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November 28, 2008

A WORD FROM THE TOWN MANAGER



Because we don't publish a December issue, this will be the last regular Tiburon Talk for 2008. This past year we sent out eleven issues and five Special Bulletins on circumstances ranging from winter storms to the Angel Island fire. I continue to be gratified that so many of you report finding these newsletters, and particularly the Special Bulletins, useful.

Just as the economy dominated the recent election, it has been the ever-present context for Town Hall this year. There is less economic activity across the board, resulting in less revenue to governments at all levels. The State of California has been particularly hard hit, and in turn has withheld some funding from cities.

Fortunately, the Town has fared remarkably well this year despite the financial turmoil around us. I don't say this cavalierly, since the situation can always shift, but in a time when many municipalities are suffering from serious setbacks in revenues and high rates of home foreclosures, we are holding steady for now. This is due to several factors:

Tiburon's revenue base - Tiburon's main source of revenue is property tax. Despite the downturn in the housing market, this is a relatively stable source of income in a place like Tiburon. Many other cities are experiencing severe revenue shortages because they are heavily dependent upon sales tax and other revenues that are more volatile in an economic downturn. We can expect reductions in many areas, including sales tax and transient occupancy (hotel) tax, but not nearly as great as many other places (consider the plight of cities that are dependent upon car dealerships).

Strong housing base - Even though southern Marin, including Tiburon, has experienced a softening in housing values, our housing base is stable, there are very few foreclosures and few properties are actually assessed at greater than their market value today. Assessed valuation, upon which property taxes are based, adjusts upward by 2% annually per state law, which creates some

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TOWN HALL HOLIDAY SCHEDULE



Town Hall will be closed for the holidays from Wednesday, December 24, 2008 through the following Thursday, January 1, 2009, and will reopen on Friday, January 2, 2009.

While Town offices are closed for the holiday week, the Police Department is on duty; rest assured that you will receive a quick and thorough response to any issue that may arise.

Town Staff looks forward to serving our residents now and in the coming year.

Happy Holidays!

automatic growth in revenue. Even though some homes are being reassessed downward, it would take a very prolonged slump to result in a significant dip in revenue. The decline in the number of real estate transactions will certainly slow growth in property taxes, but we do not expect it to move us into negative territory anytime soon.

Low exposure to state take-backs - Tiburon does not receive much in the way of revenues from the state except for property taxes, and they are protected by the voter-approved measure 1A which limits what the state can take and requires that it be repaid with interest within three years. We could eventually experience a take-back of several hundred thousand dollars through state actions. If this happened it would create strain on our budget, but it would not significantly impact our ability to maintain service levels for the community.

Insignificant debt - Tiburon has no general obligation debt. There are many outstanding bond issues, but they are funded through special assessment districts with the Town acting as a pass-through entity. Unlike many cities and counties that are being crushed by the weight of unfunded obligations to employees and retirees, the Town has little in the way of liabilities to employees (such as vacation time owed) or retirees (who receive a very small medical supplement) and it sets aside funds for these obligations. The Town's retirement benefits consist almost entirely of pay-as-you-go contributions to employee pensions through the state retirement system.

Conservative fiscal management - The Town has a long history of good governance and conservative fiscal decision-making that has allowed a healthy build-up of reserves. Our goal is to never turn to these funds for operations; reserves, like any savings account, should only be used for significant capital projects and of course should never approach depletion. We hope we never need to turn to our rainy day funds for unexpected financial problems, but it is good to know they are there.

Despite all these reassuring facts about our finances, we remain wary about our economic future. If current economic trends hold, revenues will continue to flatten and, in some cases, decline. My point is not to suggest we are immune from the effects of this poor economy, but simply that we are less vulnerable than many other municipalities and are operating from a position of financial strength. We are in "tight budget" mode every day now, and if the downturn continues we will make further adjustments accordingly.

Is it too incongruous now to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and joy on whatever holidays you and your loved ones cherish? I am ultimately a very optimistic person and believe that even these difficult

times still offer much to celebrate. We live in an amazing democracy, have resilience as a people and a nation and, here in Tiburon, we are particularly blessed with beauty, peace and prosperity.

I hope your holidays are joyous and bright and, as the old song goes, "from now on our troubles will be out of sight". Or so we can hope.

