



FOGCUTTER

Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association Newsletter – Since 1974
Families working to improve their Neighborhood

Why you should join the Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association

By Avrum Shepard

For 25 years the Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association Steering Committee has met monthly in Spring, Winter and Fall to discuss topics of interest to anyone living in the Greater West Portal area. We have guest speakers and your District 7 Supervisor Sean Elsbernd frequently participates in our Steering Committee meetings. By becoming a member of GWPNA, you can:

- Keep abreast of local issues
- Get to know your neighbors
- Get to know your District Supervisor
- Get updates from the neighborhood police on crime activity and how they are addressing it
- Get advice on how to work with City Government from neighbors who have experience
- Solicit support for your neighborhood activities (block parties, baby sitting co-ops, etc.)
- Make announcements about upcoming events that you're involved in

GWPNA delegates attend meetings of the neighborhood umbrella organizations and city agencies (listed below). The delegates report on issues in other areas of the city that will affect our neighborhood. By becoming a member your voice combined with other voices in your neighborhood can make a difference.

Members of our Steering Committee are significantly engaged in the work of the city serving by appointment or request for the following: *The Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods, the West of Twin Peaks Central Council, the San Francisco Veterans Commission, Lake Merced Task Force*

We communicate to our membership and the neighborhood through:

- The FogCutter 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 are welcome to hear speakers and discuss issues of interest to city residents. We also host two general membership meetings a year in June and December.

The most recent issue is that GWPNA is combining efforts with the West Portal Avenue Association in establishing a Community Benefit District to improve the appearance and service of our commercial district which is such a vital part of the West Portal community.

Please join us in continuing to work toward making the West Portal Neighborhood a great place to live. We want to hear what your concerns are. It's easy to join. On Page 4 is a membership form, and there's one available of the website. Just complete the form and mail it in with your check. We welcome you!



Health Hazard at Stern Grove

By Rae Doyle

The Stern Grove Summer Festival will begin its third year since the completion of the \$20 million renovation project that featured the visionary work of world renowned landscape architect, Lawrence Halpern. The Grove and Meadow are a delight to concert goers, dog walkers, and hikers.

However, since its renovation, the meadow has been plagued with water drainage problems which people who live in the homes near the meadow attribute partially to the design of the new service road from the Vale Street parking lot to Pine Lake. They are concerned that the good-intentioned paved road, that was part of the improvement project, created what is not exactly a road to hell but a road to mosquito heaven.

The original road served as a water run-off path from the parking lot to Pine Lake. The new road was built with higher curbs to keep water off the road. There are three speed bumps beside which are cuts in the curb to divert the run-off from the road into a gully to the north of the road. Patrick Skain, a volunteer gardener and member of the Pine Lake Neighborhood Association, observed that after the road was built, the run-off overflowed the gully and settled in the meadow when it rained, creating pools of standing water.

He suggested a solution to the Recreation and Park Commission that involved restoring the run-off flow that existed prior to the construction of the service road. The solution is to fill in the three curb cuts and

remove one or two feet of asphalt from the northern end of each speed bump to allow water to flow uninterrupted. The hope is that this will reduce the amount of water flowing into the meadow. Stern Grove Gardening Maintenance Supervisor Robert Sheets has agreed to implement Skain's suggestions.

But something else is troubling the Pine Lake neighbors. The project environmental review required that the water run-off spill into a filtration basin before it seeps into the Lake so that sediment and other solids can settle out. A large basin was carved out in the area in front of the Field House about 20 feet from the Lake. Neighbors observed that the basin water supply was slow in seeping into Pine Lake, stayed in the basin, and became brackish. In response to neighbors' complaints about the standing water, Project Manager Rick Thall in 2007 wrote: "The majority of the water in the filtration basin should drain within 48 hours." But the Pine Lake neighbors observed that it didn't drain in 48 hours. They are concerned that it will breed mosquitoes in the Fall.

Patrick Skain claims that the threat of mosquitoes breeding in the basin is not the real problem. He says that it is lack of staff to maintain the meadow. There has not been a full time gardener in Stern Grove in 15 years. When it was apparent that the infiltration basin was not draining as expected, last year a drainage pipe was installed in the basin. Apparently the pipe becomes clogged. This and numerous other problems are not remedied because there is no full-time gardener at the site.

There are differing opinions about whether the mosquito threat in the filtration is the largest problem in the meadow, but the Pine Lake neighborhood is unified in maintaining that the huge investment in the recent renovation project is threatened by inadequate maintenance.



Avenue News

By Karen Tarantola

West Portal Arts & Crafts Festival. April 3 – 5. There will be 65 professional artists. Stop by between 10 am and 5 pm Friday, Saturday & Sunday.

