



FIG · GARDEN
HOMEOWNERS
ASSOCIATION

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2011

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Wednesday, March 30, 2011, 7pm
Fig Garden Swim & Raquet Club, 4722 N. Maroa

Meeting Agenda:

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Tony Pings

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

The Fig Garden Homeowner's Association has been the dominate custodian of our area since our organizations formation. During this time we have faced many challenges, from the attempt to widen Ashlan Avenue, to reoccurring rumors of annexation into the City of Fresno. At each stage we have had the focus and effectiveness of our president and the board of FGHA to deal with each new challenge. Over the years many people have served as president and on our board. As the longest currently serving board member, I've had a front row view of the many challenges we have faced over the last two decades. During much of this time, we were relegated to reacting to the many potential erosions of our area. Collectively, we were generally successful in holding back inappropriate actions.

That all changed when Louise Yenovkian was selected as president. During her extended presidency, she has worked to reconstruct our relationship with both the county and city. It was a gradual change that transpired quietly outside the limelight, but it has been nothing short of the reconfiguration of our method of operation. Today we are working proactively with the county and city to plan for the preservation of our area. Louise's presidency came at a time when there was a window of opportunity for this change and she masterfully worked to transition us from a reactive group, to an interactive and proactive group. This is a profound change built on her endless energy and work.

The fruits of this transformation are easily identified. We currently have received a joint city/county/FGHA planning grant to provide comprehensive and long range planning for our area. This is a major effort that will unfold as the year progresses. In addition the county just approved a change to the minimum lot size for R1B parcels in our area to ensure the inappropriate and increasingly aggressive new parcelization projects end. Recently our area was designated a historical district. The list goes on. All are major achievements in and of themselves, but collectively, they represent a new protection of our unique area.

I have returned as the President of FGHA for a short time. My function will be more a custodian of Louise's efforts than breaking new ground. We have much work to complete this year that will serve our area for decades to come. We will need participation of our neighbors, as many long-range decisions will be made.

All of us who have worked so closely with Louise, thank you Louise for your many successes, and thank you for continuing as a member of the Fig Garden Board. It is my hope that our quiet revolution will continue throughout 2011.

If you have questions or want more information on the many things that are occurring in our area, please come to our general membership meeting on March 30.

NEWSLETTER
 P.O. Box 5796, Fresno, California 93755 • www.oldfig.org • MARCH 2011

Fig Garden Homeowners Association Officers & Directors for 2011

President: Tony Pings

Anthony@pings.com

Vice President: Louise Yenovkian

Lyenovkian@wctlaw.com

Treasurer: David Boyd

dboyd@communitymedical.org

Board of Directors

Merilee Amos

mma@towerusa.com

Magda Gilewicz

mgilewicz@gmail.com

Nick Hustedde

hhustedde@sbcglobal.net

Robert Ware

robertgware@gmail.com

Prudence Zalewski

pru@softsyn.net

Slate of Directors

The Board of Directors nominates the following people for three-year terms on the Board
(all are incumbents):

Magda Gilewicz, Robert Ware, Prudence Zalewski

Caltrans Grant Award

By Louise Yenovkian

We have some very exciting news! We applied for and were awarded a \$297,000 Transportation Planning Grant from Caltrans. We have been selected for funding in the fiscal year 2010–2011, pending approval of the State budget.

Our excitement stems in part from the fact that the County and City have come to the same table to support our goals of preservation of Old Fig Garden while the City grows around us. We thank both the City and the County for writing on our behalf one of the most impressive grants submitted to Caltrans and for their continued support of our goals of preservation.

We are in the early stages of information gathering and planning on the following issues:

- traffic calming efforts throughout the neighborhood
- implementation of safe pedestrian passage throughout Old Fig Garden
- implementation of walking/biking trails
- placement of Historic Designation signage throughout Old Fig Garden.

The City and County of Fresno and the FGHA each have committed to a local cash match of \$8,250. We are asking our Fig Garden neighbors to support our fundraising efforts in meeting this cash goal.

We need your support. Please help us with your tax-deductible donation. If every household donated just \$20 we would exceed our goal. We have enclosed a special line item for such donations on our annual FGHA dues form, or you can also donate through the secure PayPal link on our website.

A Note from the Fresno County District 2 Supervisor Susan B. Anderson

For the past ten years I have been proud to represent the Fig Garden Neighborhood as your County Supervisor and I am looking forward to working with you more over the next couple of years. It is such a special part of Fresno County where the residents take extra pride in their community and where neighbors come together to help preserve their quality of life.

