



FIG · GARDEN  
HOMEOWNERS  
ASSOCIATION

# SPRING NEWSLETTER

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING • Wednesday, March 18, 2015, 7pm**

Fig Garden Swim & Raquet Club, 4722 N. Maroa

**Meeting Agenda:**

- |                         |                                     |  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Call to order        | 3. Treasurer's Report               | 5. Discussion of matters of general interest |
| 2. Introductory Remarks | 4. Nomination of Directors & voting | 6. Adjournment                               |

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By Dean Alexander*

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve another year as the President of the Fig Garden Homeowners Association. Several things occurred in 2014 which will impact our neighborhood for years to come.

### City of Fresno – General Plan 2035

The first item is the City of Fresno's adoption of the 2035 General Plan. One of the primary focuses within the General Plan is improving the properties along the Blackstone Avenue corridor. The 2035 Plan seeks mixed-use development along the corridor and within neighborhoods one-half mile east and west of Blackstone Avenue. Assisting with the revitalization and investment within the Blackstone corridor is a new organization, the Better Blackstone Association. The association desires to make the Blackstone corridor and its neighbors look fresh, healthy, and prosperous. When the Better Blackstone Association becomes established, I would recommend that the residents join the association and be involved with the changes which will impact our neighborhood.

### Fig Garden Community Transportation Study

Last year, I am excited to say, that the Fig Garden Community Transportation Study (Fig Garden Cal Trans Grant) was presented to the Fresno City Council and the Fresno County Board of Supervisors for their acceptance. The Fresno City Council and the Fresno County Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly supported the Fig Garden Community Transportation Study. The next step for the Fig Garden residents is to search out funds to implement the recommendations set forth within the Fig Garden Community Transportation Study, which includes the highly desired traffic calming along Ashlan Avenue. It is ironic that 25 years ago the County and City agencies were considering widening Ashlan Avenue to four lanes within our neighborhood. Our homeowners association and residents fought diligently to prevent the Ashlan Avenue widening which would have greatly impacted our neighborhood. Now 25 years later, with the support of the Fresno City Council and Fresno County Board of Supervisors, we are looking at calming the traffic along Ashlan Avenue within our neighborhood. This truly is a great accomplishment for our neighborhood.

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 www.oldfig.org  
 P.O. Box 5796, Fresno, California 93755

## **Christmas Tree Lane – National Winner**

The last thing I would like to mention is the national recognition of Christmas Tree Lane. As many of you know, my 2014 Christmas display, along with Christmas Tree Lane, was one of the featured entries on the Great Christmas Light Fight. Christmas Tree Lane and my Christmas display were presented in one of 6 television episodes. Each episode consisted of 4 Christmas displays in which one was declared the winner of that episode. I am happy to say that Christmas Tree Lane and my Christmas display were the winner of our television episode. As the winner of the episode I received a cash award of \$50,000. My wife Shawn and I are donating the \$50,000 to Christmas Tree Lane so they can purchase a badly needed man-lift. The newly purchased man-lift will replace a nearly 20-year old man-lift we currently own.

Being selected one of the top Christmas displays in the United States has not only brought great pride to our neighborhood, it has brought great pride to Fresno as a whole. After airing this show, I was surprised by how many comments I received about how delighted Fresno residents were about the award Christmas Tree Lane received. While working the donation booth and traffic control, I received over a hundred comments about how proud they were being a resident of Fresno and having Christmas Tree Lane as part of their community. I think the residents were happy because this was positive recognition for Fresno. I am personally very honored to be part of Christmas Tree Lane and the Fig Garden neighborhood.

Along with the recognition of Christmas Tree Lane comes guests wanting to experience this Christmas Tree Lane event. The last week of Christmas Tree Lane experienced significant traffic congestion which required extensive traffic control by the Fresno City Police Department, California Highway Patrol, and the Fresno County Sheriff's Department. During the last week, traffic west bound on Shields Avenue was diverted to Blackstone Avenue, not allowing traffic flow across Blackstone Avenue. At the peak of the evening, traffic was backed up for over one mile and wait times were over 2 hours. Obviously this is not the norm and probably is the result of the airing of the Great Christmas Light Fight show. The Christmas Tree Lane committee is working on some traffic alternatives to improve traffic flow for next year's event.

