



# The Oak Leaf



February 2003

## THE MODA ANNUAL MEETING NOVEMBER 3, 2002

MODA Board President Alessandra Almgren welcomed all residents to the Annual Meeting at the Auditorium at Peninsula School. She began with the introductions of the current and outgoing Board Members and with a request for four volunteers for the new term. Alessandra thanked the Board members for their hard work and congratulated them for a job well done over the past year.

Three members of the Board retired: Wally Curtis, Rebekka Koch, and Cyrena Wilson.

The meeting was then turned over to Remona Murray with the MODA Treasurer for the Treasurer Report with \$2,575 in dues received for 2001-2002 year from 129 residents. She requested a discussion on cost saving ideas for the growing expense of printing and mailing the newsletters and directory. Remona also made the announcement that the newsletter will now be available on the MODA web page. A reminder will be sent to those who chose via email to download it from the web, rather than receiving a hard copy via the mail. The directory can also be emailed in PDF or Excel format upon request. If your \$20.00 dues are confirmed to be up to date.

The members of the audience then introduced themselves and stated questions or concerns they had about the neighborhood, which the Board and the experience residents then tried to address.

Remona also led a discussion on the Road Improvements letter received by the MODA Board President Alessandra requesting input from the Board. The history of our roads and the Resolution

from 1998 was reviewed as was the content of the letter. There was some discussion of the different application methods and traffic control devices. The conclusion was that no changes to our roads would be made until a request for a meeting with Neil Cullen (see article page 2) to gather more information was done.

The four new volunteer Board members were accepted by those present. James Dowley, Marge Draper, Terry Tsu, and Joel Wilhite.

## SCHOOL FUNDING SPEAK OUT!

Whether you have children in the public schools or not, you need to know that the Governor's budget proposes massive reductions in the funds available to educate our children next year. The Menlo Park City School District (Laurel, Encinal, Hillview and Oak Knoll schools) is slated for 11% reduction, while the high school (Menlo-Atherton) is facing a 25% cut.

For Menlo Park, this translates into laying off 25% of the teachers (36 positions), or dismissing most of our administrative personnel and support staff (including our superintendent, principals, teachers' aides, custodians and maintenance staff). Either way, our community, our children, will suffer.

What does a 25% budget cut mean to Menlo Atherton High School? To comply with such a drastic reduction, the Sequoia Union High School District would have to close one of its four schools... redistribute the students to other schools...and lay off 1/3 of our teachers district wide. Class sizes would balloon to over 40 students.

The size of these cuts is disproportionate to the reductions being asked of other school districts. And, not a penny of the money will be used improve education.

What can you do about it? Speak out!

## Calendar

June 8	Annual Picnic
Nov 2	Annual Meeting

Contact our legislators and let them know how you feel – as a parent, homeowner or taxpayer. All the information you need is available on the Menlo Park City School District website, including sample letters and our legislators' contact information. Please contact me if you have any questions about the budget or our schools.

Nancy Serrurier  
Board Member  
Menlo Park City School District  
329-9206

## Special Event

Twenty-five year Menlo Oaks resident Dorothy Fadiman premieres two new films on Feb. 23 at the FOX Theatre in Redwood City. Go to [www.concentric.org/premiere](http://www.concentric.org/premiere) for details.

Dorothy Fadiman  
CONCENTRIC MEDIA  
Box 1414  
Menlo Park, CA 94026  
650-321-6530 (work)  
650-321-5590 (home)  
[www.concentric.org](http://www.concentric.org)

## In This Issue

<b>Annual Meeting</b>	<b>Pg 1</b>
<b>School Funding</b>	<b>Pg 1</b>
<b>Neil Cullen Meeting</b>	<b>Pg 2</b>
<b>Who Polices Our Streets</b>	<b>Pg 2</b>
<b>Traffic on Coleman</b>	<b>Pg 3</b>
<b>Power Lines</b>	<b>Pg 4</b>

## Meeting with Neil Cullen

On Thurs. Jan 16th an informal meeting was held at 511 Entrada Way, the home of Carla Dewar with Neil Cullen, Director of San Mateo County's Department of Public Works (DPW). The following are a few of the topics we covered:

