

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

October 11, 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:

- Parking remains difficult in the Village. Please stop parking in guest spots.
- There have been a couple auto burglaries and an auto theft. Make sure you lock your car and don't leave any valuables in plain sight in an automobile, even if it is locked.
- There have been some arrests for domestic violence.
- As always, there have been some bike thefts. If your bike is stolen, please report it. Use a high-quality lock on your bikes, and keep expensive bikes inside.
- Comment regarding traffic from Ocean View PTA president: during the morning and from 3:00 – 3:45 pm it would be faster for residents to not to use Buchanan to access the freeway. Those are the times when parents are dropping off or picking up their children from Ocean View. Travel will be faster for everyone if people who want to get on the freeway will exit the Village from Monroe and use San Pablo to access Buchanan, or exit the Village to the south and use the Gilman freeway entrance.
- Question and Answers
 - o **Q:** How many residents don't have cars at all? Could we figure out a method of letting residents without a car rent their parking spot to residents with two cars?
 - o **A:** It is really hard to tell how many people don't have a car. Brian thinks that the number is not very high. A new website is being created for the Village that will include a message board that allows residents to buy and sell things (like craigslist). Renting extra parking spots could take place there.
 - o **Q:** There are homeless people getting into our recycling bins and making a mess. Can anything be done about it?
 - o **A:** People are not committing any crime by recycling. We are not a closed facility, so the trash is public property. Strictly speaking, there is no private property in the Village other than in your apartment. However, if they are making noise or making a mess, call the police at 642-6760 and an officer will come deal with it.

- **Q:** Half the time the lights are on around our garbage area, and half the time they aren't. It makes us nervous to take the garbage out at night. What can be done about this?
- **A:** (Tavie Tipton, Office Manager, asked some questions about the problem. She responds:) We will look into it. The lights are supposed to automatically detect when it gets dark and turn themselves on accordingly. They are still under warranty, so we will have them replaced if they don't work.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Friday. Every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month is Family Friday. This month Family Friday will be on October 13 and 27. 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!

Pumpkin Sale. From 9:00 – 10:30 am October 21 there will be a pumpkin sale in the Village where families can purchase pumpkins for \$1. Sales are limited to 1 pumpkin per family or 1 pumpkin per child, as supplies last. You will be required to show a student ID when buying pumpkins.

Halloween. On Halloween (October 31) we are inundated with kids who come here to trick-or-treat. If you want to do something cool, like a haunted house, there are mini grants available to help buy supplies. To get a mini grant, submit a grant proposal to the Village Office, addressed to Ron Biakowski. At 1:00 pm on Halloween there will also be a Halloween parade through the Village by the children of Ocean View Elementary School.

Diwali Potluck. There will be a Diwali potluck held on October 28th. A flier will be sent out about it, so be looking for more information.

OCEAN VIEW AND THE VILLAGE

Julie Valdez, principle of Ocean View Elementary School addressed us:

By way of introduction, I love Albany and enjoy working with a great group of educators at Ocean View. I have previous experience working in Lafayette and other places around California. I am committed to supporting a diverse culture at Ocean View, and I particularly appreciate how the Village contributes to that environment.

The major issue that parents are concerned about right now is the construction at Ocean View. The bulk of the major operations have been completed. The scheduled completion date for impacted classrooms is December 21st. Hopefully we will be able to get rid of the portables out front by the end of the winter holiday vacation.

I'd like to open the floor for questions:

Q: Why are the portables being used? Is it because the classrooms are not ready?

A: Yes. They were brought in because of the tremendous population growth of Ocean View this year. There were more children than expected this year, and since the other elementary schools in the district are already at capacity, Ocean View got the bulk of the growth. After the construction is completed the portables will be removed.

Q: Why is there a generator powering the portables? The generators put out a strong smell near the classrooms.

A: Hard-wiring the portables with electricity from the school would have been cost prohibitive. I was worried about the smell being near the children, and that is why the classrooms were not put on the playground. The generators will go away at the end of winter break along with the portables.

Q: My daughter is 4 and a half years old. When and where do I register her for kindergarten?

A: In order to attend kindergarten, children must be 5 years old by December of the school year when they start. Linda Baker at the District Office on Talbut Street is the registration specialist and will be able to better answer questions about registration. *(The VRA is planning to have Linda Baker attend a VRA meeting before open registration starts next year.)*

Q: Is there a way we can find out about the curriculum taught at Ocean View?

A: The curriculum is posted on the school website: www.albany.k12.edu. There is also a website, www.cde.ca.gov, that shows the state benchmarks.

Q: What is the chance that children in the Village will go to Ocean View?

