

# The Oak Grovian

January 2002

## Volunteers Needed To Get On Board

There is a critical need for homeowners to join the Oak Grove Board of Directors. All five current members plan to leave their seats in 2002. To date, only three homeowners have placed their name on the election ballot.

Two positions will be filled during our Annual Meeting election on February 4th. Three other seats will be filled by appointment from the sitting Board of Directors after the Annual Meeting.

Three existing Board members announced a desire to resign their positions sometime in 2002. Two of these Board members recently moved away from Oak Grove.

Please contact Good Management Company or any Board member if you are interested in joining. Nominations from the floor are accepted during the Annual meeting.

The two elected Board members will each serve a term of two years. Replacement members will serve until February 2003.

The Board of Directors currently meets eight times a year. Meetings typically run one to two hours in length. ■

## Your Vote Counts!

By Chris Ricketts

*Good Management Company*

An announcement for the Oak Grove Board of Directors' election has been mailed to all homeowners. One of the main items that will be on the agenda is election of new officers. There are two seats up for election. The results of the voting will be determined at the Annual Meeting scheduled for February 4th.

Homeowners have two ways to cast their vote.

First, you may attend the meeting at the Goleta Community Center, and turn your ballot in person.

Second, you may vote by mail by returning your completed proxy designation form to Good Management Company. A "proxy" is someone you assign to cast your vote during the meeting. Typically, proxy authority is given to a neighbor or to the Board of Directors.

Your proxy designation form gives you two options:

1. You may specify how to vote on your form and your proxy is to cast your ballot as directed.
2. You may leave it up to your proxy to cast your ballot as they see fit.

It is important for all homeowners to help establish a quorum, whether it's done in person or by mailed proxy. 51% of all households must be represented for the Annual Meeting to be official, and for the elections to be held. Failure to meet this homeowner quorum will result in the added expense of a second Annual Meeting and re-mailing of materials.

If you don't plan to attend your Annual Owners Meeting, submitting your proxy designation form may also give you an extra financial benefit. One homeowner's name will be drawn from the ballots to win a month's free Association dues. Two other names will be drawn to win a partial credit towards their monthly fees. ■

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# Insurance Cancellation Coincides with Lawsuit

Association insurance costs will increase in 2002 due to of a change in carriers – a shift that may have been a reaction to a recent homeowner lawsuit.

Last September Allstate Insurance notified Good Management that it would be canceling Oak Grove's insurance policy. Coincidentally, the insurance carrier informed our management company of a lawsuit from a homeowner asking for damages in excess of \$25,000.

The lawsuit surprised the Board of Directors and Good Management as no claim was received from the homeowner prior to the legal action. The lawsuit is demanding compensation for "medical expenses and loss of earning capacity" after the homeowner tripped and fell in a common area in September 2000.

Allstate Insurance cited increased risks associated with condominium management as its reason for canceling Oak Grove's coverage. The lawsuit was not cited by the insurance company as a contributing factor in its decision to end service to our Association. However, news of the legal action and the cancellation of service was communicated to Good Management at nearly the same time.

With help from Good Management, the Board of Directors has selected two insurance companies to take over coverage previously managed by Allstate. State Farm Insurance will assume the Association's general coverage, and Manchester Insurance will handle earthquake and flood insurance.

Allstate will continue to represent the Association in the pending legal action.

The new insurance coverage will cost approximately \$5 more per household per month.

Exactly how these issues will impact future homeowner fees is yet to be determined. In a related financial story, a recent Reserve Fund study recommended a \$5 monthly fee increase per household for next year to cover projected maintenance expenses.

The Board will be reviewing the 2002-2003 budget in January. New homeowner payment coupons will be mailed out in March. ■



## "How I See It"

By Leslie Ward

Oak Grove Homeowner

*Is my condo different from your condo? I'd like to think it is, but really what can we do to individualize our places?*

*Well, let me think what I have seen as I walk around Oak Grove. We hang different things off our balconies. One person will hang wind chimes that may or may not aggravate the neighbor, but as I have a hanging wind chime I won't say any more about those.*

*Wind socks and flags are popular, I see. Although the ones depicting flags of countries I don't recognize may not be such a good idea at this time. Some of us are willing to take more chances than others, I suppose. I don't know what the flag of Afghanistan looks like anyway.*