Neil explained the letter, sent to MODA President this past August RE: Maintaining the Surface of Our Roads, was to allow feed back from the MODA Board before beginning his budgeting process for the next couple of years. The existing road standard Resolution No. 61884 adopted in April of 1998 by the Board of Supervisors for the Menlo Oaks District was not in question and WILL NOT change without another survey like the one in the February of 1998. The options given in the letter for a smoother surface over the patch and repair methods used currently was just an option and not required. A direct request from the MODA Board to change the maintenance program for the road surface would not mean that the width of the roads would change or drainage on our roads would be fixed. It would only mean our roads would be smoother. No such request has been made and would only be made if, after a survey, the majority of the homeowners in Menlo Oaks showed a desire for a change.

Neil also addressed the question of the drainage on our roads. Any improvement made to the drainage in front of your home would mean higher taxes via special assessments. Just as if you had a sidewalk placed in front of your home or your electrical/phone drop buried in the ground.

The history of our neighborhood's strong desire and commitment to keep a rural feel in Menlo Oaks was discussed with the help of former MODA Board Members present at the meeting. Several Coleman neighbors reflected on how the circles have reduced the speed of traffic. Other neighbors expressed how they felt that the pot holes and puddles and that smooth surfaces would only encourage higher speeds.

Neil was asked to address the procedures and protocols for a proposed bike lane or pedestrian pathway for Coleman Avenue. For more on the process see the article "Some thoughts about Traffic on Coleman Ave" on page 3.

The County DPW is currently developing the protocols, due out this summer, for homeowners to initiate Speed Surveys on their roads. This involves the CHP setting up radar equipment to determine if the perception of speeding on the road is in fact a problem. The roads can then be evaluated for a traffic-controlling device that hopefully reduce the speed of vehicles and are acceptable to the neighborhood. For what you can do now to reduce the speed of traffic, see the article "Who Polices Our Streets" below.

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### Who's Policing Our Speeders? Setting the Record Straight

Recently I have found my tolerance for speeders on our streets getting smaller and smaller. Former MODA Board Members had told me that traffic enforcement was really a gray area. The County Sheriff's Officers patrol our streets for crime prevention, (if your house alarm goes off or you call 911) but they are not responsible or likely to respond to a speeding or vehicular accident in the unincorporated districts.

My confusion led to an email to Sgt. Murray Randleman [MRandleman@co.sanmateo.ca.us](mailto:MRandleman@co.sanmateo.ca.us) at San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Here is his response:

"Your question is a common one and is caused by a little bit of misunderstanding of our (Sheriff's Office) and the CHP job responsibilities. You are partially right in that accidents and vehicle problems are generally handled by CHP in unincorporated areas of the State of California. This does not mean the Sheriff's Office does not respond to these problems. We do, and in our contract cities we handle them without CHP. The misunderstanding occurs since CHP is the "primary" agency to handle these problems. When a traffic related problem comes to our attention we deal with any emergencies and then

request CHP to handle it. If they are unavailable or unable to handle it to the citizen's satisfaction then we will try to resolve the problem ourselves.

You can continue to call 911 on your home phone for emergencies and on your cell phone dial 650-363-4911. By reporting them to us we will contact CHP for you if they are needed. You can also contact the local CHP office at 369-6267. Officer Christian Oliver or Sgt. Steve Muders [Smuder@chp.ca.gov](mailto:Smuder@chp.ca.gov) can help you there.

If you have a current or future problem you need help with please give us a call to see what we can do to resolve it. Dep. John Corkery at 599-1693 is in charge of your area and would be glad to hear from you. If it needs immediate attention then call our dispatch center for a Deputy to be sent to you, 363-4911 or 911 if its an emergency. Let me know if you need anything else"

I also contacted Sgt. Steve Muders at the CHP for all speeding & traffic issues. His email address is [Smuder@chp.ca.gov](mailto:Smuder@chp.ca.gov) and his phone number is 369-6267. He and I discussed the speeding issue and he informed me that if you take down the license number, when and where the vehicle was seen (what street) and send him an email or call the number above to complain, the CHP will send the owner of the vehicle a letter explaining that they had been seen speeding and they will be subject to a citation if they continue to speed. If the CHP receives enough complaints at a consistent time and/or if we request their presence they will make an effort to be seen on our streets. Unfortunately they can't be here all the time, but the squeaky wheel does get the grease.

