

Public Meeting of the Civic Council April 16, 2018

A regular meeting of the Ladera Ranch Civic Council was held April 16, 2018 at the Rancho Santa Margarita Water District Building on 26111 Antonio Parkway. The meeting convened at 7:07 PM with the following members present.

ROLL CALL:

Council Members Present: Chair, Stephanie Ramsey
Vice-Chair, Gary Kephart
Treasurer, Amir Arbabi
Secretary, Margaret Novak
Councilmember, Joe Brenneman
Councilmember, Michael Ellzey
Council Administrator: Absent

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Girl Scouts Troop #4393.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were several members of the public in attendance, which included residents of Ladera Ranch, parents and children from Girl Scouts Troop #4393, as well as representatives from Capo Unified School District (CUSD), California Highway Patrol (CHP), Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD), and Ladera Ranch Neighborhood Watch (LRNW).

Young members of the Girl Scouts Troop asked several that were responded to by Kristin Vital, Superintendent of CUSD. Below is a summary of that discussion.

- **Question:** Why aren't there outside classrooms at our schools in Ladera Ranch?
Answer: The Superintendent indicated that select schools have outside classrooms, gardens, and other outdoor-based activities. There must be a partnership between the community, school district, parent teacher association (PTA), and redevelopment dollars to fund these kinds of improvements and other school sites.

- **Question:** Is it possible for Oso Grande Elementary School to have an outdoor classroom kind of set-up?

Answer: CUSD would have to evaluate that kind of set-up based on available funding, but teachers are permitted to have class outside, when they deem it appropriate.

- **Question:** Can CUSD schools in Ladera Ranch have affordable “activity camps” for fun events (e.g. water balloons, etc.) with students?

Answer: These kinds of activities are already in place at several of the schools, so check Ladera Ranch “Roots and Wings” for more details about ways to get involved.

- **Question:** Can parents could learn more about what students are trying to learn in math so the parents can help help their children understand the lesson plans?

Answer: CUSD provides a parent university district-wide, and CSUD will make sure this information is shared for the Fall so parents better understand how then can help.

- **Question:** Is it possible to have a perimeter fence installed at Oso Grande Elementary School to keep bad guys out?

Answer: There is not enough funding available for CUSD to provide this kind of perimeter fencing. However, CUSD has completed some research to better understand the implications of perimeter fencing, security cameras, and having only one point of ingress/egress to a school campus. Early intervention is very important. If communities really want fencing, then the residents of Ladera Ranch would need to be open to a facilities bond. There are different “schools of thought” now about the effectiveness of perimeter fencing, based on the unfortunate circumstances of the Las Vegas Massacre and the fact that perimeter fencing in that case prevented people in the audience from being able to escape the shooter. Also, a lack of fencing makes it easier for law enforcement to be able to access perpetrators more quickly. Finally, funding resources are limited and aesthetics to the community are of concern to many.

- **Question:** Can Oso Grande Elementary School expand its parking lot?

Answer: This is part of CUSD’s facilities discussion in July 2018, during which CUSD will be evaluating enrollment to understand time shifts to influence attendance. In 2005, when Oso Grande Elementary School opened, there was plenty of parking, but over the course of time, the parking became more constrained because of other local uses. Open space under the powerlines is not available due to easement. LARMAC allowed a sidewalk to be installed to help with access and while parents shifted the school start/end times to help allow parents to walk their children to school, parents still ended up driving them instead. Stoneybrooke Elementary School is now gone so those students are also attending Oso Grande Elementary School and the result is crowding in the parking lot areas. Walking groups in the morning are very helpful.

- **Question:** Can CUSD allow a day for students to plant trees/flowers in Ladera Ranch?
Answer: LARMAC has participated in Arbor Day where the students planted trees on the school campus. However, this has not been community-wide despite partnering with specific community-based organizations to do so. LARMAC is open to exploring ways to help CUSD facilitate this kind of event involving students.
- **Question:** Can the science lab, which only has five different activities at this point, be expanded to provide additional learning topics?
Answer: As different grade levels advance, it is likely that CUSD will be expanding this program to include additional events/activities/learning topics. Also, if interested, parents and students are encouraged to check out the Ocean Institute for similar types of learning opportunities.

Mr. Jeffery Hamilton from Melody Lane in Ladera Ranch shared his comments about the County's poor slurry seal efforts in his neighborhood. In 2015, the County made several repairs to the street that involved tearing up asphalt in and around the curb areas. That project was patched with a temporary asphalt. In 2016, that temporary asphalt was destroyed by the intense rains. In 2017, the County simply installed their slurry seal over the damaged asphalt, so now the result is significant cracking and degradation of Melody Lane. He has asked about this project a number of times and is still looking for an answer as to when the County plans to fix the problem. Separately, Mr. Hamilton expressed concerns about the number of vacant storefronts in Ladera Ranch. He cited examples such as the Pacific Grill location that has been vacant now for nine years and for which our community was just notified that the tenant is no longer planning to open. He also indicated that Kohl's is still empty and that these kinds of empty storefronts is attracting nuisances such as the street racing along Antonio Parkway (Kohl's parking lot is the staging area for many of the street racers). Separately, Mr. Hamilton shared that school children are being picked up in the middle of the street after school, which is extremely dangerous. He is a crossing guard and is concerned for their safety. Separately, Mr. Hamilton again asked Councilmember Kephart for a copy of the minutes from the meeting between LRCC, LARMAC, and CUSD from approximately four months ago. Finally, Mr. Hamilton indicated that he likes Mr. Dan McCray's proposal for a four-lane striping option along Crown Valley Parkway.

