

**Mission Canyon Association
Minutes of Board Meeting
February 3, 2009
7:32 p.m.**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mission Canyon Association was held at the McVeigh House at the Museum of Natural History on February 3, 2009 beginning at 7:32 p.m.

Present: Dick Axelrod, Nancy Bertelson, Ralph Daniel, Tom Jacobs, Kathy Koury, Bill McCullough, Ray Smith, Tim Steele, Alastair Winn

Absent: Georganne Alex, Laurie Guitteau, Milt Roselinsky, Jean Yamamura

Guests: Michael Mortensen (Cal Trans project engineer), Jim Shivers (Cal Trans public information officer), Nancy Johnson (SBBG), Bob Muller (SBBG), Cass Ensberg, Lorna Moore, Marcy Simmons

President Tim Steele called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Minutes of the January 9, 2009 minutes were approved after noting that the proper year was 2009 (not 2008 as printed).

The primary order of business was a discussion of the Foothill Road Project. Michael Mortensen from Cal Trans outlined his presentation: (1) the duration of Foothill Road closure; (2) tree removal; (3) parking, or not, on the improved Foothill Road; and (4) outreach to the community.

1) Foothill Road closure.

Mr. Mortensen said there was no magic answer since the project is complex. The project includes dealing with relocation of water and gas lines as well as providing storm drainage. Current plan is to close Foothill on 9 May for 3 weeks followed by partial, one lane access, for the following 6 weeks. Plan is to have the job done by mid-July. This will entail paying premium time for 6 day/week, 10 hr/day work schedule. Some aspects of the project are in flux. Cal Trans will meet with the contractor as well as the Office of Emergency Services (OES) – inclusive of county agencies in charge of emergency response – to discuss time line and scope of the project. Efforts will be made to ensure that Cheltenham evacuation route to the west remains clear of parked cars and constantly open. Mr. Mortensen emphasized that, because of the complexity, there is no way to guarantee the final schedule.

Lorna Moore, a guest and Mission Canyon resident who lives on Las Canoas Road, cited an article in EdHat that decried the removal of trees, claimed the project's objective was to improve drainage and implied that the project was being forced on the community without sufficient public information. Ms. Moore argued that trees should not be removed, the roads should remain narrow, the ditches should remain and the project reconsidered.

Ray Smith pointed out that the main objective of the project was to improve the safety of Foothill Road, a main route of ingress/egress during an emergency. Smith pointed out that roughly a decade ago (editor's check – May 9, 1999) the Mission Canyon Association, because of concerns associated with the safety of evacuating a box canyon in an emergency, had recommended creating an innovative drainage system along both shoulders of Foothill Road to provide for emergency pull-out, pedestrian and bike circulation. Following this recommendation there were meetings with County officials and Cal Trans, followed by several workshops and meetings where the proposed improvements were described and public input was elicited. These meetings and workshops stretched over the ensuing decade while funding was being secured. Throughout this process the vast majority of Canyon residents have viewed this project as important for the health and safety of the Mission Canyon community.

Tom Jacobs noted that Foothill, with the narrow width and side ditches, is extremely dangerous. He further noted that there is no safe place for pedestrians or bikers and, particularly, for children walking or biking to school from MC heights.

Numerous folk, sometimes several at once, continued this discussion (your scribe apologizes for his inability to record multiple conversations). Eventually, Ralph Daniel requested that we return the discussion to our agenda and Mr. Mortensen continued with his presentation.

2) Tree removal.

The timing of this project presents several logistical considerations. Tree removal is scheduled to avoid nesting season for birds. Trenching is scheduled in an effort to avoid the rainy season. And road closures attempt, but do not fully succeed, to avoid the fire season. Currently 31 trees are potentially slated for removal. Seventeen are within the right of way and must be removed, 14 others will be evaluated to see if they can be saved. Cal Trans will work to save trees where possible. Residents on Foothill whose trees are being removed have been informed and replacement trees will be provided to homeowners where appropriate and/or desired.

3) Parking, or not.

Cal Trans builds and improves roads, they do not concern themselves with parking issues. If the community wants the improved Foothill road to be free of parking this will require a legally enforceable ordinance by the County. There was some discussion regarding the potential to make the shoulders of the improved Foothill a different shade of asphalt as has been done elsewhere. It was noted that the shoulder on the north side of Foothill would be 5 ft wide, that on the south side 4 ft wide. Also noted, it would require County funding for a Cheltenham culvert.

4) Outreach.

Cal Trans has notified the homeowners where trees will be removed. A “larger universe” of letters will soon be sent to the community giving project goals and time line as well as phone and web site for obtaining project updates. For information call (805)568-0858 or online at www.dot.ca.gov/vift5. This year’s MCA Annual meeting will host Cal Trans and provide a forum for discussing the project: history and rationale for the project as well as a time line and project information. Cass Ensberg, MCA member and Canyon resident, noted that this project has the potential improve the beauty of Foothill Road. She cited Mission Canyon Road scenic corridor as an example to emulate and suggested that the Cal Trans presentation include views of “how it will look when complete”.

Tim Steele noted that many rocks will become available because of this project and suggested trying to work with the contractor to provide rocks to residents who wanted same for walls and/or other landscaping. This ended Cal Trans portion of the meeting.

Nancy Johnson presented the Botanic Garden’s standing report to the MCA dated Feb. 3, 2009. She noted that work would begin next week to clear vegetation and dead trees on the west side of the Garden (east side of Tunnel Road) making use of their Firesafe Council Vegetation Removal Grant. Also noted was that Bob Muller gave an excellent talk on fire & chaparral and that this talk may be given again. The Herb Parker sculptor proposal will go before the HLAC next Monday Feb 9th. Tim Steele scolded the Garden for not including fire-related specification on this proposed project. Comments with respect to the Garden’s DEIR for their expansion plans are due at the County (Alex Tuttle) by 5 p.m., Feb. 17th.

There were other random discussions. However, being past 9:00 p.m., your scribe was no longer on duty. The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday March 3, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.

Ray Smith, Acting Secretary