



HOLIDAY CAROLING, DECEMBER 11th, 6-8 PM. **COME ONE, COME ALL!**

Join the festive carolers as they sing their way around the neighborhood! We will be led by Julia Norton, a professional singing instructor, so we will be in excellent hands! Bring your kids and flashlights and meet at the Panama Hotel, at the foot of B St., at 6 PM for voice warm-up, hot apple cider and cookies. Songbooks will be distributed, so no one need be at a loss for words! If there's a possibility of light rain, just bring an umbrella and dress accordingly. If we have heavy rain, we will reschedule for Dec. 15th, at the same time, same place. Julia's phone # is 453-3559, or email her at voicework@julianorton.com.

CHRISTMAS DECORATING CONTEST

It's that time of year again- so deck your halls, your porches, windows, yards and wherever else you can find space, for the annual Christmas decorating contest. The judges will have the fun job of walking the neighborhood and casting their votes between Dec. 20th and 25th. Let's make the whole neighborhood glow!

CONSTRUCTION BEGUN ON NEW TOT LOT

On Nov. 10th, construction began on the new preschool playground in Gerstle Park. Because of the necessity of keeping heavy equipment at the site during construction, the lower playground will be closed off for safety reasons. Since we are entering the rainy season, this will probably not affect neighborhood children as much as it would in warmer months.

The contract for the project was awarded to Pat Nelson Construction, the same company that built a new playground in the Bret Harte area. Pat Nelson's bid will cover the cost of demolition of old equipment and installation of a new playground and a bathroom, as well as fencing and landscaping. Because of budget constraints, however, the upper area will remain empty for the time being, except for the existing dragon. Anyone with questions about the new tot lot construction can call Chandra Murphy, GPNA Board President, at 482-8033, or email her at murphdtm@yahoo.com; or Parks and Recreation Director Carlene McCart at 485-3333.

GPNA ANNUAL MEETING

We had a very successful annual meeting and election of a new Board of Directors on October 30th. Outgoing President Hugo Landecker recapped the year's record number of events and issues. Without such an outstanding Board of Directors, all the work we accomplished could not have been done.

Hugo pointed out that the San Rafael General Plan 2020 continues to be a high priority item. GPNA has had much input regarding the Plan, and will continue to remain involved. Initial public hearings are scheduled to begin after the first of the year. Our primary focus will be protecting the Short School site and preventing increased housing density in the neighborhood, which would create overcrowding and severe parking and traffic problems.

Hugo also issued a special appeal for help with our website. The site already exists, and we just need someone to put already-provided information into the site. No writing or artwork is required.

Hugo thanked Krystyna Barron (Vice President), Brett Merner (Treasurer), Richard Geist (Secretary), Lynn Bradescu (Correspondence Secretary), and Board members Chandra Murphy, Cynthia Landecker, Jennifer Stroman, Deborah Weinberg, Steve Schoonover, and Craig Barron. This Board served GPNA faithfully, and did much to make our neighborhood a better place to live in.

Issues brought up from those attending the meeting included concern over the shortage of street parking on Bayview St. caused by the housing complex at # 215, street sweeping inefficiencies, vehicles speeding on Ross St. and other streets, local streets used by non-local traffic, especially heavy trucks, and second units.

Proposed amendments to the GPNA Bylaws were voted in unanimously. The amendments are as follows:

- Change the membership and fiscal year from Nov. 1st-Oct. 31st to January 1st-Dec. 31st.
- Allow members to pay annual dues up to 5 years in advance if they wish, as a convenience to them and to simplify our mailings.
- Change the number of members needed to establish a quorum at a meeting to a percentage of the membership rather than an absolute number, making it more representative.
- Allow a flexible agenda for meetings.
- Allow the Board to propose bylaws changes in addition to changes that may be proposed by members.