Mr. Josh Rummelstein, owner of the home adjacent to 8 Snapdragon in Ladera Ranch, shared his strong concerns regarding criminal activity of the adjacent property. He indicated that it has become unsafe for children to play in the neighborhood and is causing grave concern for him and the tenants of his property. Last week, the owner/resident of 8 Snapdragon was arrested for criminal behavior, and was then back at the house the next day. The owner/resident has been photographed with stolen items from within the surrounding neighborhood as he was walking back into the house. As the adjacent property owner, Mr. Rummelstein is concerned about losing more than \$3,000/month in rent because of losing his tenants due to the disconcerting activity from

8 Snapdragon. Mr. Rummelstein commended the Sheriff's Department for their recent efforts to detain the owner of 8 Snapdragon, but other individuals tied to him have still been seen entering/exiting the home. Lieutenant Gonzales from the Sheriff's Department indicated that Mr. Rummelstein may wish to hire his own private investigator.

Ms. Jennifer Powers indicated that she would like to better understand what the County of Orange is doing regarding the homeless issue in Orange County and, more specifically, what is being doing to prevent any kind of temporary homeless facility from being positioned in Ladera Ranch

PRESENTATION(S):

1. UPDATE FROM CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive a report from Kristen Vital (Superintendent) and Mike Beekman (Executive Director, Safety & Student Services) of the Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD).

Mr. Michael Beekman provided an overview of enhanced safety measures within CUSD schools based on the recent school shooting in Florida and heightened concern amongst the parents of local schoolchildren. In February 2013, CUSD assembled a School Safety Taskforce comprised of teachers, principals, district administrators, among others with the objective to identify possible areas of enhanced safety (options for consideration by the School Board). Approximately 30 to 45 people were part of the Task Force at any given time and identified 26 potential items related to denial of access, communications, prevention, preparation, response, training, staffing, and networking. Mr. Beekman share a PowerPoint presentation (available on CUSD's website) that further details each of these potential enhancement areas.

The outcome of CUSD's School Safety Task Force resulted in identified resources needed by the Community. CUSD has been implementing numerous safety measures, including improvements to notification system and classroom, and there is a CUSD Safety Committee that is providing the School Board with recommendations for how to prioritize and allocate resources based on the proposed enhancements.

2. PRESENTATION FROM CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive report from the California Highway Patrol (CHP).

Officer Steve Miles from CHP was present to provide an update. Given that Ladera Ranch is unincorporated, the CHP oversees all traffic-related incidents (e.g. collision, DUI, parking, etc.) in our area on County-owned streets. He reiterated that private streets are managed by LARMAC, the HOA, since CHP does not have jurisdiction to oversee traffic-related issues on private streets. Ladera Ranch has a dedicated CHP office located in San Juan Capistrano Monday to Friday (7:00 AM to 3:30 PM) with

additional support officers involved in other communities as well: Las Flores, Wagon Wheel, Coto de Caza, Trabuco Canyon.

The CHP receives a large number of traffic-related calls resulting from the narrowness of streets, especially during the peak traffic commute hours associated with schools. With regards to parking on County-owned streets, there is a 72-hour rule (per the County's ordinance) that applies. Vehicles must be moved during this time to avoid ticketing and/or being towed.

Councilmember Arbabi asked about Antonio Parkway street racing and any other physical street improvements that would help improve safety in Ladera Ranch. Officer Miles indicated that the CHP is aware of the Antonio street racing problem and is tracking it closely. Separately, Officer Miles indicated that other traffic-related incidents are caused by the streets being so narrow for cars to successfully maneuver them. The shoulders are challenging in the areas of local schools because parents dropping-off their children are blocking shoulders that should remain accessible for other public safety measures as needed.

3. REPORT FROM ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive report from the O.C. Sheriff's Department (OCSD).

Lt. Mark Gonzales provided an update on the current crime log for Ladera Ranch. In March 2018, there were 36 Part 1 crimes, including one robbery, nine residential burglaries, three vehicle break-ins (all unlocked), one vandalism of a restroom card reader door at a clubhouse.

Separately, Lt. Gonzales indicated that OCSD has responded to calls at 8 Snapdragon 43 times in the last several years and has made eight arrests to-date. OCSD is compiling information specific to address.

The 2-11 robbery at Corky's Restaurant occurred around 1:00 AM and involved an individual from the Inland Empire. The perpetrator's license plate was documented, which led to an arrest of the individual and identification of a second suspect.

Regarding the homeless issue, Lt. Gonzales shared that the County of Orange is currently in the process of trying address concerns on a regional basis. Local residents are encouraged to attend the "Coffee with a Cop" event at Lolas's Café on April 25 (7:00 AM to 9:00 AM). Two deputies will be receiving life-saving medals.

