



Dedicated to a continuing rural atmosphere

From The Chair

By Mid Hoppenrath

I know the community will join me in thanking the directors who are leaving the Town Council Board this term. Some are very well-known names in our valley, such as Evelyn Alemanni and Patti Newton, who between them have over 30 years of public service. While it is difficult to imagine the Town Council Board without them, they are not leaving Elfin Forest and I know they will continue to be active in community affairs.

Also leaving this term are Elfin Forest residents Bob McGurk and Jan Denny, two very valuable contributors to the ongoing efforts to “keep it rural.” Our heartfelt gratitude goes to these four hardworking individuals.

I also wish to welcome new board members Jacqueline Arsivaud-Benjamin, Jeff Swenerton, Steve Barker, and Betsy Keithley. Many of these names are also well known to valley residents and represent active members in other local community organizations such as the Elfin Forest Community Foundation, the Elfin Forest / Harmony Grove volunteer fire department, and The Escondido Creek Conservancy. Thank you for donating your time and energies to our local Town Council Board!

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Town Council Meeting –Wednesday, March 1st @7:30PM
At The Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Fire Station

**Topics: Meet Captain Bennett of the San Marcos Sheriffs’ Substation.
 OMWD’s Alex Newton with an update on the dam tunnel to Lake Hodges.**

Town Council Board Elections

By Evelyn Alemanni

As a result of the February Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Town Council Board election four new members join the board: Steve Barker, Jeff Swenerton, Jacqueline Arsivaud-Benjamin and Betsy Keithley. They are replacing departing members: Patti Newton, Evelyn Alemanni, Bob McGurk and Jan Denny. Congratulations to the new board members and thanks to the departing ones.

EF Community Foundation News

By Betsy Keithley, EFCF Secretary

The EFCF election, which occurred on February 1st, resulted in the re-election of incumbents Steve Barker, Trey Fairman, and Sue Hill along with the election of new member, Lori Vitale. The term is three years with a minimum of two face-to-face meetings per year to review grant applications that are due in April and October.

Harmony Grove Fire Anniversary

By Nona Barker

This October is the ten year anniversary of the Harmony Grove Fire (October 21st, 1996) which burned more than 8,000 acres, destroyed 110 structures, caused more than \$51 million in damage and killed one of our residents.

The EF/HG Fire Department would like to hold a remembrance event coinciding with Fire Prevention week in October. If you would like to be on the ground floor of planning this event, please contact the fire department at 744-2186. Leave your name and email and you will be contacted. The first event planning meeting should be mid-March.

Calendar For March

Date	Time	Event
Weds 3/1	7:30 PM	Town Council Meeting
Tues 3/7, 3/21	7 PM	Fire Training@Firehouse
Weds 3/8	7 PM	Fire Auxiliary @MaryGarman's House
Mon 3/13	7 PM	Fire Board@Firehouse
Sat 3/25	8 AM	Fire Training@Firehouse
Sat 3/4, 3/18	10 AM	Bookmobile@Firehouse
Every Thurs	6:30 PM	Yoga@Firehouse

Over 100 Trees Planted

By Jeff Swenerton

For all of us that are fortunate enough to live in the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove area we are able to appreciate a rural environment surrounded by much natural beauty. The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) was formed to preserve open space and enhance the natural environment throughout the Escondido Creek Watershed.

The Conservancy received a significant donation of 150 24" boxed Coastal Live Oak trees from the Pardee Tree Nursery of Bonsall for planting in the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve. Two semi trucks full of large trees would overwhelm most people but Head Ranger, Joey Randall, and his small crew of rangers took this as a challenge and planned a huge community planting day. With the support of TECC, his water district staff, and cosponsor REI, an incredible event was planned.

