



The Riviera Association

September 2008 www.rivieraassociation.org P.O. Box 4235 • Santa Barbara, CA 93140-4235

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President's Letter

This is the last president's letter I'll be writing for our bi-annual newsletter. My third and final term ends December 31, 2008. It has passed quickly and I've enjoyed and learned from the process, but it's time for new leadership. I must tell you I am now a firm believer in term limits!

The Riviera Association is truly a remarkable organization. It's the oldest neighborhood association in Santa Barbara. We represent approximately 1,900 addresses within our boundaries which stretch from the base of the Riviera on the south, to city boundaries on the north, Sycamore Canyon on the east, and Mission Canyon on the west. If you are receiving this newsletter, whether a paying member or not, you're likely to be living within the association boundaries.

The board of directors is composed of fifteen residents who volunteer countless hours of time. They are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the quality of life we all so enjoy on the hill. Each board member is eligible for up to a maximum of six years in office. The president can serve a maximum of three years. There are no paid employees. For those of you who have served on boards, you will realize what an accomplishment it is to keep an all volunteer board going for 78 years.

Not only has your association survived for 78 years, it has flourished. We regularly participate in city council and planning commission meetings. We are constantly working with our

city fire and police departments to improve our safety issues. We are active and we make a difference. Our input is not only heard, it is solicited and welcomed.

Over the last three years your board has been directly involved with fire safety, the Wildfire Suppression Assessment District, the Riviera evacuation drill, street and public safety, views, zoning, density, emergency communications, Cottage Hospital housing, building heights, Sycamore Canyon access, El Encanto Hotel remodel, Riviera Research Park remodel, Marymount School construction, candidates forums, Web site development, and generally responding to your needs and concerns. I'm very proud of the accomplishments of the board of directors and I thank them for the support and friendship they have shown me as your president.

My final request of each of you, our constituents and neighbors, is to join or renew your membership. Enclosed is the 2009 membership registration card. For \$30 a year you can be a paid member of the association. Either return the enclosed card or pay at our secure online Web site at www.rivieraassociation.org.

Sincerely,

Paul Cashman

Paul Cashman, President
The Riviera Association

Riviera Association Questionnaire

It has been many years since the board asked your input. Please help us serve you better by responding to the enclosed questionnaire. The

board welcomes your concerns and any suggestions, and thanks you in advance for your participation.

Joining the Riviera Association

For 78 years, the association has been dedicated to ensuring that the Riviera is a great neighborhood—by protecting and preserving what we have, and by working to improve things throughout the neighborhood.

Current issues include fire safety and emergency preparedness, zoning density and variances, undergrounding of utilities and preservation of existing undergrounded utilities, roads and traffic, the impact of the El Encanto renovation, Franceschi Park, and many other matters that come up during the year.

Visit our new and improved Web site at www.rivieraassociation.org. It has current and archived information, links to other resources, and the capability to pay dues online. It will soon have “members only” pages with information of particular interest to Riviera residents.

We have two general membership meetings a year—one in the spring and one in the fall (Sunday, October 19). We feature speakers on subjects of current importance to the Riviera. The board meets bi-monthly throughout the year, and its committees meet as often as necessary.

Please renew your membership for 2009. Our ability to influence issues and the decisions of our local government and regulatory agencies is directly proportional to the size of our membership. Our ability to monitor issues and protect neighborhood interests depends on adequate funding. We depend on your association membership dues of only \$30 per year per household.

If you are not a member, please join today—either using the form enclosed with this Newsletter, or online at www.rivieraassociation.org/join.php. We need you! —Bob Johnson

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The Riviera Association General Meeting

**Sunday October 19, at 5:00 p.m.
at Marymount School Auditorium
2130 Mission Ridge Road**

Fire Season is upon us! Come hear representatives from the Santa Barbara Fire Department speak on “Lessons Learned from the Gap Fire;” provide us with an update on how our money for the Wildfire Suppression Assessment District is being spent and how we can better prepare for wildfire!

“**Plan Santa Barbara**” is working its way through our city planning process. This broad-based public outreach program will create the updated General Plan which will be used to determine Santa Barbara’s future growth and development. Join us along with representatives from city planning for an overview of the process, a discussion of the issues and information on how you can participate.

Did You Know...

The geographic boundaries for the Riviera Association area were established in 1952. The greatest width of the association territory is about 2½ miles and the greatest distance north to south is about 1¾ miles. The highest point on the “nearer” Riviera is a bit easterly of the junction of Franceschi Rd. with what is the continuation of Las Tunas Rd, an elevation of about 880–890 feet. On the “farther” Riviera, the high point is close to Mount Calvary where the elevation is 1,250–1,300 feet. (*Information published in the first Riviera Association newsletter, April 1965.*)



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The Fire Safe Council

The Fire Safe Council meeting is usually held on the third Thursday of the month at the Red Cross building at 2797 State Street in Santa Barbara. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. and is open to the public. We usually have a broad attendance from local fire departments, U.S. Forestry and volunteer groups all interested in sharing information about fire prevention and response. It's a great forum to meet some of the people behind the scenes and find out where to get more information on preparing for a fire or other types of natural disaster.