Even before the airing of the nationally televised TV show, Christmas Tree Lane experienced a heavy attendance on the 2nd walk night. This was primarily due to the threat of rain and light attendance on the 1st walk night. The Fresno County Sheriff's Department along with the Fresno City Police Department and the California Highway Patrol had a significant presence during both walk nights which kept our visitors aware of the law enforcement presence. The Christmas Tree Lane committee is aware that large visitor attendance on Christmas Tree Lane impacts our neighborhood, and the Christmas Tree Lane committee will continue to try to improve the Christmas Tree Lane event for our guests and neighbors. But on the bright side, Christmas Tree Lane is a jewel for the Fresno community and as a neighborhood we should be proud that this event reaches the hearts of hundreds of thousands of people every year.

We Fig Garden residents should look forward to another prosperous year in 2015. We live in a great historic neighborhood and I look forward to the good things and improvements that will occur in our neighborhood in years to come.



## **FIG GARDEN HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION OFFICERS & DIRECTORS FOR 2015**

**President:** Dean Alexander

dalex215@gmail.com

**Vice President:** Tony Pings

Anthony@pings.com

**Treasurer:** Robert Ware

robertgware@gmail.com

**Secretary:** Merilee Amos

merilee.fghoa@gmail.com

### **Board of Directors**

Magda Gilewicz

mgilewicz@gmail.com

Prudence Zalewski

pru@softsyn.net

Mei Leng Cheng

mlcheng6@yahoo.com

Dan Gallagher

dlgalla@fresnounified.org

Valerie Lemay

vlemay@hotmail.com

## **SLATE OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors nominates the following people for a 3 year term on the board

**Dean Alexander - Mei Leng Cheng – Dan Gallagher**

## **Fig Garden Fire Protection District Annual Assessment**

By Dan Gallagher and Prudence Zalewski

In April, the neighbors living within the Fig Garden Fire Protection District will be voting in a special election on a proposed extension of an assessment to their property tax. This is being requested by the Fire Protection District to help keep Fire Company #20 open and funded. Fire Company #20 is located on Wishon just south of Gettysburg, and serves us in the event of fire, severe injury, and/or medical emergency.

This Proposed tax extension, with a maximum added 2.5% annual increase for 10 years, is the subject of many of our neighborhood debates and discussions. What follows are the facts and rationales of both sides of this debate, in an attempt to inform residents and help them make educated decisions.

### **Background**

The Fig Garden Fire Protection District was formed in 1942 to provide needed structural fire protection to a district approximately one square mile in size. It is bounded, generally, by Shaw Avenue on the north, Maroa on the east, the Herndon Canal on the south, and Palm Avenue on the west, and is Governed by a 3 member Board called the Fig Garden Fire Protection District. On January 1, 2006, the Fig Garden Fire Protection District contracted with the City of Fresno for the delivery of fire protection services, and recently created a Community Facilities District to help administer the Fire Safety Assessment that we've paid for the last 25 years.

Currently, homeowners within the district pay an assessment of \$732 annually, giving the district an approximate annual budget of \$547,000. This funds 75% of the 9 fulltime firefighters' budget, and gives us a service that averages 3-5 minutes when responding to calls in our area.

In April, ballots for this Special Election will be mailed to those who live in the Fire Protection District. Residents may vote, then either mail ballots, or drop them in the locked box at Company #20 fire house located on Wishon south of Gettysburg. If you are interested in learning more on the issue, there are pamphlets that can be picked up at the Fire House on Wishon.

## **Pros**

While it is true that we pay more than other areas of the city and county for fire protection, our neighborhood greatly benefits from having a station located here. The proposed assessment has its annual increase capped at 2.5%. The previous assessment had no cap and at times grew at a rate over 3%.

