

# The Saddleback Gazette

A publication for the homeowners of the Saddleback Estates community in Auburn, California

Saddleback Homeowners Association • P.O. Box 6691 • Auburn, CA 95604-6691

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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

As I write this Newsletter entry, it is forecast to be another day with near 100° temperatures and a high potential for wildfire. Until the fall rains return, it is hard to imagine a higher priority for our community than wildfire prevention. I do want to share the good news that many



residents have already begun to return their annual Firewise effort reports (due by 8/15) which are required to justify our Firewise re-certification. Firewise certification establishes the fact that, as a community, we are actively doing our part to reduce wildfire risk. For new residents, our Firewise Report Form is used to record the efforts a homeowner makes to reduce flammable grass, weeds, shrubs, etc., on their property. Additional information can be found on our HOA website by clicking on the “**Firewise Safety Program**” link in the upper right-hand corner. Blank Firewise forms can be downloaded from the website or obtained from the plastic literature boxes located at the mail kiosk. Completed forms can be conveniently returned by depositing them in the HOA drop box, also located at the mail kiosk.

Another very high priority for us all is staying healthy while the Coronavirus seems to rage all around us. I believe we are lucky to live in a semi-rural community, where the closeness and stresses of city life affect so many, but our ability to distance ourselves from different family groups is helpful. We all miss the social interaction of our families and friends, going to a movie or just having a relaxed meal at a favorite restaurant. At Saddleback, most of the community social events such as BUNCO, ladies luncheons, men's breakfasts and outdoor movie nights have been either canceled or modified for safety. Hopefully, it will all be just a bad memory by this time next year. Remember when we could not find toilet paper on the shelves?

Please take care and consider becoming involved in our Saddleback community.

-- David Franklin, Saddleback 2020 President

## HOA Professional MANAGEMENT Initiative

The need to hire an HOA management company has become essential due to the new legal requirements of the Davis-Stirling Act, which affects California HOA laws. They involve extensive financial accountability, strict voting and election procedures, increased legal responsibilities, multiple HOA mailings, timely escrow company interactions, along with many other obligations. These functions now dictate the need for a professional organization with extensive experience and legal knowledge, which a volunteer homeowner simply cannot perform. Going forward, it is **no longer possible to continue operating our HOA solely with volunteer effort**. The function has evolved into a part-time job for someone who must have considerable time (hundreds of hours), management experience, communications ability and legal expertise. Expecting a homeowner to volunteer for such duties with significant potential liability and without remuneration is totally unrealistic.

The HOA Board will still oversee and approve the efforts of a management company, but off-load the labor of producing financial statements, annual audits, collecting dues, paying bills, collecting and sending mail, routing communications, managing contractors, interacting with escrow companies in the home sale process, etc. In addition the management company will provide guidance and training to board members, along with year-to-year continuity, which will make it far easier for board volunteers.



A committee led by Board member Hank Skawinski is in the process of writing a Statement of Work and gathering proposals from several HOA management companies regarding functions performed, costs, experience, etc.,. The committee will then recommend a best-value alternative solution to our present volunteer situation. We have surveyed several other local HOAs in size similar to Saddleback and discovered that, without exception, we are the *only* HOA that does not employ the services of a management company.

Hiring the professional management company will require an increase in HOA expenses and therefore, annual dues. For many years, Saddleback has not had an increase in the \$140 annual fee, which is essentially a

break-even amount of revenue for current operations. Current budget information, including income and expenses can be found on the HOA website. There are those folks who may say *“Why have an HOA? What am I getting for my money?”* Although we do not have a clubhouse or pool, we do have an organizational structure that regulates architectural issues, maintains the front entrance and mail kiosk, and also provides a community structure for initiatives such as the critically-important Firewise program. The HOA exists to protect our community from becoming like many of the junkyard properties along Dry Creek Road, which would affect our quality of life and seriously degrade our property values.

## 2020 BOARD of DIRECTORS ELECTION



The 2020 election season for the HOA Board of Directors begins in November of this year. We must elect 5 Directors from a pool of 5 or more potential candidates for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director. New this year is a legal requirement to have a Director Nominating Committee. Further, legal changes require that all candidates must be residents of the HOA (name on property deed, CC&R requirement) and no recent criminal history (financial bonding requirement). Refer to the CC&R document section on our website for more details about this process.

