

ACONA Meeting Notes - November 1, 2011 - Community Room, Altadena Library

After introductions, the following topics were covered:

Trash in Altadena

Thor Schmidt, General Manager of Athens Services

Tomas Soli, Operations Manager

Paul Alva, Franchise Garbage Disposal, LA County

Benjamin Cortez, Environmental Programs Division, LA County Public Works

Thor Schmidt summarized Athens' service. Approximately 13,000 customers. Seven-year contract with three one-year extensions. Bit of a rocky start because the service started during a holiday week when service days weren't the standard ones. During the start-up period, Athens responded to customers who wanted different or more containers, explained senior rates and services.

Containers: greens in green container, recycling in blue, trash in black. Customers need to make sure only green waste goes in green containers because putting trash in the green containers contaminates the green waste and it is rejected at the recycling center. NOTE: Palm fronds cannot be recycled as green waste; they should go in the black trash cans; can also be placed out with trash and Athens will pick up.

Trash is taken to MRF (materials recycling facility) and sorted. Target is 50-60% diverted from landfill and recycled.

Collected old containers (residents just put a "Take me" sticker on them and Athens picked them up).

Won't collect anything extra that people put out on the curb unless they've been called to pick it up, because sometimes people put out things they don't mean to be picked up.

Recycling: the shorter list is what can't be recycled. Website www.athensservices.com has information about what's recyclable (along with a lot of other info).

Abandoned waste: call the county (800-993-5844), who will contact Athens, who will photograph it, pick it up, and photograph the area again.

If customers have bulky materials to pick up, they can call Athens directly at 888-336-6100. (No extra charge for this pick-up.)

Audience expressed appreciation for Athens and the way they have been providing service.

Luis Sanchez is the full-time Altadena rep for Athens.

Weed abatement: Dept of Agricultural Commissioner 626-575-5484
Brush clearing on hillsides: Fire Dept. Brush Clearing Unit 626-969-2375

Neighborhood Watch

Natalie Salazar, Director CLEPP (Community/Law Enforcement Partnership Program), LA County Sheriff's Department
Sgt. Michael Randenberg, Dty. Ronnie Manier, Altadena Sheriff's Department
Jeff Sedlik, creator AltadenAlert map, Member, BraeWatch neighborhood watch

Jeff gave the history of how his neighborhood watch got started. He showed the map he created to show all the neighborhood watch groups and contact information on each.

Steps to create a Neighborhood Watch group:

- Recruit a founding committee
- Contact the Community Relations team at the Altadena Sheriff's Station (Sgt. Randenberg and Dty. Manier)
- Define your boundaries
- Neighborhood Watch is security-oriented; neighborhood associations are more wide-ranging.
- Create an online discussion group (Yahoo, Google are free) as a way to get people to join up and participate.
- Or create a blog or website and add resources (e.g., emergency contact list, map, registered sex offenders, FAQs)
- Establish guidelines for discussions
 - Stay on topic (neighborhood watch = only security)
 - Respect
 - All postings must be ID'd with name
- Distribute announcement that you are starting a Neighborhood Watch group
- Recruit participants
- Recruit sponsors for neighbors w/o email/Web access
- Post alerts and security information
- Create emergency contact list and add to blog/website
- Grow your group

Natalie Salazar oversees all crime prevention and community relations efforts for the Sheriff's department. She went over training opportunities for Neighborhood Watch and highlighted information she brought with her, including a booklet on target hardening (making your house safer).

Sgt. Randenberg went over target hardening

- External lighting - not a fan, unless resident pays attention if the light goes on.
- Shrubbery that blocks view of your house creates cover for burglars. Lower it to the point that sheriffs or neighbors can see if there's someone in your yard.

Basics of neighborhood watch building

Suspicious persons: learn how to describe them, where they were heading.

Alarms/video installation: alarms are a deterrent but won't stop someone from breaking in. But the more deterrents you have, including neighbors who are watching, the better.

Dty. Ronnie Manier introduced himself. He's been at the Altadena Station for 15 years, and an Altadena resident for over 40 years.

Q&A:

Question about why there isn't better communication between the Sheriff's Department and the community on suspicious persons, for example. Natalie Salazar will follow up.

Concerns about where emergency calls are being directed. [Answer, 911 calls are still being routed out of La Crescenta.] Reported shots fired on Lincoln Avenue resulted in lack of adequate response from the Sheriff's Department.

A: If you want a response from the Sheriff's Department when you call, you need to request that the department contact you.

Another concern about non-response on a suspicious person report, on multiple calls, after hearing from the Captain at a Neighborhood Watch meeting that that was the thing to do.

Q: How do we know recyclables are being recycled? A from Paul Alva, LA County: Blue containers are taken to an authorized recycling center. Athens has reporting requirements. Athens has a good track record.

Q: Who subsidizes recycling if the cost-benefit ratio is negative? A: Whether the market is good or bad, Athens is required to recycle everything in the blue bins. Thor Schmidt: It's a risk Athens takes. Paul Alva: Customers' cost is built into the monthly fee and it's fixed.

Q: Can you recycle food containers that are dirty? A: Should be as clean as possible. Don't recycle a peanut butter jar that's full of peanut butter, for example; empty and wash it or throw it in the trash.

Q: Back to shootings: concern that there was not call-back. Wants assurance that the Captain will be addressed about this.

A: Natalie Salazar asked that the Sheriff's Station be invited to the next ACONA meeting to follow up on these issues.