We enjoy the fastest response times in the Fresno area, and because of Company #20's record, we pay less for Homeowners insurance. Our firefighters are also Emergency Medical Technicians ( EMT) and respond to medical emergencies. Recently, Fig Garden Fire Protection District was evaluated by the Insurance Service Office, and improved its class rating, going from a 3 to a Class 2 Fire District. This rating is what insurance companies use in setting rates, so our new classification will help ensure lower insurance rates. Losing the Fire house will mean a lower rating and higher insurance costs.

The alternative to extending the current annual assessment, is that Fresno Fire will close our Firehouse. By simply keeping the amount we are currently assessed, we can keep the protection and service that we currently rely on. This station serves us 24 hours a day because we have chosen to pay for it. Letting it close would mean response time would take considerable longer, up to double, as the nearest station would be a Bullard and West.

## **Cons**

Many residents feel over taxed and object to their taxes funding fire protection that occurs outside of our neighborhood. Information provided by Fire Chief Kerri Donis shows information about the 1,853 calls Company# 20 responded to in 2014:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total calls                                 | 1,853 |
| Calls in Old Fig                            | 122   |
| Calls outside Old Fig                       | 1,731 |
| Percentage of Calls responded to in Old Fig | 6.6%  |

There have been times when our calls had to be answered by other Fire Companies because Company #20 was answering calls outside of our District. In 2014, 93.4% of the total calls responded to by our Company #20, were outside of the neighborhood that pays to fund them. We pay 75.22% of Company #20's budget, yet only use 6.6% of their time on calls.

## **You Must Decide**

The issue boils down to whether we wish to continue the level of service we have enjoyed necessitating a 2.5% per annum increase, OR whether we prefer a longer response time and no "local" fire house for a reduction in our annual assessment. When your ballot arrives in the mail, please take the time to make you opinion known by voting.

## From Fresno County Supervisor Andreas Borgeas.

As your representative I am eager to share with you some important developments in Fresno County.

You may have noticed two new faces on the five-member Board of Supervisors: Buddy Mendes and Brian Pacheco. We appreciate the contributions made by their predecessors Judy Case and Phil Larson, and look forward to Buddy and Brian serving our Fresno County community.

In January the Fresno County Board of Supervisors held a joint meeting with Madera County and discussed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Moving forward, our counties will work closely together to develop and implement a sustainable groundwater management plan in order to maintain regional control of our groundwater. By working with regional water districts and industry partners Fresno County will be in a position to create and implement sound management policies.

