



MARCH 2009

Neighborhood News

MOUNTAIN HOUSE COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

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Mountain House Community Services District Welcomes in a New Era

With the past November elections ushering in a new slate of Mountain House Community Services District (MHCSD) Board Members, District Board and staff are building the foundation for a new era of self-governance within the Mountain House community.

“For the past year my staff and I have been working hard to create a smooth transition for Mountain House from a dependent to an independent District,” said MHCSD General Manager, Paul Sensibaugh. “I am pleased to see the success of our efforts and to watch how quickly the new Board Members have embraced their roles and responsibilities and have begun assuming the leadership of the District.”

While each newly elected Board Member identified their individual goals and priorities for the coming years, the January Board Workshop started the collaborative process among the Board, MHCSD staff and community members for reaching consensus on the prioritization of common MHCSD Board goals and objectives and the development of an action plan. (Please visit the MHCSD website at www.ci.mountainhouse.ca.us to read each Board Member perspectives.) Some top priorities identified by the Board include public safety and the status of Delta College Mountain House campus. Separate committees to address these issues were formed at the January Board Meeting.

“The Board is interested in determining ways the community can work more effectively with the Sheriff’s office in reducing crime and ensuring Mountain House remains a safe community for everyone,” said Sensibaugh. “Also, the Board wants to make sure that the interests of Mountain House are represented at the future Delta College Board meetings.”

Two other committees were formed in the February Board meeting those include Public Communications and Recreation and Events.

“One of the key themes throughout the workshop discussion was how the MHCSD will maximize the budget dollars to provide the best impact for the community,” said Sensibaugh. “The Board has expressed an interest in hearing from the residents.”



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Mark Your Calendar...

■ **MHCSD Board Meetings**

Second Wednesday of each Month
7:00 pm
MHCSD Board Room

■ **The 5th Annual Mountain House Great Egg Hunt**

April 4 (April 11 rain date)
12:00 noon
Wicklund School Field

■ **The 3rd Annual Mountain House Kite and Cultural Festival**

June 13
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Central Community Park

MHCSD Embarks on a Community Survey

As part of the on-going effort to better serve the community, the Mountain House Community Services District (MHCSD) will launch a community survey from April 1 through April 20. The survey is intended to gather input about MHCSD services from Mountain House residents who are 18 years and older. The on-line survey is available at the MHCSD website at www.ci.mountainhouse.ca.us.

Each residence has a maximum of three survey entries available. Please check your April water bill for the introductory letter which includes specific codes for your entries. For those residents who do not have Internet access at your home, you can use a computer at the Mountain House Public Library or at the MHCSD offices to complete the survey.

Results of the survey will be presented to the MHCSD Board as part of the consideration for the 2009/2010 priority planning.

Maintaining a History of Transparent Government in Mountain House



Mimi Duzenski, Office Manager

The term transparent government might be considered a cliché among voters following this year's national and state elections. Nearly every candidate who ran for a federal or state office insisted they would seek to establish a transparent government if elected. That's good, because most citizens want to know what issues are being considered and what decisions are being made by their elected government representatives. The public also wants easy access to government information. All of this may require a paradigm shift and on-going commitment, not just by the elected officials, but also by the governmental agencies.

Thankfully, long before the Mountain House Community Services District (MHCSD) Board was elected and sworn into office, MHCSD General Manager, Paul Sensibaugh, insisted on government transparency. When Mr. Sensibaugh became the General Manager, he set the example by being accessible to residents and insisting that we strive to provide the same information to all residents at the same time. My department worked closely with all MHCSD departments to provide the necessary information to interested parties in a timely manner and that all appropriate public documents were available to community members.

Therefore, the transition from a dependent to an independent District did not involve a philosophical change for the MHCSD staff, but it has required some other changes. One of our first decisions, after the vote for independence, was how to provide coverage of the Board Meetings. We understand that not everyone is able to attend the MHCSD Board meetings, which occur every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. However, we wanted Mountain House residents to be able to watch the Board meetings remotely, either as they take place or at a later, more convenient, time. We also wanted to provide residents with meeting minutes on-line.

To that end, Mountain House residents are provided with the latest technology that offers live streaming video coverage of the MHCSD board meetings on the MHCSD website. Also, the minutes and archived video for past meetings are available on-line. Please visit the MHCSD website at www.ci.mountainhouse.ca.us and click the MHCSD Board Meetings green button on the right-hand side.

By taking on the Board Secretary responsibilities, my day-to-day duties changed dramatically, and the past few months leading up to the swearing-in ceremony were a whirlwind of activity. Within the span of two months, the MHCSD built and furnished a Board Room, installed and learned the new audiovisual and software technology, and developed the process for Board meetings. Many details were addressed, such as creating the MHCSD processes for developing and reviewing Board agendas, noticing the meetings, organizing and distributing the Board documents, and retaining the documents.

I am impressed at how the MHCSD staff and Board members successfully accomplished the steep learning curve required for our new roles. I am particularly thankful to the MHCSD General Manager, the District Counsel, and the office of the San Joaquin County Clerk of the Board, who were instrumental in making the transition successful. I am also grateful to the MHCSD Board Members, who

MHCSD Board of Directors Establishes Four Advisory Committees

The MHCSD Board Members have established four advisory committees; a Delta College Advisory Committee, a Public Safety Committee, a Public Communications Committee and a Parks and Recreation and Events Committee.

In addition to two MHCSD Board Members, the advisory committees include three positions to be held by Mountain House residents. Residents were invited to submit an application to become involved in any of the committees.



“It is a great way for residents to volunteer and provide their unique expertise to their community,” said Paul Sensibaugh, General Manager for the MHCSD.

