

GWPNA: Why Be a Member?

A strong neighborhood association helps us all when problems arise, and often helps avoid them. To be strong and effective, we need and want to hear from you frequently, and we encourage you to come to as many monthly meetings as you can. We have a wealth of knowledge and influence when pooled together!

We communicate to our membership and the neighborhood in many ways, including:

- The FogCutter, our **Newsletter**
- www.gwpna.org, our **website** – where you can get information on meetings, agendas, minutes, and current events
- **Monthly open meetings** of the Steering Committee – all members and the general public welcome to hear speakers and discuss issues of vital interest to city residents (7:30 pm on first Tuesdays at the newly renovated West Portal Playground Clubhouse, 139 Lenox, above the Muni Tunnel).



Some of the ways in which you can help volunteer to benefit the West Portal community include joining one of our committees, which meet periodically to discuss topics and issues of interest, including:

Housing and Growth, Infrastructure,
Quality of Life and Parks & Recreation

Help our city and neighborhood by supporting and joining your local neighborhood association. **Visit our website and join!** If you have questions, please email our Membership Chair, Bert Hill at echill@sfhills.org

GPWNA Steering Committee

March 6th Meeting Minutes

Public Comment: Marilyn Amini read a letter from the Dept. of City Planning's Zoning Administrator, Larry Badiner, in which he interpreted the possible zoning impacts, or lack thereof, established by the "Market/Octavia Plan" on other San Francisco neighborhoods.

Taraval Police Station: Captain Sanford discussed staffing changes at the Taraval Police Station and reported details of a shooting that occurred at a card game at 17th and Lawton Streets.

President's Report: Ken K. reported Verizon's application for a cellular antenna site on the Barbagelata Realty building on West Portal Avenue and reviewed the "conflict of interest" portion of GWPNA' Bylaws and emphasized that it remains a member's responsibility to recuse herself from individual votes at GWPNA meetings when there is a conflict of interest; he also requested nominations for the slate of officers to be elected at GWPNA's June meeting.

Presentations:

Mohammed Nuru – described San Francisco's sidewalk inspection and enforcement program which includes the cleanup of specific transit corridors (100-block pilot program); he emphasized the importance of the relationship between the people cleaning and the merchants on these corridors and reminded us that San Francisco has no "blight" ordinance. The program's long-term goal is to create livable, attractive corridors.

Other actions:

Members of the Steering Committee were asked by Ken K. to volunteer as delegates to the WTPCC, CSFN, and the WP Merchants' Association.

Ken K. motioned to discharge the "Schools Committee" (Mary Burns seconded). Motion passed.

Howard Strassner motioned to create a new "City Infrastructure Committee" (Bert Hill seconded). Motion passed.

Dr. Stan Kaufman motioned to create a new "Recreation and Parks Committee" (Mary Burns seconded). Motion passed.

New Business: none

8:55pm: Meeting adjourned.

How Did GWPNA Come to Be?

A Bit of History... by Rae Doyle

In October 1973, a group of young mothers, watching their offspring play on dilapidated play equipment amid unkempt grounds at West Portal Park, decided to ask the Recreation and Park Department to improve the maintenance of the park and playground. What they learned from Recreation and Park Department astounded them. The park was scheduled to be condemned in late 1974 to make way for a new MUNI railway terminal that would take up a third of the park's open space.

The Recreation and Park Department had made an agreement with BART and the Transit Task Force to (in the ladies words) "transform a third of our park into a plexiglass and concrete railway terminal that would seem more appropriate to downtown Houston than to a small residential community in San Francisco."

The battle that ensued to save the park land in the next few years resulted in the formation of the West Portal Park Improvement Association that eventually was expanded to the Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association. Charter members Lori



Horne, Ginnie Boushey, Lynn Saunders, Sally McMillan, and Nancy Hersh organized the community to save West Portal Park and eventually

gained the support the Board of Supervisors, which was headed by another young woman, Dianne Feinstein.