**Please consider volunteering as a board member** to help sustain our environment and community spirit. If you are interested, submit your name as a board candidate, along with a brief resume to any current Saddleback board member; see the “Annual HOA Meeting Minutes” tab under the “Documents” section on our website for a resume example.

You might think: *“I don’t have any previous experience with an HOA”* or *“I don’t have much time”*... but don’t let these deter you. All that’s required is a willingness to help by attending 4 to 6 two-hour meetings per year and a small amount of follow-up time, depending on the office position. Current and previous board members will guide and teach you the ropes, while our new management service will do all the physical “legwork” to make it easy. This is your opportunity to become involved in helping maintain our Saddleback community and have a say in directing its future.

## RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY UPDATE

Over the past several weeks, your HOA Board has informed all homeowners (via mail and kiosk notices), about a recently purchased home that was being modified into a residential care facility. According to our CC&Rs, this is not an allowable activity, as it represents the commercial use of a residence. However, it was determined by legal counsel that California state law allows such use of a residence for 6 beds or less. Since we have no choice in this matter, this section of our CC&Rs must be amended to conform with the current law.

## CC&R UPDATE

Our CC&Rs were last updated in 1991 and significant changes to laws, rules and regulations that affect HOA CC&Rs and community oversight have occurred since then. Your HOA Board has established a committee led by Director Randy Wonders to research and recommend a legal firm that can take our existing CC&Rs and update them with only the **minimum changes necessary required by law**.



To expedite this process, no other changes are contemplated at this time. Simply put, we need to baseline our CC&Rs to be compliant with the law. Examples of law changes include the process for Board of Director voting (including eligibility to be a Director), the annual dues collection process, permitted accessory dwelling units, display of political signs, and many other activities. Any proposed changes will be clearly communicated to all residents well in advance, with at least one (socially distanced) community meeting planned to share ideas and information.

## TRAFFIC CALMING/RADAR SIGNS

During the past several months, Placer County, like many other organizations, has been impacted in their operations by the Corona virus. Placer Supervisor Cindy Gustafson's office has previously assisted us by brokering an agreement whereby Placer County would procure and install a radar feedback sign if our HOA procured another. We were recently contacted by a Placer County Traffic Engineer who said that the County road sign crew would soon be installing the two signs on Blue Grass Drive to address the many speeding vehicles on that narrow road. Please be cautious when traversing this road on foot, as speeding vehicles can be potentially dangerous to life and limb.



## HOA COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Your input is not only important in guiding our HOA, but the information you provide can actually **save money**. Have we got your attention? For example, did you know that many of you are **paying over \$1 more per gallon of propane**



than your next door neighbor? This fact came to light at the last annual meeting when several homeowners exchanged information on their suppliers and pricing structure. Members were astounded (many outraged) by the differences in cost from one vendor to another.

This enlightening episode inspired the Board to initiate a series of surveys on the following suppliers and services: **propane, Internet, Cell Phone** and most important, **Home Insurance**. Each survey will be a simple, one-page "fill-in-the-blanks" form, asking you to provide essential data on vendor, pricing, plan/contract, quality-of-service, etc. The data we receive will be compiled and summarized, then anonymously shared with all Saddleback homeowners. The resulting **knowledge** will give you the bargaining **power** to either switch vendors or demand lower prices from your current vendor. And it works! A few homeowners who attended the annual meeting have already used the exposure on propane prices to dramatically lower their cost. One satisfying side-effect: the supplier who may have been gouging you all this time will no longer have your business... and they are not happy.

The first survey will obviously be about **propane**, since it's easy and most homeowners are still not aware of the pricing discrepancies. Beside, the heating season is coming and you don't want to be paying more than you should. The second survey will be on **home insurance**, which is such an important need in these critical, fire-ravaging times. Board members receive many homeowner calls asking: "who will provide fire insurance for my home at a reasonable price?" Sharing such info will help all of us to obtain the necessary coverage at the best possible price. Lastly, Information derived and shared from surveys on **internet** and **cell phone** providers will give you additional power to help improve your service and reduce cost.

Another potential survey concerns **landscape services**. We've all been asked at some time: "Who is your **gardener**... are they reliable and reasonably priced?" If you have any other ideas for sharing information, please email us, call a Board member or leave a message on our hotline.

