying to get police to take a more active roll in towing cars. We used to post a ticket and then tow them after 72 hours. That doesn't work now. Cars will now be towed much sooner. Hopefully this will start to teach people not to park in reserved spaces.

A: (From Tavie Tipton.) We are also looking into having the lettering and numbering on guest spots painted a different color than on reserved spots. We are currently looking at quotes for repainting.

Q: What can you do if someone parks in your spot?

A: (From Brian Parsley.) First, don't park in someone else's spot. If you do that, then you will get ticketed and towed. Call the police and the police will tow the car.

Q: I had an experience where I had an emergency and had to park in someone else's spot because my spot was taken. My car was towed. Isn't there a more neighborly way to handle this type of situation?

A: If you do happen to park in someone else's spot, at least leave your phone number on the dashboard so that when that resident gets home, they will be able to call you instead of having to call the police.

Q: What should families with two cars do?

A: (From Brian Parsley.) There is no guest parking in the Village because families with two cars are parking in guest spots. If you have two cars and are parking in a guest spot, you are violating your lease. I have been chasing the same cars all over the Village in guest spots. One thing you could do is rent a parking spot from someone who has no car. This is perfectly legal, and you will not get a ticket unless the owner of the spot calls the police and complains that you are in their spot.

Q: What other ways can we reduce the parking problems in the Village?

A: I am negotiating now to get a couple short-term rental cars, like FlexCars, in the Village. The price would be several dollars per hour, and they would be easily accessible, with permanent parking spots near the Village office. That might make second cars less necessary for families, and free up some guest parking spots currently being taken by residents.

Q: If Section A is vacated and not built upon, could we use it as a parking lot?

A: (From Brian Parsley.) No, that wouldn't be legal.

Q: The doors in the West Village have a tendency to slam shut really hard, sometimes even knocking things off the wall. What can be done about this?

A: Maybe you need to have your door adjusted. Call the maintenance staff.

Q: In West Village both doors have locks. What if a young child accidentally locks him or herself in?

A: The slots on the outside of the door allow any thin object to open the door, not just the apartment key. A butter knife or something similar would probably work.

Q: Is it okay for me to paint the inside of my apartment?

A: Not if it is any color other than white. If you want to touch up a part of your apartment with white paint that matches the current paint, that is okay. In fact, doing it yourself would probably be better than contacting maintenance because maintenance is no longer allowed to do painting due to a lawsuit from the painters' trade union.

Q: I am interested in putting on a workshop for Village residents. Who would I talk to?

A: Pepper Black is in charge of residential programming. You can contact her at fullmoon@berkeley.edu. For funding, contact the VRA at vra@berkeley.edu and fill out a funding request.

Q: Why haven't I been getting all the fliers that have gone out lately?

A: There have been some delivery problems, but they have been fixed. You should get them all from now on. If you don't, contact the office.

Q: Is there some way to coordinate the delivery of the fliers? It seems like I get one every couple of days.

A: It would be great if we could coordinate fliers. It would save the office a bunch of money. However, the programs in the Village are so varied and independent that this is difficult to do. The new Village website may help with announcing upcoming events, though.

Q: In parts of West Village the garbage cans near the grills have filled up and are overflowing. In addition, the grills are filled with ashes. Could we get those emptied?

A: The staff is supposed to empty those out regularly. I will check into this. Perhaps we could get an ash can specifically to keep the grills clean and ash-free.

Prepared by:
Maile Urbancic
September 19, 2006