

Inter Canyon League
Minutes of the General Meeting
Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 7:00 PM Live Streaming

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by President Sarkissian.

II. General Announcements

Melody McWilliams, chair of the ICL History Committee, gave a brief presentation on “the Castle,” a stone building constructed on a Modjeska hill in 1907 and recently renovated. Said to have been originally built for Madame Modjeska’s concertmaster, it was known in the 1960s for being associated with the Brotherhood of Eternal Love, Timothy Leary, and a drug ring. A 1984 newspaper featured then-owner Ed Fredette.

III. OC Planning and Code Enforcement—Special Presentation

Geoffrey Sarkissian introduced Justin Kirk: He is the Planning Division Manager for OC Public Works, 601 N. Ross Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701, (714) 667-8895, justin.kirk@ocpw.ocgov.com. His department is in charge of regulating land development by processing permits and enforcing codes. In more complicated development cases, a site development plan is required, not just a building permit. Site development plans must be consistent with specific plans and zoning. Justin characterized the Silverado-Modjeska Specific Plan (Sil-Mod Plan) as a policy document but not a “true” Specific Plan.

Code enforcement operates in a reactive manner: The county responds to complaints, but does not routinely patrol looking for violations. Seeking a permit for something can trigger “other processes,” however, including orders to restore land to original condition. After this brief overview, Justin invited questions from the audience. One of the first was about notifying neighbors of construction projects. Justin said that it depends on the type of project. There is no requirement for notice of smaller projects, where there might be a conflict with property owner rights. Other projects, though, could require public notice if they involve meetings subject to the Brown Act, for example. Individuals within a “limited” radius of a specific project can request notice.

About the Sil-Mod Plan, Justin said that it was adopted prior to later requirements. Specific Plans typically replace zoning, so although the Sil-Mod Plan would be “somewhat applicable” in this area, and could be taken “under consideration” regarding trees, streams, etc., it would fall short in being able to enforce zoning. Adopting a new specific plan might be expensive, take two or three years for a hired firm to do the work, get approval from the Board of Supervisors, and possibly not turn out to be what was expected.

Janet Wilson said that she would forward to Justin a 2018 court decision regarding enforceability of specific plans. Justin said that his department is following advice from county counsel.

Justin said that he does not have enough manpower to respond to code violations on weekends, but if anyone files a complaint about illegal grading, for instance, an inspection will be made and a stop work order may be issued. Inspections are normally not restricted to the source of a complaint: other visible violations may also be noted. Code Enforcement tries to work with violators, but it can issue citations if necessary.

In a recent Modjeska case, OC Planning was not aware of alleged site plan violations because no permits had been applied for. Normally, that would have triggered project analysis. But in response to a complaint, a case was opened, inspectors were sent out, and stop work orders issued.

What if illegal activity creates a public hazard, like flooding due to removed or damaged trees, which might also have historic value? And who would pay for fixing the problem? Justin said that the county is mostly focused on mudslide threats at the moment, but the Modjeska problem site is being monitored, and an arborist will be consulted later concerning the trees. There is a “cost recovery mechanism” available to the county if it has to do repair work.

To find out if Code Enforcement has followed up on a complaint, ask for the assigned officer. If the case is closed but still a problem, file a new complaint. A public records request may also be filed regarding a particular project.

IV. Committee Reports

a. Friends of the Library—Janet Coughlin

No report.

b. Dredging Project Status Update—Rich Pfeiffer

Riprap held up during recent rain; one bridge needs work; thanks to Supervisor Don Wagner for pushing the cleanup project.

c. Canyon Watch Update—Bic & Keith Edwards

Francesca Duff asked about lithium battery chargers getting hot. Bruce Newell recommended not leaving the chargers unattended when charging.

V. Director Reports

a. President—Geoffrey Sarkissian

No report.

b. Vice President—Celeste Veerkamp

Qualified ICL voting members can go to the ICL website, click on “Donate,” and enter “\$5.” As the only candidates nominated last month for the two open positions on the ICL Board of Directors, Geoffrey Sarkissian and Scott Breeden were elected to new terms.

c. Secretary—Scott Breeden

Recycling income of \$720.90 was raised for ICL over the past six months.

The minutes of the December meeting were approved 4-0.

d. Treasurer—Francesca Duff

A \$1,185 Directors and Officers insurance bill was paid. Total annual insurance cost is expected to be at least \$4,500 now. Canyon Watch will also need money this year.

The December financial report was approved 4-0.

VI. New Business

Jessie Bullis noted that canyon residents displaced by disasters like wildfire can continue to be voting ICL members.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

***** The next ICL meeting will be held February 7, 2023 *****