



*"To preserve and enhance the unique village character of Laguna Beach."*

# Newsletter

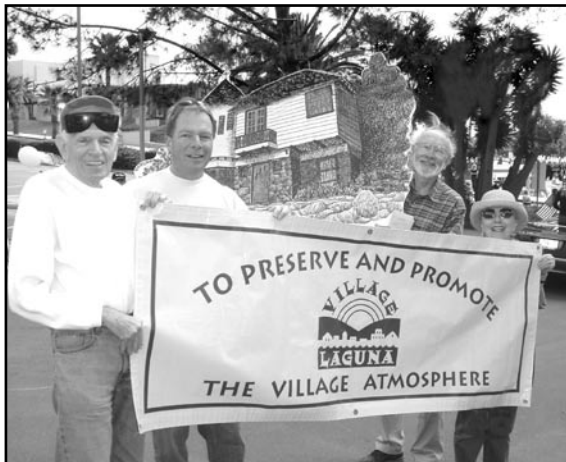
THE VILLAGE LAGUNA NEWSLETTER • FEBRUARY 2007 • ESTABLISHED 1971

## Council Commits to Climate Protection: VL Considers Next Steps, Prepares Parade Entry with 'Green' Theme

At the urging of a number of dedicated community members, the City Council has unanimously agreed to sign the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, making Laguna Beach the fourth Orange County city to do so and become one of 376 "cool cities" nationwide. The agreement commits cities to reducing their carbon dioxide contributions to global warming to 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. Among the suggested measures are purchasing hybrid vehicles, adopting "green" building standards, investing in wind and solar energy, enforcing anti-idling rules for vehicles, making streets more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, planting trees and creating urban green spaces, and educating businesses, organizations, and families. The anticipated effects of global warming on world sea levels bring the issue home for Lagunans. The challenge of the task is not to be underestimated—habits are hard to break (for example, when it

got too warm in the Council Chambers last Tuesday, the response was to turn on the air conditioner instead of opening the doors and windows)—but the community's history of environmental concern allows hope that the commitment can be met or exceeded.

At our next general membership meeting on February 26, Village Laguna member and member of the city's Environmental Committee Tom Osborne will report on what other cities are doing to slow global warming and lead a discussion on ways to approach implementation of the agreement in Laguna. Then, drawing on the ideas that emerge from the discussion, we'll be planning and producing materials for our "green"-themed entry in the Patriots' Day Parade. Poster board and art supplies will be available. We'll meet in the Wells Fargo Community Room at 7 p.m. ≈



## Village Laguna to March in the Patriots' Day Parade

Village Laguna will be marching in the Patriots' Day Parade on March 3, reminding spectators to "keep the charm" and to "think green" (photo shows last year's entry). The Board is meeting early that morning so as to be ready to assemble in the high school parking lot around 10:30 a.m. Entries are identified by number, and this year we have moved up to #70. There will be banners and signs to carry and transportation by golf cart for members who need it. All members are encouraged to join in. ≈

## Coastal Commission Seeks Input on Use of Sunset Trail

The Coastal Commission is conducting a survey of use of the Sunset trail, which begins on Sunset Avenue directly behind the hospital and extends into the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park. The investigation is intended to determine whether any public rights to the trail exist because of public use. Lagunans who have used the trail are encouraged to fill out a copy of the survey questionnaire and send it to Linda Locklin, Coastal Access Program, California Coastal Commission, 725 Front St., Suite 300, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (llocklin@coastal.ca.gov). Questionnaires are available at [www.coastal.ca.gov/access/prc-access.html](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/access/prc-access.html) or from Debbie Hertz ([planetlaguna@msn.com](mailto:planetlaguna@msn.com)). ≈

### FEBRUARY General Membership Meeting

Monday, Feb. 26, 7 p.m.  
Wells Fargo Community Rm.

### MARCH

### Board Meeting

Sat., March 3, 8:30 a.m.

Home of Michael Hoag  
415 Loma Terrace

# Village Voices



By Arnold Hano

**W**ordsworth had it right when he wrote “The world is too much with us.” And that was when the blackberry was still a fruit.

I have trouble keeping up with language and its changing form. What in the world is an I-Pod? Does it have I-Peas? There’s a TV show called *Dr. Phil*. I’ve never seen it, so I don’t know what Phil is a doctor of. Who calls a doctor by his or her first name, anyway? Not all of us, of course, contribute to this made vocabulary. In the checkout line at Trader Joe’s the other day, I stood behind Carmen, the dark-haired lovely who works behind the counter at our local library. She was with her husband, who owns Len’s Wine Site. They do not own a TV, so they don’t know what Phil is a doctor of either. They also do not have a cell phone (neither do I), and they drive an old Volvo. They seem to have their act together, and that is the solution: Give up your TV and cell phone and drive your car till it dies.

