

Palomino Lakes

Property Owners Association

March 2008

Annual Meeting scheduled

The Palomino Lakes Annual Meeting is scheduled for 10:00 AM, Saturday, May 3, 2008 at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 205 West First Street.

The annual meeting will include election of officers for the Property Owners Association and the Mutual Water Company. While Board salaries are low (zero) the fringe benefits are great – you learn how the community works and get to meet and help your neighbors. Please consider making this contribution to our community. Nominations should be in writing and may be submitted to any member of the nominations committee (below) or to the Association Secretary. Self nominations are encouraged. Nominations must be received by 5:00 PM on Friday, March 28, 2008.

The nominations committee members are: Joe Chiantella, suejoe813@comcast.net, 894-1852, Gary Johnson, gjohnson@saber.net, 894-3113, and Rich Schaefers, rks@beckstoffer.net, 894-5696

Brush pick up scheduled

The Board has scheduled Johnson's Quality Tree Care to chip and remove property owner cut brush and tree trimmings during the week of May 19. Property owners need only place brush and trimmings (nothing larger than four inch diameter) at the edge of the road no later than 9:00 AM on Monday, May 19 – Johnson's will do the rest. This is a great opportunity to reduce some of the fuel around your home and get ready for fire season.

A similar effort several years ago was a great success and the Board feels strongly that we should help property owners make the entire community as fire safe as possible.

More road repairs completed

2007 was another busy year on the roads for the Board. Repairs were completed on Oak Knoll Terrace, Cedar Lane and Palomino Road but, due to budget, fell short of what is needed. Additional

work is planned this year for Palomino Road and lower Mountain Pine Road. Lower Mountain Pine is in such poor condition that we have asked one homeowner with a large truck to use Willow Terrace until repairs can be completed.

Although we worked closely with our contractor to minimize costs, there simply were not sufficient funds in 2007 to do all the work that needed to be done. The cost of asphalt (which uses large amounts of petroleum in the product and as fuel to heat the asphalt) has sky-rocketed in recent years and our dollars do not stretch far enough.

Our contractor has informed us that our roads should be chip-sealed when all repairs are completed. This should greatly enhance their longevity although our roads will continue to require significant maintenance and repair due to thinner than normal asphalt – as little as 1-1/2 inches in some places. The Board is getting bids chip-sealing and will determine when it can be done and how we can finance the work.

We will soon be obtaining bids for more road work for 2008 so anyone interested in asphalt work should contact one of the members of the Board so that we can put you in touch with the contractor. Costs should be substantially less when the contractor is in the area with his equipment.

Dogs

This is an issue that is sure to raise the ire of several homeowners - pet owners and non-pet owners alike. The Board has received numerous complaints of barking dogs and dogs running loose.

As we are all aware, Sonoma County has a leash law and dogs are not allowed to run loose off your property. One property owner was bitten by a dog, another had a pet attacked and severely injured by loose dogs and yet another has had to fend off loose, threatening dogs on at least three occasions. Several drivers have reported their cars being chased by aggressive dogs.

Our CC & R's are silent on the issue of loose and barking dogs and the Board currently has little ability to deal effectively with these problems. Loose and barking dogs are best handled by first talking to your neighbors. While it may not be the most comfortable conversation, dialogue may help. In those cases where the issue can't be resolved between neighbors, Sonoma County Animal Care and Control (565-1700) is responsible for enforcing local, State and Federal laws and regulations that pertain to animals and their care. Call them, particularly if bitten or if faced with aggressive dogs. We have placed a copy of the County Animal Regulation complaint form on our web site along with the regulations. In repeat or egregious situations, a written complaint may be appropriate. We have been told by Animal Control that multiple written complaints about the same dog from different individuals will carry much more weight.

Dog owners, we support your right to have well behaved animals and know the joy pet ownership brings. We are, or have been, dog owners ourselves. Please show courtesy and consideration to your neighbors by not allowing your dogs to run loose and by controlling your barking dog, especially after dark and before dawn. "Invisible fences" are installed on several properties and are very effective at keeping dogs at home. Anti-bark collars are not that expensive and are also quite effective. There are things you can do and affected neighbors might even share the cost.

At the very least, every homeowner is entitled to the quiet enjoyment of their property.

Excitement in the 'hood

One of the most out of ordinary situations the Board dealt with in 2007 was a large-scale marijuana growing operation in our community. One of our homeowners happened to check a stack of suspicious trash bags near a residence on Oak Knoll Terrace and discovered what appeared to be marijuana clippings. He called the Sheriff's Department but the deputy who arrived felt there was little he could do, stating he could not search the residence. Undaunted, our homeowner peered into a garage window and took photos of growing pot plants. However, the deputy felt he had no authority to see for himself and left. Frustrated, the homeowner called the Board, whose members include a retired state peace officer who has maintained his contacts. Calls were made and

results were swift in coming. The following morning several Sheriff's units and Sonoma County Drug Task Force personal – a dozen officers in all - arrived and descended on the home in question, busting down the front door. They searched the premises and found many growing marijuana plants, along with a sophisticated growing operation. However, it was clear that most of the pot had been cleared out the night before, leaving an insufficient amount to warrant charges. As we understand, the law allows up to one-hundred plants to be grown for medicinal purposes.

