

RIDGE REPORTER

Newsletter of the Inverness Ridge Association
December 2016

invernessridgeassoc.com

From the Interim President

Tim Stanton

Dear Neighbors,

I write as Interim President of the Inverness Ridge Association Board of Directors (IRA) with greetings to all of you. Susan Fisher, our previous president who, sadly for us, moved away from PRE, left big shoes to fill. With help from my fellow board members I am slowly finding my way.

All of us owe Susan a huge round of thanks for her excellent leadership of the Board and stewardship of our community over the past few years. Her accomplishments are many, but perhaps the most visible and notable was pulling together representatives from FIRESafe Marin and the National Park to improve fire safety in PRE, insure that all residents are aware of evacuation routes in case of fire, and know what to do to make our properties as fire safe as possible. Marin Fire helped trim vegetation along the Sunnyside right of way and the Park cleared combustible material at the top of Drakes View Drive along boundaries it shares with PRE properties. Thank you, Susan, and good luck with your new life in the East Bay!

Road Maintenance

The major topic at recent IRA Board and Paradise Ranch Estates Road Advisory Board (PRERAB) meetings has been road maintenance and the future repaving of Drake's View Drive.

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OUR SPECIAL RIDGE GATHERING

Please join us for

IRA Annual Meeting
Saturday January 14, 2017 - 10:30 AM

Barbara Jay's home
100 Douglas Drive (at the end of Douglas)

Sumptuous potluck lunch.
Please bring a salad, main dish, or dessert. Drinks provided.

Guest Speaker:
Our new Marin County Supervisor, Dennis Rodoni

All property owners and renters welcome.
Car pooling recommended.

We will be collecting 2017 IRA membership dues, nominating and electing board members, and receiving a report from PRERAB, our road board, which will include an update on the plans for repaving Drakes View Drive, with options, costs, financing, and timing.



Fox Very Much at Home.

Photo by Marna Clarke.

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PRERAB is responsible for our road system, which it carries out in consultation with the County. IRA provides support and works closely with PRERAB on road issues, including vegetation management, road safety signs, and preparation for future assessments we must pass in order to repave DVD and continue regular vegetation management. This will be a major topic at the upcoming Annual Meeting.

You have recently received messages from the IRA Board and from PRERAB board member Michael Ongerth via NextDoor regarding the chipping service for residents, which the IRA supports each year. Chipping is taking place in coordination with PRERAB's annual removal of dead and dangerous trees along our roads and clearing of ditches to prepare for heavy winter rains.

I have been walking our roads several times a week for many years and I can say that they are in good shape. We all know that the lower reaches of DVD are in need of repaving, but we should feel good about the overall condition of our road system. For this, all of us owe much gratitude to our neighbors who voluntarily serve on PREBAB. Please reach out and let them know how you feel, and of course offer any suggestions you have for further improvement. Please also consider joining PRERAB or the IRA Board to pitch in!

The Inverness Ridge Association website—Invernessridgeassoc.com—continues to be updated and revised. Here you will find contact numbers for the IRA Board, the PRERAB board, local emergency personnel, and our neighborhood liaisons, as well as the updated emergency escape route map and other helpful resources and links.

Annual Meeting

The Inverness Ridge Association Annual Meeting is coming up (see notice elsewhere in this newsletter). Our custom is to begin with very brief reports from the chair, treasurer and Road Board representatives. This year the Road Board report will be more detailed, as there is much to learn and discuss about the need for future repaving as well as the extensive, ongoing maintenance work. In addition, we will be joined by Supervisor-Elect Dennis Rodoni. Please come get acquainted with your board members, neighbors and Dennis.

Finally, as is our custom we will elect IRA directors renewing their terms and new members wishing to join the board. Here is the list of current directors (starred names identify those up for re-election):

Tim Stanton, President
Dave Wilson, Vice President
*Myn Adess, Secretary
Helen Chapman, Treasurer
*Ron Bennett
Sydne Bortel
Alicia Jackson
*Leah Light
Robert Lundstrom
Julie Merk
Michael Ongerth

As always, we welcome anyone who would like to serve on the IRA Board. It's not a big time commitment—we meet every two months for about two hours on a Saturday morning. It's an ideal way to get to know your neighbors while doing your part to make our bit of the world work better. Whether you're a weekender or full timer, owner or tenant makes no difference. If you're interested, please send an e-mail to me at tkeelst@aol.com. See you on the 14th of January! ❁

Roads, Potholes, and Dead Trees: Serious Thoughts for Our Annual Meeting

David Wilson
IRA Vice President

In addition to the turn-of-the year frivolity, there will be some real business to deal with at the IRA Annual Meeting on January 14. Most of it will be prosaic but critical stuff about roads, culverts, dead trees, and the like.

