



viewpoints

Summer 2010

Volume 41 Issue 1



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Supervisors Approve Chicken Ranch Development over Community's Objections

Even though hotly contested by the surrounding residents, GMIA, the Valle de Oro Planning Group, and the community at large, development of the former Hooper Chicken Ranch located next to Fuerte Elementary School was approved by the County Board of Supervisors on May 19th.

The approved change in General Plan and zoning represents a 600% density increase over the current land use designation and double the density that would be allowed by the County's recommendation for the General Plan update.

To support the proposed density, the Supervisors voted to allow sewer lines to be brought through Damon Lane Nature Preserve from Rancho San Diego and the development site to be graded so that the north portion will be well below the grade of Fuerte Drive and the south portion will be well above the Damon Lane Nature Preserve. Some of the elevation increases with man-made slopes appear to be necessary for the sewer to work properly, and the sewer is necessary to support the large increase in planned density.

Supervisor Dianne Jacob led the way for a swift approval of the project after dismissing many of the protesting residents for a two hour mid-day break. The momentum of the public input against this project was lost and it became clear that Supervisor Jacob supported the project. Many speakers had been at the meeting since early morning, but could not remain for the long postponement. However, once the meeting began again after

2:00 P.M., Supervisor Jacob's recommendations were swift and the developer was granted what appeared to be a predetermined approval.

This project, with its 170,000 cubic yards of cut and fill grading, will be out of character with the surrounding homes and will forever scar this community. The incursion of sewer will lead the way for future lot splits and the further decay of our semi-rural appeal. The traffic congestion will be compounded along Fuerte Drive and the surrounding residential streets.

Many residents and GMIA members have been deeply disappointed by the public process that this development has taken. Our legitimate concerns were systematically disregarded as the project was guided through the entire process by the staff of the Department of Planning and Land Use leading to support of the project by Supervisor Jacob and the other Board members.

The final decision by the Board of Supervisors shows that ensuring a profit to developers is more important to them than ensuring the well-being of our community. ▲

West Nile Virus Alert

Get prepared for another season of those pesky mosquitoes. One dead bird with the virus has already been found in El Cajon, so get rid of all the standing water and protect yourself from mosquito bites.

For more information, please call 858-694-2888 or visit the county's website, www.vector@sdcounty.ca.gov. ▲

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

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Casa de Oro**www.gmia.net**

Message from the President

GMIA and our community at large have been dealt a significant defeat when the County Board of Supervisor's systematically disregarded GMIA, the Valle de Oro Planning Group, and the concerns of more than 30 Grossmont/Mt Helix residents who spoke out against the Chicken Ranch Development.

While my views are not shared by everyone, I suggest that our efforts were not completely in vain. We do have an impact. While we have been defeated, the community could have been hurt much worse if we had not taken a stand. Remember, the first proposal presented to the residents included 46 homes versus the 36 that were granted. The Planning Commission also agreed to apply a "Design Overlay" which means that the architectural styles must pass a discretionary approval for its general design compatibility. The "California" design is intended to emphasize the "Ranch," "Spanish" and similar designs that are common in the immediate community. The developer has also agreed to limit two-story construction to only 20% of the homes which should help with the scaling of the development.

On a related note, we have had great success in the past with contributing to the stopping of a five-tier water rate structure that would have nearly doubled most of our water rates. Rates have increased and they are being increased again, but GMIA remains diligent in efforts to make the increases logical. The water district has also acknowledged our concern about unfair punitive pricing to households with larger lots. They have said that a rate study will be in the works in the near future that will specifically address this concern. The rates are going up again and GMIA has been instrumental in getting a forum on the new water rate proposal so that your questions can be addressed. We encourage our members who live in the Helix Water District to attend the scheduled forum in July.

We have sponsored another successful Garden Tour this year and we plan on the continuation of this tradition. We have had several community events and walks and are planning new events for the fall. Please stay informed through the Viewpoints and GMIA.net.

As always, the Directors of GMIA greatly appreciate your membership and continued support. ▲

Mark Schuppert

It's That Time Again...Annual \$18 Membership Dues Payable Now

Our new fiscal year has arrived and your annual dues are now payable. (Your address label indicates what month, day, and year you're paid through.)

As you will notice on the enclosed payment envelope, the dues are being raised from \$15 per year to \$18 per year.