On January 28th approximately 200 people arrived to plant over 100 trees. Elfin Forest community members arrived early in the morning to guide traffic, register volunteers, and pass out equipment. Special thanks to Teri Brand, Janel McDonald Chen, Judy Holmes, Joy and Dave Jackson, Betsy Keithley, John Olsen, TECC Board Member Jack Olmstead, Cheri Smith, Carolyn Swenerton, and Mark DiBlasi. Special thanks also go to Tracy Swenerton of the Pardee Sales staff for her work in coordinating the donation.

Volunteers were welcomed with coffee and refreshments arranged by TECC Executive Director Geoffrey Smith. To express our appreciation for their donation, TECC Board member Leonard Wittwer presented Bill Widas, Vice President of Pardee Tree Nursery, with a beautiful burl plaque made by TECC Board member Tim Costanzo.

The Escondido Creek Conservancy has a number of planned events throughout the year including guided hikes in the watershed and Creek Clean-ups. The Conservancy's sole source of revenue is through donations. We encourage your participation and financial support. For more information our website is www.escondidocreek.org.

Past *chaparral* Issues On Web

Past issues of the chaparral are now posted at www.efhgtc.org in downloadable PDF format.

OMWD Increases Water Rates 4% By Susan J. Varty, OMWD Director

The State of California has again raided your Olivenhain Municipal Water District (OMWD) property taxes. For the second year in a row OMWD lost \$1.4 million in property taxes. This is NOT a loan, this is theft. They have no intention of paying it back. OMWD's monthly revenue is a little over \$1 million a month, this amount stolen is not an insignificant amount. What happened to no increases in taxes? Make no mistake, this is a backdoor tax. Will it happen again? Will we be called on to fund the state government again? I guess it depends on whether they can come up with a "balanced" budget.

The following are some of the things OMWD is doing to hold down rates as much as practicable:

Cost-Cutting Measures

The OMWD did not replace the Operations Manager position vacated last year. The Deputy General Manager, Harry Ehrlich, is now taking on the Operations Manager's responsibilities to cut costs.

The management has been successful in obtaining grant money from state and federal sources. Grants received in 2005 totaled \$1.6 million; this is used to offset capital expenditures. OMWD has joined SDG&E's critical peak pricing program; this is an \$11,000 per year energy cost savings.

OMWD generates its own electricity. Energy produced by the Olivenhain Water Treatment Plant (OWTP) turbines and blowers is sold back to SDG&E, and mechanical energy cost savings amount to over \$400,000 per year now. We have an entrepreneurial program called "Tiger Teams" that searches out and develops revenue-generating programs and ideas that the District can implement to increase revenue that offset various costs of operations and administration. This year Tiger Teams has generated about \$500,000 of new revenue that helps the District hold down water rates. Marketing cellular telephonic antenna sites brings the District an additional \$300,000 in lease payments every year.

Implementing Productivity and Quality Control Tools to Optimize the Company

OMWD has maintained the same number of meter reader employees to read the approximate 24,000 meters per month as was needed eight years ago for

14,000 meters. OMWD even reduced its customer response time for service requests; such as leaks, meter tests and high bill complaints from 72 hours to 48 hours, depending on the seriousness of the problem. This saves more than \$120,000 per year and provides a higher level of service.

OMWD implemented automated customer calls and various enhancements to the billing system, including on-line bill payments and account access information. OMWD still has the same number of customer service representatives even though the number of accounts has grown by almost 50% over the last eight years, a cost savings of \$60,000 per year.

OMWD implemented a vehicle tracking system to improve dispatch efficiency and to reduce employees' driving time, which is offset by not having to hire field customer service representatives.

Long-Term Water Purchase Agreements

Unfortunately, in a capital intensive industry such as the water business, long-term water purchase agreements will only work for large agencies with long term storage. The District is having discussions with private providers, such as the Poseidon Resources Corporation located in Carlsbad, for some future supplies from Poseidon's desalination project.

OMWD participates in a surface water storage program from Metropolitan Water District that reduces raw water costs on seasonal storage and covers some evaporation losses.

Conclusion

Olivenhain has worked hard over the years to protect our customers. We invested in infrastructure. We built a dam and a treatment plant: even when conventional wisdom said we were too small. We believed, and our customers agreed, that a reliable source of high quality water is important. We continue to believe that.