I remember back in 1950 or so when a homosexual friend of mine told me that he was no longer “homosexual,” he was “gay.” “Gay,” I asked, “how come gay?” He explained that it was the opposite of “straight.” I said, “Gay is the opposite of morose,” and he nodded. “That too.”

The world spins and stays in orbit; I go flying off somehow. I have not viewed a moment of *American Idol* or any so-called reality show, with the exception of that fantasy about Laguna Beach. I sat stolidly through one episode of that one. Bonnie lasted perhaps three minutes; she is more sensible than I.

We have a new image and new words to deal with. A few weeks ago, the lead story in the *Los Angeles Times* told us that our planet was like a “runaway train,” totally out of control and with no means of stopping it. We used to handle runaway trains by sidetracking them. Apparently this one can’t be sidetracked, and there seems to be no one at the wheel.

Do you buy this new language? Do you buy the doomsday words? Global warming has really become global warning. We are warned: The end is near. (Hey, wasn’t that the placard carried by the Earth-is-flat nuts?) Climate change is all about us these days. OK, I agree. Things are bad. Greenland is turning to soup. The polar bear is endangered. I hate it when animal species die, just as I hated it when a local said of the historic structures on Third Street that stand in the way of the construction of the senior/community center, “To hell with the cottages!” Even the man who uttered this angry denunciation of four rather beat-up dwellings realized he’d said something stupid and apologized at a subsequent meeting. We all talk nonsense at times. And I think the media are talking nonsense when they say that the planet is out of control.

What we have to do is stop driving so fast, stop turning on all the lights in the house, stop permitting mansions to be built that rip away greenery and turn it all into cement, stop blare and glare and waste. We are a community that

banned high-rise development, banned billboards, banned pole signs, stopped development in the Canyon.

It’s true that we have a runaway train to deal with, and I am serious about the problem. It will take all of our genius to slow that train down. Perhaps we should take our cue from Carmen and her husband. Perhaps we should simplify our lives—make sure that when we say “blackberry” we mean the fruit that makes a rather tasteless jam. I have started driving under the speed limit. Other drivers will, of course, go nuts if they find themselves behind me. They will lean on their horns and give me the finger. I will drive on, at a modest speed. I am holier than thou.

Simplify. Let the TV gather dust. Change the title of that show to *American Idle*.

The only thing Bonnie watches on TV is the City Council meeting. When we tell friends about this, they look at her strangely and say, “That’s sick.” What’s sick today is the emphasis on new things, expensive things. We don’t own a camcorder. We don’t own a digital camera. But I insist on claiming ownership, with the rest of you, of Laguna Beach and of the planet. And I suggest, as a first step, that we start to speak a different language. Wordsworth was right. Two hundred years ago this year, he wrote, “It is a beautiful evening, calm and free/ the holy time is quiet as a nun breathless with adoration.”

Let us keep our evenings beautiful and quiet, and perhaps we will begin to pull the planet back to sanity, the runaway train brought to a trembling halt. ≈

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*Email addresses are on our website: [villagelaguna.org](http://villagelaguna.org).*

## EIR Workshop Draws a Crowd

Last month's League of Women Voters/Ocean Laguna/Surfrider-sponsored workshop on how to read an environmental impact report attracted more than 50 Lagunans, and everyone went home with a packet of information on the EIR process, the basic components of an EIR, and examples of public comments, appropriate and otherwise. Local resident and expert Ed Almanza, who prepared the materials and walked us through them, explained that the process is designed not just to inform decision makers and the public about potential significant effects of proposed activities and identify ways environmental damage can be avoided, but "to demonstrate to the public that the environment is being protected" and "to determine the environmental and economic values of their elected and appointed officials, thus allowing for appropriate action come election day should a majority of the voters disagree." Public input into the process is critical, not least because there is no oversight at any higher level than the city.

One thing to look for in judging the adequacy of an EIR, he said, is whether the project *objective* is distinguished from the project *description*; without this distinction, there's no logical way of considering alternatives—projects that might meet the objective while avoiding significant adverse environmental effects. Another is whether the criteria for significance are spelled out in advance—for example, in terms of General Plan policies or ordinances. Laguna EIRs don't always do this, and this has the effect of making the significance of effects a subjective judgment.

Almanza reminded workshop participants that the city is in the process of revising its procedures for implementing EIRs and suggested that we look at the proposal, which is available for comment at <http://www.lagunabeachcity.net>.