*And plants - now that really tells the differences between us. I know what the people who hang plastics plants out on their patios are saying, "Hey, I don't have a green thumb and I am giving up trying!" Well, I haven't -- given up, that is. I'll spend another spring trying to make those seeds sprout. At least it is the cheapest way to fail.*

*OK, and screens. They are ugly, but I wish I had one. Perhaps I'll spend my next year's Christmas bonus and order a patio screen, too. But hey, they are ugly, admit it.*

*It seems some people think they are competing with the Botanical Society in the flora category. Now, don't the neighbors complain about that? I guess only the owner and his guests have to fend their way around those fronds and cactus needles to get to the front door. And if any uninvited person dares to try to get the their front door, they will just have to use a machete.*

*Anyway, living in a condo group where the only thing different about your place is the person living in it can be a bit dull. Leave it up to us Oak Grovians to try to make it different, even if just a little bit. ■*

Leslie Ward is an Accounting Supervisor at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital who writes as a hobby.

# Association Meeting Highlights



**November 5, 2001**

## **Homeowner Comment**

- Kathy Schmitt and Greg Nowak expressed interest in joining the Board of Directors.
- Suggestions were made regarding the upkeep of the common areas. Ideas included adding rain gutters to the carports, the removal of a palm tree, the adding of mulch, sweeping debris off the gazebo walkway, installation of benches near the top of Oak Glen Drive, and the creation of a dog park.
- Greg Nowak talked about setting up a "group site" on the Internet through Yahoo! for the Association. The site could be used to archive Association notices, as well as make available work request forms to send to Good Management.

## **Board of Director Items**

- Approved the purchase of an \$88 mirror to be used for a blind spot in the parking lot at 4551 Oak Glen Drive.
- Voted in favor of new fencing to conceal the area used by Plowboy to store their dumpster and latrine.
- In light of the recent homeowner lawsuit, three Board members have decided to delay their resignations until sometime in 2002.

## **Good Management Company Items**

- Report of termite inspection at 4558 Oak Glen and 410 Camino del Remedio.
- Informed Board of "false" alarms sounding in the buildings at 410-460 Camino del Remedio. These alarms monitor fire sprinkler water pressure. Alarm vendor will investigate and advise. ■

# Oak Grove 2002 Calendar



**January 14**

**Last day to remove outdoor  
holiday decorations**

**January 22**

**Association Meeting  
Goleta Public Library  
500 N. Fairview Avenue  
7pm**

**January 31**

**Proxies should be mailed to  
GMC no later than today**

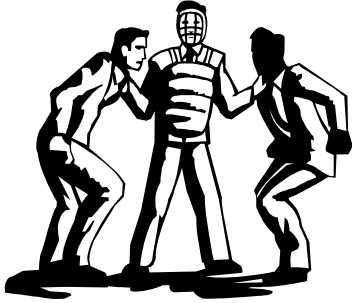
**February 4**

**Vote**

**Annual Meeting & Election  
Goleta Community Center  
5679 Hollister Ave  
7pm Sign In Begins  
7:30pm Meeting begins**

**March 25**

**New payment coupons should  
arrive in mail by today**



## How to Handle Conflict with Good Management

**By David Rasmussen**

*Oak Grove Board of Directors*

Keeping 170 condominium homeowners happy is no easy chore. It's a skill that requires good judgment, open communication, and a healthy dose of tact.

Still, even with the best of intentions, some homeowners come away with bad feelings after dealing with our Association's hired property manager – Good Management Company.

In fact, in our year 2000 survey, about one out of four respondents rated GMC's service as "poor".

As a member on The Board of Directors, or as a committee volunteer, I've had a chance over the years to review many complaints levied about GMC. Here are the top three:

- Dissatisfied over no or slow reply
- Unhappy over service request denial
- Irritated over rule infraction letter

Let me share with you some tips to make your interaction with GMC a more productive and positive experience.

No one likes to be ignored. Tempers can rise if somebody feels they are being purposely neglected. If you feel your issue has been forgotten, follow this advice from Michelle Armstrong, Vice President of the condominium division of GMC:

"If you don't get a response in a day or two," said Michelle, "call us back by all means to see if it fell in the cracks somehow."

GMC constantly evaluates pending homeowner requests, and prioritizes them based on importance and contractor availability. So how long should a homeowner for a callback from a GMC representative?