The goal for the Delta College Advisory Committee is to work hand-in-hand with the Delta College Board on the future direction of the Mountain House campus. Delta College has also appointed a committee to work with the MHCSD committee.

Expanding on the efforts and accomplishments of the Mountain House Neighborhood Watch program, the MHCSD Board decided to establish a Public Safety Committee. The committee will look for collaborative approaches between that community and public safety officials to enhance public safety within Mountain House.

Communications between residents and the MHCSD continues to be a priority among the Board and the MHCSD staff. Therefore, the Board decided to establish a Public Communications Committee, which will consider additional ways to maintain a two-way line of communication between residents and the MHCSD. One of the first efforts includes a community survey which will be launched by the MHCSD in April. (Please read the survey article in this issue for further information.)

As the MHCSD begins the planning phases of the 2009 Community Events program, the MHCSD Board decided to establish a Parks and Recreation and Events Committee to help prioritize the efforts to establish a comprehensive and fun recreation and events program.

For more information regarding these committees contact the MHCSD offices.

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To that end MHCSD will be sending out a community-wide survey in order to capture the residents' thoughts and opinions regarding the Board's 2009 goals and objectives. The survey will be available via the MHCSD website and be open to residents in April.

Other areas of interest by the Board included development, budget, code enforcement, public information and participation and youth, community and recreation services. Residents are encouraged to attend the MHCSD Board Meetings which occur every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm, or watch a live streaming video on the MHCSD website. Also, feel free to contact the MHCSD offices with any questions and concerns at (209) 831-2300.



Dumping Expired Medicine Down the Drain is Bad for Mountain House

When cleaning out the medicine cabinet at home, it may be tempting to dispose of outdated prescription and over-the-counter medicine by flushing them down the toilet or down the drain. But don't do it. Pharmaceutical waste, specifically expired prescription and over-the-counter medicine have become a serious environmental problem in many waterways throughout the United States.

At one time doctors and pharmacists recommended that medications be disposed of by flushing them down the toilet to prevent accidental poisoning. However, with more advanced technology detecting the pharmaceutical compounds in the environment, wastewater treatment agencies are becoming more concerned about proper medicine disposal. The impact has become visible in the fish populations off the Coast of Orange County, while other research showed male fish in the Potomac River and Boulder Creek displaying female traits.

“Although we have advanced state-of-the-art water treatment technologies, one of the best ways to protect your creeks and rivers is to avoid putting contaminants such as expired medicines into the wastewater stream in the first place,” said Harpal Singh, Operations and Maintenance Manager for the Mountain House Community Services District (MHCSD).

Instead, it is suggested that residents with expired medicine should dispose of the medicine in the outside garbage can.

CARBON MONOXIDE: The Silent Killer *By Firefighter Dele Peterson*

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless, toxic gas that is non-irritating, making it very difficult for people to detect. At moderate levels, you or your family can get severe headaches, become dizzy, mentally confused, nauseated, or faint. You can even die if these levels persist for a long time. Low levels can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea, and mild headaches, and may have longer-term effects on your health. Since many of these symptoms are similar to those of the flu, food poisoning, or other illnesses, you may not think that CO poisoning could be the cause.

Just last month, firefighters in Santa Clara County responded to a report of an unconscious person. The crew responded as usual, entering the facility to administer medical assistance and within minutes the fire and ambulance crews were feeling ill and disoriented. Realizing they were in a dangerous atmosphere, the crews quickly exited with the patient. Requiring medical assistance themselves, additional units were called to the scene. In the end, two residents and six responders received medical treatment. Coincidentally, earlier that day, a man died in San Francisco from CO poisoning.

<http://cbs5.com/local/cupertino.carbon.monoxide.2.907151.html>

Fortunately, you can protect your family from this household menace by buying, installing and maintaining carbon monoxide detectors in your home, as well as inspecting your home for CO-producing hazards.

Your best protection is to install a carbon monoxide alarm on each level of your home as your first line of defense. According

to the National Fire Protection Association, some 93% of homes have smoke alarms, yet the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that only 15% have carbon monoxide alarms. A carbon monoxide monitor with an audible alarm works much like a home smoke alarm and beeps loudly when the sensors detect carbon monoxide. Follow instructions regarding proper placement and installation of CO detectors as well, as this is crucial to their effectiveness.

If the alarm sounds, evacuate the building right away. People who have symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning should seek emergency medical care at once. Call the fire department and/or PG&E to investigate.

Inspect your home for hazards. Your home heating system, chimney, and flue must be inspected and cleaned by a qualified technician every year. Keep chimneys clear of bird and squirrel nests, leaves, and residue to ensure proper ventilation.

Be sure your furnace and other appliances, such as gas ovens, ranges, and cook tops, are inspected for adequate ventilation. Do not operate gasoline-powered engines in confined areas such as garages or basements. Do not leave your car, mower, or other vehicle running in an attached garage, even with the door open.

You can't see it, smell it, or taste it; but carbon monoxide can kill you. Protect your family from the silent killer by installing CO detectors throughout your home. For more information, visit your local fire station or contact us at <http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us>. We are here to help keep you safe.



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understand that we are learning together and establishing the foundation for the future of Mountain House.

Going forward, we are already working with the Board on their goals and objectives for the near-term. I have begun aligning my department's goals and objectives with those of the Board and the General Manager. This year should prove to be even more exciting than last year. Be sure to visit the MHCSD website for new information.



230 South Sterling Drive
Suite 100
Mountain House, CA 95391
Phone: (209) 831-2300
Fax: (209) 831-5610

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT
www.ci.mountainhouse.ca.us

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