The bottom line is that our infrastructure is crumbling at just the time when funding sources are drying up. PRE voters will soon be asked to pick up the slack.

Some History

The PRE subdivision was approved during the 1950s, when almost any kind of development was rubber-stamped. In our case, there was no provision for reliable water, road and other services. Through our own efforts, some of the issues have been dealt with. But the road problem will always be with us. Since the County refuses direct responsibility for our sub-standard system, it is considered "private." At the same time, the County administers the system and has an effective veto over any expenditure of tax money for road maintenance and improvements.

In 1982, after severe rains and flooding caused extensive damage to Paradise Ranch Estates roads, our Road Advisory Board (PRERAB) was created. It is a committee of the Inverness Ridge Association board, and is charged with advising the County. In the real world, PRERAB deals with the hard stuff: dead trees, culverts, potholes, washouts, and engaging the contractors who fix things up as best they can.

Where does the money come from? Part comes from our regular property taxes and part from special assessments that the voters periodically approve. For example, when Drakes View Drive (DVD) was last repaved (in 1993), the County loaned the money up front to pay for the paving; that loan was secured by a special assessment on PRE owners, who voted in favor of the assessment, which we then paid with our property taxes. Over the years, the loan was paid off, and the assessment ended.

Another example: ten years ago we approved a more modest assessment to cover accelerating maintenance costs (including, especially, vegetation management along the roads in PRE), and to create reserves for use in emergencies (like the slides that put Lower Robert Drive out of commission a few years ago). That assessment will shortly expire.

It has been 24 years since DVD was repaved. The normal lifespan of such a job is 20 years, and the County Department of Public Works has examined the road and determined that we've got to pave it again. The estimated cost? Up to a million dollars, a sum we do not have. In addition, the County has told us that we cannot count on it to loan us the funds for the project, even if the loan is secured by a new voter-approved assessment. Unless we are able to dissuade the County, we will be faced with the need for some sort of bond measure, most likely through the complex and costly Mello-Roos procedure provided by state law.

The Alternatives

1. We could continue patching and filling, and responding to emergencies, using current reserves. The problem is that costs will certainly go up as the base beneath the asphalt begins to erode and wash out. It's like your teeth: ignoring a

small cavity means that decay will get through the protective enamel and attack roots and gums. The cost of fixing the DVD base in a few years would be two or three times more expensive than repaving next year with fresh asphalt.

2. We could trim back our cost estimates, which include some critical work on side roads, and ask the voters (owners of PRE) for a somewhat reduced tax increase. But very practical issues intrude: a lot of voters live on the side roads, and a lot of folks reasonably expect that fallen trees and flashy fuels will be removed and other threats to their safety dealt with. Their votes count.
3. We could bite the bullet and ask for voter approval of an assessment that would cover reasonably foreseeable repair and maintenance costs for the entire system. In that case, the current special assessment for reserves and vegetation management would expire and be folded into the new assessment.

Whatever alternative is chosen, it's undeniable that we must at some point raise the money needed to protect our own investment in this unique part of the world.

Serious stuff, which will all be discussed on January 14. Since we need lots of opinions before decisions are made, we'd really like a big turnout. But don't just come for the discussion, come to enjoy the food and drink—and the neighborhood gossip, which will surely follow. ❀

2017 IRA dues now due!

It's time to renew your IRA membership for the upcoming year. Annual dues have stayed at \$25 per household. IRA board members will collect dues at our Annual Meeting on January 14 (checks or cash, please) or checks may be mailed to IRA, P.O. Box 342, Inverness 94937.

Funds collected are used for fire suppression efforts, such as roadside chipping and thistle abatement, as well as for P.O. box rental, website maintenance, printing, postage, and Annual Meeting expenses. Special thanks to the 11 of you who have prepaid for 2017 and 2018.

The Annual Meeting is a great time to socialize with neighbors, welcome new residents and hear about local issues that affect IRA. Bring your purse or wallet and support our organization.



Evacuation Routes

Evacuation routes, in addition to Drakes View Drive, include the Park fire road accessed from the top of Sunnyside leading to Limantour Road. Combination locks on the Park gates at either end of the road are set to open using a 0911 combination. If fire equipment is using Drakes View Drive or it is otherwise unusable, there are two drivable emergency exits located on private property, one at #7 Douglas, and one at the end of Douglas, beginning left of #100 Douglas. A map of evacuation routes can be found at InvernessRidgeAssoc.com. ❀

See you at the Annual Meeting: Saturday, January 14, 2017