TuttiMelon has opened to rave reviews from the after school and early evening family crowd serving a wonderful assortment of gelato, frozen yogurt and toppings. Judy Ng, site manager, is anticipating adding a crepe service and Italian soda selection soon. You don't know what yumy is till you've sampled their gelato!

Rumor is that **Walgreen's** will be moving to the Rite Aid site but there is no date set and no known new tenant for the current site.

Dr. D. Duncan's expanded dental offices to the first floor of the old Diamond Video site will have its hearing before the Planning Commission March 26, 2009.

The Bookstore on West Portal has a children's story hour twice a week: Wednesday at 10:30 and Sunday at 11AM. This is a wonderful opportunity for a special and free outing for families.

Baby Street, 207 West Portal, has just opened. Al and Julie, the owners, focus on designer "diaper" bags that can easily be modified to accommodate the most style conscious. A small space, there is a large selection of bag styles as well as darling baby shoes and accessories. Please stop by and visit their store.

There is not much activity at **279 West Portal Avenue**, only a sign indicating that it is the new home of First Republic Bank. The building was originally built to house a bank, with no windows, a vault and two drive-teller lanes. But the owners were confronted with a technicality in the West Portal Avenue zoning that limits the use of banks. When the property became vacant in 1998, the lessee Washington Mutual Bank subleased to the "Mayor Brown for Mayor" campaign. Even though the owners expressed concern that this temporary could jeopardize the property's important grandfathered permitted bank use, they received Planning Department determination that it would not relinquish the right to use the property as a bank. In spring of 2008, they had contradicting information from the Planning Department and were required to apply for a conditional use permit. They were granted that permit.

The beautiful mural on the old **Waldenbooks** store is once more battling graffiti. The muralist was out there last week restoring the mural and covering over new graffiti.

On May 16, West Portal merchants will celebrate **Small Business Week** by providing special events and products.



Planning Commission approves Conditional Use for Dental Offices

By Rae Doyle

On March 26, dentist Dr. Dean Duncan won permission from the San Francisco Planning Commission to expand his dental offices to include the first floor of 99 West Portal Avenue. The San Francisco Planning Department had recommended disapproval of Dr. Duncan's expansion project. The Greater West

Portal Neighborhood Association had voted on November 24, 2008 to oppose granting permission for his project as well. The West of Twin Peaks Central Council, an umbrella organization of 17 neighborhood organization, also opposed the conditional use permit application.

In response to reluctance by some Commissioners to grant a conditional use permit to convert retail to professional use on the ground floor of West Portal Avenue, the Commission specified that Dr. Duncan produce more information about how he intended to landscape and alter the exterior to make it look more like a retail establishment.

With one commissioner dissenting, the Commission granted approval of Dr. Duncan's request for a conditional use permit with the condition that he return to the Commission with revised architectural plans on April 9.

Arden Wood News

By Eric Castongia

The seven homes being built at 15th Ave. and Wawona are in full swing. The home closest to West Portal was started first and looks like it will be done first. Given their progress, I'd expect several of the homes to be on the market within a few months.

There's been no communication or news regarding the proposed condominium development on the western 4.6 acres of the Arden Wood Christian Science property. Given the current financial market and difficulty in getting financing, many developments have been put on hold, even some that have already been started.

A visit to the Arden Wood Christian Science web site stated that "After many site surveys and studies,

the option to develop a piece of Arden Wood's property along 19th Avenue has been made available to national and local developers." This piece of information was updated October 30, 2008. Given that Republic Urban Properties' recorded option to purchase the portion of the property for the proposed development expires in July of 2009, it is unknown whether Republic Urban is continuing in their quest to develop the property, or whether its open to other 'national and local developers.'



The Next GWPNA Meeting

Date: April 7, 2009
Time: 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Location: Citibank Lobby @ 130 West Portal Ave. (Just down from the corner of Vicente, near Starbucks)

GWPNA Meeting Dates for 2009

- May 5
- June 2
- September 1
- October 6
- November 3
- December 1

Membership Form: Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association (GWPNA)

GWPNA is a non-profit 501(c)3 / EIN 51-0169982, Your Contributions are Tax-Deductable

Renewal Membership New Membership

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

FogCutter Newsletter by Email Postal Mail (E-Mail saves trees and can be forwarded to friends)

Membership Dues: Sponsor = \$20.00, Family = \$10.00, Additional Contribution: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to "GWPNA" and return this form with your check. Mail both to:

Greater West Portal Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 27116
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neighborhood*

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Get the FogCutter On-Line!

The FogCutter can be received online. E-mail **info@gwpna.org** to get on the e-mail list to receive the FogCutter and neighborhood announcements.

The FogCutter is published bi-monthly and distributed to GWPNA members. Please contact the FogCutter editor with your ideas, issues and questions.

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