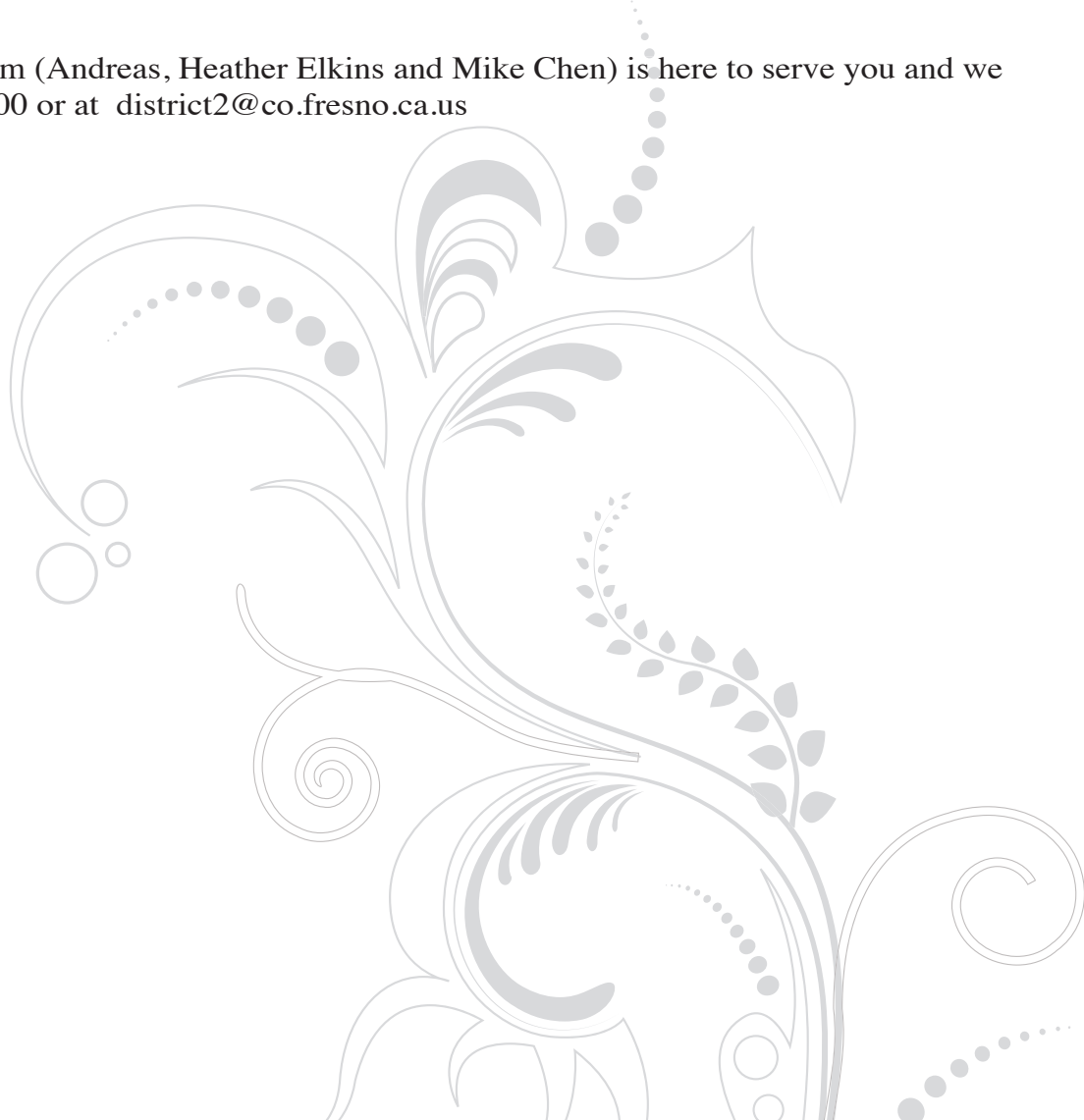
In February Supervisor Mendes and I co-sponsored an agenda item to coordinate a joint meeting between the County of Fresno and the Cities of Fresno and Clovis. I believe this is a wonderful opportunity for representatives to come together and discuss issues of mutual interest. Please feel free to contact my office and share any thoughts you would like for us to address during the upcoming meeting.

Finally, I am pleased to announce the Greater Fresno and Valley Region were selected for the Brookings Institution's Global Cities Initiative! The Global Cities Initiative is a competitive program co-sponsored by JP Morgan Chase and the Brookings Institution to help us inventory our agricultural and commercial assets to create a comprehensive strategy for improving our regional exports. This is great news for our community and for improving our international market competitiveness. Our office was proud to provide a supporting role in our region's application and I am excited to see where this opportunity will take Fresno County.

Don't forget the District #2 Team (Andreas, Heather Elkins and Mike Chen) is here to serve you and we can be reached at (559) 600-2000 or at [district2@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:district2@co.fresno.ca.us)

Warm Regards,

–*Andreas*



# Police Protection District

Hello Neighbors,

Like other neighborhoods, we have recently been targeted with several burglaries. I would like to remind the Fig Garden Residents to utilize our neighborhood watch program. The neighborhood watch program provides you with email alerts about your neighborhood. The email alerts include prowling reports provided by our Fresno County Sheriff deputies along with any suspicious activity within our neighborhood. In addition, the email alerts provide a way to connect lost pets with their owners. The neighborhood watch program definitely helps to keep our neighborhood safe. To be placed on the email alert list, please email me at FigGardenWatch@gmail.com.

In addition to the neighborhood watch program, the Fresno County Sheriff Department provides home security checks on your house when you are out of town. This is a no cost service provided by the Sheriff's Department. To access this service, just do a Google search under "Fresno Sheriff Home Check." The process will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

When you have a police emergency, please call 911. If you see any suspicious activities please call the Sheriff non-emergency line 559-600-8400.