But the facts are raw water rates continue to climb, and are forecasted to increase 6% to 7% per year for the next ten years. The fact that the state government can (partially) fix its problems by forcing special districts to give up a large portion of its revenue is very worrying.

OMWD's objective is to keep water rates from rising more than 4% per year. That's the goal. Keep your fingers crossed...

Minutes Of Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Town Council Meeting

By Patti Newton

Date: February 1st, 2006

Call to Order: 7:35 PM.

Members present: Cheri Smith, Gordon Fines, Patti Newton, Bob McGurk, Bill Wilgenburg, Jan Denny, Eric Anderson.

Board Updates: Mid Hoppenrath read the minutes from the meeting with the County Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU) on January 20th.

Gordon Fines, Patti Newton, and Mid Hoppenrath met with **Gary Pryor, Ivan Holler,** and **Dahvia Locke.** The DPLU asked the town council to consider becoming an advisory group, effectively giving it planning group status for new developments. The town council accepted and will be apprised of any land use issues within CSA 107 and asked to provide input. Eden Valley residents can attend EFHG Town Council meetings as another means for them to gain information and question developers. At the request of the Village subcommittee, New Urban West sent a letter supporting the staff-recommended GP2020 map, which features the village development pattern that is so important to preserving our rural lifestyle. The County is sponsoring the first trails symposium to encourage synergy between major stakeholders, i.e., various city and county agencies, utilities, and community representatives, to facilitate creating a linking county-wide network of multiuse trails.

Town Council Board Elections: Jacqueline Arsivaud-Benjamin, Steve Barker, Jeff Swenerton, and Betsy Keithley won the four open seats. John Phillips may opt to act as a member at large.

Elfin Forest Community Foundation Board Elections: Lori Vitali won a seat on the Elfin Forest Community Foundation Board and incumbents were reelected.

Adjourned: 8:45 PM.

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If you're not already receiving a full color, PDF format copy of the **chaparral** by email send an email note to alemanni@allea.com to be added to the list. The PDF version is free to regular "hardcopy" subscribers and only \$10.00/year to receive the PDF version only.

March 2006

OMWD Customers Urged To Conserve

By Susan J. Varty, OMWD Director

In light of inquiries received by the Olivenhain Municipal Water District (District) these past few days on the shortage of water for several North County Water Agencies, the District wants to let its customers know that the shortage is not having a direct impact on their water supply. Other North County agencies suffered shortages during the shutdown of their treatment plant, but the District had adequate local storage and treatment capacity to meet the needs of its customers.

The warm weather and Santa Ana conditions that Southern California experienced in February have increased the demand for treated water in San Diego and south Riverside counties. This puts an extreme strain on the storage capacity of the North County agencies without their own treatment plants during the previous shutdown of all treated water deliveries to San Diego County from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's Skinner Treatment plant in southwest Riverside County.

District customers should be congratulated on their foresight and commitment to the development of the Olivenhain Water Storage Project (OWSP). The OWSP provides local storage for District customers at the Olivenhain Dam and Reservoir of 3,440 acre feet of water and also provides for local treatment of the water for District customers at the Olivenhain Water Treatment Plant. The treatment plant came online in 2002 and the dam was completed in 2003 with the District's partner, the San Diego County Water Authority.

The OWSP provides local storage and treatment which reduces the District's reliance on imported treated water aqueducts during maintenance or emergencies. The OWSP has proven vital in these past few weeks to meet the needs of District customers and to help our neighboring water agencies.

Customers can log onto www.bewaterwise.com for conservation tips and outdoor watering calculators. Additionally, tips on saving water can be found at the San Diego County Water Authority's web page at www.sdcwa.org/manage/conservation-falltips.phtml.

Garden Projects For March

By Evelyn Alemanni

The end of February is the traditional last chance for frost in our area, and March 20th is the first day of spring. However, temperatures so far this year have made it feel like spring all along. The plants are definitely confused, with lots of the daffodils, freesias, and others blooming nearly six weeks early. What can you do, except relax and enjoy it?

