

**Sycamore Square Neighborhood Association  
March 2019 Session Minutes**

**March 4, 2019**

The meeting was called to order by President Conrad Starr at 7:00pm.

Board members present included Mr. Starr, Joshua Kirchmer, and David Zadick. Neighbors also present include: Lori Nakama, Michael Schlesinger, Sue Horwitz, and Lane Maser, who arrived midway through the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

**1. February 2019 -**

JK moves to approve minutes from February 2019 with submitted revisions.

CS seconds.

Passes unanimously.

**Public Comments**

Nothing to report.

**LADWP --**

CS brought audience up to speed on recent power outages in the neighborhood.

Michael Ventre -- LADWP Community Affairs

Art Johnson -- Manager of Distro Construction Maintenance -- 33yrs, came up thru field

**--- SEE OUTAGE REPORT AT END OF MINUTES ---**

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Michael Ventre -- LADWP Community Affairs

1-800-DIAL-DWP first, to report outage.

LADWP twitter account

LADWPNews.com

## Reports

**Treasury Report** - DB not present

**Streets and Sidewalks** - DB not present

**SSNA LUC** - CS will call a LUC meeting, CS handed out TNP survey and explained situation of development in SySq and urged those present to attend the LUC meeting that will be scheduled in the next few weeks. Neighbors expressed interest.

**SSNA Communications Committee** - CS wants to put anti-eviction and renter resources, perhaps adding twitter feed etc. Board agreed.

**Neighborhood Watch** - Nothing to report

### Community Meeting Reports --

**GWNC** - CS moves: SSNA will email Sycamore Square Candidate Statements and Election info to stakeholders.

JK seconds.

Unanimous approval.

### **Unfinished Business--**

**Board Vacancies** - CS noted that Kathy Flynn expressed interest in joining the board, and the Board has expressed interest, but nomination will be postponed until Ms. Flynn can attend the meeting.

**Neighborhood Watch** - Nothing to report.

**Pedestrian Death** - Confirmation from Officer David Manning .... GET NOTES FROM CONRAD

CS reported that Ofc. Manning was able to confirm the following details: a vehicle traveling northbound on the 800 block of S Mansfield struck a pedestrian who was crossing the street between two parked cars. CS said that the pedestrian was visiting her daughter who lived on Mansfield near the intersection with 9th. Ofc. Manning reported that the pedestrian was at fault for not yielding to the car which had stopped at the intersection, and the driver, a 17 year-old, was not at fault. The pedestrian who was struck died three days later in the hospital. CS

confirmed that he would share this information with the community as a safety advisory but would first try to contact the family of the deceased as a courtesy.

### **Streetlight Update -**

CS reported that Rob Fisher from CD4 had shared the news that 326 street lights between Curson and Cochran and between Mansfield and Wilton would be upgraded with low voltage LED fixtures.

In addition, he reported that Citrus Ave had received new wiring and fixtures in the previous week as confirmed by Joy Calisof. He asked if anyone was aware of lighting upgrades/improvements on the other streets of Sycamore Square, but those in attendance were not sure.

### **New Business**

#### **1. Tom Bergins's Historical Landmark -**

JK: move that sycamore square board draft a letter in support of the designation of tom bergins as a historical landmark

DZ seconds.

Unanimous Approval

### **Board Comments**

#### **Clarification on Preferential Parking Opt-Out Restrictions --**

CS reminded the group that the City does not have a system in place to enforce preferential parking opt-out agreements as with 5100 and 5200 Wilshire buildings. Recently, Rob Fisher had provided the additional information that during her time as State Attorney General, Kamala Harris had issued the opinion that "local authorities may not limit preferential parking based on the type of dwelling. For now, the City Attorney is taking this to mean that the opt-outs are unenforceable, but a clarification may be issued at some future date..

