

State of the Green 2014 Speech/ Jerri Allyn, President

The Village Green Owners Association / Annual Meeting of Board and Owners

Saturday, February 7, 2015 / 9:45am-12:30pm / Resume Annual Board Meeting 4:00pm

Welcome! It's great to see you. My name is Jerri Allyn, and I'm President of the Board. It's been another year of tremendous changes, challenges and accomplishments. I am still honored to serve in this Emerald Isle - and I thank my talented fellow Directors and our staff for continuing to show me the ropes.

To paraphrase a famous quote by President Kennedy, *Ask not what your homeowners association can do for you, but what you can do for your association.* HOA's are one of the few places where the staff is directed by a board who know very little about managing a property of this size, and where the staff get new bosses at the beginning of every year. Challenging? You bet. **TEAM gets the job done--the board working fruitfully with staff and volunteer owners.**

Village Green has still not fully recovered from the results of the greatest recession since the 1930s. We continue to experience turnover of units, with the unfortunate loss of neighbors, as well as revenues. Yet we have definitely turned that corner. As our tax bills and the prices of newly purchased units continue to show, our property values keep climbing up.

Here are some notes on 2014:

- The Building Stabilization project is finally complete; the total two-year cost was \$2,022,266. We found the most effective method for doing this project, hired an architect, contractor, broke ground in 2013, and completed the work a few months ago, to the relief of the residents in Buildings 8 and 14.
- Our team of directors voted for more than \$2 million worth of reserve projects like this, improving the standard of living and financial appreciation of our condos for owners. Interior water line re-piping, sewer replacement, painting programs and roofing projects have been successfully completed.
- The 2014 Board remained committed to ensuring a stable financial status. This year ended with a surplus. We funded the Regular Reserve with \$617,413 and will transfer more than \$100,000 of additional unbudgeted funds to this account. We budgeted another \$581,010 to Special Assessment Reserves, and voted for a \$3.5 million Operating budget for ongoing operations and general maintenance in 2015.

- With the foresight of our Manager and Assistant Manager, who prepared an 11-year budget planning document, we've successfully gone through the first phase of strategic planning. After analyzing high-priced items, we found that water projects cause the most damage. We want our infrastructure repairs to improve the quality of life for residents, and that's why we've prioritized sewer replacement above other projects so we can finally put an end to the frequent sewage backups experienced in some courts, within two years.
- After an open invitation to all owners to submit proposals last June, the Landscape Committee successfully designed a pilot for Buildings 8 and 14, using the Cultural Landscape Report as a foundational document, along with other research. We anticipate this new drought-tolerant design to break ground in March.
- We spent a particularly trying year with our current escort and patrol company, and the Board appointed an ad hoc committee to work with the Manager including Directors Markowitz, Carson, and longtime volunteer Nat Hutton, to vet four companies. The Board has unanimously agreed on a local, community-oriented one in Baldwin Hills, and negotiations are underway. We anticipate the new company to start working here by the end of March.

TEAM: Changing Escort and Patrol Companies is going to represent a sea change in the Village Green. We need your cooperation. Let's work together to welcome the new patrol staff, and let them know about who and what to watch out for.

- We've made Communication improvements: An informative and attractive HIGHLIGHTS distributed monthly; website enhancements, like an agile calendar program that quickly posts upcoming events; we're expanding Mail Chimp-an electronic notice; and there's an increasing use of the informal Facebook page to help residents respond to challenges as they arise.

Can we do better? Always. We're human. We make mistakes. Are we ready for what lies ahead? We're going to do our best. **Soon you'll hear reports from the Committees, whose members the directors are also honored to serve with.** We think you'll find most impressive.

I want to appreciate some people whose deeds many may not be aware of:

- Director Fried's yearlong effort - joined by Singleton, Cyrus, Teresa and Ethan Markowitz last fall - produced an educational and fun Catastrophe Preparedness event.
- Following on their heels, we've seen the re-awakening of the Safety Committee and our Neighborhood Watch.
- Cultural Affairs (CAC) events are still a great counter balance, repairing the strife we continue to experience on a few challenging committees: (CAC) Drinks on the Green events are growing in popularity, and we just got a winter "Fireside Edition" in the Clubhouse. (CAC) Bill Beemer brought back Movies on the Green; and his crew did an outstanding organizing job with the annual garage sale last June.

These are a few examples of how owners are doing things to build community...

...Along with our incredibly responsive and dedicated staff. Carrying forth directives from the board, the staff labor vigorously to accommodate the needs of owners, and respond efficiently to breakdowns in communication and work orders. It continues to be a breath of fresh air to work with a team that checks off accomplishments. Our manager has kept the staff on schedule, as we enter the fifth year of our Special Assessment-Mills Act contract projects.

