

March 2017
ISSUE 21

FRIENDS *of* VILLA GRANDE NEWSLETTER

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OUR MISSION

- ❖ RESTORE AND MAINTAIN PATTERSON POINT AS A RIPARIAN PRESERVE FOR LIMITED PUBLIC RECREATION USE
- ❖ PRESERVE THE HISTORIC AND UNIQUE CHARACTER OF VILLA GRANDE
- ❖ ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE GREATER VILLA GRANDE COMMUNITY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been a more exciting than usual rainy season, with robust winter storms bringing flooding, tumbling trees and falling branches. We still have a lot of cleanup work, but all of us are looking forward to a summer of recreation and fun.

Our annual fundraiser is Saturday, March 25 and it will be a "Wedding Party" at the Christian Brothers retreat on Moscow Road near the Casini Ranch Campground. I hope you can attend, but if you cannot, please consider giving a "wedding donation."

The next election for Board of Directors is on July 15 at our annual meeting, and we encourage FoVG members to participate. If you are interested in serving on the FoVG Board, please contact me before June 1 at wikle@usa.net.

We will also host a Town Hall Meeting for everyone in the community on Sunday, July 23. Look for details on the Post Office "Bulletin Board" fence.

Ken Wikle
President, FoVG

WINTER LANDS HARD IN THE PRESERVE

The winter storms did quite a bit of remodeling on the Preserve. Most dramatically, a 150' redwood fell over from the main path into the river on January 10, knocking down a bay tree and some bigleaf maples. The redwood is estimated to be 150 years old. A later storm uprooted more bay trees.

Mulch on the main path was also washed away and the path to the gravel beach has now become a series of sand dunes. The Restoration Committee will organize the path rebuilding team once the rains subside, and we welcome all volunteers to help out.



Sukey Robb-Wilder next to the fallen redwood. High floodwaters envelop the park bench.

CANOE AND KAYAK ANCHORAGE

Once again this summer, we are offering boat anchorage on the gravel beach to members for \$150. If you are an FoVG member as of March 2017, you may apply to attach your canoe or kayak to our chain from May 27 until October 22.

There are 16 slots available, one boat per household, and the deadline for application is May 20. If we receive more than 16 applications, a drawing will be held. To apply, contact Roberto Esteves at: friends@villagrande.org

JUNE BIRDWATCHING EXCURSIONS

On all four weekends this June, FoVG will host free bird-watching events for a limited number of lucky people! Two events by boat and two on foot are planned, all at the height of bird nesting season. These expeditions will be led by Villa Grande's own expert birder, Leah Norwood.

Birding by Boat - Sundays, June 4 & 18

Get your canoe or kayak ready to go on the gravel beach first, and then meet at the bird kiosk at the top of the Preserve trail at 7:30 a.m. for a welcome and overview. We'll paddle down to Austin Creek (across from Casini Ranch) observing bird life along the way and then walk up the creek a bit to stretch our legs and look for more birds. Return with us to Patterson Point Preserve or make your way home on your own. Bring snacks, water, binoculars and dress in layers.

Time: 7-11:00 a.m. No dogs. You must be able to handle your own boat and be

prepared for walking ¼ mile on gravel at Austin Creek. If you need to borrow a boat, contact FoVG. Limit 6 people per trip.

Villa Grande Bird Walks - Saturdays, June 10 & 24

Meet at the bird kiosk at the top of the Preserve trail at 7:30 a.m. for a welcome and overview of the fascinating life of birds. We'll begin by checking out both the gravel and sandy beaches at PPP, then take a leisurely stroll through the flats of Villa Grande. Optional walk up along Mesa Grande Terrace. Bring snacks, water, binoculars and dress in layers.

Time: 7:30-10 a.m. No dogs. Less than one mile of flat walking in the Preserve and around town; more distance and elevation if Mesa Grande Terrace is included. Limit 6 people per trip.

To sign up or for more info, contact Leah Norwood at 707-865-2274 or LGNorwood@aol.com



WATER MAIN REPLACEMENT

Sweetwater Springs Water District is currently making improvements to the water system in Villa Grande. The water mains on Russian River Avenue were upgraded years ago but the center of town still had the original pipes which were most likely installed around 1903 when the town was subdivided. These consisted of 1½ and 2 inch galvanized iron pipes installed at a shallow depth.