Resident Jeff Hamilton again asked about the Kohl's parking lot as a problem area, particularly as teenagers see it as an alternative to the "park at the lake" since nobody is supervising them when they gather in this area. Lt. Gonzales asked if any of the businesses in local retail/commercial areas partner with Rancho Mission Viejo and/or Westar to provide security cameras. There are security cameras at select locations.

Councilmember Brenneman asked about regulations pertaining to mufflers.

4. UPDATE FROM LADERA RANCH NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive a report from Ladera Ranch Neighborhood Watch.

Ms. Jennifer Powers, who runs Ladera Ranch Neighborhood Watch, provided an update on the program in our community. Out of 100+ neighborhoods in Ladera Ranch, only 11 participate in the Neighborhood Watch Program. There is an online Ladera Ranch Neighborhood Watch Facebook page that is linked to 2,033 residents who are verified as residents. To be most successful, we need traditional Neighborhood Watch Programs in every neighborhood, in addition to real-time measures to communicate, such as the Neighborhood Watch Facebook page.

Neighborhood Watch is a national program that began in Chicago in the late 1960's. Eventually, the police and neighborhoods partnered to address safety concerns. Research shows that crime is higher in socially-disorganized areas and when communities fail to maintain their properties to certain standards. As such, we should not apologize for wanting a community that looks a certain way or to call the Sheriff's Department when there are incidents. We need to be diligent.

Creating a Neighborhood Watch Program is simple. Information is available at the Avendale Clubhouse. Residents can work with LARMAC to determine the placement of signs in their neighborhood, being careful to place signs on existing poles. Neighborhood then order the signs and LARMAC will install them at no charge. Then, the neighborhood needs to contact the Sheriff's Department to schedule their first meeting in the neighborhood, which helps the deputies to see entry and exit locations.

Separately, Ms. Powers shared that she recently participated in the OCSD Academy, which is a six-week program to teach students about public safety. One portion of the training dealt with active shooter training. Orange County received a grant from Homeland Security to teach interested participants in how to be prepared. The OCSD Academy will be accepting applications within the coming week or two.

Councilmember Ellzey talked about this being a "labor of love" for Ms. Powers, and asked if the Ladera Ranch Neighborhood Watch Program could be linked into our Neighborhood Representatives Program. Ms. Powers indicated that there is potential for overlap in making sure that Neighborhood Representatives understand the value. She will also make sure that all information is up-to-date on Ladera Life.

Lt. Gonzales asked about whether Neighborhood Watch participants do active patrols throughout their neighborhoods. He indicated that there is still a need to better educate residents about who to call when there are issues (i.e. 911, OCSD, CHP, LARMAC, G4S Patrol, etc.).

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

5. CIVIC COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

Budget & Fundraising Committee – Councilmember Ramsey shared that LRCC is a 100% volunteer-based organization, funded by Councilmembers own contributions and the financial support of sponsorships from local organizations/businesses. LRCC appreciates the local support, which allows us to cover annual operating expenses (e.g. D&O Insurance, dedicated email service, community events, etc.).

Communications & Technology Committee – Councilmember Brenneman indicated that he is working on efforts to have a “State of the Community” event in October 2018.

Education & CUSD Committee – Councilmember Kephart indicated that he is working to set-up the next Committee Meeting with CUSD, but that LRCC’s contact at the School District has changed; hence the delay in doing so.

Land Use & Economic Development Committee – Councilmember Ellzey indicated that the Land Use & Economic Development Committee is working closing with the Local Governance Committee to address the retail/commercial shopping centers’ decline.

Local Governance Committee – Councilmember Novak shared that LRCC submitted a letter of support for Assembly Bill (AB 2491) related to funding for unincorporated communities as they seek to incorporate. She also shared the members from LRCC have recently met with the County Supervisor’s office, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), and Rancho Mission Viejo to discuss Ladera Ranch’s future governance structure, in addition to expressing our concerns about continued decline within our retail/commercial centers.

Traffic & Public Safety Committee – Councilmember Arbabi is working closely with the County of Orange Department of Public Works on six to eight different traffic and safety improvements throughout Ladera Ranch right now. More detailed project updates will be provided as information (e.g. project timing, etc.) becomes available.

CIVIC COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Chair Ramsey – LRCC will be looking for Councilmember Candidates, both voting and non-voting in the coming months. Our elections will be held in September for a total of four open seats (one vacant and three open). Also, LRCC is closely tracking TCA’s proposed SR-241 Toll Road project, the route alternatives for which are moving through the second screening process now. LRCC has asked TCA representatives to provide an update on outcomes of that screening phase when available in Summer 2018.

Vice-Chair Kephart – No comments.

Treasurer Arbabi – No comments.

Secretary Novak – LRCC will have an update by the Ladera Rancho Chamber of Commerce on the “shop local” campaign and potential Farmer’s Market renewal effort at the next LRCC Public Meeting on May 21, 2018.

Councilmember Brenneman – No comments.

Councilmember Ellzey – No comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

LRCC’s Public Meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM to Monday, May 21, 2018 (7:00 PM).