**Clarification on Preferential Parking Opt-Out Restrictions (California State Attorney General's Office), No. 14-304, April 14, 2016 ( [https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/opinions/pdfs/14-304\\_1.pdf](https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/opinions/pdfs/14-304_1.pdf) )**

## Event Calendar

**3/5** (Tue) 8pm – Sycamore Square Emergency Radio Net (FRS/GMRS Channel 7)

**3/12** (Wed) 7pm – Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council, (Wilshire Ebell) C. Starr

**3/21** (Thu) 7pm – Community-Police Advisory Board (4849 Venice Blvd., Community Room) C. Starr

**3/26** (Tue) 6:30pm – GWNC Land Use Committee (250 N. Rossmore Ave., Marlborough School, D200)

**3/31** (Sun), 10am-4pm – Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council Elections (336 N. Larchmont Blvd., The Barking Lot)

*Voter requirements at [www.greaterwilshire.org/election-2019](http://www.greaterwilshire.org/election-2019)*

**3/31** (Sun) – **DEADLINE for Purple Line TNP Survey:**

<http://www.latnp.org/purple-line/survey/>

**4/2** (Tue) 8pm – Sycamore Square Emergency Radio Net (FRS/GMRS Channel 7)

## Scheduling

SSNA April Meeting is scheduled for 7pm Wednesday April 3 at Numero Uno.

## Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

**Sycamore Square Neighborhood Association (SSNA) March 4, 2019 Discussion with Michael Ventre and Art Johnson of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) regarding Power Outages in Sycamore Square during Fall 2018 and Winter 2019.**

*The SSNA Board invited LADWP to provide Sycamore Square residents with an explanation for at least 8 power outages from October 2018 to February 2019. Michael Ventre, LADWP's Community Affairs Representative for the area, and Art Johnson, LADWP Electrical Services Manager attended the March 4, 2019 SSNA meeting.*

Mr. Johnson reported that he has worked at LADWP for 33 years in various roles, including distribution, construction, and maintenance. He thanked the SSNA board for providing a list of outages by date, approximate start time, restoration time, and area affected, explaining that the data was easy to cross-reference against LADWP records.

He explained the outages from oldest to newest.

**10/8/2018, 9:40 pm**

Mr. Johnson reported that on October 8th, approximately 27,300 customers were affected by a power outage. He explained that within the LADWP infrastructure, there are receiving stations and distribution stations, and that transformers are final step before power hits the wires to homes. On October 8th, 2018, a private individual, who was allegedly attempting to steal copper wire, broke into a receiving station, and died by electrocution. Mr. Ventre noted similar past theft incidents leading to someone's death.

**11/29/18**

Mr. Johnson said the "Primary was down" - a 4.8 kV wire was compromised by severe winds.

A member asked how palm fronds factor in power outages. Mr. Johnson said that the shape of a palm frond is similar to that of a sail; wind can carry a frond a significant distance, and the frond can "hook" onto a wire. If the frond becomes wet, even from morning dew, it can cause a short-circuit in the system and possibly a power outage. Mr. Johnson noted that mylar balloons are a similar problem.

**12/6/18, 1:00 am to 2:50 pm**

This outage event was due to both an underground [fault *or* vault] [and] a failed piece of cable on a pole. The duration of the outage was due to a large volume of reported outages during that rain event.

Mr. Johnson explained that underground cables carry power to the conduit, then to the power pole and on to the wires, and that during wet weather, the moisture barrier joints can go bad. For safety reasons, crews will not work directly on an energized underground cable, but instead will cut the power first. The time needed to repair such an issue depends on the nature and extent of the damage: it may take 4 hours or

a couple of days. An SSNA member asked if damage is likely to recur where it has been repaired. Mr. Johnson replied “not necessarily.”

He said that in this case, a “[pothead](#)” was 50-60 years old, with an original projected lifespan of 50-100 years.

Mr. Johnson noted that “smart meters” will one day report outage information in real time to the LADWP using a network similar to that of cell phones, but that no implementation date has been set. In the meantime, LADWP relies on customer phone calls to know where problems are.

### **12/15/18, 10:30 pm to 12/16/18 3:00 am**

This was a Level 1 rain event (major rain). The LADWP was overwhelmed and called in crews from the district.

### **12/18/18, 8:22 am to 12:30 pm**

This event was a “circuit level outage,” where a circuit “tripped,” requiring the diagnosing team to patrol the circuit in the field.

(At this time, an SSNA member noted that his Nest device provides a timestamp of all outages, which could be useful for reviewing outage details.)

Mr. Johnson explained that a power station will provide info to the department if it locks out, but that information from customers is still needed to narrow down the location of affected areas. Smaller outages, such as a power line going down in a city alley, may not significantly affect a station’s output, and so would require a report.

