

SWEETWATER VALLEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Meeting June 3, 2009

Bonita/Sunnyside Fire Station

7:00 p.m.

Members present: Ray Ymzon, Rick Blacklock, Fran Cornell, Carol Freno, Susan Kopp, Tom Pocklington, Don Scovel, Steve Stonehouse

Opening: Ray called the meeting to order. This was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a period of silence in honor of the country's military.

Minutes: A motion passed to accept the minutes of May 6, '09.

Law Enforcement Reports:

Sgt. Cobb, Hwy. Patrol, said that the motorcycle officer recently hit by a truck is expected to recover, although he sustained injuries to a lung, arms and legs. He was hit by a truck that exited Rt. 8 onto Rt. 15. After he was hit, the officer was dragged 40-50', according to witnesses. The driver reportedly had a medical emergency right before the accident. Cobb said drivers are at great risk when they stop at the side of a freeway; he said this should be avoided if possible.

In answer to a question, Cobb replied that law enforcement personnel are not subject to the law that limits cell phone use while driving.

He told the audience that additional "no turn on red light" signs are posted in the South Bay. Cobb's written report listed 44 citations for stop sign infractions, plus 29 for unsafe speed.

Julio Garcia reported for the Sheriff's Department and gave the following information:

- Crimes increasing the most in our area are residential burglaries and crimes involving narcotics, domestic violence. Incidents of auto theft have decreased.
- He cautioned against putting outgoing mail that includes payments into curbside mailboxes. He suggested that such mail be taken to the post office and deposited inside. Garcia also suggested writing checks with a gel pen, which would prevent checks from being washed.
- There was damage to a local golf course when vandals used chemicals to draw smiley faces in the grass.
- \$20 counterfeit bills are now in circulation locally.
- "Graffiti tracking" is a new tactic law enforcement is using in order to identify graffiti artists. It involves technology and a closer study of patterns and messages. The goal is to find the vandals and to be reimbursed for costs.
- Two misdemeanors equal a felony: Julio said that a criminal with two felony convictions plus two misdemeanors, for example, would qualify to be jailed under provisions of the three-strikes law.

Rick mentioned programs in other parts of the country that give citizens more information about crime in their areas. Rick brought an article about these programs; it was published in The Wall Street Journal, June 3, '09. Julio responded that citizens in our area can go to ARJIS.com for "crime mapping." The website gives general information about crimes and locations. Julio said that it is rare for the public to access exact names, addresses for criminals in their areas as a result of following up website information.

Report from County Supervisor Greg Cox's office:

Michael de la Rosa reported the following:

- A traffic-light project is expected to be completed in a year's time. This has to do with coordinating traffic light timing in our area.
- Construction at the Briarwood and Sweetwater Rd. intersection should be finished by the end of this month.
- The Board of Supervisors is meeting to deal with financial problems, especially with the threat of the state taking County funds.
- Michael also explained graffiti tracking. He said personnel from the Dept. of Public Works go to tagging sites to document and track incidents.
- Cox's State of Bonita address may be given in July. (Ray urged Michael to inform SVCA of the date as soon as possible.)

Treasurer's Report:

Steve's report: Checking account balance is \$4,079.42. Balance in CD, including interest, is \$3,412.63. This makes the total balance \$7,492.05.

Fire Department:

Tom reported the following: The Bonita Fire Dept. is doing well, in that over 70% of its firefighters are qualified as paramedics. There are no plans at present to lay off employees or to change their rates of pay. Meantime, the San Miguel District will lay off 18 firefighters and may ask for additional fees. The Bonita district will lose some County funding, however.

Project Report, Traffic & Roads:

Don reported: Chula Vista plans to improve the Willow Street bridge in 2011. He said there will be either three or four lanes, as well as access for pedestrians and bikes. Payment for the project: 80% from federal funds and 20% to be paid by Chula Vista.

Proposed Project, Community Garden:

Fran described tentative plans for establishing such a garden at the site now known as The Pinery or Christmas tree farm, on Sweetwater Road. Fran said that she and others would like to see a community garden materialize at this site once the current lease is up. (Michael gave December 31, 2011 as the expiration date.) Fran said master gardeners have expressed interest, and students, service clubs could also become involved. She suggested

that this be discussed at the State of Bonita event. Don said there would need to be a main person to contact in regard to the garden. After discussion members voted to support the concept of a community garden at the Pinery site; they voted that SVCA write a letter to this effect once the lease has expired. Fran has written information about community gardens, and she mentioned www.LGC.org as a resource for additional information.

Round Table:

Tom brought up an incident that was reported in the news recently: Pastor David Jones, who lives in Bonita, received a warning from a County Code Enforcement officer in April. The pastor was accused of holding an illegal religious assembly in his home. Tom said he spoke with the pastor, who accuses Code Enforcement of unfair treatment. Tom said he was outraged at the way Pastor Jones was treated by the officer. Michael said members of the Board of Supervisors are concerned about the incident; he said the supervisors certainly don't support any infringement of an individual's rights. (In the meantime, San Diego County's Chief Administrative Officer has apologized to the pastor, according to the Union-Tribune.)

The meeting was adjourned.

Susan Kopp, substitute secretary