Sincerely,



Peggy Curran

SECURITY VIDEO CAMERAS



The Police Department first raised the idea of using a video system to catch criminals in a newsletter article last year. We sought your input before proceeding further on the project. We received a number of responses, a substantial majority of which favored the concept. Those who did not cited privacy issues as their chief concern. Because of the generally positive response, we have continued to investigate the possible use of cameras and what technology might be most effective and cost-efficient to accomplish the job.

Thefts remain the most commonly committed felony in Tiburon. In 2007, we experienced 99 thefts from vehicles, 15 residential burglaries and 10 auto thefts. We estimate property loss at just over \$500,000, with about half of that attributable to the value of cars that were stolen. Residents of Belvedere and the unincorporated area of the peninsula suffered proportionately. We recovered about \$190,000.

Most of the crimes occurred between midnight and dawn, and most were thefts from unlocked cars. The department publicized the problem in *The Ark* and in a Town newsletter and encouraged the public to lock their cars and homes and to conceal valuables left in cars. To help catch the thieves, Tiburon PD sought assistance from the Sheriff's Office, Belvedere Police and the CHP and assigned additional officers on overtime to preventive patrol, surveillance and investigation.

In analyzing the patterns of thefts, we concluded a video camera system capable of capturing vehicle and license plate images on Tiburon Boulevard and Paradise Drive would have vastly simplified our task. To combat these crimes, we spent countless hours monitoring traffic for

known suspects and vehicles. In most cases, fixed cameras on Tiburon Boulevard and Paradise Drive would have aided us in developing a workable list of suspects (most of those arrested in these incidents did not live on the peninsula), especially when there is a known time frame for the crime.

The system we envision involves the use of three fixed cameras: two on Tiburon Boulevard and one on Paradise Drive. The cameras would be focused on the traffic lanes in a direction and at an angle that would most likely capture the vehicle's license plate. The cameras would not have pan, tilt or zoom capability.

While the images would be available in real time, the system would not be monitored in this manner except in extraordinary circumstances. No officer would be sitting at a computer watching vehicles enter and leave Tiburon. Rather, the footage would provide a post crime investigative tool. The images would be recorded continuously and stored at the department for a defined period and reviewed following a report of a crime. Images would be automatically purged after a specified period.

A video camera policy, which would be the subject of a public meeting and require the approval of the Town Council, would govern use, access and storage of images. System cost and benefit would be shared by Tiburon, Belvedere and the Sheriff's Department.

Please don't hesitate to let us hear from you if you have an opinion on this subject. We anticipate bringing this forward to the Town Council in a public hearing early in the new year and hope all who are interested will participate and share their views.

Sincerely,
Michael Cronin
Chief of Police

NEWS BRIEFS

ANGEL ISLAND IS OPEN!

Angel Island State Park reopened to the public on Monday, October 20, 2008, following a major fire which started on October 12 and lasted until October 14. More than a third of the island was burned, but no lives or buildings were lost thanks to the heroic efforts of firefighters from several agencies, and the volunteers who supported them.



Ferry service to the island has resumed. Come for a visit and tour the burned area! Beginning December 6, docents will lead an "after the fire hike" on the first Sunday of the month. The hike is around the perimeter road until all of the trails reopen; it starts at 10:30 a.m. and ends around 3 p.m. Call the tour coordinator at 435-3522 for reservations.

Visitors can still tour the historic buildings, visit Ayala Cove, and access the perimeter road for bicycling. The Park's concession stands also have reopened and food service is available.

People are encouraged to once again enjoy Angel Island. Visit www.angelisland.org for more information.

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS



For most people the holidays are a time of celebration and joy. Unfortunately, it is also a prime time of year for criminals who view the season as rife with opportunity.

This time of year we often deviate from our normal routines. We shop in areas we rarely, if ever, visit; we park in unfamiliar places; we fill our homes and cars with expensive gifts. We are also more distracted than at almost any other time of the year.

In Marin we're luckier than most. We don't have a lot of street robberies or muggings and pickpockets are uncommon. Most of the crime Tiburon residents will face will be thefts from cars and homes. A surprising number of them will be unlocked. In many cases the property that is stolen will be in plain sight.

For those of you who head into San Francisco or who shop in other large cities, the risks are a little greater. Large, crowded urban shopping districts are prime territory for thieves who quickly pick out the shoppers who are distracted or burdened by armloads of gifts.