The home was soon vacated, however, (we believe that no one was living there full time) and is now listed for sale. Thanks to the vigilance of one of our home owners, this clandestine operation in our midst was exposed and quickly eliminated.

Big progress on culverts

In an earlier newsletter we discussed the problems with some of the culverts underneath our roads. We noted that in 2007 we planned to begin a three year effort to repair these culverts. Well, the culverts had other ideas.

Shortly after relining a large culvert on upper Palomino Road whose bottom had rusted out, and extending an inadequate culvert crossing Willow Terrace, a concrete culvert crossing Madrone Drive collapsed and led to a sink hole in the roadway. As that culvert and roadway were being repaired, we discovered that another concrete culvert, this one crossing lower Palomino Road, had collapsed internally and roadway failure was imminent. We were forced to repair this culvert as well.

The good news is, after spending nearly three times what we had planned, our culverts are in pretty good shape and our three year plan is complete – after about six months of frenzied activity.

Speeders

The Board continues to get complaints of speeding vehicles on Palomino Road. At least one homeowner has been identified as a repeat offender and has been contacted by the Board.

Please be mindful of your speed and stay at or under our posted 25 MPH limit. If the problem persists the Board may exercise the unpalatable option of contacting the CHP. Under California law, at the Board's written request, the CHP has

authority to patrol private roads and take appropriate action. Citations could result. This is a measure we would reluctantly pursue, so PLEASE slow down and give us all a brake.

CFPD and CDF inspections

The Board will meet with the Cloverdale Fire Protection District and the California Division of Forestry (Cal Fire) as it does each spring to discuss fire safety and flammable vegetation inspections. The Board will again urge these agencies to set as aggressive an inspection schedule as possible with the hope of reducing the danger of wildfire.

These agencies are stretched pretty thin and their prevention budgets continue to shrink. It's a shame the state has money to fight fires but not enough for adequate prevention efforts.

Rental restrictions proposed

The Association attorney, Bill Gillis, has advised that our CC&Rs lack restrictions on rental properties and that this can negatively impact property values. The Board has confirmed with real estate agents and appraisers that a high percentage of rental properties, or simply the lack of restriction on rentals, can reduce home values. Indeed, lenders take a harder look at property values and may limit loans and/or increase interest rates when there is a high percentage of rentals. Rentals are also a factor in the appraisal process and are frequently a consideration for the purchaser and their agent. Many disclosure forms now ask for the percentage of rental properties.

Mr. Gillis has recommended and is currently drafting a proposed amendment to our CC&Rs which would limit rentals to a percentage felt to have minimal impact on property values. This percentage would be above the current number of rentals and no property currently being rented would be affected. We plan to have this proposal to you in time for it to be included on the spring ballot.

Beware the Star Thistle

Homeowners should be on the lookout for star thistle. Star thistle is a non-native, noxious weed that once rooted will soon proliferate. Once established, it is extremely difficult to eradicate. It is common in Sonoma County. It abounds along Highway 101 in the center dividers. Several

properties in our community have this pest, and we do not want it to spread.

Star thistle is a spindly weed that begins to show itself in the middle of summer. It grows to two feet high and has several small yellow thistle-type flowers, each surrounded by several half inch long spikes. It can be seen almost everywhere in the county. KOA has acres of it. The best defense is Roundup®, but to be effective star thistle must be sprayed when it is in flower. After it flowers, the seeds will have spread, and while Roundup will kill the plant, the seeds will be unaffected. Once it is established, it usually takes three years to eradicate.



STAR THISTLE

Another method of control is to pull the plant from the ground before it goes to seed. In this case, be sure to put the pulled weeds in your trash container. Do not toss them over the fence or into a gully where the seeds can be spread. Never mow over star thistle because this will only spread the seeds and exacerbate your problem.

If you see star thistle anywhere on your property, please take measures to eliminate it.

PLPOA credit line denied

Last summer the Board, recognizing the need to have some back up funding in the event of an emergency, went to our bank for a \$25,000 line of credit. We didn't think this modest amount would be a problem as Palomino Lakes had banked with WestAmerica for years and we are members of the community.

Well, as it turns out, according to WestAmerica, we have no assets and insufficient resources to warrant credit. We haven't given up but, with the credit situation the way it is, the Board decided that it was time to implement a contingency fund.

Yellowjacket control

Yellowjackets are a major summer nuisance in our area and can quickly take the fun out of an evening barbeque – particularly if you are unlucky enough to experience a painful sting. Yellowjackets are social wasps that live in large colonies and are very difficult to control once the colony is established. However, before the colony is established, you need eliminate only one wasp – the queen – to eliminate or drastically reduce your yellowjacket problem. Colonies die out over the winter except for the new queens which emerge when temperatures rise in April or May to seek a location for a new nest. The queen lays her eggs and workers begin to emerge in mid-June. By late August, the colony is fully developed and contains as many as 5,000 individuals.

The key to control is to start early – before you have a problem. Trapping the queen will prevent the establishment of the colony. One or two traps per acre, set out in April, have been shown to greatly reduce the problem. Homeowners report good results from the inexpensive Rescue© trap.

Approach yellowjacket nests with caution as disturbed wasps are aggressive and stings are painful and can even be fatal to allergic individuals. Consider professional help to eliminate an established colony.

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