When the committee of young mothers asked that the plans for the terminal be revised to minimize the amount of open space it was gobbling up, the Transit Task Force personnel told the ladies: Sorry, ladies, you are too late. There were meetings in 1972 in which the residents and merchants agreed to the

plan. And further your park was never a park anyway, and the cost of revised plans would be too costly.

On the first argument, the ladies concluded that the meetings in 1972 were attended by West Portal Merchants only who were so relieved that BART abandoned plans to build a tunnel under the street, that they would agree to any project as long as it was above ground. The ladies asked for the minutes and attendance sheets for those meetings and never received them. Their conclusion was that residents had never been informed of these meetings. The Recreation and Park Department's conclusion was that all the people who had been informed of the plans had subsequently moved away in the intervening two years.

The Transit Task Force's argument that West Portal Park was not a park was an attempt to circumvent the "Public Park Preservation Act of 1971" a combination of City Charter provisions and State of California

Government Code and Public Resources Code which specifically forbids the use of park land for other than recreational



purpose. In response to the Transit Task Force's argument that West Portal Park was not a park, the ladies had this to say before the Board of Supervisors: "By a nightmarish logic reminiscent of Joseph Heller or Lewis Carroll, they argue that because a portion of our park has equipment for children's play, it is a playground, not a park, and is therefore not protected." They were poised to file a lawsuit in federal court to dispute the Transit Task Force definition that West Portal Park was not a park.

Meetings were held on December 6, 1973, and on April 27 and May 6, 1974 attended by residents who were enthusiastically supportive of the effort to save the Park. On June 10, Dianne Feinstein introduced a resolution before the Board of Supervisors to ask the Transit Task Force not to approve any plans for the West Portal Muni Railway station which would result in the taking of any part of

West Portal Playground. Previously, Supervisors Kopp and Molinari had introduced a resolution asking BART to set aside funds to assure that West Portal Park would be rebuilt. At this time, any agreements that BART would replace or rehabilitate the park were verbal, and the ladies wanted assurances in writing. Three days later, there was a large town hall meeting at West Portal Elementary School in support of the resolution.

What they demanded was two tennis courts, a basketball court, a handball court, leveling of the playing field, and a larger children's playground, and a rebuilt club house. And they wanted agreements that were written, not verbal.

The Association won only a part of what they asked. They lost some open space and got one tennis court. But the playing field was leveled, and the clubhouse was rebuilt and the children's playground was enlarged with new equipment. The playground was relocated from the upper northeast corner of the park where the winds from the oceans, unsullied by windbreaks, blasted the tots and moms with bone chilling vigor, to a more protected site further west. The clubhouse, built from leftover materials from the MUNI stations, proved unsatisfactory and was rebuilt through the leadership of Helen Johnson of the Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association.

The Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association, thirty three years later, continues to keep an alert eye on all developments which might affect residents. Individuals within the organization have become familiar with zoning laws and study environmental considerations. The primary goal of the Association is to provide strength through the unity of the residents in order to maintain and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood for residents and their children.

The issues, that have been addressed over the years, have been promoting acquisition of open space on Edgehill Mountain by the Recreation and Park



Department, intervening in establishing a retirement home at the foot of Edgehill Mountain, participating in zoning of the West Portal Avenue commercial district to restrict financial institutions. The Association has also tackled minor issues, such as, posting a \$25 reward for the return of a stolen parrot at a pet store on West Portal Avenue in the 1980's.

The Association continues to address the wide variety of issues that are associated with a neighborhood that has a two commercial districts, a library, a playground, and a large number of first residential homes.

Be a Visible Cyclist!

Bicycle Safety in the City - by Bert Hill

A few years ago, my wife and I took the *Citizens' Police Academy* program in San Francisco. We were somewhat surprised to learn that Bike Patrol officers are used as a *stealth* tool in making arrests. Like other bicyclists, their relatively small size and maneuverability contribute to being **invisible** in the curb area of the street around parked cars and SUVs. Nearly every street cyclist has experienced this **invisibility**, being passed and cut off by a motorist braking or turning right, leaving no time for the cyclist to stop or maneuver.