"If it's not an emergency you might have to wait a day," said Michelle. "Especially if it's a on a day when we really have a pile of messages." Michelle said Monday mornings are typically the busiest day for homeowner phone inquiries.

Clear communication between the homeowner and our property manager can alleviate most conflicts. Ask how long it will take GMC to respond to your request. Some inquires, particularly routine ones, may be handled immediately. More complex needs might require days or weeks to complete.

But what do you do if GMC denies your request?

Well, first understand our management company does not set the rules; they follow guidelines established by the collective homeowners.

For example, consider this request for a rodent inspection. A homeowner was selling their unit, and wanted the Association to pay for an inspection requested by the buyer. But since there was no evidence of a pest problem, GMC denied the request.

While homeowners are responsible for routine inspections required for selling a property, the Association will pay if there is evidence of a problem within the structure.

Oak Grovians are also accountable for maintenance inside their units. Some homeowner complaints are a result of a misunderstanding of where the Association's responsibility ends and the owner's responsibility begins.

The Board of Directors expects GMC to handle request denials in a respectful manner. However, if you are not satisfied with the explanation from a GMC representative, ask to speak with Michelle Armstrong.

While GMC spends most of its time responding to our inquiries, sometimes they initiate contact with us.

One of the more touchy issue GMC handles is contacting homeowners who have been accused of breaking Association rules. Generally, this communication is in the form of a letter.

Should one of these notices arrive in your mailbox, don't freak out, and don't ignore it. You have many options of response.

If the mistake is admittedly yours, let GMC know you will rectify the situation.

If you feel unjustly accused, contact GMC and provide your side of the story. GMC will respond to your reply. If the response is not to your liking, you may appeal GMC's decision.

"I would suggest that they come to the next Board meeting and formally be put on the agenda," said Michelle Armstrong. "They have the right either - in open session or executive session - to have a hearing with the Board."

GMC can inform you of the date and location of the next Association meeting, and will add your issue to the evening's agenda. GMC will make sure any correspondence to and from the homeowner is given to each Board member. During the meeting

the homeowner will have the opportunity to explain their position on the matter.

In my opinion, three out of four complaints can be settled if the unhappy homeowner lets GMC know of their dissatisfaction. By giving GMC a second opportunity to respond to your request, you will increase the chance of getting the service you desire.



*In our next issue: "How to Handle Conflict with the Board of Directors"*

## **A FEW TIPS**

### **FOR DEALING WITH GOOD MANAGEMENT COMPANY**

- 1. Avoid calling Monday mornings, unless your issue is urgent.**
- 2. Call back if your message is not returned within one business day.**
- 3. Ask the rep how long it will take to handle your request.**
- 4. If dissatisfied with the response, escalate the matter to Michelle Armstrong.**
- 5. If still dissatisfied, request a hearing with the Board of Directors.**
- 6. Document your communication with GMC.**

# Oak Grove News Briefs

## New E-Mail Address



There is a new way to communicate with Good Management Company – by E-mail!

After a successful trial period, our property management vendor is ready to give out it's Internet address to all Oak Grovians.

***cjricketts@mac.com***

As the name suggests, GMC staff member Chris Ricketts will manage the E-mailbox.

Of course, GMC will continue to answer your inquiries by phone, fax, and snail mail. See page 8 of this newsletter for a complete contact list.

## Is The Answer Blowin' in the Wind?



"I've had several owners call about leaf blowers last week," reported Chris Ricketts of Good Management Company.

Complaints ranged from dirt being blown through open front doors, newly washed cars getting dusted, and concerns over noise.

Some homeowners suggested that our landscape contractor switch from blowers to brooms to clean the common areas.

Chris contacted the manager of Plowboy. Ramon told Chris the use of blowers takes one-tenth of the time the same work would take with a broom.

The Association could instruct Plowboy to use brooms instead of blowers. However, we would face a higher labor cost to do the same work, or lower output for the existing contracted price.

Ramon said the current plan is to use leaf blowers to clean all parking lots only on Friday. Concerned homeowners may take heed and shut their doors and windows that day, and park their freshly waxed

cars on the street.

If you feel that the Association should make a change to the existing leaf blower procedures, please contact the Landscaping Committee or Good Management Company.



## Lofty Ideas Can Lead to Trouble

The shortage of storage space at Oak Grove has many homeowners looking for creative ways to store their stuff.