THE 2003-2004 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chandra Murphy (President). A Bay Area native, Chandra spent her childhood in Mexico and is fluent in Spanish. She has lived in Gerstle Park for 5 years, and was recently appointed to the San Rafael Parks and Recreation Commission. Chandra chaired this summer's successful Garage Sale fundraiser. She hopes to address neighborhood traffic issues, especially on D St., in the coming year. Chandra will be the contact person for the Board; her email address is murphdtm@yahoo.com.

Roger Coale (Vice President). Roger has lived in Gerstle Park for the past 15 years with his wife, Jan. You may have seen them walking their dog, "Bear", around the neighborhood. He is a past President of GPNA, and is a gardener and master carpenter. He is very interested in the important issues of neighborhood density and historical preservation, and wants to work to increase the sense of community in Gerstle Park.

Tymber Cavasian (Secretary). Tymber and her husband, Derek, are new arrivals in Gerstle Park, where they are now building a home. They have a custom home building business, and work daily with the issues of city planning and growth, design and construction, and landscaping. Her experience and input promise to be a huge plus in her current position on the Board.

Leslie Allen (Treasurer). Leslie and her husband have two young daughters, and have lived in Gerstle Park for the past 21/2 years. She is very interested in the Short School issue, helping out with our annual events, and in getting more families involved in GPNA.

Andrea Eneidi (Correspondence Secretary). Andrea has lived in Gerstle Park for 4 years, is newly married, and is a safety engineer with PG&E. Andrea has been very active in attempts to control traffic problems, especially at the First and C St. intersection, and has met with the City several times on this issue. Traffic, parking problems, and increased neighbor involvement with City staffers are the areas she wants to focus on, as well as working with the City for landscaping improvements.

Dolores Rogers (membership). Dolores has owned and lived in 2 Victorians in Gerstle Park over the past 20 years, and has a strong interest in historical preservation. She is very concerned with the coming pressure to increase the density in our neighborhood, and feels that we are already at the limit of how much housing we can handle in this area.

Tim Firman. Tim was born in Indonesia, but has lived in the Bay Area for almost 20 years, and in our neighborhood for 3 years. He is an architect, and works for the firm that redesigned Marin General Hospital. His professional experience can bring us good new ideas and perspectives. He is one of the volunteers who deliver the newsletters.

Lynn Bradescu. Lynn was raised in Marin, and spent several years in Mexico. She has been back with us and active with GPNA since 1996. She is a design resource specialist, and has a special interest in historic architecture. Lynn chaired the successful GPNA 2003 Spring Fling, which attracted hundred of young children to Gerstle Park, and also worked on our Garage Sale and Annual Picnic events. She is committed to protecting the integrity of our neighborhood, and is a strong proponent of limited growth in residential areas.

Joel Schwartz. Joel is a music teacher, and a 20 year resident of Gerstle Park. His concerns are increased neighborhood density, traffic problems, parking, more "lift and fill" housing, and illegal units. He believes in the importance of facilitating dialogue with City government about the issues that will affect our neighborhood.

Dan Miller. Dan is the owner of the famous Panama Hotel and Restaurant. He is a longtime Gerstle Park resident and loves to garden and collect antiques. He wants to help preserve the small town atmosphere of the neighborhood, and hopes that his close association with the City can be of help in this area. He lives in a vintage home close to his Panama Hotel; you've probably seen him walking with his dog, "Monica" the little white fluff ball.

Jim Gonsman. Jim is a civil engineer, and has lived in Gerstle Park since 1994. He is also a general contractor, and has 25 years of experience in building construction, design and repair. He has served on a MMWD committee that recommended rate structure changes to promote water conservation, and is currently the treasurer of the Marin Audubon Society. He is interested in preserving neighborhood character and quality of life through control of density and traffic, and elimination of illegal housing. He also wants strengthened design standards for new architecture, preservation of open space, and better public transportation systems.