One of the topics at our last meeting was a briefing by Renee O'Neill, on the Tepusquet Fire. Renee is a volunteer on the Fire Safe Council and a resident in the Tepusquet area where the fire first started. She has also conducted numerous classes on emergency preparation and is well versed in fire department procedures. What struck me was her description of the process she went through with the fire now was in her backyard. The usual, cool, linear thinking process went right out the window. With the smell of smoke in the air, information was flying at her all at once; the phone was ringing because of concerned family and friends. She couldn't concentrate on what to do first. Renee had to force herself to find her checklist and read it and then perform the first task. She came back to the checklist, read the second task and completed it. After several tasks, she found a rhythm and was able to get multiple tasks done quickly.

The point to be made here is that because you have your emergency box in the garage, your container of valuables identified, you may not have all the bases covered. Having key emergency operations on a checklist and stored at several locations in your home could greatly improve your response time in the first moments of an emergency. —*Jm Knight*

Franceschi Park and House

In the April 2008 newsletter, we informed association members of an offer to assist with the implementation of the demonstration planting bed. Mr. Robert Hughes, Franceschi Park Foundation president, successfully secured a \$25,000 grant and is in consultation and discussion with parks department managers as to the application and administration of these funds.

Several months ago, representatives from the parks department and the Pearl Chase Society visited the property. The purpose was to determine responsibility of each organization in the rehabilitation of the house. Should the Pearl Chase Society be able to raise the needed funds for house rehabilitation, the city must stabilize the sloping patio south of the structure, rebuild the deteriorating stone wall north of the structure and widen the driveway off Mission Ridge Road to comply with fire department access requirements. Ms. Rapp, parks department director, received a preliminary cost estimate from a civil engineering firm. It stated the need for a more detailed investigation of the necessary work resulting in a more accurate project cost. Authorization of and funding for this expanded project investigation will be a council decision. —*Brigitte Forssell*

Undergrounding of Wires

The process put in place for undergrounding of wires by the city has been suspended pending review. This was the result of a project disputed between a group of neighbors who want to proceed and another group that did not want to participate. There will be a city council meeting in September to discuss the undergrounding process. The Riviera Association board will be proposing that a "mediation step" be added to the undergrounding process in the case of neighborhood disputes. —*Jules Bender*

El Encanto Hotel & Garden Villas

Changes at the executive level of the Orient Express Hotel organization are affecting the El Encanto Hotel project. Due to major changes of the project, the El Encanto planning team is presenting a revised Master Plan to the city. This plan is being reviewed by the various city boards and commissions in “phased stages” in order to expedite approval of the design changes.

Major changes are the new “Mission Village” structures with underground parking in the northeast corner of the property, replacing several circa 1970s buildings. The northwest corner, at the intersection of Mission Ridge Road and Alvarado Place, will be the location of the Central Plant (heating and cooling, laundry and housekeeping, and general service facilities) with an adjacent parking lot. Due to the contour of the property, part of the parking lot will be depressed several feet and screened by a wall along Alvarado Place.

The Mission Village location does not interfere with view corridors and has received positive comments from neighbors. However, close neighbors to the proposed Central Plant and parking lot have expressed serious concerns regarding equipment noise and the valet parking activities on the increased lot size.

Interested neighbors and Riviera residents can contact Kathleen Kennedy, project planner at the city planning de-



Photo by Charles Croninger

partment (564-5470) or Trish Allen at Suzanne Elledge Planning and Permitting Services, INC. (966-2758) for a status report and hearing dates of the project.

Some of you may already know that Mr. Clive O’Donoghue, general manager of the hotel for the past three years, has been transferred to an east coast Orient Express Hotel. Mr. Bruno Brunner is the new general manager, coming from the Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans. The Riviera Association board is looking forward to establishing the same congenial and productive working relationship with the new manager that was enjoyed with Mr. O’Donoghue.

—*Brigitte Forssell*

One General Meeting Topic

Join us at our general membership meeting on October 19 to discuss “Lessons Learned from the Gap and Zaca Fires” Here are a couple excerpts I pulled from the Internet about two prior local fires that have threatened the Riviera. It happens fast so be prepared!

Coyote Fire—1964

“The Coyote fire of 1964 was very bad indeed, but it could have been worse...Under slightly different circumstances probably even more houses would have been burned, or people could have been trapped in large numbers and burned. This is something to keep in mind when speculating about big fires of the future, for probably our most destructive fires are yet to come.”

Sycamore Canyon Fire—1997

“From the city, power transformers can be seen exploding in white flashes, as trees and homes go up in flames around telephone poles. It is an eerie sight. The entire mouth of Sycamore Canyon filled with an orange-yellow glow. Fire trucks, their lights flashing red in the night sky, can be seen rushing back and forth through the foothills from one hot spot to another. When a desperate stand by a valiant group of firefighters near Stanwood Drive fails, the front moves into the Riviera...”

For full text of Santa Barbara fire articles go to:
www.sb-utdoors.org/Interpretivel —*Paul Cashman*