## SADDLEBACK SOCIAL EVENTS

**Most are suspended for the time being** due to the Corona virus. An exception may be possible if allowed per County regulations and if deemed low risk when using precautionary measures (distance, mask, etc.).

**SADDLEBACK GARAGE SALE** -- To be tentatively held on **August 29 this year**. Last year's event was a raging success and homeowners who participated requested another. And it's the perfect outdoor venue for social distancing! Now is the time to begin cleaning out the garage, closet, attic, etc., and make a few coins selling *almost anything* (you'd be amazed).

If you are interested in joining this years' event, send us an email or call our hotline to **register by August 15<sup>th</sup>**. (see below). If we have enough participating homeowners by then, we will proceed with the signs, flyers, advertising, etc; otherwise it will be postponed to a future time. Last year, there were 18 registered homeowners and several who joined-in at the last moment on their own after seeing the large flow of potential buyers.

**Don't miss out on this event!** It's also a great way to meet some of your neighbors and folks from our surrounding communities. Watch our website and the mail kiosk for updated information.

## SADDLEBACK COMMUNITY-WIDE Multi-Home Neighborhood GARAGE SALE

**SATURDAY • August 29, 2020 • 8am~3pm**

The **ASTOUNDING SUCCESS** of our first-ever Garage Sale has prompted many of the "pioneer" participants to ask: *"when is the next one?"*

Well, we've scheduled it for the above Saturday, when the weather should be good with no conflicting holidays.

To participate, send an email by the **registration deadline of AUGUST 15, 2020** to:

[SaddlebackEstates@gmail.com](mailto:SaddlebackEstates@gmail.com)

with **"join garage sale"** in the subject line, then include your **name and street address** in the email body. You may also call our **Saddleback Hotline** at **(530) 392-8055** and leave the same information.



All participants will receive a staked "Garage Sale Here" sign to place in your driveway, along with a packet of pricing stickers. For tips, techniques and more information, visit our Saddleback website.

[www.SaddlebackHomeownersAssociation.com](http://www.SaddlebackHomeownersAssociation.com)



**Are *YOU* Prepared for the upcoming *WILDFIRE* season?**

A big THANKS to all homeowners who have submitted a FIREWISE REPORT... please keep them coming. Saddleback is very active with wildfire prevention and insurance companies are starting to take notice. *We kick butt compared to most other communities!*

Sign up with [www.Placer-Alert.org](http://www.Placer-Alert.org) to receive emergency information about police, fire, or other emergency alerts. It's easy -- just go to the website and provide simple contact information.



COUNTY OF **Placer** EMERGENCY SERVICES



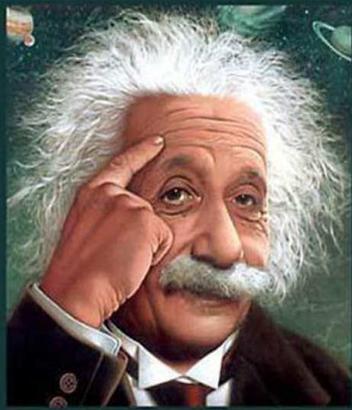
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**ALERT**

Sacramento Region Emergency Notification System

**2020 OFFICERS and COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

- PRESIDENT:** David Franklin
- VICE PRESIDENT:** Laura Bishop
- SECRETARY:** Randy Wonders
- TREASURER:** Hank Skawinski
- DIRECTOR:** Jim Aumond
- ARCHITECTURAL CHAIR:** David Franklin
- SOCIAL COMMITTEE CHAIR:** Bonnie Ozard
- COMMUNICATIONS:** Hank Skawinski



**"Once you stop learning, you start dying"**  
~ Albert Einstein ~

Remember this number... **(530) 392-8055** ...because it connects you to the new



**Saddleback MESSAGE HOTLINE!**

Thanks to Google Voice, we now have an answering service that you can access and leave a message any time, *at your convenience.*

Use it to register for an event, ask a question, log a complaint, give us a 'high-five' or notify the Board of a hazardous situation in our community.



No matter how you call, it's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

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**YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU!**



**PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING MORE INVOLVED WITH OUR COMMUNITY.** Volunteer to help with or host a social event (when permitted); attend HOA Board meetings; consider being a candidate for the HOA Board; most important, TALK with YOUR NEIGHBORS!

And don't forget to visit our HOA website daily, as it contains a plethora of information about local news & events, as well as HOA-specific social activities, meetings, resource links, etc