WEBSITE HELP NEEDED

We are in great need of a volunteer to help with our already-existing website. No writing or artwork required- just put provided information into the site. It's easy, not very time-consuming, and will keep you in touch with neighborhood issues. Contact Ken Goudey at 577-0002.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD MEETS WITH JOE NATION

On Sept. 16th, GPNA hosted a meeting with Marin's California Assemblyman Joe Nation. We were pleased that 40 people attended, including a few from outside the Gerstle Park area. Our objective was to open a dialogue with Sacramento legislators. GPNA's concerns center on the increasing number of California laws that hamper the ability of local entities to make their own decisions regarding land use and housing density based on local needs and problems.

GPNA President Hugo Landecker addressed the Association of Bay Area Government (ABAG) requirement that San Rafael provide for the zoning of 2,090 additional housing units in the General Plan 2020 now nearing completion. He stressed that these units would be shoehorned into an already built-out community, but that ABAG is likely to request even more units in the coming years. The resulting impact on the environment, traffic, and general quality of life would be severe, especially in older neighborhoods such as ours.

GPNA Vice President Krystyna Barron said that the vast majority of mandated new housing throughout the state is sold at market rate for the benefit of developers, and is not, as the public may think, primarily for increasing housing for lower income households. She asked Mr. Nation to join with other state leaders in including many presently excluded housing units, such as senior, teacher, group housing, boat housing, etc., in the official count of existing units; she also called for the state to shift the power to make housing decisions back to local government, giving the people their just right to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Board member Lynn Bradescu outlined the negative impact of new state legislation on local communities. She described AB 1866, which severely limits local control over the establishment of second units and which will contribute significantly to overcrowding neighborhoods. Now a new bill, AB2292, will prohibit the ability of cities to make their own decisions about downzoning parcels to a lesser density even if that would be to the benefit of the residents. (In forming its first Neighborhood Plan in the 1970's, GPNA was allowed to downzone certain areas of the neighborhood to protect many existing homes from being torn down for multiple units.)

The floor was then turned over to Joe Nation, who thanked us for inviting him to address us, joking that he thought he had been invited to a party. He reviewed the history of ABAG, stressing that the organization concerns itself with many Bay Area-wide issues besides housing. He stated that most of our local cities are volunteer ABAG members, since regional planning can be beneficial in addressing many problems. He emphasized that the state is mandating planning for increased housing density because of projected state population growth and the need for all communities to be prepared in advance for this growth. But he did vote against AB 1866, the measure that limits local control over second units, and stated that most of the pressure for these laws comes from rapidly growing communities in the state and from affordable housing advocates, not primarily from developers or realtors. He told those present that Marin is considered by the state to be removed from real problems because it has an enormous amount of protected open space and also has a low rate of population growth. However, he did not address the detrimental impact of imposing increased density on old, built-out neighborhoods like ours, which certainly exist in other cities as well. Also, none of the state's mandates is concerned with a county partly surrounded by water, with one limited freeway to handle all existing and future traffic.

A lively question-and-answer session followed Mr. Nation's remarks. Of those who spoke, only one expressed support for mandating growth and regional planning solutions, disagreeing with the GPNA Board on this. The other speakers were concerned with the great power of ABAG, affordable housing, the need for local decision-making control over housing issues, and the need for other Marin communities to take some of Marin's housing density burden.

We only had one hour of Mr. Nation's time. Although he did not appear moved by GPNA's arguments, he said he would work on the idea of allowing some kind of local review process. Also, his staff will set up a meeting for us with ABAG representatives. GPNA will notify Gerstle Park residents and other neighborhoods when this meeting is planned. If you want to learn more about these issues or would like to contribute your ideas, please contact Chandra Murphy, GPNA President, at murphdtm@yahoo.com.

OPEN SPACE FIRE DANGER

You may not have noticed the article in the IJ's Sunday paper on Nov. 2nd about "Marin's Wildfire Threat". The article identified the open space area above Gerstle Park as a danger spot for potential wildfire. GPNA has long known about this problem, and we have been working for at least the last 12 years to remove the non-native French broom that prevails there. Removing the broom prevents the dangerous buildup of drier and taller plants that could fuel a fire. It also eliminates some of the hidden areas frequently used by people who camp there illegally and build campfires. We need more help in this endeavor. If this area has a fire it could endanger the homes along Upper Toyon. Can you help? Please call Hugo Landecker at 456-0221.