The lack of rain has been a strain on gardens as well as gardener's budgets. Normally we look forward to being able to turn off the outside irrigation for a few months, but so far, we are looking at one of the driest years on record, with about half an inch of rainfall since the first of the year.

How do you deal with such a dry year and still maintain a garden? First of all, let the lawn go and redirect the water to. Lawns require more water than any other plant. Second, mulch heavily. A 3 – 6 inch layer of mulch on your planting beds will do a lot to retain soil moisture. Just be sure to keep the mulch at least 6" away from tree trunks. Gravel is another wonderful mulch.

Another way to deal with lack of rainfall is to use a product like SoilMoist when planting. This is a water-absorbing polymer which absorbs many times its weight in water, and holds the water near the plant roots. Just sprinkle a half teaspoon of the crystals into the planting hole for a typical 4" pot, add water, and plant as usual. The crystals last for many years.

Reconsider the plants you grow. Think about using more drought-tolerant plants, cactus and succulents. Visit the two demonstration gardens at the fire station for some inspiration on using both native and drought-tolerant plants in the landscape, and also for examples for using mulch. Then get ready to show off your efforts in OMWD's landscape contest.

Elf Alerts

Elf Alerts are email notices about issues that need your immediate attention. They don't replace the newsletter, but supplement it. Don't worry, the emails are sent as blind CCs, so your address is not made public, and we share the list with the fire department.

Remember The Bookmobile

By Mickey Cross

Remember that the bookmobile is here on Saturday, Mar 4th and 18th from 10 AM until Noon. I am hoping that as many of you can come as possible (bring your kids; they count them too) because some people are out of town. If you want to order a book for pick up, you may still have time to order (or you can try to order it online and have it sent to the bookmobile). Phone number for North County services 760-643-5125 and the web site is www.sdcl.org. Dan (the library man) is working hard to get us the books that we want or are interested in. Let's support our bookmobile!! See you there!

Town Council Merchandise

Available Online

By Evelyn Alemanni

Click on over to www.efhgtc.org. On the home page, you'll see links that let you purchase the community guide, Voices of the Valley DVD, and even subscribe to the newsletter online! There's also a link so you can order other town council merchandise like license plate holders, mugs, and t-shirts by mail or email.

Community Guides Are Here

By Evelyn Alemanni

Our community guide is available at all town council meetings. This beautiful, keepsake edition has nearly 200 color photos showing our community's past and present. They make wonderful gifts and an indispensable marketing tool for realtors. It provides resources for rural living, a history of our community, and much, much more. The price is \$25 or five for \$100.

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What's Happening At The Fire Department – March 2006

By Captain Dawn Pettijohn



You may have noticed the Brush Engine and the Water Tender out of quarters for a few days last month. BR2861 responded to the *Angel Fire* in Julian with Strike Team #6412C, and WT2851 was requested

as a single resource along with two other water tenders for the fire in Deer Springs. Crews assisted with the tedious mop up operations required in the heavy fuels. Kudos to our team for an excellent job in their hard work representing the Elfin Forest / Harmony Grove Fire Department.

Training is still focused on the upcoming drill at the Questhaven Retreat on March 11th, and we are anticipating a great training opportunity in the scenario of a structure fire that extends into the vegetation. While the Firefighters are busy “brushing up” on wildland and structure fire manipulative skills, the officers are reviewing command and control tactics and procedures with Chief Twohy and Deputy Chief Neville. As always, we strive to stay prepared to respond through training and preplans.

At last, we have received final grant approval for the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Instructor training began late February and will conclude in March. We will be contacting the residents who signed up on the interest list with a schedule of training as soon as it is complete. Anyone interested in participating in CERT should contact Dawn at the fire station 744-2186. This is going to be a great addition to our communities, enhancing their ability to help themselves in the event of a disaster. We extend our sincere appreciation to the San Diego CERT Council for making this effort possible through grant funds.

