

Rolando Park Community Council General Meeting

May 8, 2017, Rolando Park Elementary School Auditorium

Board members present:

Co-Presidents: Sonia Lang/Lynn Edwards
Co-Vice President: Gerrie Flaven/Kathryn Kern
Co-Treasurers: Audrey Ledesma/Debbi Blake
Secretary: Judy Fleischman

7:00 Sonia Lang called the meeting to order.

Dues and Membership: Debbi Blake reported that there are now 44 members, of which 14 are new. There was a question from the audience about how we are trying to get new members. It was explained that we have had several pop-up tables in the neighborhood to recruit new members, and put reminders on Nextdoor notifying neighbors of the membership drive at that time, along with forms in our newsletters. The suggestion was made to have more reminders on Nextdoor.

Sonia Lang then spoke of our need for volunteers for the 2018 Nominating Committee. Gerri Flaven explained that it takes time during the summer and through October to post notices on Nextdoor and private message people who you think might be interested. Please contact her or another board member if you can help with this.

Panel for Landscaping Your Front Yard: Gerrie then introduced our program and very informative guest speakers for the evening.

David Clarke, a private landscape designer who lives in Rolando on Aragon and owns David Clarke Designs, spoke first. He talked about the need for planning and taking your time to avoid costly mistakes. First, he offered suggestions on how to get started, such as going on line, checking with local colleges, and contacting your local water agency. Next, after you know what you want to do you have to decide whether you can do it yourself or not. You might need to hire some people to help you with major aspects. If that's the case, he said to get three prices and check their references, even asking to look at their work.

Mr. Clarke then brought up cost. A ballpark figure for work by a licensed contractor is from \$10-15 a square foot, including such things as demolition, grading, soil preparation, and irrigation. Design costs can average \$1500-2000, for the front and back yard. Again, visit their work. He mentioned that chemistry is important, too. You need to feel you can trust them.

He then showed some beautiful, inspiring slides of sample projects, which varied in size, complexity, and amount of hardscape (rocks, concrete, pathways). He also gave us some resources: Association of Professional Landscape Design, American Society of Landscape Architects, California Landscape Contractors Association, and www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation. He also spoke highly of the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College in El Cajon. Lastly, David fielded specific questions from the audience about trees, drip systems, and water softeners (which are not good for plants).

Joni German, from the San Diego County Water Authority, was the next presenter. She shared that she loves her job and is very proud of the organization, which began in 1944. It's a 44-member agency that sells water to 43 million people. Joni agreed with David that the Water Conservation Garden is an incredible resource for plants in San Diego. She told us the biggest mistake people make in landscaping is buying plants without doing research on them.

Joni said to think about your yard as an extension of your home, and to first decide what you want to do there. Do you want to entertain, have a small sitting area, or just have a pretty place to look at? Next comes budget. Decide how much you want to spend. Then create a layout of plants and hardscape, and select a floor covering that is water permeable, such as pea gravel, or use a walkable ground cover. Keep in mind whether or not there is something you'd prefer to hide, such as a neighbor's trash cans. If so, you'd want some screen plants to block that view. Of importance is to pick colors and textures you like, much as you would in your house.

We were then shown a short video on "plant palates." We learned that San Diego climate is similar to 5 areas in the world, which means we have a large range of water-wise plants to choose from, from those areas. The palates are: Mediterranean, Asian, tropical, contemporary, native, and the shady dry area. Joni reminded us to consider the size of a plant at full maturity before purchasing it. Joni also treated us to some amazing slides of before and after pictures of homes in San Diego in which turf had been replaced with low water plants. She closed by bringing up the free classes offered by the Water Authority.

Kathryn Kern had attended a 4-part series of these classes, and shared her experience with us. After committing to the removal of your turf and to a water smart landscape, someone comes to your home and makes a map of your yard, eventually helping create a plan for you as you attend the classes. Kathryn spoke highly of the experience and is currently in the process of redoing her yard. At present, there are no series being offered, but Joni will inform us when they come up again.

Katie Sadd from Council President Cole's Office spoke next, in a break from our program. She informed us about **Play Day at the Lake**, on Saturday, June 3rd from 11-4 at Chollas Lake. There will be something for the whole family to do there, and it should be a lot of fun. Katie also informed us that budget hearings in San Diego have started; the public is welcome to come and speak of concerns about certain projects and proposed cuts. There will be a meeting on May 15 from 6-9 at City Hall.

Answering questions from the audience, Katie told us there is still no start date for the "goat trail" sidewalk as it's part of a larger project. In addition, the first public input meeting about the joint use fields at Rolando Park Elementary will be held on May 23. She will email us the details to post on Nextdoor. President Cole is advocating for more funding for this; currently, there is only funding through the design phase.

Michelle Cook, a Rolando Park resident, then returned us to the panel presentation. She passed out a photograph of the before and after pictures of her front yard; on the back, she listed in detail all the expenses of doing it, along with suggestions of how to give your home more "curb appeal." She had some things done by professionals, like hard grating and stuccoing, but all of the planting she did by herself. The result was very impressive. Drive by her home on Donna to see for yourself.

Michelle recommended The Plant House in El Cajon, stating that it's a mom and pop store with prices far below such places as Home Depot. To start, she spent a lot of time on the planning phase, looking on the internet and through magazines like Home and Garden. She researched companies for the best prices on rocks, too, and chose three colors to give her yard lots of color. For plants, she also had a great deal of color; many were purchased, but some were cuttings from a neighbor's yard. The central point of the yard was a lovely Palo Verde hybrid shade tree. She told us she used decorative pots, new house numbers, and a new mail box, along with other small things to give her home a put together look. Michelle recommended some simple things, too, like pulling the weeds in your driveway and power washing your house. Michelle's presentation showing off the results of her hard work was a great way to end a wonderful panel discussion.

Noel Avilucea also had a power point presentation of her yard, but was unable to attend the meeting, and we ran out of time to share it for her. The presenters stayed for questions.