

LMPOA Update Letter – April, 2019

I want to take this opportunity to update residents and property owners throughout our La Mision subdivision about LMPOA's activities since we met in September, 2018 at the annual meeting. First, one bit of housekeeping detail. Our secretary, Cathryn Grosvenor, found that she was not able to continue in her role and asked that we find a substitute. The board asked Sandy Stadelmann, who had served in the role of secretary in the past, to take over for the remainder of Cathryn's term. Sandy agreed and is now handling those duties.

Now for the news.

Security

We have had a lot of activity including an uptick in break-ins and car theft attempts. Some of this may be due to changes in Mexican law that we all now need to be paying attention to. We met with the Commandant of the La Mision Police and among our discussion points was the topic of these Mexican Law changes that I am referring to. As it turns out, Mexico has now adopted more lenient laws (and therefore more lenient penalties) as it applies to criminal activity by its citizens. Specifically, as it impacts us, if someone breaks into our homes the police will do little more than incarcerate them for two days before releasing them. Even if caught "red handed" with stolen goods in their possession, the culprits will not be held for very long. Break-ins and robbery are not considered to be major crimes under these new legal rules. The criminal must actually do harm to the victim in order for the Mexican system to elevate its view of the crime.

Our guards on the Hill have actually stopped two cars from being stolen in recent months – and we are grateful for their excellent work in this regard – and one would hope that this would make the criminals think twice. Nonetheless, it is not a difficult stretch to see how these law changes might be affecting the criminals' risk calculations going forward. If you were one of them, it wouldn't take you long to determine that the small penalty of spending 48 hours in jail if caught committing a burglary is a meager price to pay.

At this point there are indications that the government is facing significant backlash to its new policy and the recently elected new administration in Mexico City suggests that they will review the law to see if it needs fixing. Until they get it right, we may be in for more erratic criminal activity in the future. What are the implications for us? First, for all intents and purposes we are more "on our own" than we might have previously realized when it comes to protecting ourselves and our community. To meet this challenge LMPOA has either already and/or will soon implement changes to our security procedures. Here is a summary of our plans and activities.

- 1) Schedules for and coverage by our night patrol guards have been expanded on the Beach and for the first time the Hill now has similar night patrol activities.

- 2) We have instituted more regular and frequent meetings and communications with all of our security staff to insure we have the most up-to-date information, training and accountability reviews in place.
- 3) New equipment including air horns, wrist restraints, batons, pepper spray, etc are being provided to the guards.
- 4) We are continuing our policy to keep the lower beach gate closed during periods of high tourism traffic to secure the community both in terms of traffic and overall safety. As in previous years the lower beach & hill gates will remain closed on Easter weekend and on weekends during the summer months (Memorial Day thru Labor Day). Our prior experience with these closings proved highly effective and we expect a similar impact this year.
- 5) **NEW VIDEO SURVEILLANCE** – We are finalizing our plans to install high definition video surveillance cameras throughout the community. The video feeds are planned to terminate for viewing in each of the guard shacks, both hill and beach, and the systems will be expandable to accommodate more cameras in the future. For this first phase we are planning about 20 cameras to cover the beach community, and about 6 cameras at strategic locations on the hill. At this point however, for budgetary reasons much more of our plan, in terms of coverage and timing, can be executed on the beach as opposed to the hill, the latter having to wait until the 2019 annual meeting to determine if the necessary funds for full implementation will be forthcoming. Paid-up LMPOA members will have access to these video feeds, thereby creating a kind of “electronic, digital neighborhood watch.” More about how this “neighborhood watch” works will be provided in future months.
- 6) **LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ALARMS** – We are encouraging individual homeowners to invest in motion detection lights to illuminate “the key hiding spots” around your home that thieves are likely to use. LED systems are now available at Home Depot and Lowes that are inexpensive to operate and provide substantial intensity and coverage. Camera systems are now also affordable and can provide real-time surveillance of your home’s surrounding property and can record and playback activities over time. Finally, companies like Ring and Blink offer simple alarm systems that will trigger a “motion-detected” alert to the home owner when someone enters an empty house. These alerts will factor into the community wide response system outlined next.
- 7) **RAPID RESPONSE PROCEDURES** – To make the installation of an alarm in your home more desirable and effective we are creating a system by which individual home owners will be able to – upon receipt of a “motion-detection” alert on their smart phone – contact the guard shack and provide a code indicating the nature of the disturbance and the action to be taken (no need to speak Spanish, only the code, and the guards will be trained regarding how they are expected to proceed in response to each code). We are now developing a plan to have a team ready to provide a quick response to the most pressing events, even in the middle of the night if necessary. This rapid response procedure will be linked to a “panic” button located in each guard shack that will notify the response team and the police. The system will be available to paid-up LMPOA MEMBERS ONLY and details about the system’s functionality will be forthcoming as the necessary equipment is installed.