Due to the age of the system and the shallow installation, these pipes frequently broke, creating spectacular displays of water shooting into the air, wasting water and causing erosion. The old pipes had so many repair jobs on them that some sections were com-

pletely covered with clamps. The pipe running down East and Fourth Streets broke 5 times over this past summer.



Sweetwater Springs is now replacing 840 feet of pipe and 9 service connections. The project will encompass Fourth, East and West Streets and uses state of the art 2 inch diameter high density polyethylene pipe. The work is being done as an "in house" project by Sweetwater crews which means sections are replaced as they have time available. Aside from eliminating leaks, the new pipe will provide more consistent pressure and flow with improved water quality.

OCCIDENTAL SEWAGE TRANSFER PROPOSAL

District 5's new supervisor Lynda Hopkins and the Sonoma County Water Agency held a public hearing on February 16 at the Monte Rio Community Center to address the transportation of Occidental sewage to Guerneville via Bohemian Highway. The proposed plan hopes to solve Occidental's sewage problems by enlarging the transfer station at Riverside Drive and Route 116 in Guerneville and then trucking 17,000 gallons of sewage to this new facility every day.

The impact on our community will be additional traffic and

road maintenance caused by as many as 15 large tank trucks running between Occidental and Guerneville on Bohemian Highway. Issues raised at the meeting included the potential for spills into Dutch Bill Creek, the hazard to bicyclists on Bohemian Highway and the wear and tear on the Monte Rio bridge. Neighbors near the proposed pump station have also expressed concern about the noise and odor as the trucks are emptied. We'll have more on this story as it develops in our emailed News Update.

VILLA GRANDE FIREHOUSE UPDATE

The foundation work on the firehouse is almost complete. After repainting, flooring and pest control work to be done in the spring, the building should be fully stabilized. Thanks to everyone who contributed to making this possible.

THE LOIS - 21866 EAST STREET

This charming California Craftsman cottage, one of the most photographed in Villa Grande, is named for Lois Tidball. At one time, her family owned all the property in Mesa Grande (former name of Villa Grande) from the town square to the river. Lois lived in Mesa Grande with Captain Nelson, a ship's captain from San Francisco, and built this charming cottage in 1905, with "The LOIS" etched on the stained glass doors. Legend has it that the Captain took Lois and her daughter on his ship for one last sail and came back married to the daughter.

Years later, a contractor named Gallagher, who had owned the house for some time,



showed up at The Lois to ask the current owners, Rich and Wanda Holmer, if they'd ever found the Captain's buried treasure under the house. The Holmers hired professional treasure hunters to explore with a metal detector, but no treasure was found.

After Gallagher, The Lois was owned by Wyman Spaulding, who became famous in town for revitalizing the annual 4th of July celebration in 1979. When Wyman and his wife Jan sold The Lois, they removed its craftsman furniture and some of the architectural features, including the stained glass panels from the entry doors. After Rich and Wanda purchased the house in 1978, they became friends with the Spauldings, and were able to negotiate the return of the panels. Rich reinstalled the glass in the original doors and they remain a primary feature of the house to this day. The unique "Lois" script is also duplicated on the entry pergola at the front of the house, facing the town square.

If you have stories about your Villa Grande house you would like to share, please contact Roberto Esteves: esteves@comcast.net

PROPANE DISCOUNT PROGRAM

FoVG continues to offer a discount propane program through AmeriGas. You may have noticed that propane rates have increased sharply this past winter, but for those of us in the FoVG program, the surcharge increase is only 2 cents per gallon over last year.

Since the current 3 year agreement is ending soon, we have begun negotiations for a new

contract. The goal is always to provide additional value, to you, as a member of FoVG. An update letter to all current program participants will be sent out shortly with more details.

If you would like more information in the propane program please contact Kyra Wink, kyrawink@aol.com or 707 529-4206.

DETACHMENT FROM PALM DRIVE: WHAT'S IT MEAN?

After petitioning by more than 25% of the voters in our river area, Sonoma County LAFCO has detached us from the Palm Drive Health Care District, as of February 2, citing the district's fiscal mismanagement, governance issues, and lack of services.