I have been impressed with the volunteer work of Fig Garden neighbors and would like to commend outgoing FGHA President Louise Yenovkian for countless hours working on behalf of your community. My staff and I have met with her many times about Fig Garden issues. She is the one that the Board of Supervisors can count on to show up at Board meetings to promote the interests of Fig Garden.

I am looking forward to working with returning FGHA President Tony Pings, who has come up with insightful solutions to Fig Garden issues in the past, and the rest of the FGHA board and community. My two staff members, Christy Bourbon and Mike Chen, are always available to help you. Mike is a 20-year resident of Fig Garden and is well acquainted with all the issues of the area. You can reach him at 600-2002 or by e-mail at: district2@co.fresno.ca.us

Fig Garden Police Protection District

By Prudence Zalewski

We are the new Commissioners of the Fig Garden Police Protection District (FGPPD) appointed in 2010:

Dean Alexander	Dalex215@aol.com
Amy Tingey	Amy@truenorthprops.com
Prudence Zalewski	Pru@SoftSyn.net

2010 was an exciting year for us as we became familiar with the nuances associated with our District. The FGPPD is an area bounded by Palm, Maroa, Lansing, and Shaw. The District was founded in 1950 to enhance and increase the police protection already provided by the Fresno County Sheriff. We are one of only three police protection districts within the State of California. No more can be created. This special status and power allows us to contract with law enforcement to provide additional police services for the area. These supplemental services are then paid with monies obtained from a property assessment issued to 725 residences within the FGPPD.

The FGPPD has a unique class of protection, entirely different from that provided by the County Sheriff. The Sheriff's Department has one deputy patrolling a very large area—the L21 area (bounded by Hwy 99, Freeway 41, Hwy 180 and the San Joaquin River). The average response time to an incident for the L21 deputy officer is 20 minutes; in comparison, the FGPPD deputy has an average response time of 2 minutes.

The past year has been a very active one for us. In June we negotiated with the Sheriff to provide two full-time deputies for this area. The services of these deputies are over and above what is provided by the Sheriff's Department. Our two Deputies, Alan Kelzer and Todd Burk, are the force that allows our neighborhood to take a proactive stance toward crime prevention, rather than only being able to react to a problem. Recently Deputies Kelzer and Burk have increased neighborhood security by

- stopping burglaries in progress
- performing drug and weapons arrests on vehicles traveling in our neighborhood
- investigating transients traveling through our neighborhood.

Our Deputies are doing a tremendous job; however, their contract for services equates to only 11 hours per day. Even though Fig Garden is one of the safest places to live in Fresno, this is changing. Economic conditions, the early release of criminals, and county budget constraints are teaming up to cause an increase in the crime rate. We

feel that additional protection is now warranted for the Fig Garden area.

The desire of the FGPPD Commissioner is to keep Fig Garden safe and secure. We want to accomplish this in three steps:

- re-establish the Neighborhood Watch program. Deputies Kelzer and Burk will be implementing this program during the first part of the year
- increase our supplemental police protection from 11 hours per day to 24 hours. This would provide quick response times and proactive environment for crime prevention
- institute a graffiti watch and immediate removal program. For this program to be successful, we need immediate response from law enforcement. With 24-hour protection, a quick response time would become a reality.

The FGPPD will be having a series of town hall meetings to discuss ways in which we can implement these three steps and keep Fig Garden a safe and desirable place in which to live. Please look for our flyers or emails for dates, times, and locations.

Neighborhood Watch Program

by Deputy Alan Kelzer

We plan to have the entire Police Protection District involved and active with the program. There are three zones (1754, 1854 & 1954) in the area. Our goal is to have three teams in each zone and one in the business portion of Fig, totaling 16 teams, consisting of one captain and one secretary. The meetings will be planned and set via mail and email. Following a big general meeting, we will assist each team in organizing its own meetings. Whether they will be consolidated meetings or not, it will benefit us to have them quarterly. We will also need to get new signs and stickers for every corner, street and home to replace the old, rusted and damaged ones.

Fresno Unified Planned Changes

By Tony Pings

Fresno Unified School District is undergoing a number of changes. The FUSD is rebuilding its pyramids and realigning the feeders. This change will be truly felt in the Old Fig Garden. When fully implemented, our entire area will become part of the Bullard feeder pattern with Powers-Ginsburg becoming our elementary school. Wawona will return to a neighborhood school, keeping the international baccalaureate program feeding Fresno High. With all these changes, Old Fig Garden will feed into Bullard High School.

