

From: "Dag Forssell" <mc@forssell.com>  
Subject: MC Water conservation group  
Date: Thu, 02 Jun 2022

This Door Drop is a  
Follow-up to Email

Dear [Resident's name],

As I wrote to you on May 1, I have been encouraged to start an informal Water (H2O) Conservation Group to discuss water conservation at Menlo Commons.

The State of California earlier this year called for a voluntary 15% reduction in all water usage. Recent news reports suggest it did NOT decrease at all and in fact is UP 22% from a year ago. A community discussion of water conservation is both important and urgent, and potentially of GREAT CONSEQUENCE to all residents. The Menlo Commons Association Board has already instructed Val Smith to reduce irrigation. You can see the effect by looking at our big central lawn. That is a needed action, but considerably more will likely need to be done.

As you may be aware, any Menlo Commons resident can start a GROUP. While the Board will be informed, and board members are residents too, so welcome, I want to stress that this is NOT a Committee of the Board as Committees can only be chartered by the Association Board itself.

***Our H2O Conservation Group is independent of our Association Board, but our intent and objective is to engage in exploration of options, community input and discussion, and to ultimately present a workable conservation program to the Board for their consideration.***

The H2O Group is intended to work with and support the community and the Board.

I have indications from more than a dozen residents that they want to discuss water conservation, and the topic has broad implications for the aesthetics, economics and quality of life here at Menlo Commons. Therefore,

**I am calling for a meeting of any interested residents to be convened outside, in front of the Commons Room, at 6:30 pm, Wednesday, June 8.**

Menlo Commons has lived through a period of drought before, but the present drought unfortunately promises to be a rather permanent feature of our local climate. Certainly, we can all be more water-wise with showers, laundry and other personal water use. Perhaps we can develop some guidance for action that is helpful.

We have one (and only one) pool for 122 residences. It is used and enjoyed throughout the day. The pool is very important to most residents. Controlling evaporation would be a good thing. Perhaps ten years ago, a pool cover was installed. In use, it proved to be a hazard and liability. Our insurance company required us to remove it. The failed pool cover is resting in peace (above ground) a mere ten steps from the large green compost bin. A floating cover on the jacuzzi had its own problems. So covering the pool does not appear to be an option although it should be investigated to see if technology and insurance considerations have changed.

That brings us to irrigation and the substantial landscaping which anchors Menlo Commons. Major, long-term IMPROVEMENT. One year ago, John Loughlin, then Board Chair, prepared to contact landscape architects, asking them to discuss their interest in preparing a long-term master plan for MC. As part of that effort, an 8-page **Landscape Overview** was prepared: See <http://www.forssell.com/menlo/Drought/Drought.html>

That project, in the midst of Covid, did not generate much enthusiasm and was abandoned.

While it is likely still a good idea to ask our BOARD to consider retaining the services of a landscape architectural firm to guide us, it seems to me to make sense for our group / residents to begin by discussing and arriving at consensus about what our objectives for a landscape master plan should be. These areas would logically include:

- o... a long term plan to move to drought resistant landscaping
  - perhaps near zero irrigation at MC;
- o... landscaping even more beautiful and inviting than what we have now;
- o... compatible with existing major features, such as retaining our trees;
- o... minimum disruption / smooth transition;
- o... creating landscape features the community deems desirable;

All this, and more, should be discussed.

A major change to our landscape has every potential to be controversial. Therefore, I want our June 8 meeting to start by discussing planning as such. You all know I have advocated Completed Staff Work. I will bring prints, but you can check out the principles at <http://www.forssell.com/menlo/Planning/CompletedStaffWork.pdf>

The idea is to explore and evaluate alternatives with care before coming to any recommendations for any BOARD consideration or action.

Each of us has different life experiences yielding many different points of view and understandings. Because our understandings determine our wants, creating consensus requires shared understandings. Arriving at consensus with shared understandings will take time and effort on everyone's part.

For my presentation June 8, I will advocate for Idealized Planning, as presented by Russell Ackoff in this transcript of his 1978 seminar on planning:

[http://www.forssell.com/menlo/Planning/3\\_Interactive\\_planning.pdf](http://www.forssell.com/menlo/Planning/3_Interactive_planning.pdf)

In the interest of consensus -- with a minimum of off-target conversation (such as liking ivy, or not) -- I will ask each participant to think through and contribute together to a vision of what the Community might see as the ideal approach to landscaping for Menlo Commons going forward, and for the second 40 years.

I sincerely hope that by each of us (or small group of like-minded friends) creating visions of an ideal Menlo Commons, we will find ourselves in a place where consensus will be within reach. I have ideas too, but they will wait for the next meeting. I will do my best to serve as secretary, summarize, illustrate and post alternatives for us all to discuss further.

To help the creative juices along, I have already placed books featuring drought resistant landscaping, walkways, stone work, surfaces, patios, other spaces and more in the Commons Room. See **Drought and Landscaping picture books** at the web page.

If you want a print of an overview plan of MC to work on, such as the Page for notes, with crayons or whatever, just ask

We have plenty to consider as we get together June 8, 6:30 PM:

- o Our objectives
- o The meaning of "Completed Staff Work"
- o Developing consensus / Idealized planning
- o Agreeing on homework for each or small groups
- o Next Steps

I will persist in e-mailing materials and report on progress to all residents, not just our group. I will also do door drops to be sure that all residents are alerted to our discussion, whether or not one accesses email.

I hope you will join the H2O Conservation Group discussion of June 8. See you then :)

Best to all, Dag