Here's what detachment means for residents and taxpayers in the Monte Rio, Guerneville and Forestville school districts:

- We will continue to have access to the hospital, now known as Sonoma West Medical Center, in Sebastopol.
- We will continue to pay parcel taxes to Palm Drive to pay down our part of the debt.
- While we expect our taxes to decrease, we don't know by how much or how long we'll

keep paying. The size of the debt isn't clear, though we do know that it has increased from \$5 million in 2000 to over \$30 million today. The district has not been forthcoming with debt or detachment details.

- Our detachment from Palm Drive does not affect the hospital's survival. Accumulated debt and 2014 bankruptcy problems loom larger than our tax reduction.

For more information, see the article in the February 7 Sonoma West Times & News, "Hospital detachment effort gets final LAFCO approval," at:

tinyurl.com/PDdetachment

You may also contact Sukey Robb-Wilder at sukeyw@yahoo.com or 707-865-2470 who has been tracking the detachment process.

CALENDAR

**Extended: Low Flow
Comment Deadline**
scwa.ca.gov/fish-flow
March 10

**Wedding Party
Fundraiser**
Saturday, March 25
5:30 p.m.

Boat Anchorage
Sign-up deadline: May 20
First tie-up day: May 27

Mimosa Gardens Party
Sunday, May 28
3:00 p.m.

Birding Tours
By Boat: June 4 & 18
On Foot: June 10 & 24

**Independence Day
Celebration & Parade**
Tuesday, July 4
Town Square - 4:30 p.m.

**FoVG Membership
Annual Meeting**
Saturday, July 15
Town Square - 11:00 a.m.

**Villa Grande
Town Hall Meeting**
Sunday, July 23
Firehouse Plaza - 11:00 a.m.

**Member/Volunteer
Thank-You Party**
Saturday, September 16
Patterson Point - 6:00 p.m.

Online at:
villagrande.org/calendar

ON THE WEB AT
VILLAGRANDE.ORG

“A WEDDING PARTY” PARTY

FoVG’s annual fundraiser will be March 25 this year, and the theme is “A Wedding Party,” or a Falsa Boda, with all the trappings of a real wedding, but none of the responsibilities. Feel free to come as your favorite wedding participant, and if you care to renew your vows - or make some new ones - we’ll have a licensed minister on hand.

Cost: \$80 per person, and includes light dinner, a champagne toast and wedding cake, followed by dancing to everyone’s favorite tunes. Get to work on a toast to all the happy couples and go to: villagrande.org/wedding for information and tickets.

RED WILLOW (SALIX LAEVIGATA)

Red willow is a native riparian tree that can quickly grow to 40’. Its slender leaves are shiny on top and its red twigs are used in bird nests. Along the Russian River, red willows help control erosion during floods with their extensive root system and multiple trunks.

We are planting red willow in the Preserve as “sprigs,” which are 5’ long branches stuck in the ground. When conditions are just right, the sprigs will take root within a year to stabilize areas where we have removed ivy.

This January, the sprigging team of Jim Beck, Victoria Wikle and Caprice Lee planted 9 willows.



“MIMOSAS IN THE GARDENS” PARTY

We kick off the summer in style with a progressive afternoon tea party - plus Mimosas - in some of our members’ lovely gardens. The date is Sunday, May 28, starting at 3:00 in Jane Saunders’ riverside garden, then moving to Jay and Erin’s redwood glen and finally to Marcy and Jim’s Sol Y Rio yard and deck. All FoVG members are invited; just send along your RSVP to friends@villagrande.org and we’ll provide the details.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

Renewal New

Circle one member category below:

BENEFACTOR	\$ 1,000	2 TICKETS TO FOVG EVENTS; UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
PATRON	\$500	1 TICKET TO FOVG EVENTS UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS
HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIP	\$ 100	UP TO 2 VOTING MEMBERS; LIST NAMES BELOW
CONTRIBUTING MEMBER	\$50	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP
LOW INCOME	\$25	LOW INCOME

ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

TOTAL PAID: Cash/Ck/Pay/Pal: \$ _____

Last/First Name of member/household members: _____

Mail Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Local Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Propane Discount: (circle) Yes No

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please send check and form to:
FoVG, PO Box 28, Villa Grande, CA 95486
or online through Paypal at:
villagrande.org/Membership