One other piece of advice I was given was to program both the CHP and Sheriffs non-emergency numbers given above into my cell phone. The CHP has only one call center handling all 911 calls on cell phones for the entire Bay Area. I have dialed 911 on my cell phone and got an all circuits are busy signal and you cannot get through, especially during commute hours. You may also consider putting in other City Police numbers you frequent.

Remona Murray

## Some thoughts about Traffic on Coleman Ave.

Sadly, I am writing this article for our newsletter just as the tragic bike fatality in Palo Alto has been published in the local paper. Ironically, earlier this school year, I had a near miss on the way to the local elementary school which forced me to face the fact that drivers really are not always focused and alert as they drive past pedestrians and bikers.

On Coleman Avenue drivers really do speed past pedestrian and bikers and, there is no shoulder, path, or sidewalk of any kind. Something must be done to create a SAFE ROUTE for non-vehicular traffic on Coleman Avenue! If not, I sincerely fear that in the not too distant future there could be a serious accident that might have been prevented.

Living in Menlo Oaks, I, like many others, have tried to commute to the local school by other means than my car. The most direct route is via Coleman Avenue where I see an increasing number of other parents doing the same thing. Many of the other bikers travel from the Willows & other neighborhoods in Menlo Park. This is a wonderful trend and should be applauded, supported, and encouraged.

The Coleman Avenue issues, which need to be addressed, as I see them, are the

following:

- 1) High School kids, and Elementary School children and their parents, walk, ride, and scooter in the road because there is no other choice.
- 2) Peak hours of travel are 7:30-8:30am and 1:15-3:15pm - both vehicular & non-vehicular
- 3) Vehicle traffic travels quickly and passes in an unsafe manner.
- 4) Vehicular commute traffic has a large number of high school students (not known for their cautious driving habits), people off to work (not always on time), and parents taking kids to school (not always on time either).
- 5) Although there is an un-landscaped, un-used portion in front of most of the homes (hereafter called "the road right-of-way") on Coleman Avenue, this "road right-of-way" is not maintained in a way to make it consistently usable, thus forcing pedestrians and bikers in and out of the road.
- 6) The traffic circles on Coleman Avenue are designed to slow traffic by decreasing the "line of sight" of the driver; while they may serve this purpose, they also force the driver to swing at the pedestrian and biker in areas where there is NO "road right-of-way" space. These are extremely dangerous locations for pedestrians and bikers.
- 7) And finally, parked cars and construction vehicles force pedestrians and bikers out into the road.

While I understand that there are very different points-of-view approaching this problem, the bottom line is that **safety must be a priority**. We need to take into account that most Menlo Oaks Homeowners want to keep their country feel and not have a sidewalk community. Similarly, we need to acknowledge that traffic professionals want to do what is proper and to specific traffic standards. Working together, I know we can find a solution that pleases both the homeowners and the traffic engineers.

The process for getting a pathway is the following: 1) present a petition showing residents' support of the pathway; 2) the County Supervisors then authorize the traffic engineers to investigate & come up with a possible design; and 3) I have been assured that a public meeting to discuss the design will be part of the process (this is where the specific nature of the pathway will be discussed).

A group of MODA neighbors will be circulating a petition in support of a pedestrian/bike pathway on Coleman Avenue. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please contact Carla Dewar (650) 322-0484 or [CLD312@aol.com](mailto:CLD312@aol.com). The more who help, the easier it becomes.

We have faith in the process of collaboration and doing the right thing!