GERSTLE PARK ANNUAL PICNIC WAS FUN!

Everyone seemed to have a good time at our annual picnic on Sept. 11th. Many thanks to all who came and brought such wonderful salads and side dishes to share, and very special thanks to our friends from Center Point, who not only brought a great dessert but also did an admirable job of cleaning up the Redwood Grove afterwards. Thanks to the large group of volunteers who helped to put on the picnic and make it so successful. Our raffle prizes were outstanding, and each one seemed to be won by a very deserving person. Thanks also to the weather gods for a lovely evening!

We were pleased to see Mayor Boro in attendance, as well as City Clerk Jean Leoncini. Also present were representatives of San Rafael's finest: SRPD officers Lt. Jim Kelly and Sgt. Bean.

Next year we will try to avoid having the picnic on the same evening as Sun Valley School's parent event. The kids who came had a lot of fun (especially the babies!) and the grownups had a chance to catch up on neighbors they hadn't seen for awhile, but we would have had more participants if not for the conflict of dates.

ATTENTION GERSTLE PARK RENTERS!

Some renters believe that only homeowners can, or should, be involved in a neighborhood association. This is NOT true! You, as a renter, are a vital part of Gerstle Park, and your ideas and opinions are important to the neighborhood. GPNA was purposely formed as a neighborhood association, not a homeowners' association, so that renters could be included. What happens to our neighborhood impacts us all. We encourage you to join GPNA, and have a voice in the issues that will affect you. A membership application is below. Join us, and let your voice be heard!

HALLOWE'EN DECORATIONS CONTEST

So many of you did such an imaginative and beautiful (and creepy!) job on your houses and yards that it was hard to choose winners. The votes were very close- but since choices had to be made, here are the picks for best Hallowe'en decorations. Thanks to everyone who did their best to make the neighborhood fun for the kids!

- Best Dracula and noise effects: *21 Marin St.*
- Best witch costume: *11 Marin St.*
- Prettiest Hallowe'en lights: *146 San Rafael Ave.*
- Best Overall: *231 Bayview St.*
- Scariest Construction Site: *217 Bayview St.*
- Best Window Decorations: *523 D St.*
- Creepiest: *409 D St.*
- Best Spiders: *508 D St.*
- Most Original: *16 First St.*
- Best Pumpkins: *239 Bayview St.*
- Best Graveyards: *Upper Clorinda neighborhood*

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- December 11:** Christmas Caroling - 6-8 PM
- December 20-24:** Holiday Decorations Judging
- January 8:** Monthly Meeting - 7 PM
- February 5:** Monthly Meeting - 7 PM
- February 7:** Broom Pull
- March 3:** Monthly Meeting - 7 PM
- March 6:** Broom Pull (with Center Point)
- April 1:** Monthly Meeting - 7 PM
- April 10:** Spring Fling

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- Cultural Affairs Commission - 1st Wednesday
- Design Review Board - 1st & 3rd Tuesdays
- City Council - 1st & 3rd Mondays
- Planning Commission - 2nd & 4th Tuesdays
- Fed. of S.R. Neighborhoods - 3rd Tuesday

Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Membership Application

Please complete the information below and return with your check to:
GPNA, P.O. Box 150644, San Rafael, CA 94915-0644

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Do you wish to receive this newsletter at your home? Yes No

Would you like to be included on our mailing list? Yes No

Email Address: _____ Date: _____

New Member Renewal

Amount Enclosed*: \$ _____ *Annual donation: **\$10.00** per household (**\$5.00** seniors) - 1 voting member

Payment Type: _____ Term of membership is from November 1st to November 1st

How did you hear about GPNA? Friend Newsletter Other: _____

Welcome to GPNA!