The Fig Garden Police Protection District has negotiated with the Fresno County Private Security Company for supplemental services which all Fig Garden Residents can purchase directly through the Fresno County Private Security Company. These services are provided below.

1. Fresno County Private Security Company will provide home checks to your residence at a cost of \$11.00 per visit. This is in addition to the free service provided by the Fresno Sheriff Department. If you are out of town and you want a security company to inspect your residence, they will do the inspection visit for \$11.00.

2. Fresno County Private Security Company will provide an alarm response to the residence at a cost of \$33.95. You can arrange to have Fresno County Private Security Company perform a response if your alarm is triggered. This can be done by notifying your alarm monitoring company to call Fresno County Private Security Company to respond to an alarm call.

Fresno County Private Security Company Contact Information is:

Phone 559-233-9800

Address: 777 W. Shaw Avenue, Fresno, CA 93704

Fresno County Private Security Company is presently providing supplemental patrol services in addition to the two full-time Sheriff Deputies currently patrolling the Fig Garden Police Protection District. For clarification, the Fig Garden Police Protection District limits are between Maroa and Palm Avenues. The contracts for the supplemental protection services provided by the Fresno County Sheriff Department and the Fresno County Private Security Company are renewed yearly. On a yearly basis we evaluate the effectiveness of the security services. The Fresno County Sheriff Department continues to provide excellent service and we do not foresee any changes affecting our contract with the Sheriff Department. The contract with the Fresno County Private Security Company was initiated in October of last year. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the Fresno County Private Security Company and decide if we want to continue with the supplemental patrol service. Your input on the Sheriff Patrol service and Fresno County Private Security Company service would be very much appreciated.

Fig Garden Police Protection District

*Dean Alexander*

*Prudence Zalewski*

*Cory Bell*

# Our Sheriff Deputies

By Marilee Amos

Welcome to Deputy Alexander Sosin and greetings to still our very own Deputy Andres Solis. Deputy Sosin joined the PPD in December 2014 replacing our long-time Deputy Henson who has been promoted. These two men share some similarities so we'll begin there: both are Valley born and raised. Deputy Solis was born and raised in Merced. He attended Merced High and Merced Community College. While still in high school, he enlisted in the California Army National Guard's delayed entry program eventually becoming active in the National Guard. He was also a participant in the Merced Sheriff's Explorer Program. Deputy Sosin is from "right here": Fresno. He attended Bullard High and Fresno State graduating in 2011 with a BS in criminology. He, also, combined university studies with additional outside training in the Police Academy. Both men knew early on they wanted to be involved in law enforcement. In their own words: Deputy Solis: "I have always wanted to be a peace officer since I was a kid". National Guard experience only deepened his commitment to serve his community. Deputy Sosin: "I always knew I wanted to serve my community and law enforcement seemed to fit".

A glimpse of their off-duty private lives reveals: Deputy Solis keeps busy working out at the gym and on home improvement projects. For animal lovers, he is too-- being a dog parent to three rescues. He is dedicated to his family and reverent of his single mother who raised her family of six, and to his adult stepson of whom he's very proud.

Deputy Sosin is a mentor with the Sheriff's Explorer program and a member of the Off-Highway Vehicle team. He loves the outdoors—hiking, snowboarding, skiing, running and coaching wrestling at his "old" high school. Likewise dedicated to family, he speaks highly of his "most supportive parents" and of an older sister who helped raise him. And, for us romantics: Wedding Bells are just around the corner for him and his long-time sweetheart this summer!

When asked for safety tips here are the best: 1. Keep doors, garages and windows locked (criminals look for the easiest route). 2. No valuables left in cars. 3. Trim vegetation 4. Keep yards lit at night. 5. Get and use a burglar alarm with a monitoring system. 6. Address clearly marked so law enforcement and emergency services can find you. 7. Call Dispatch at 600-3111. Say that again: 600-3111.