Even though we're in a recession, costs keep going up (paper, printing, postage, costs for events, web site, notices, etc.) for our organization's activities. ▲

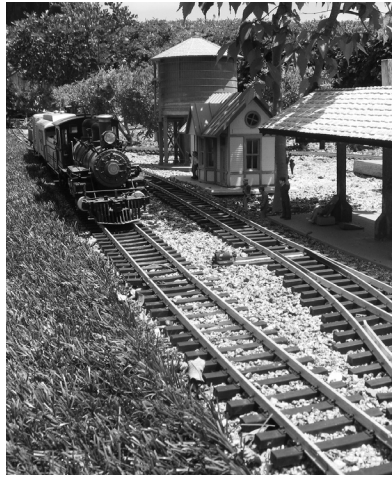
2010 Art & Garden Tour

Thank you to members Ron and Mary Alice Brady, Bob and Carole Caparas, Dick and Cynthia Jackson, Al and Jennifer Westermeyer, and Chris Wotruba who opened their magnificent gardens for our annual Art & Garden Tour. Their generosity gave over 500 members and guests a wonderful opportunity to learn about plants that flourish in our neighborhoods, view attractive landscape designs, and relish the beauty of our community. As always, original work by local artists was displayed for show and sale. Thanks to Susan

Nichols who wrote our garden descriptions. A huge thank you to GMIA Board member Jeff Rule who took over the reigns as our Art & Garden Tour Director and produced a flawless event. Great job Jeff!

We couldn't produce this popular tour without the help and support of our members. If you would like to participate in or help with next year's Art & Garden Tour, please contact GMIA at www.gmia.net or P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943. ▲

Photos by Bob Cederdahl



Annual Dinner Meeting Recap

RECYCLE was the theme for GMIA's 2010 annual dinner. Table centerpieces followed through on that theme; each centerpiece was a one-of-a-kind free-form creation consisting only of recyclable materials. Some pieces were so creative they should have been submitted to the Del Mar Fair as part of their exhibit on "artistic recycling." Thanks to the three ladies in GMIA who donated their artistic talents and time to make them. And thanks to Sprouts and Trader Joe's for their donations of colorful, re-usable grocery bags.

Again, The Abbey Catering and Event Design Co. provided great



service and fantastic food, especially the chocolate cheesecake brownies — we'll have to order more brownies next year so we can have more than one!

Bob Cederdahl's photographs of GMIA's May 2 Garden Tour were displayed early in the evening. Troop 362 presented the flags and led the Pledge of Allegiance to begin the meeting.



President Mark Schuppert presided over the meeting and the re-election of some board members. He thanked Susan Brownlee, the recipient of the annual Al Platt Memorial award, for all her contributions to the community.

Guest speakers included: Sheriff's Capt. Guy Chambers, Margy Day from the California Native Plant Society on native water-wise plants, Maggie Eggers of Edco Disposal on recycling, Laura Eubanks from the Master Gardener's Association on composting and recycling your leftovers, and Dianne Jacob, County Supervisor. ▲

Are Cell Facilities in the County Right-of-Way Coming To Your Front Yard?

Next G Networks has come into our Mt. Helix community with plans to put 12 of their telecommunications facilities on existing or replaced power poles in the county right-of-way portion of our front yards.

In order to accommodate the addition of these new facilities, at six of the proposed locations the existing utility pole will be removed and replaced with a new pole that is 6' to 15' taller than the existing pole. Total heights vary from 34 to 39 feet. Many of the new poles exceed the 35 foot height restriction for our residential neighborhoods.

The cylindrical or panel antenna enclosures and the shrouded equipment box will extend up to 2 feet and 16 inches, respectively, from the surface of the utility poles. Additionally, new power lines will be required on many of the poles. This complete configuration, located in many front yards, will be a significant visual impact and interfere with scenic views including views of Mt. Helix.

The Valle de Oro Planning Group could not make the findings necessary to approve the required Use Permit for this project. Specifically, the location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed use are not

compatible with the adjacent residential uses and would be harmful to the character of the Mt. Helix community. Locations on Fuerte Drive would also violate the General Plan Update designation of that roadway as a scenic corridor.

By mounting the entire cell-site equipment suite on the wooden poles, the poles are converted to non-camouflaged monopoles which are prohibited in the residential zones associated with all of these monopole sites. (County Zoning Ordinance, section 6985.)

If you wish more information on the details of these new facilities, please

Helix Water District – New Rate Increase

In addition to the 20%+ increase they just adopted, the Helix Water District is proposing a new rate increase of up to 12%. Much of this increase is driven by the increased cost of benefits for the District's employees at a time when most other public agencies are cutting back on salaries and benefits.