The change will not be immediate.

With the passage of Measure ‘K’ the district will have many upgrades including Bullard High School and its feeder pyramid. As these changes take effect, we will need to work with FUSD in implementing these new plans. Today, barely one in four of our area’s students stay in the current Fresno High pyramid. Most opt out to specialty programs or non-FUSD schools. Even with this feeder change, our area’s students will still have the option to pursue these alternate programs. With this change, the school district will be able to better serve those who choose to stay in the Bullard pyramid track. This change serves to return our area to its historical Bullard roots.

Bringing our area into a single pyramid and back into the Bullard track will improve Old Fig Garden in many ways. The ultimate quality of our area’s educational experience will be dependent on the degree of support we provide our returning neighborhood schools. With the fractured nature of our student’s current educational paths, our area has provided little support for our area schools. We need to change this and engage our schools. FGHA will be a part of working with FUSD and in keeping you informed on the progress of this change. It would be normal for challenges to arise as this change progresses.

Returning our local schools to serve the area’s students will have many positive effects. The schools will increasingly serve as the hub of our community. It is a positive change that we all should embrace. FGHA will be working to keep you informed as these changes occur and to introduce you to the school district people who will need your support and we will work to ensure your input is heard.

Why I Belong to the Fig Garden Homeowners Association

By Robert G. Ware

I became aware of the Association sometime in the ‘80s. When I married my wife, Anna, in 1979, I also married into Old Fig Garden, where she had a home since 1952. In finding the love of my life I accidentally became a member of a unique and wonderful neighborhood. The opportunity to live in an enclave of natural landscapes without streetlights or sidewalks was unknown to me outside of my childhood. Neighbors here seemed to know one another and enjoyed walking in the area. The character was of being in the country but with all the features of the city close by, and the Old Fig Garden was at the center of it all.

I loved the mature foliage, the large lawns, and the space for living free. When the issues of widening Ashlan

and of being annexed to the City came up, I became concerned. Such changes could compel sidewalks and streetlights. They would bring more traffic and with more traffic comes more crime, and less privacy. Then there was the matter of Fire and Police protection.

One day sometime in the ‘80s we were going on vacation. As Anna told our the neighbors of our plans, she learned that some of them had been burglarized in recent months. We put in a security system before we left, and on returning I looked into the policing situation for Old Fig.

As a result we became supporters of the FGHA and began attending annual meetings and dinners. Our interest in the Association and neighborhood issues developed from there. My father had taught me that one hasn’t a right to criticize the way things are unless one gets involved with how they are managed. That meant that I couldn’t complain unless I made an effort to understand and affect the situation. When I was asked to serve on your Board I accepted in the spirit of the challenge JFK put forth fifty years ago: Ask not what Old Fig Garden can do for you; ask what you can do for Old Fig.

The life we enjoy today in Old Fig is the direct result of FGHA’s efforts over the years. Our future depends on maintaining our engagement in how it unfolds.

Latest on the Enterprise-Holland Canal Project

By Magda Gilewicz

Occasionally I run into people who ask me about the fate of the Enterprise-Holland Canal project. I want to assure everybody that the project is very much alive, though slow moving, I must admit. For those of you who never heard of it or don’t remember, here’s a bit of history.

The Enterprise-Holland Canal (located right west of Palm, between Rialto and Swift, bordering the east side of Wawona Middle School) is now the only remaining open earthen canal in our area. The historic canal was put here over a hundred years ago at the same time J.C. Forkner started planting fig trees in the area that was later to become the Fig Garden Tract in the 1920s.

In 2001 Fresno Irrigation District wanted to cover this last open section of the old “dirt ditch” (as it is affectionately called by old-time residents) but over 200 people protested, and that’s how the project to beautify the area along the canal was born. Support for the project came from many residents who often walk and jog along the canal, who like its wildlife (herons, frogs and crayfish), who remember playing in it when they were children, and who want to preserve

and beautify it.

Together with two colleagues from Fresno State, Roland Brady and Mark Somma, I worked on a study of the project, producing an extensive report that is the basis for its implementation. Then came numerous meetings with Fresno Irrigation District, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, Fresno County, and Fresno Unified School District. Most issues have been resolved, and now we are working on the final stretch toward the project's approval by the County, so we can apply for grants. The project has received strong support from Supervisor Susan Anderson, Gary Serrato of FID and Bob Van Wyk of FMFCD.