## Building Site Coverage Rules Modified Slightly

Responding to Council concern over what some members considered excessive coverage of lots with impervious surfaces (driveways, walkways, and auxiliary structures in addition to the house), on January 30 the Planning Commission recommended deleting the section of the Municipal

Code giving the Design Review Board discretion with regard to maximum building site coverage. The Commission's charge had been broader—to pursue a standard for maximum coverage with impervious materials structures—but commissioners had found the reality too complex for a universal standard. The code section in question is used to allow a somewhat larger house as a trade-off for not adding a second story where the latter would be out of character with the neighborhood or block views. Architects attending the hearing argued that they needed this flexibility (implicitly, to design bigger houses), but the Council voted for it anyway (with Elizabeth Schneider and Kelly Boyd opposed).

## Council Focuses on Customer Service at City Hall



One positive outcome of the November election is that Verna Rollinger's call for a shift in priorities from the top down at City Hall, establishing a system that explicitly values being helpful, has attracted the Council's attention. The

idea of having a kind of "concierge" or receptionist at the front counter is being considered, and a direct-mail survey of satisfaction with city provision of services has been commissioned. The survey will seek input from 1,200 residents, randomly selected, and compare the results with those from other similar jurisdictions. While this approach is likely to produce some useful information, there seems reason to worry that it won't provide a complete picture of the situation.

Most Lagunans rarely have occasion to seek services at the City Hall counter. Those who do often have stories that point to problems that need fixing. Will the Council also be giving systematic attention to customer complaints—soliciting them, organizing them into categories, examining the problems they reflect? When Steve Lopez of the *Times* invited readers to e-mail him about traffic in Los Angeles, the response produced some interesting ideas about solutions. If residents have comments on their experiences at City Hall, it may be a good time to let Council members know about them.

**Join Village Laguna!** Pay annual dues of only \$20 per member or \$35 per family and receive our informative monthly newsletter, attend fun parties, stay informed at our monthly meetings, participate in our annual Charm House Tour, and support local city and school board candidates. (If you are already a member, check your membership status on your mailing label. For example, 1/1/2006 means your membership expired in January of this year.)

If you would like to join Village Laguna or if you need to renew, please clip and return this form with your check. If you are already a member, why not share this application with a friend or neighbor?

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer for \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$20/person, \$35/family).

I have included an additional amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help Village Laguna with its mission.

**Mail to: Village Laguna, P. O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652**



P. O. Box 1309  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

## FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING Monday, Feb. 26, 7 p.m. Wells Fargo Community Rm.

### Natural Watercourses in News

The California Environmental Quality Act makes a project appealable to the Coastal Commission if it is within 100 feet of a stream. This is how, some years back, Lagunans managed to get a Coastal Commission hearing of the proposal to move the Corporate Yard to the ACT V lot when City staff was having it processed through the County; the stream on the property qualified it for consideration.

The city has a map of significant natural watercourses ("streams" under the Commission's definition), and development has to be kept 25 feet away from their centerlines. The reason for this, as spelled out in the General Plan, is that disturbance of natural watercourses may not only damage valuable wildlife habitat and ecological systems, but also create hazards such as flooding and mudslides.

South Laguna contains designated significant natural watercourses, too, and when the community was annexed to Laguna Beach, the Council voted to give them the same protected status as the city's. City staff at the time failed to pursue certification of the South Laguna mapping by the Coastal Commission, and this seems to have suggested to current staff that these watercourses don't count.

The Coastal Commission has identified streams on the St. Catherine's School site that in its opinion make that project appealable. Its determination is now the subject of a lawsuit. More recently, a project on Hillhaven places a 6,900-square-foot house with significant impacts on very high-value habitat just 30 feet from a mapped watercourse. City staff has declared the watercourse "not an appealable

feature," but Coastal staff disagrees.

We expect our City to be on the side of the angels when it comes to environmental protection. It is to be hoped that all the relevant General Plan policies will be applied to this new project so as to produce an approval for which no appeal will be necessary. ≈

### More on Montage Parking

According to the city's weekly newsletter, the Montage has just received a permit for its planned permanent improvements to the parking lot on the site of the old Unocal station. Its lease with the trailer-park owners for the narrow strip just south of the lot will expire on February 22, and that area will be abandoned. When the use was approved in March 2005, concerns about what would happen if the strip became unavailable for southbound egress at the traffic light were brushed aside by the Council majority. We wonder how ingress and egress will be safely managed without it. ≈

### Renew Your Membership!

Annual membership dues are payable in January of each year. If the date on your address label is 01/01/07 or earlier, please renew today by clipping the payment coupon below and mailing it with your check in the attached envelope to Village Laguna, P.O. Box 1309, Laguna Beach, CA 92652. A date of 01/01/08 or later means you have already renewed (thank you!). Your dues help Village Laguna to continue working to preserve and enhance Laguna's village character. ≈