



## **New HOA Policy Manual Available for Review**

Our HOA has a Policy Manual that helps provide guidance and restrictions that are not covered or explained in our Protective Covenants and Restrictions (PC&Rs). For example, last year the Board adopted a new policy that restricts vacation rentals within the HOA.

Since this manual has not been updated in a number of years, the Board has gone through the process of revising it. At the August HOA meeting, the Board gave preliminary approval of the updated manual. This manual will be considered for final approval by the Board at the October meeting. The updated policy manual is posted on our web site, [www.sanelijohills1.org](http://www.sanelijohills1.org). We encourage all members to review it. If you do not have Internet access, you can obtain a printed copy by sending your request to: San Elijo Hills #1 HOA; P.O. Box 232; Solana Beach, CA 92075. If you have concerns with any of the changes to the Policy Manual, please attend the October meeting and express your concerns, or send your comments by mail to the Board, at the above address prior to the 10/26/16 meeting.

Below is a synopsis of the manual and a list of the changes that have been made:

Section 1 is an introduction to the HOA and how it functions, as well as how it has not materially changed.

Section 2 details how HOA board members are solicited and elections held. This section was completely rewritten to reflect the process that has been followed in recent years.

Section 3 provides a list of approved exterior paint colors that has not changed.

Section 4 covers restrictions for side yard easements. A new restriction on second story decks near the side yard easement was added.

Section 5 covers acceptable roofing materials, including more roofing types that can be used. This section was rewritten to bring the policy into compliance with the PC&Rs.

Section 6 covers the HOA's policies on maintaining the slopes. It also covers tree trim-

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## **HOA Fee for the 2016/2017 Year**

The homeowner's association fee will be increased by 7% for this upcoming year. As you know, these fees go toward paying for slope maintenance, including replanting and mulching, water costs, electricity, bookkeeping/secretarial, insurance, irrigation repair, tree trimming, tree replanting, and legal fees.

## **Why Do Our Slopes Look So Poorly?**

*By Erwin Willis new HOA President*

At the July Board of Directors meeting a number of HOA members expressed concern with the look of our slopes, especially the newly planted Buckwheat, as we transition to drought tolerant plants. While no one is completely happy with the way the slopes are looking during the transition, I want to provide a short history of how we got here, and the direction the Board has decided to move for improvement.

Our problem with the slopes began with the drought. When water was cheap and plentiful our ice plant-covered slopes looked beautiful as they bloomed each year. However, as the drought set in, the cost of water started to increase. We were then told by Olivenhain Water District that we had to cut our water usage by 25%. Because we knew our ice plant would not survive with an additional 25% reduction to our already reduced water usage, a committee was formed to look at options. The committee considered reclaimed water, which is used by the other HOA's and golf courses in the area. However, the estimated cost to install the water lines necessary for reclaimed water was over \$1,000,000, and it would only reduce our water costs by 10%. Therefore, changing to drought tolerant plants or just turning off the water to some of the slopes were our only options. The committee and the Board elected to re-plant with drought tolerant plants.

At that point, the Board hired a consultant who developed a plan and estimated cost to convert all of the slopes to drought tolerant plants. There are about 510,000 square feet of slopes in our HOA. The estimated cost to remove the ice plant, re-plant with drought tolerant plants, and then cover the slopes with mulch was \$2.00 per

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ming and replacement, irrigation systems, drainage systems and pests. Except for trees, the section is entirely new.

Section 7 covers leasing restrictions and was adopted by the Board last year and has not been changed.

Section 8 is the HOA's enforcement policy and fine schedule. It was adopted by the Board in the previous year and has not been changed.

Appendix A is our updated Request for Architectural Improvements Form that can be downloaded from the web site as a fillable PDF form.

**- PLEASE READ -**

**Get Approval from the HOA Before Making Changes To Your Property**

Homeowners who wish to make changes to their property are required by the PC&R's to get approval from the HOA. Simple matters like interior painting and repairs do not need approval. However, if you intend to: build, change windows, add a second story, change landscaping, change exterior colors, or remove or change visual barriers between yourself and your neighbors, **please get approval from the HOA**. The process is simple and usually fast.

***Even if you have obtained a permit to build or renovate from the City, the HOA board still needs to approve your plans. You also need to inform your neighbors of your plan.***

***Easements Between Neighbor's***

Make sure that you abide by the easements that exist between you and your neighbor's property lines.

**Save yourself a lot of problems and possible fines. Get HOA approval and ask questions before building.**

**For all other issues, please contact the HOA board at [info@sanelijohills1.org](mailto:info@sanelijohills1.org).** Your issue will be forwarded to the appropriate members of the board. Please refrain from contacting individual board members.

Our website is: <http://sanelijohills1.org>. Many important details about the HOA are on this site. Alternatively, attend the HOA board meeting which is held on the forth Wednesday of each month and announced by signs placed near the entry monuments.

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square foot, or \$1,020,000, far beyond the funds available to us.

Faced with a requirement to reduce water usage by 25% and without enough money to convert to plants that could thrive on a limited amount of water, the Board decided to try re-planting some of the banks with the limited funds available. In an effort to make the available funds go as far as possible, we redirected our maintenance crews to do the planting, leaving the ice plant in place, and with minimal mulch that was otherwise recommended by the consultant. After the first slopes were planted, we found that the mulch was absolutely necessary for new plants to survive. In the second year, we planted additional slopes with deeper mulch and went back and re-mulched the slopes that were planted the first year.

We have learned a lot from these first plantings. On a positive note, water usage was significantly reduced with the right plants and the application of mulch. Previously, with the ice plant, we were spending ~\$45,000 per year for water. In this past year, water costs to the HOA were reduced to ~\$30,000, even with higher water rates. With these draught tolerant native plants we also can eliminate fertilizer that will cut approximately \$2,000 from our annual costs. Additionally, on the positive side, some of the plants that we selected are thriving and starting to cover the slopes. Other recommended plants did not work well. The Buckwheat planted toward the bottom of the slopes blooms with a white flower that looks nice for three or four months, but when the flower dies, it turns dark brown and gives the appearance of a weed. We also found that some of the plants will not survive under our Eucalyptus trees.

So what are the next steps? Based on feedback that the Board received from homeowners at the July meeting, a new landscape committee was formed. Funds were approved to hire a landscape architect to develop planting options to create slopes that enhance the beauty of our community while incorporating drought tolerant, fire resistant, and easy-to-maintain plants. We believe that almost all of the planting that has been done (except for the Buckwheat) will be used in any new design, so past work will not be lost. Once we have narrowed the design, installation timeframe and funding options, we will come to the members for your input and direction. During this review and evaluation, we are suspending further planting.

I will keep you updated on the progress of this work in future articles.