This project is invaluable to our area. Studies have shown that waterway enhancement projects like this have demonstrably played a significant part in reducing crime, increasing property values, improving community relations, and strengthening neighborhood stability. Homes near greenways tend to sell faster and at higher prices. We envision a greenbelt open space, with a walkway and trees along the banks of the canal. As many of you may know, a study a few years ago showed that out of 50 major cities nationwide Fresno placed...last (!) in the number of park acreage per capita. This small linear parkway once beautified will add to the attractiveness of the neighborhood and increase much needed public green space that is away from street traffic, with shallow tranquil waters flowing by.

Our plan is also to create a sister water feature—a pond on Wawona Middle School grounds for educational purposes, as well as to showcase at its new library historical documents that FID is eager to make available concerning the importance of the canal systems to our area. But work on approval of this second project is still ahead of us.

So, yes, the dream is very much alive and the work on it continues. If you would like more information or would like to help (legal help esp. is needed!), please contact me at mgilewicz@gmail.com.

Magical Moments on Christmas Tree Lane

By Dean Alexander

Another magical year for Christmas Tree Lane has passed. Christmas 2010 was successful despite the rain showers during the second walk night. The walkers who braved the elements enjoyed the lights shimmering in the rain. This year, Christmas Tree Lane received several compliments, especially from Bill McEwen of the Fresno Bee. Our event was covered on the front page the Bee, discussed on all the local networks and named as one of their Christmas Destinations by The Learning Channel (TLC). The TLC program gave Christmas Tree Lane national recognition, which drew out-of-town visitors to enjoy our lights.

Christmas Tree Lane is a renowned grass-root tradition that provides a budget-friendly Christmas event for San Joaquin Valley residents. Its emphasis on non-commercial displays makes it unique. In the past several years, local high schools (Fresno, Bullard, McLane, Roosevelt, Hoover, Sunnyside and San Joaquin Memorial) created Christmas displays for the Lane, which significantly enhance the Christmas Tree Lane experience. A special thanks to our high school art instructors and their students.

When people talk about things to do in Fresno and what makes Fresno special, Christmas Tree Lane is on the Top 10 List. Lights, trees, music and Christmas—what's better than that? Christmas Tree Lane is so special to our visitors that they will wait up to two hours on busy nights and even get soaked in the rain to experience the magic of the Lane. To top it off, what other event would warrant the placement of an All Points Bulletin by the Sheriff's Department to be on the lookout for a stolen Raggedy Ann and Andy? (They were found and returned, by the way.)

Every year we try to make the Christmas Tree Lane event better. This year we added more LED C9 light bulbs, which use 80% less energy than typical incandescent bulbs and create more of a saturated light effect. We improved the sound system by adding more speakers. A major concern, however, are vendors selling trinkets on the lane. The vendors are a traffic safety concern and they take away from the non-commercial atmosphere we try to provide. We are working with the Sheriff's Department and the Fresno Police to stop the vendors from being on the Lane. We look forward to another great year in 2011!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Fig Garden Woman's Club Antique Show

The Fig Garden Woman's Club will have its annual Antique Show on **March 18-20**, with the pre-party on March 17. The hours are: *Thursday, pre-party 6-8 pm*

Friday, Saturday 10 am- 6 pm

Sunday 11 am- 3 pm

A \$5 admission is good for the three days. Pre-party tickets are \$15 for one or \$25 for two. Appraisals are available on Saturday from 10 am-3:00 pm @ \$5 per item. The proceeds from the sale will benefit several charities. For more information call Marilyn Schutt at 559-285-6040.

The Fig Garden Annual Dinner

The annual Fig Garden dinner is scheduled for Sunday, **September 18**. For the ninth year in a row, Barry and Becky Barisic will host the dinner at their home on the northwest corner of Van Ness and Ashlan. We are most grateful to the Barisic family for their hospitality and the beautiful setting their home provides for our party. This dinner is a great way to meet your neighbors, see old friends, and speak with our County officials. Details to come on our website and in the Fall Newsletter.

Thank you for supporting Old Fig. Please join the Fig Garden Homeowners Association. We work to protect and strengthen our unique neighborhood. Our finances are fragile. The dues are \$60/year. Mail a check payable to FGHA, PO Box 5796, Fresno, CA 93755, or pay on our website. Unlike most homeowner groups, our dues are voluntary. Money goes to pay fees associated with filing documents that protect the integrity of the neighborhood, producing and mailing newsletters, and running the website.

This and previous newsletters are available on our website www.oldfig.org