

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
Monday, December 8, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Davis called to order the special City Council meeting of December 8, 2008 at 6:11 p.m.

Present: Mayor Davis, Council Member Scherman

Absent: Vice Mayor Hume, Council Members Cooper and Leary

PRESENTATION – Neighborhood Leaders Solutions Summit

Mayor Davis recognized that strong neighborhoods are a benefit to government agencies. He noted that after presentations of best practices by two community groups that he wanted to open the discussion on improving communication between neighborhoods and agencies, and to look into the issue of how to take a semi-informal meeting of neighborhood leaders and institutionalize such a gathering in a way that makes sense.

Council Member Scherman expressed her thanks to community representatives for attending and encouraged neighborhood leaders to actively approach the City with their suggestions and feedback.

Stonelake Homeowners Association

Safety Coordinator Vince Lena, representing the Stonelake Homeowners Association (SHA) provided an overview of the composition and accomplishments of the association. SHA has a membership of 1,500 homes with elected board members and elected delegates representing three designated districts comprising the community. SHA operates a clubhouse, maintains a website at www.stonelakeclub.com, publishes a monthly newsletter, coordinates a private security patrol, and operates four committees including the Community Club, the Architectural Control Committee, the Safety Committee, and Neighborhood Watch. SHA is also a member of the West Elk Grove Coalition, consisting of numerous groups including the Lakeside and Laguna West homeowners associations, which meets to examine larger issues effecting residents in the western region of the City. Mr. Lena described SHA's efforts in approaching the City during and after the annexation process to address several safety concerns in the area, especially in regards to street speed limits and the implementation of traffic calming measures and devices. He noted that 15-20 stop signs were added implementing four-way stop intersections and crosswalk markings in needed areas of the community. He explained that the levee in the community, owned by the City, is a topic of interest to SHA, and described the collaborative efforts of the City and the Cosumnes Community Services District to address dog litter issues on the levee trails.

He explained that the success of SHA has come from the efforts of a small group to build a good rapport with local government agencies, and that the group conducts outreach early to provide a stance regarding projects effecting SHA. Such early outreach has positively influenced development and architecture in the area, and created an opportunity to establish partnerships with developers in identifying SHA's expectations and needs of the community.

Mr. Lena described the efforts of the SHA Safety Committee in setting up regular meetings with the Police Department which draw an average 50-70 residents per event. These meetings 1) address general questions about roles of the Homeowner Association, the Police Department, and neighbors; 2) provide a means for direct communication between these groups; and 3) help establish and coordinate Neighborhood Watch. The Safety Committee also held a Safety Day, attended by approximately 250 residents, which coordinated numerous agencies and local businesses which advertised services, provided general safety information, and conducted outreach to the neighborhood. During a question and answer period, the following was discussed:

- SHA distributes their monthly newsletter by mail, using membership dues to pay for production and mailing, and posts the newsletter on its website;
- Over the past five years approximately 30 stop signs have been installed, with SHA working both with the County before, and the City after, annexation;
- Fire Chief Steve Foster of the Cosumnes Community Services District, noted SHA's assistance in completing the I-5 Safety Plan; a two year process coordinating several stakeholders addressing fire threats to 1,400 acres of open space south of the community;
- Flood plan measures for SHA's water runoff include a water detention basin and the levee;
- The 1,400 acres included in the I-5 Safety Plan are located in the unincorporated portion of Sacramento County and it remains unknown what long term development plans are held by the owner, AKT Development Corporation;
- The Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Association provided assistance in remedying loitering and vagrancy issues that were previously encountered at the cul-de-sac ending on Elk Grove Boulevard west of I-5. These efforts also deterred semi-trucks from parking in the areas around the interchange;
- The northbound High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) bypass lane from Elk Grove Boulevard onto I-5 is on the right side of the ramp, instead of being on the left-most lane which is more typical. The City and Caltrans plan to initiate work to remedy the situation starting spring 2009;
- Private security service for SHA is provided by Burrows Security. Local business owners, who are not members of SHA, have contributed funds towards the security service voluntarily. SHA contacted developers as early as the project application process to invite developers to contribute towards local security services. The security service is in addition to SHA's Neighborhood Watch;
- Regarding outreach to local commercial development, SHA invites developers to present projects to the SHA early in the process which has fostered dialogue for