Please be aware of Association rules pertaining to our building attics. Attics at Oak Grove are considered "common area." They are intended as access points for electrical, cable, telephone and heating conduits.

While most homeowners with second story units have access to the building attics, these lofts should not be used to store things, or for that matter, be converted to any living area.

Attic floors are not designed to support added weight. Access to the attic may be needed for a neighbor requiring utility work. A cluttered attic could also present a fire hazard.

A homeowner in defiance to this rule not only risks fines from the Association, they could also face financial liability should an accident occur due to improper use of an attic.

So play it safe. Stay clear of the attic.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance for Survey

Never got around to filling out your 2001 Association Survey? It's not too late to mail yours in.

Send it to GMC by January 20 and your feedback will be included in the survey report to be distributed during the February Annual Meeting. ■

# What Makes a Good Neighbor?

**By Michael Clear**  
Oak Grove Homeowner

*There was a knocking on my door the other morning. I answered it to see one of my neighbors. In his hand he held my car keys, the very same keys I had spent the previous evening tearing apart my house to find.*

*"I found these in the grass last night," he explained, and went on to tell me how he had gone from car to car to see if the automatic door opener worked until he came to my car. Presto! The car door opened and he brought me the keys the next day. A good neighbor.*

*Then there was the gentleman who lives across Camino del Remedio from us, a man I had never met before. He stopped to give assistance to my wife and kids when our car was hit head-on by a careless driver on our street in front of the County buildings. He stayed with my family until I arrived and offered what help he could. Another good neighbor.*

*So I sit and write this just a few days before Thanksgiving I have reason to be thankful that I have such fine neighbors around me. True, I don't know all their names, have never met most of them, but still my sense is that most of the people here in Oak grove are hard-working, considerate persons who would be well worth getting to know better.*

*Which brings me to my main point: What makes a good neighbor?*

*Do we expect a good neighbor to drop by over on Sunday with a six pack to watch the ball game? Do we expect a good neighbor to help us get our groceries into the house, or invite us to dinner? Probably not.*

*I think what most of us expect from a good neighbor is simple, old-fashioned consideration... not to drill into a shared wall at 8am on a Sunday morning, not to play Nine Inch Nails at warp volume at midnight, not to bring the dog down to the same greenbelt every day to poop in the exact same spot where our kids will be playing in a half hour without picking up the poop. Simple, old-fashioned consideration.*



*One simple yet profound consideration which I would hope could flourish here in Oak Grove is the consideration for the safety of others. As I sit here in my home and look out onto Camino del Remedio, I see that consideration woefully lacking on a regular basis as zealous drivers scream up and down the street in excess of 40 to 50 miles an hour.*

*I wonder often if they are aware, these neighbors, that the posted speed limit is 25 MPH, or that they are racing through areas where children and other pedestrians live and play. I wonder if they fear for their neighbors as much as I fear for my neighbor's children and my own kids?*

*I know from years as a rehabilitation nurse that one of these days somebody will blow the stop sign on Oak Glen or somebody else will be unable to stop when a kid chases a ball out from between parked cars on Camino del Remedio and somebody will be killed or seriously injured by an inconsiderate neighbor.*

*We probably all remember our childhood neighborhoods fondly. For most of us they were made up of decent, hard-working souls who had consideration for their neighbors. We felt safe and secure there. Let's give our neighbors that gift for the new year – the knowledge that we are all looking out for each other. ■*

Michael Clear has been living at Oak Grove since the complex opened over 10 years ago. We thank Michael for his perspective, and invite him – and other Oak Grovians – to submit articles for future newsletters.

## Oak Grove Board of Directors

**Gail Anikouchine** – Chairman  
**David Rasmussen** – Vice Chairman  
**Honorah Simpson** – Treasurer  
**Katie Doan** – Member at Large  
**Nona Andrews** – Secretary

## Association Committees

Landscaping  
Architectural Review and Compliance  
Communications

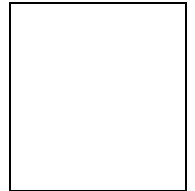
*To get periodic Oak Grove news by  
e-mail, send a message to  
[david.rasmussen@twtelecom.com](mailto:david.rasmussen@twtelecom.com)*

## Good Management Company

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1 N. Calle Cesar Chevaz, Suite 230-A  
Santa Barbara, CA 93103



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address  
Street Number and Name  
City, State ZIP