Carla Dewar

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## MODA Dues & Directory

Check the mailing label on the front cover of your newsletter. If the address label is colorful than my records show that you have paid your annual dues of \$20.00 for the 2002-2003 MODA calendar year. If you received a colorless label then my treasury records show that I have not received your annual dues. Please check your records and let me know if I am in error [treasurer@menlo-oaks.org](mailto:treasurer@menlo-oaks.org) or phone 327-2806. Or send your dues of \$20.00 to me at 441 Arlington Way as soon as possible.

The MODA Directory will be distributed this week to members who have paid their annual dues, PDF or Excel format are available via email. If you have paid your dues, but have not received a Directory by the second week of March and you would like to receive one, please let me know so I can correct my records.

If you are new to the neighborhood and have not yet received a welcome package please contact me or Marge Draper [welcomingcommittee@menlo-oaks.org](mailto:welcomingcommittee@menlo-oaks.org) for more information about MODA

## Have Something for the Web Site?

Please provide us with ideas for content, recommendations/referrals for service companies and contractors, comments and news.

Any great sites you would like to see pointed to? Any local groups you would like to support?

For example a local Community Emergency Response Team might be great - looking for someone to organize...

## Power Lines

We aren't even out of the rainy season and we already have a record number of power outages in Menlo Oaks according to PG&E. As those living in the Menlo Oaks Dr. corridor can attest, a 10 to 15 MPH wind alone has been enough to knock power out.

The cause of the problem should be obvious, the problem is the tree crews don't work on trimming around secondary and low voltage (to you and me its all high voltage) circuits until summer time. The crews also get lent out to other parts of the country where they are getting hit much harder than we are. In particular, the ice storms this season have paralyzed the East coast with as many as 7 days without power (and heat).

But have you wondered what the rule is about tree trimming around the power lines? General Order 95, rule 35 states "Where overhead wires pass through trees, safety and reliability of service demand that tree trimming be done in order that the wires may clear branches and foliage by a reasonable distance." To enforce this, PG&E has to send a crew to survey all 811,000 miles of conductors all over the state. A dubious task, the teams either drive or walk in some cases, the entire length of wires to find those trees and shrubs that will need to be trimmed to bring the system

into compliance. Ever notice that the very high-tension transmission wires that pass through a forest have a clean swath cut to the ground. It is easy to understand why they do this. Considering the amount of power passing through, those lines would instantly incinerate anything that could conduct electricity.

Because of the over abundance of foliage in our neighborhood, we will lose power when a tree branch touches the power line creating a short circuit. If you were afflicted during the recent power outages, you'll recall that the power would go out, then come back several times and then just stay out. This is because the circuit we are all on has an automatically resetting circuit breaker. The breaker would try to reset itself up to 3 times and then give up if the load trip current is still too high, meaning the circuit is shorted. This is a dangerous condition and if you have evidence of lines being shorted like bright flashes and or arcing sounds (not related to lightning) or worse, fire, call 911 immediately and report it. What ever you do, never attempt to fix it yourself by climbing a tree or pole or pick up any downed wires. Remember those automatically resetting circuit breakers?

The tree crews will eventually get around to inspecting the trees in our area. You can help by looking at the wires in and around your house and report conditions to PG&E like tree branches that are charred or

blackened or very close to wires, especially those that are at the very top of the poles. Those higher wires carry a much higher voltage (2.4kV to 60kV) and are much more susceptible to starting a fire.

Joel Wilhite

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## Thank you to Dog Walkers

We would like to send out a thank you to those of you who have been extremely conscientious of cleaning up after your dog during your strolls through the neighborhood.

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## Have Something for the Newsletter?

Please provide us with ideas for articles, recommendations/referrals for service companies and contractors, comments and news

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## MODA Bulletin Board

Jim Wampler ([jim@igc.apc.org](mailto:jim@igc.apc.org)) manages the MODA Bulletin Board email list. To subscribe to the list send him an email with your name and address so he can confirm you're in the neighborhood.

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### ABOUT THE OAK LEAF:

The Oak Leaf is published by the Menlo Oaks District Association and is distributed to all homes in the Menlo Oaks neighborhood of unincorporated San Mateo County.

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