Helix Water District has scheduled a forum to discuss the proposed rate increase and will have a representative available to answer questions. The forum will be held in the multi-purpose room at Fuerte Elementary School on Wednesday, July 14th at 5:30 PM.

GMIA opposes the proposed rate increase as it reflects the most aggressive of the six options presented to the Helix Board and reflects the continued use of a punitive pricing system that effectively charges a higher rate increase and a higher price per gallon to households with large lots or large families.

The proposed rate increase ranges from about 5% to 12% with the higher increases applied to the heavier users (note the Rate Matrix uploaded to GMIA.net). The higher percentage increases are applied to the already higher rates of large-lot households thus unfairly compounding the punitive impact.

The tiered system was put in place to encourage conservation and to penalize those who waste water. For many GMIA residents, we have already installed water saving devices and replanted areas with drought tolerant landscaping. Water use in the district has already decreased by 12% during the past year and has met the conservation requirements to the year 2020. Since conservation requirements have been met, there is no supportive reason to keep the punitive pricing system in place. We are conserving effectively and the already high prices will ensure that our conservation efforts will remain strong.

The unfair pricing system is resulting in diminished landscaping that has historically contributed to our community character and appeal. Avocado, citrus, and other mature trees are being idled and are not being replaced. The abundance of mature landscaping that was such a large part of the community's character is being threatened.

The Water District did acknowledge that there is a minority of larger lots (1/2 acre and greater) that have a higher basic need and the District will therefore study a potential "domestic water budget" structure that would reflect a lower punitive pricing component for those lots. However, this future "study" is something that may be

considered, but the majority of the board members have an obvious bias toward the punitive pricing system as they were given five other options with at least two of the options that would have lessened the impacts of the punitive pricing. Why should we believe that they will vote any differently if a more equitable pricing system is presented? Except for the two representatives for the GMIA area, the majority of the board voted in favor of the most punitive pricing option and that option will be presented to you at the July 14th meeting. ▲



Fall Sweetwater River Nature Walk

GMIA is in the process of planning an exciting new Nature Walk in the Sweetwater River Wildlife Preserve for mid-October. GMIA boardmember and wildlife specialist Brian Arnold plans to partner with the San Diego Audobon Society for a special look at migratory birds in our area.

Be sure to check our fall Viewpoints for details about this upcoming family-friendly event. ▲

CELL continued from page 4

contact Ms. Michelle Chan of the Dept. of Planning & Land Use at 858-694-2610.

The County Planning Commission will be the next to hear this request. As of now, no date has been set. We'll put the date on our website (gmia.net) as soon as we know.

[Location of poles: 10225 Fuerte Dr., 10695 Fuerte Dr., 10151 Grandview Dr., 10545 Grandview Dr., 9686 Lemon Ave., 4501 Mayapan Dr., 4211 Nabal Dr., 10728 Queen, 4523 Resmar Rd., 10313 Sierra Vista Ave., 9151 Tropico Dr., 4306 Vista Way. There is a red tie marking each pole.] ▲



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Self-Help Contact List for the Unincorporated County

Animal Control..... 619-236-4250

Hazardous Waste Recycling..... 877-713-2784

Abandoned Vehicles..... 619-401-2000

California Highway Patrol..... 858-637-3800

Code Enforcement Hotline 858-694-2705

Code Enforcement 858-694-3741

Dead Animal Pick Up..... 888-299-9905

Dig Alert 800-227-2600

Locate gas lines, electrical wiring, water pipes
and phone lines before you dig. Call at least
two days before you dig.

Grading Enforcement..... 858-694-3034

Environmental Health Code

Enforcement..... 619-338-2222

Graffiti Removal on Roadways 858-467-4042

Graffiti/County Property 858-874-4040

Dept. of Public Works

Junk & Debris 858-495-5143

Dept. of Public Works

Lemon Grove Sheriff's Station..... 858-337-2000

Noise Enforcement 858-694-3741

Road Maintenance - Potholes..... 858-565-5262

Dept. of Public Works

San Diego Sheriff's Dept. 858-565-5200

Non-Emergency

San Miguel Fire District 619-670-0500

Business & Administration

Vector Control – Rodents, 858-694-2888

Flies, Mosquitoes, etc.

Health Services Dept.

For those living in the city of La Mesa or city of El Cajon,
please contact your city's offices.