The annual meeting of the Fire Advisory Board was held February 8th and was well attended. Election results: Nona Barker and Bob Kephart were re-elected and Mike Holmes newly elected. The by-law change was passed to allow the annual meeting date change to October. New Board positions: Nona Barker-Chair, Bob Kephart-Vice Chair, Byron Macfarlane-Treasurer, Rob Hill-Secretary, Don Grace-Director, Mike Holmes-Director, and Bob

McGurk-Director. They are prepared to lead us through a difficult year.

This October marks the ten-year anniversary of the Harmony Grove Fire which, sadly, on October 21st 1996, burned more than 8,000 acres, destroyed 110 structures, caused more than \$51 million in damage and took the life of one of our residents. The Department would like to hold a remembrance event to coincide with Fire Prevention week in October. If you would like to be in on the ground floor of planning this anniversary event, please contact the fire department at 744-2186 with your name and e-mail address. We will contact you with the first meeting date that should be scheduled sometime in mid-March.

This unseasonable weather has made for some very dry conditions and fires are a high possibility. Please stay prepared at all times. Even though it is technically off season, we are consistently in “High Wildland” fire conditions. Check clearance for your homes and escape routes. Be vigilant. Be safe.

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News From Questhaven Retreat



Sunday worship is at 10:45 AM.
All are welcome.
20560 Questhaven Road.
760-744-1500
www.questhaven.org.

Study groups meet on weeknights. Please call the office for times and locations.

Weekly Meditation - Wednesday at 7:30 PM.

Mar 5th - Mounting Jacob's Ladder, The Upward Climb - *Rev. Phyllis Isaac*

Mar 12th - Becoming a Warrior Within, Facing the Dweller on the Threshold - *Rev. Jonathan Wiltshire*

Mar 19th - Illumination, Climbing Out of the Darkness to Find the Light - *Rev. Blake Isaac*

Mar 26th - Entering Eternity in the Silence - *Rev. Susan S. Cary*

Sheriff's Department Contacts

In an emergency, please call 911. For non-emergency reporting, contact the following:

General - 760-510-5200

Jackie Cruz - Agriculture crime prevention specialist
760-940-4350

Betty (B.J.) Williams - Crime Prevention
Specialist/Neighborhood Watch 760-510-5254

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www.efhgtc.org (town council website)
www.elfinforestgardens.info
www.coburntopiary.com
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Amanda Clerke – Baby sit or feed animals. Parents will supervise and transport. EF Resident. 11 years old. 760-510-0143.

Emily Dill - Baby Sitting/Pet Sitting, EF Resident, 15 years old. Contact at 760-736-4333.

Jessica MacKinnon - Babysitting/Feed Animals, EF Resident, 14 years old, SFC High School - 9th grade, took babysitting course through Red Cross. Contact at 760-744-8955.

Brooke York - EF Resident, LCC School 12th grader, Baby Sitting. Tel: 760-752-7784.

Jared York - EF Resident, RSF School 10th grader, Baby sit or feed animals. Tel: 760-752-7784.

Wanted: Free Horse Manure for my vegetable garden. Please call John at 760-471-8515.

For Sale: Solid maple dining set, 3 by 6 foot natural butcher-block top, whitewashed legs, 6 matching Windsor arrowback maple chairs, all good condition, \$250. Call Mid, 760-747-1145.

Firewood: You load. Donation basis. For info call, 760-744-1500.

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The town council's website is continually updated. Check it out at: efhgtc.org. Note: the town council is not affiliated with elfinforest.net and elfinforest.com.

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Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Town Council Board members: Mid Hoppenrath 747-1145, Eric Anderson 471-1464, Gordon Fines 291-1129, Bill Wilgenburg 746-9713, Cheri Smith 891-0294, Jacqueline Benjamin 891-9061, Steve Barker 471-5559, Jeff Swenerton 471-4312, Betsy Keithley 471-8515

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