In response to a member’s question, Mr. Johnson said that a single phone call would go on the “petties” list, with a lower priority. Once multiple customers in a given area report an outage, a neighborhood-wide outage would be suspected, which would move it higher in the queue.

### ***February, 2019:***

Mr. Johnson noted that all area outage inquiries (February 6th, 14th, and 15th) were “wrapped up in underground issues.” The outages, he explained, come when a rain event leads to water entering underground vaults with cables from the 1930s and 1940s. He said there were already “jobs written” for some of the failed components prior to the outages, i.e. they were already due to be serviced.

### **2/6/19, 7:29 pm to 2/7/19 2:00 am**

Mr. Johnson explained that a “ground came in on a circuit,” requiring equipment to be replaced inside a vault. In an underground circuit, there are 3 “legs” where a problem may show up. The crews will check the underground infrastructure by going to the first switching point: they’ll open it up, “plug in,” and use a meter to determine the direction of the problem. For worker safety, power is cut to the circuit during

testing, which likely accounts for the numerous mini-outages reported by community members on Nextdoor, as crews tested sequential switching points.

On the night of 2/6 to 2/7, storm water entered a 4.8kV circuit. Crews looked for change in the meter. They found a bad switch for the transformer, which was 40-50 years old. As described above, they switched in and switched out.

Mr. Johnson said there is no need to expect any damage to household appliances or electronics during such controlled power interruptions. He noted that by his records, the power issues began around 3pm on 2/6/19 to around 5am on the 7th.

He added that they “try to keep the lights on as long as they can.”

### **2/14/19, 8:40 pm - 2/15/19, 4:30 pm (intermittent)**

Mr. Johnson shared a printed photo which he described as a “fault in the vault” at the distribution station located at 4858 San Vicente Blvd. involving a lead covered cable which had melted and damaged two nearby cables.

An SSNA member asked whether planned repairs or replacement of old infrastructure competes for priority with new construction projects. Mr. Johnson confirmed this is the case, saying they are “swamped” with new business, including new high-rises, Metro construction, and “A-Permits” for sky cranes, which he said are a major draw of electricity.

He cited Metro rail construction as having a major impact on their workload, noting they “have to take care of that” as a priority. He said new developments often involve “business people screaming” for their projects to be energized. He confirmed that LADWP is dedicated to the maintenance projects and that they continue to allocate assets, but there is only so much they can do at a time. He repeated that where recent outages were due to infrastructure failures, “these jobs were in the queue.” He noted that of the 3 written jobs for Distributing Station 8 (“Longwood” at 4858 San Vicente Blvd.), only one was completed (in February, due to an outage), and that other jobs could result in future issues, including outages.

Mr. Johnson added that some outages are avoided by “running a loop” - where connected systems are tied together and the load can be shifted to “sister circuits,” but if that sister circuit is abnormal, [there are limitations]. Such limitations led to outages in the Summer of 2018. He characterized some of the recent outages as deferred maintenance “coming home to roost.”

Mr. Starr thanked Mr. Johnson and invited Michael Ventre to discuss how LADWP communicates with the community.

“We get information out as quickly as possible,” Mr. Ventre offered, noting they can only give out the information they have, which comes from the field. He said that during troubleshooting and repair operations, crews are out in the field and are too busy to provide non-essential information, focusing instead on communicating what they need to fix a problem. Due to many factors, it can take considerable time to get a restoration time estimate.

He encouraged the public to report outages by calling 1-800-DIAL-DWP. Customers can also follow LADWP on Facebook. On Twitter, customers can connect with LADWP staff about specific outages. LADWP staff also provides certain outage information via Twitter.

Mr. Ventre noted that at the “Trouble Center,” employees work 10 days on and 4 days off. He mentioned an employee named Juan Esparza.

SSNA members told Mr. Ventre that their community is active on Nextdoor, perhaps more so than on Twitter; they also noted that many City departments use Nextdoor for their communications, encouraging LADWP to improve their use of Nextdoor.

Mr. Ventre recommended also visiting [www.ladwp.com](http://www.ladwp.com) to view reported outages and [www.ladwpnews.com](http://www.ladwpnews.com) for other information.

SSNA board member David Zadick asked if there would be value in Sycamore Square having a “power liaison” to communicate with LADWP. Mr. Ventre responded that he would be happy to communicate with a designated point person for the neighborhood.