

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

October 12th, 2005

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

INTRODUCTION

Ron Bialkowski led the meeting. We began by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

A resident announced Cal Community Action Day, an opportunity for Cal students to work together to improve the community. It will be held on Saturday, October 15th from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Upper Sproul.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Officer Brian Parsley had a few things to say:

1. **Crime.** Right now we are doing okay, generally speaking.
 - *Close the laundromat door.* Be sure to close the door, especially if you use the main laundromat near the office. Several loads of clothing have been stolen from that area, possibly by homeless individuals.
2. **Parking.**
 - Parking will get worse before it gets better.
 - More officers will be coming down to monitor speeding and stop-sign violations, both of which have been happening frequently in the Village.
 - If you have a car that does not run and have been parking it in guest spots in the Village, be aware that officers will begin towing cars with lapsed registration starting October 17th. If your car is towed, contact the University Police for information about how to get it back.
3. **Car Washing.**
 - Do not wash your car in Village. Also do not change your oil here. The runoff goes into Cordonices Creek and is very bad for the environment.
4. **Guest Parking**
 - Officers do monitor cars parked in guest parking spots. The limit is 72 hours at a time for any car. Officers will soon be using new technology to help accurately mark cars parked in guest parking and track how long they have been there. Removing a mark from a car that has been placed by a police officer is a crime (a misdemeanor, in fact), so don't do it.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Walter Bahm, Village Community Garden Manager, spoke to us:

1. **General Information.** The Village Community Garden is located to the west of Section B and is open to residents of University Village. The Garden currently has 90 to 100 plots under cultivation; more plots are available. Anyone in the Village can obtain a 20 square-foot plot for \$25 per year (the money is used to buy tools and maintain accessibility). Water is provided. If you are interested in signing up for a plot, contact Walter Bahm at wbahm@yahoo.com. There are large wild blackberry bushes in the Garden; anyone can go pick the berries.
2. **Construction Encroachment.** The construction plans to replace Section B have created access problems and potential encroachments into the Garden. Originally the construction company, J.R. Roberts, wanted to close the Garden for two years during the last construction phase in exchange for compost and soil enrichment, but residents rejected the proposal. The current construction designs include using 40 feet of the east end of the Garden as a parking lot and a sidewalk, starting in the fall of 2006. This will cut off the main entrance into the Garden. J.R. Roberts has agreed to build a temporary entrance in the south-east corner of the Garden so that the Garden can remain open during construction. Residents with plots in the Garden will likely take action to try to stop the encroachment into the Garden for use as a sidewalk and parking lot. There has been an article in the Berkeley Daily Planet regarding this issue; residents can help by writing letters to the editor. Interested individuals can also join the Garden Yahoo group. Contact Walter at wbahm@yahoo.com for more information.

Norton Mitchell, Residential Services Coordinator, had an announcement:

1. **ESL Classes.** The Village Office is considering creating English as a Second Language classes here in the Village, starting in the Spring Semester. The classes would be twice a week, with varying curriculum each month. They would be open to any resident in the Village, including parents and children of students.

Ron Bialkowski announced the following upcoming events:

1. **Ramadan Veggie Potluck Dinners.** There will be vegetarian potlucks in celebration of Ramadan on the last three Thursdays in October—the 13th, 20th, and 27th. The event will be held in the Four Corners Room in the Community Center and will start at sunset. Everyone is invited; bring a vegetarian dish to share!
2. **Thanksgiving Potluck.** A Thanksgiving Potluck is being tentatively planned for November for families that will be spending the holiday in the Village. Be waiting to hear more about it! If you are interested in helping with the event, contact an RA or any member of the VRA Board.
3. **Pumpkin Festival.** On October 23rd from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. the RAs will host the annual Pumpkin Festival. Families will be able to buy pumpkins for Halloween for \$1 a piece. It will be held outside the Community Center.
4. **Harvest Festival.** The Harvest Festival will be held mid-afternoon on October 30th in the Gill Tract. There will be face painting, information about gardening, and other booths.

SISS – SERVICES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

Ivor Emmanuel, Director of SISS, and Laura Nikraves, International Student Advisor, led a discussion regarding the needs of international students at the Village and brainstormed ways that SISS could help:

1. **What is SISS?** SISS provides immigration support, helps foreign students and scholars assimilate to campus life, and tries to ensure that students and scholars have successful lives in the United States. They are located in the International House on campus, but are not PART of I-house, but an independent unit. They want to learn how to better serve international students here at the Village
2. **Needs of International Students.** What needs do international students have?
 - *Health care.* Families need to know where to go for services, and they need to have the English language skills in order to be able to adequately advocate for themselves and their families.
 - Possible solution: An orientation or workshop regarding health care in the US, showing how the health system works and what programs international students can access.
 - *Employment.* Spouses of international students have often been professionals in their own country but cannot find a job in the US.
 - Possible solutions: A workshop regarding eligibility for employment in the US. Setting up internships for spouses in the area in which they worked in their home country to give them experience performing the same job in the US.
 - *English.* Some spouses and especially parents of international students may have limited skills speaking English and have few opportunities to learn.
 - Possible solutions: Informal family get-togethers between English-speaking families and international families. Trading English lessons for international cooking lessons.
 - *Taxes.* International families often have difficulty filling out their tax forms.
 - Possible solutions: A workshop discussing tax preparation. (Note: a workshop of this type is held every year on campus; the issue with having the same workshop in the Village would be having enough space to accommodate a large crowd.) One-on-one advising at workshop. Making the advisors' contact information available throughout tax season so that confused students could call with questions.
3. **Long Term Goals.** SISS would like to make themselves a household name. In order to raise awareness of SISS, a flier providing information about SISS will be put into the packet of information that is given to new residents upon moving into the Village. SISS would also like to create a handbook for international students to help them adjust to life in the US.

RANDOM ITEMS

There will be information about lead and lead testing at the annual Health and Wellness Fair in the spring. If you want to have your children tested for lead before then, you can contact the Tang Center or the West Berkeley Family Practice. If you live in any of the older buildings in the Village, there may be lead paint on the interior. Windowsills may be problem because paint

dust tends to accumulate. If you have concerns about lead, you can contact Maintenance Supervisor Bruce Hawkin at 526-8505, extension 14.

Secretary
Maile Urbancic
September 22, 2005