Your directors volunteer 8-16 hours a week. **Do we welcome your involvement and ideas? You bet. We still need the best heads we can get to assist with board initiatives. And we deeply appreciate those who contribute in all kinds of other small and large ways.** These include measures that are just as essential as a healthy checkbook, to a robust sense of community ...

...Where we also butt heads with those who think differently than we do. Human beings love gossip, drama, and violence. I see this in the sometimes deadly dramas that unfold in the schools and communities where I work in, and in the popular rise of "television reality shows" featuring all manner of dramatic conflicts across our country, including cop and robber crime shows.

We have our own "Green Village reality show" where owners get into all kinds of mischief. We inadvertently hurt one another, most often with attacks of harassing statements, an emotional violence, versus physical assaults. Owners have admitted, have literally confessed to me, that they participate on the gossip side of Facebook and attend Board meetings, in anticipation of the latest "Village Green drama."

I often ponder this dynamic, which I get caught up in; I can gossip with the best of you. One conclusion I've come to is to stay "conscious." Turn away from the gossip. Turn toward listening more carefully. Turn toward patience. Keep explaining why directors make certain decisions, that we do our best to weigh in on each concern, even those of the very few who reflect minority opinions. Keep sharing how the board must prioritize a "to-do" list every month, which grows as fast as we check-off each accomplishment.

And still I ponder - how can I – how can the directors - demonstrate leadership in contributing to "productive drama"? Rather than unproductively screaming over how many trees come from Barlow and how many from Winans - ? - how can we turn toward the excitement, the reward, in solving the challenge of re-greening our Village?

As Martin Luther King has noted, and I paraphrase again: *We've barely touched the light within each of us.* Imagine what we could accomplish if we turned this lingering tone of accusations, into discussion? If we turned assumptions of wrongdoing by the staff, into questions? These little finger-pointing dramas that drain us, that have volunteers walk away from participation? Imagine what we might accomplish if we turned more toward the light?

And let me express appreciation to all those who make constructive suggestions. You mentor us.

- I've been having these waking dreams, in that state of sleep arousing to wakefulness: In reality, we've heard from owners who are willing to pay for tree replacements. In my vision, an enthusiastic TEAM of tree huggers organizes a campaign, canvassing everyone to see if they can financially contribute toward replacement. This TEAM works with the board to design a system for collecting funds and getting those trees re-planted.
- ANOTHER GOAL in my vision – includes TEAMS from every court who educate residents about the importance of leaving their porch and patio lights on for 24 hours a day, so we can further discourage crime in the dark of night.
- Equally important, in my vision, other TEAMS go door to door to meet their neighbors, asking about their needs in the event of an emergency, requesting numbers and emails to organize phone trees so we can help one another if city services break down. This could be crucial for saving a life. (I have family in New Orleans. During the Katrina hurricane, many with disabilities were lost to the storm.) In reality, it's unclear whether the Association could be sued if the board adopts an official policy about

owners helping one another during cataclysmic events. The directors got bogged down about liabilities. But I'm addressing citizen-to-citizen, human-to-human beings now. Wendell and I live in the same court. We don't see eye to eye on many issues. In my vision, if Wendell and his little grandson get toppled into a split crevice caused by an earthquake, I have no doubt that I'd do everything in my power to drag them out – lawsuit be damned.

- Reality: How many have heard of the La Brea Corridor Study? The city is building a regional trail between Exposition and Stocker Boulevards. In my vision, ONE of the GOALS I've conjured is for a TEAM of Association hikers to link our Emerald Isle with this exciting neighborhood initiative. Our Green Village becomes a beacon of light throughout the smoggy, polluted, desert basin that is currently Los Angeles. We become a leader in an Eco-Sustainable movement – so that Ethan and Teresa's son Silas, Ted and Georgia's twin grandsons, Joe and Allison's Louis and Sadie Jane, Malcolm's little one, Bens four kids, Marcy's grandkids – inherit a city where asthma is an affliction of the past. We leave our children an environmentally and economically affordable community within this City of Angels – that gets replicated along with other regional trails - throughout the county. Our heirs inherit an urban site balanced with green spaces, a place to breath clean, healthy air with all Angelinos.

In MY "Green Village reality show" I am striving for all to be a part of needed solutions, respectfully.

To conclude, of course you can ask your HOA to do things for you. However, the board, volunteers on working committee and those who pitch in, all ask in earnest: What CAN you do for your HOA? To those owners who'd like to work on discrete tasks, yet are challenged with the committees, we can appoint small Ad Hoc groups comprised of neighbors who chose to work together. What do YOU WANT to contribute?

You've heard some of my visions. The directors have more. And we'd like to hear about yours. Please join our TEAM in achieving more than financial, Mills Act projects, and maintenance goals at Village Green this year.