Property Development Regulations

Our PDC (Property Development Committee) is up and running, with lots of thanks going to its initial members (Mark Johnson, Molly Post, Andy Hartzell) who have put together the committee's regulations and procedures. At this point, we are gaining traction – as several people who have planned constructions now are seeking approval first and others who did not come forward on their own are responding to our push for them to comply. As an example of your LMPOA HOA dollars at work, you may all have seen that the unsightly double-wide has been removed from the Hill. Other violations of our five property development regulations are being addressed and we will update progress on those denuncias at the next annual meeting, if not sooner, as the information becomes relevant and available.

Going forward we can expect some people to try to proceed without getting a building permit from Ensenada, so it is important for all of us to be alert to any activity that signals the start of a construction project with no building permit prominently displayed. All new construction and any renovation that changes either the footprint or height of a property must have a building permit issued in Ensenada. We met with two groups in Ensenada – the authorities at Control Urbano, and the Supervisor of Delegados and his staff – and we received consistent assurances that Ensenada will ask LMPOA if our regulations have been met before they issue a building permit to the applicant. Naturally, we will have to revisit the authorities periodically as new administrations take over after elections, but in time the process should stabilize.

Infrastructure Improvements

For quite some time we have been hearing that the main entrance to the beach community is not as safe as we would like for entering and exiting cars. So, you will have noticed that we've taken steps to improve that situation by lengthening and widening the Playa entry approach and have provided lighting for the entire gate area. Voted on at the last annual meeting, this was a major capital improvement that we were finally able to complete this year.

We have noted some safety challenges as well associated with cars exiting the Hill community and are beginning to think about how we might address those. However, moving forward on this front also must await the availability of additional funds on the hill before we can turn plans into action.

One final point about infrastructure. As part of our meetings in Ensenada we reviewed the "street lighting" issue. In the past we have paid for new street lights, having received the promise that if we installed them the city would provide the electricity. As we all know, the street lights are sometimes on and sometimes not...and in some areas, there is zero lighting, especially on the hill. The authorities were responsive and indicated that they are willing to work with us to improve lighting throughout the community. We will see. Vamos a ver que pasa. At this point, we do not have a formal agreement with the city, but we expect that given the attitude of the authorities we will be able to formalize what has been agreed to during our informal meeting. We will keep you informed about our progress.

Stocker Coordination

We have had meetings with the Stocker attorney (Ruben Reyes) for the purpose of determining where there might be overlapping interests between the Stocker family and LMPOA. Reyes has indicated that there may be advantages to our collaboration, and he is eager to explore them. Meetings were set but unfortunately had to be rescheduled following Oakes Stocker's passing. More news about this going forward.

LMPOA presence

We have been considering establishing a more permanent physical presence for the LMPOA organization. If you've ever visited La Salina, Cibola or Bajamar you will have noticed that each community has a structure devoted to the HOA. Our community has the Policia casita on Junipero Serra which we are considering as a potential location for a similar HOA presence in our subdivision. Of course, we need to explore legal requirements and hurdles...but will let you know when and how we make progress on this idea.

A final message from me

We are trying to do a lot and we need help. All of us on the Board are volunteers, and we need more of you to join in. If you can't run for office, be on a committee. If you can be a good representative for the point of view of your part of the community let us know, since where appropriate we are widening participation in our Board's deliberations about what works best for the whole neighborhood. This year I've instituted having more than just the four Board members regularly attend board meeting to weigh in on important topics and decision-making. The result is that the inclusion of these "adjunct members" of the board has enabled us to get better ideas, more constructive debate, and more boots on the ground to get things done. I intend to continue and expand the practice. And finally, MONEY! None of this gets done without money. The more people that pay, the less each home owner will have to come up with to meet our basic needs. As I said at the annual meeting, it's all about what kind of community we want to live in.

Thanks for your attention...
Steve Zimney – LMPOA President