Such dangerous habits aren't usually intentional. In the distraction-filled world of the motorist, their multi-tasking mind is filtering to include only those activities seen as dangerous or important, meaning other vehicles, traffic signals, a siren or a squad car - rarely a cyclist or pedestrian on the edge of the road. So what can the cyclist do to enter the conscious mind of the motorist?

Enabling Early Detection and Recognition, so Avoidance is smooth

Cyclists can safely overcome being *Mr. Cellophane* with clothing, lighting/reflectors, and street position. While the police may favor dark uniforms to avoid detection, clothing for cyclists should be bright and

eye-catching, with fluorescent yellow-green being the best. This type of clothing nearly always includes reflective piping. At night, the outline of the cyclist's torso complements the color's visibility. The fluorescent style has recently been adopted as standard emergency clothing, signaling that the individual wearing it wants to be consciously seen, recognized, and avoided.



Night and foul weather riding offers additional challenges. To enhance visibility, cyclists improve detection and recognition wearing reflectors and blinking lights on their helmet and torso. Shoe &

ankle reflectors are important in showing pedal motion that can be attributed only to a cyclist. Many also wear the reflective rear triangle, an international symbol of a slow-moving vehicle.

Bicycles are required by law to have reflectors - front white, rear red, and yellow pedal; plus wheel reflectors to show motion from the side. At night, cyclists must mount a white front headlight visible for 300 feet from the front and sides. Safe cyclists add LED blinking lights and reflectors to their bicycle frame. Most bicycle lights have clips for easy removal.

Once recognized as a cyclist, detection can be optimized by being clearly in the motorist's field of view. Safety statistics have consistently shown that danger comes from being outside the travel lanes of vehicles, riding on sidewalks or too near the curb. Depending on speed differentials, cyclists should ride with a clear area of three to four feet on either side, protecting them from the 'door zone' on the right, and vehicles passing on the left. They should take advantage of extra lane space by staying safely close to traffic, well away from the road edge.

If the travel lane is too narrow to allow a safe amount of space on both sides, cyclists should 'take the lane', requiring vehicles to pass by changing lanes. Cyclists should show courtesy on two-way narrow streets

without periodic signals that interrupt traffic flow; pulling over to let backed-up vehicles pass, but only in areas where return to the traffic lane can be made safely, visibly, and predictably. It is unlawful for vehicles to pass too closely to a cyclist for safety.

A cyclist should always be cognizant of motorists' ability to recognize, detect, and take actions to ensure safety. There may be conditions and circumstances where walking, waiting, or taking a different route may be the safest alternative.

Compromise on Golden Gate Park Saturday Closure on Kennedy Drive

After marathon negotiations, an agreement was reached whereby advocates for closure ceded the Concourse, Conservatory, and 8th Avenue areas east to Stanyan, in return for closure of a small portion west of the Concourse area. This will allow continued free parking and motoring through the Eastern area of the Park on Saturdays. Related legislation was passed to meet requirements for disability access in the Park.

Signatories to the agreement included the De Young Museum, the Academy of Sciences, the Sierra Club, and the SF Bicycle Coalition. The Board of Supervisors subsequently ratified the agreement 9-2.

The closure is anticipated to commence on Saturday, May 26 through September 28 (6:00am – 6:00pm).

An environmental review will be prepared, leading to legislation extending this year's closure permanently. Signatories will abide by this agreement for five years. Details are at

http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_index.asp?id=58947
&
http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_index.asp?id=58806

Hearing on Critical Mass

The SF Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) will hold a hearing to discuss recent developments allegedly associated with the monthly Critical Mass bicycle ride. The BAC meeting will be on Thursday, May 26 at 6:30 pm in City Hall, Room 408.

Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association
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Get the FogCutter online!

To save paper and costs, GWPNA is offering the FogCutter online at www.gwpna.org for GWPNA members whose dues are paid. If you’d like to receive an email notice telling you when the FogCutter is available – and other events and news – please send an email to webeditor@gwpna.org and let him know you want to be on the list!

The FogCutter is the newsletter of the Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association, published bi-monthly (usually) and distributed to GWPNA members. Please contact any officer, or the newsletter editor, with your ideas, issues and questions.
DAYTIME calls only please!

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