Whether you shop in a large city or stay closer to home, we suggest you take a few simple precautions to make your holidays safer and happier.

--When you leave your home, look around for anyone who may be looking at you. If you see someone who is suspicious call us at 789-2800. We really don't mind.

--Pay attention to your surroundings, particularly in parking lots and garages where it is easy for a thief to hide between or under parked cars.

--In a garage, park near the elevator if you can and

- always pick a spot that is well lighted.
- Look around before you get out of your car; if someone suspicious is nearby keep the doors locked and drive to a safe location.
 - Use the elevator and take the crowded one so you can't be isolated. Stay out of stairways and rest rooms in parking garages. Use the ones in stores.
 - Shop with a friend or two. If you can't, try to move with groups of people.
 - If you leave gifts in your car, always put them out of sight in the trunk. If you're going to continue shopping, try to pick a moment when no one else is nearby or able to see you secure your gifts and then leave your car again.
 - Get your cash ahead of time in your local bank. Avoid using ATMs in public places. Thieves frequently watch them.
 - When you return to your home, take a quick look around before you get out of your car, even in your garage.
 - Shred your bills, or anything containing personal information, before you discard them.

The holidays are a time for special caution, but crime happens all year round so consider adopting these simple rules for everyday use. They are good habits to develop that will help safeguard you and your family. Enjoy the holidays safely!

The Tiburon Police Department

UPCOMING EVENTS

Downtown Holiday Cheer & Tree-lighting Ceremony



Come join carolers and revelers as the Tiburon Peninsula Chamber of Commerce hosts the annual holiday tree-lighting ceremony on Friday, December 5 at 5 p.m. in Fountain Plaza.

For more information, contact the Chamber at 435-5633, or visit www.tiburonchamber.org.

OPEN SPACE WORKDAY AND INTERPRETIVE WALK

It won't be long before the bright yellow flowers of French broom start popping out on Tiburon's hillsides. Not only does this invasive plant crowd out



native wildflowers, but it's highly flammable.



The Broom Busters of Old St. Hilary's Open Space have been battling broom, pampas grass, bull thistle and other non-native plants since 1997, and they need reinforcements.

The next workday is Saturday, December 6 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Volunteers will meet in the parking lot of the Tiburon Peninsula Club (1600 Mar West Street) and will be pulling broom on the open space behind the club. Open Space rangers will be on hand to direct the efforts, provide tools, snacks and lunch. Naturalist David Herlocker will lead a walk to show how plants and animals benefit from habitat restoration.

The Broom Busters usually hold their workdays the first Saturday morning each month. The requirements are simple: "Come when you can; leave when you must." No experience is needed. Training, tools and refreshments are provided.

For more information or to volunteer call the Volunteer Coordinator at the Marin County Open Space District, 507-2823.

OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Angel Island Benefit

The Angel Island Association's 2008 Angel Lights Benefit will be held on December 5 at the Corinthian Yacht Club from 6 until 8 p.m.

Visit www.angelisland.org to purchase tickets, to become a sponsor of Angel Lights, or to donate to the Angel Island Association.

Your generosity will help the association restore, preserve, and protect this beloved park in the aftermath of the devastating fire in October.

Landmarks Society Holiday Art and Crafts Sale



The Cottage at the Art & Garden Center will be the site of the annual Holiday Art and Crafts Sale on Saturday, December 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The sale features fine art, gifts, jewelry, textiles, art glass, American Doll clothes, preserves, baked goods and more.

The Cottage is located at 841 Tiburon Boulevard. Parking is limited, so come early to get a spot.

BEL-TIB LIBRARY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For the scoop on events and meetings sponsored by local not-for-profit community and government organizations on the Tiburon Peninsula, visit the Belvedere-Tiburon Library's excellent [community calendar](#).



UPCOMING MEETINGS

COUNCIL AND COMMISSION MEETINGS



Town Council: Wednesday, December 3 at 7:30 p.m.; the December 17 meeting is cancelled.

Design Review Board: Thursday, December 4 and 18 at 7 p.m.

Planning Commission: Wednesday, December 1 at 7:30 p.m.; the December 24 meeting is cancelled.

All meetings listed are in the Council Chambers at Tiburon Town Hall, 1505 Tiburon Boulevard.

Sincerely,

Town Staff
Town of Tiburon

Editor: Diane Crane Iacopi
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