- the developer to attain feedback from the community and to attain formal or informal support from SHA before presenting to the Planning Commission;
- SHA has had success in meeting with staff from the Cosumnes Community Services District (CCSD) and to date have not needed to approach the CCSD Board to address needs in the community;
 - SHA aggressively pursued establishing contact with local government agencies during the annexation process in order to make the agencies aware of them. Reaching out to the agencies did require substantial effort but was definitely worth the investment to establish an ongoing rapport.
 - In response to Mayor Davis, Mr. Lena noted that the City could better serve community groups by continuing summits of this nature, but also by taking the time to conduct individual outreach meetings with groups, maintaining a personal, on-going dialogue.

Fallbrook Neighborhood Association

With the aid of an overhead presentation (filed), Fallbrook Neighborhood Association (FNA) President Angee Wangsgard provided an overview of the history and objectives of the association. FNA was started in 1993, is currently comprised of 400 homes, and is a non-profit group funded by an annual \$25 volunteer membership. FNA has a volunteer Board of Directors, has established bylaws, maintains a website at www.efallbrook.com, and promotes a focus of proactively building a stronger community using a five point method encouraging 1) security and safety, 2) getting to know your neighbors, 3) beautification, 4) awareness of current events and development, and 5) service in the community. FNA maintains a newsletter distributed every other month. Newsletter Coordinator Kurt Meusborn noted that 10 delivery routes are employed by volunteers to distribute the newsletter. The newsletter is an effective means to communicate current events affecting the community, and advertises activities, events and services such as:

- Annual events including an Easter Egg Hunt, July 4th bike parade, Christmas Event, Holiday Decorating Contest, and National Night Out;
- Regular events such as the FNA Neighborhood Night Out which encourages residents to coordinate a night to informally barbeque in their front lawns to invite interaction and dialogue with neighbors;
- Services offered by community members and local agencies;
- The Yard of the Month award, which along with recognition through an article in the newsletter, gives the recipient an identifying banner to place in their yard and the opportunity to select the next Yard of the Month recipient;
- The Adopt a Family Program which provides charity assistance from the community to aid families in need that are encountering hardships;
- The Neighbors in Need Program which centralizes neighborly charity assistance in the FNA community to aid residents facing extreme or unexpected circumstances; and
- Candidate Nights which invite candidates for local government offices to directly address and meet the community;

Ms. Wangsgard described additional proactive methods used by FNA to conduct outreach to the community including: 1) Delivering a welcome gift basket to new residents, 2) using e-mail notifications and signage at the entrance to the community to update the community on news and current events, 3) promoting a "talk first" policy for handling neighbor disputes to mediate issues locally before initiating calls to local service agencies, 4) encouraging participation at meetings addressing area and City wide issues, and 5) using phone trees to coordinate making contact with agencies like the police to report suspicious or nuisance activities. During a question and answer period, the following was discussed:

- Police Chief Lehner responded to Ms. Wangsgard that the Police Department does track phone call histories, call frequency, and number of callers to assist in dispatching units to an incident.
- Membership dues is used by FNA to pay for production of the newsletter and to purchase liability insurance;
- Insurance costs approximately \$1,200 per year and often is required by local government agencies for groups who wish to use public facilities. Ms. Wangsgard inquired if measures could be taken to reduce premiums through pooling resources of qualifying community groups. Council Member Scherman reported that Deputy City Manager Frank Oviedo was currently researching options the City could pursue to help alleviate liability insurance costs for community groups;
- FNA's bylaws were drafted by a previous member who was a lawyer, and Ms. Wangsgard noted that it would be helpful for groups that are starting out to have a resource to access with templates, forms, and information on how to start and establish a community group; and
- Mayor Davis noted that establishing and holding regular elections for a neighborhood group is very important to propagate activity in the association and to ensure continued operation as the composition of communities change over time.