A: The district tries to place children as much as possible according to preferences of parents. However, the district also has to consider class sizes, facility, etc. They try to make sure siblings stay together. Parent-requested childcare is also a big thing – if you have childcare needs that necessitate children being placed in a certain school, the district does its best to comply.

Q: When and what is open enrollment?

A: Open enrollment is from March 1 – March 31. It is the process in which families may request a change to a school site other than the one to which they were assigned.

Q: What are some of the upgrades that the school is going to benefit from through the construction?

A: Ocean View will be made compliant with the American Disabilities Act. There will be new electricity lines, new data lines, new phones, new paint, and a new roof. They are expanding the playground so that there is more space for kids to play. There will be new carpet in the library. There will not be any new rooms built, with the exception of the Cedar room. The multipurpose room received an expansion of the stage. There is a beam that supports a portion of the roof that has rotted and will be replaced. There will be new restrooms, and probably a number of other improvements that I can't remember off the top of my head.

Q: When I was young I went to school from 9 am to 3 pm. Now it seems like school is shorter. Why the shortened hours for elementary school?

A: The shorter hours are due to a program that many schools in California are employing: staggered reading periods. Staggered reading periods allow the teacher-to-student ratio to be

increased to 1-10. These periods let teachers work more closely with students who are struggling with reading. As for kindergarten, some school districts have a full kindergarten day, but that requires extra funds. Whether full-day kindergarten is good for children probably depends on the child. Some children would probably benefit from the added instruction, but many kindergarteners are really tired by end of the day.

Q: All Albany elementary schools are feeding into one middle school. Are there negative outcomes of that?

A: Sure. There has been an issue of having enough facilities for the large student population. I don't have personal experience, but from what I have seen, our middle school children are doing pretty well. The instructors at Albany Middle School are very good and they do a great job with what they have.

Q: I heard a rumor that there would be an Albany Chinese School established in the district. Is there any truth in that?

A: We do not currently have a district-run Chinese school. At Ocean View there is an after-school program that teaches Chinese to children. There are currently about 20 children enrolled in the program, and a credentialed teacher gives instruction from 3 – 6 pm.

Q: I am interested in the future of the Gill Tract. To what extent is the school district communicating with the university about it?

A: There has been some communication. We always hear about pesticides if they are sprayed, and that is usually done during school breaks. I hope to have more conversations about what it could be and what it could provide for Ocean View. Kids take tours through the Gill Tract, but maybe the Gill Tract could do more for us.

A: (From Tavie Tipton) The Gill Tract is in a mid-life crisis. The buildings are old, but the Agriculture Department at UC Berkeley still uses the fields for agricultural research. Until the Department of Agriculture moves, nothing can happen on the property. It used to be part of the planning for the development of the Section A land, but it isn't anymore. Now there is no overall site plan and no decisions have been made about it that I know of.

A: (From a Village resident) As a parent, I have been very happy that my children have been able to go on tours through the Gill Tract, and I deeply hope that Ocean View can support the preservation of the land for agricultural and educational purposes.

Q: What percentage of kids at Ocean View are from the Village?

A: I'm not exactly sure, but my guess is 30%.

Q: Do you have a Spanish-bilingual program?

A: No. There no second language immersion programs anywhere in the district. Berkeley has a couple, but Albany does not. We are exploring ways to provide second language instruction. We have our Chinese after school program, and we are always looking for more after school programs. We would love to find more volunteers to teach after school programs in language, art, dance, etc. If you have a good idea or are interested in volunteering, please contact me at jvaldez@albany.k12.ca.us.

CABLE TV SURVEY

Maile Urbancic presented the results of the VRA Cable TV survey:

We have completed the survey and compiled the results in this handout. (*See the handout attached to this month's VRA minutes.*) A quick summary of the results show that 36% supported or strongly supported the mandatory fee, while 57% opposed or strongly opposed the fee.

Based on these results, the VRA will strongly recommend to Housing and Dining that the cable services be made optional for Village residents. This will likely raise the price of cable for those residents who choose to subscribe, but the price would still be lower than it would be otherwise. Because the service would be beneficial to some residents, we would prefer that they not completely get rid of the deal. If the fee were made optional then everyone would be happy.

VRA BUSINESS

In response to an approved budget expansion, VRA members voted on the following amendment to the VRA Charter:

Section XI ("Budget") of the V.R.A. charter currently reads:

The minimum V.R.A. operating budget for each year shall be the equivalent of one year's rent for a two-bedroom apartment in section B of University Village.

The V.R.A. Board proposes to change this section to read:

The minimum V.R.A. operating budget for each year shall be the equivalent of one year's rent for a two-bedroom apartment in West Village of University Village.

The amendment passed unanimously.

Prepared by:
Maile Urbancic
October 18, 2006