Mayor Davis invited attendees to express their hopes, successes, and frustrations encountered by their respective groups. He detailed his vision of a central web resource, having a geographic map to identify area resources and community groups, and would also contain information on best practices, sample templates, and additional general resource information. This resource site would link community websites, and potentially could provide space to host group websites. He noted if there is an opportunity to create a Council of Neighborhoods with on-going meetings of community groups such as this summit, and to consider that such an organization could start external of the City, not necessarily requiring it to be a sub-committee under the City's purview.

Council Member Scherman observed that continued gatherings, such as these summit meetings, address cost concerns for meeting space for large gatherings, and could serve as a mechanism to build momentum to consider creating a more formal Council of Neighborhoods.

During an open forum question and answer period, the following was discussed:

- A designated contact or liaison for community groups would be helpful in assisting individual groups in contacting one another;
- Elk Grove is comprised of unique communities with different needs. A master inventory of those individualized needs could be beneficial to local government agencies in assessing and prioritizing projects, and could reduce duplication of services amongst agencies;
- In looking at areas identifying active community groups it was noted that there is a gap of underserved areas with no registered or acknowledged representative group(s). It was suggested that outreach be conducted to bring awareness of the benefits of community representation to these areas, and to explore alternatives to create a voice for these neighborhoods such as hosting a general information clearing-house on the basics of starting associations and Neighborhood Watch programs. The outreach was suggested to be more than only a website, as not everyone has, or is willing to rely on, computer access;
- The Fallbrook community benefits from an integrated trail system, and implementation of the Trails Master Plan by the City should be prioritized to connect and strengthen neighborhoods;
- Small groups starting out have a difficult time due to the lack of resources, information, and volunteers for membership. It is especially difficult for groups who are concerned about their safety due to conditions existing in the neighborhood. Council Member Scherman expressed her belief that no one should feel threatened in their neighborhood, and urged citizens to contact the police and city representatives immediately to remedy such situations. Other citizens noted that all community groups start small, and communication conducted early and often is a key to initially organizing groups;
- At the suggestion that the City appoint an ombudsman to coordinate with community groups it was noted that Denise Costello, Crime Prevention Analyst, serves as an active City resource to address Neighborhood Watch formation and community safety issues;
- Involvement by community groups with the Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD) was identified by several attendees as an underutilized partnership. Mayor Davis recognized an opportunity may present itself for the newly formed Youth Commission which may be able to take such a charge to foster relationships between the EGUSD and community groups;
- Communication with neighbors was a consistent theme throughout the night but some attendees expressed they feel ill-equipped to interface with the diverse cultural backgrounds of their neighbors. Mayor Davis responded that such cultural diversity training could serve as a good topic for a future meeting;
- In relation to dealing with community safety and security concerns, it was noted that Code Enforcement is another City resource that can aid in dealing with problematic neighbors; and
- Rising crime is often a motivator for neighborhoods to unite as a community group and it was noted that the City used to have a summary sheet of crime available online. It was asked that the resource be reinstated so local groups can gauge criminal conditions in their neighborhoods.

Mayor Davis suggested it would be beneficial to maintain a status list of the issues raised as topics to revisit or address on or before the next Neighborhood Summit meeting. He thanked participants for being involved and looked forward to opportunities to further share information, ideas, and strategies to implement suggestions made during the course of the evening.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business to conduct, the special City Council meeting of December 8, 2008 was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.



JASON ROLF LINDGREN,
ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

ATTEST:


GARY DAVIS, MAYOR