EVENTS

2010 CASBA Spring Conference
April 9, 10, & 11
Ranch El Chorro Education Center
San Luis Obispo
Details:
http://www.strawbuilding.org/

Green California Summit and Exposition
March 15, 16, & 17
Sacramento Convention Center
Details:
http://www.green-technology.org/gcsummit/

Build Today for a Green Tomorrow: Real Estate Expo & Convention
March 26th
Holiday Inn Hotel, 1740 N. First Street, San Jose
Details:
http://www.sareaa.com/events/

2010 CASBA Workshop Plans by CJ Cavet

This coming year, plans for the workshops are ambitious but so far are still in planning. We hope to find two hosts for 2010; one in Northern California and one in Southern California. At this date we only have one host for the north but are still hoping to succeed in finding on for the South. So if someone is interested in being a host in Southern California, please contact Rebecca Tasker & Mike Long at rebecca@simpleconstruct.net as soon as possible.

The Northern California host site will be in Butte County, in or near the town of Concow. The dates have not been set yet and will be posted on the web site as soon as they are.

This workshop will be very special as it is being set up for and by the people burned out in the wildfires of 2008. Their town was especially devastated and many homes burned down. A group “The Phoenix Project” was formed with the mission of rebuilding the community. You can read more about them at http://concowphoenix.org/index.html

Because many of the people either did not have enough insurance or large savings they have struggled to regain what they had before the fire. The goal of the group is to teach some of the interested people sustainable methods of construction including Straw Bale so they can rebuild their lost homes.

Plans for CASBA workshops have been underway since last spring and some CASBA members have been helping with planning and answering questions to officials. Once all the issues with the building departments have been resolved, dates for the workshops will be announced. The workshop dates will most likely be around the usual dates; June or July for the Bale Raising and August or September for the plaster.

Green California Summit and Exposition

The Green California Summit and Exposition will be held March 15-17th at the Sacramento Convention Center.

From stimulus funds to clean tech investment, California remains central to the nation’s hopes for a greener future. Stay up to date on the policy innovations, technologies, strategies and best practices that are keeping the Golden State on the cutting edge of the green revolution.

For more information go to http://www.green-technology.org/gcsummit/

“Take a straw and throw it up into the air, you may see by that which way the wind is”
John Selden

Articles... Continue on page 4
DEar Reader,

Due to the current state of the economy, active distribution of this Journal has been reduced. The first blow to the dissemination of the Journal as one voice of CASBA happened early last year, when bulk ("snailmail") mailings fell victim to the budget axe. Direct Email distribution took the next hit – direct Emailings fell from a high of nearly 200 individuals as recently as April of last year to a current level of just over 50 persons today.

On a positive note, passive availability of the Journal has increased – it’s available for download at our web site, and also apparently at our page on Facebook. But these are, again, only passive mechanisms, not active ones. Proactive, assertive distribution of the Journal as a positive voice of advocacy for CASBA’s mission has been cut drastically, and the current trend does not bode well for reversing itself of it’s own accord.

More troubling for me as Editor was to find recently in my Email inbox one CASBA member’s praise of another professional organization’s newsletter, citing it as a good example of a newsletter that contains advertising. That organization, with a membership of barely 100 persons, was able to do for that CASBA member what our own newsletter apparently can only rarely accomplish of late: it incited him to praise it. That newsletter enjoys more of what ours enjoys less, namely the direct distribution of it, in this case it’s direct mailing via Email.

Our Journal is diminished. For me as Editor there was a time when I could compose an edition, see it to print, know it would be distributed to an appreciative audience, and enjoy the heartwarming feedback loop that resulted. For now at least I find myself reading about the effectiveness of other newsletters, instead. I’d prefer really to read positive input and definitive submissions to OUR JOURNAL, see OUR JOURNAL resume it’s own position of positive advocacy, and see OUR JOURNAL inspire our own members to contribute articles to our own organization.

This begs the further question: is the trend away from proactive distribution of the Journal and towards a “passive availability” mode a necessity, or have we arrived at this situation by default? That is the question I propose to accommodate by informal poll, the results of which I intend to discuss as an agenda item at our next Advisory Board meeting on April 9th at Rancho el Chorro. They are as follows:

1. If funds could be made available, should the CASBA Journal resume it’s previously supported levels of proactive distribution by CASBA: <y> <n>?
2. Conversely, should CASBA instead conserve it’s resources for now to save costs: <y> <n>?
3. If proactive distribution is favored, shall distribution be done via snailmail, by Email, or a combination of both vehicles: <snail> <Email> <both>?
4. In support of any proactive distribution program, shall CASBA Journal be opened to advertising: <y> <n>?

I welcome all Reader’s thoughts and considerations. I propose to receive your thoughts, evaluate, forward, and then make recommendations to CASBA Advisory Board, based on your feedback, at the Spring Conference in April. Thank you for helping me facilitate this item, in advance!

Yours,
Daniel Silvernail A.I.A.
Editor, CASBA Journal
dan@silvernailarch.com
NOTES FROM CASBA CENTRAL
Joy & Maurice Bennett – Angels Camp

As we embark into 2010 we want to thank you for your support during this last year. Without member support CASBA would not exist nor would we be able to pursue the task of making building with straw mainstream instead of extreme.

During this last year CASBA, again with the hard work of its members, held three – that’s right, three successful workshops this year. We are especially fortunate to have C J Cavet as our workshop coordinator and she has done an excellent job of working with workshop hosts and leaders to make our workshops meaningful and a worthwhile learning experience. We were also fortunate this year to have had the opportunity of presenting a workshop with Bill and Athena Steen from the CANELO Project and Tracy Thieriot. On that one Jim Furness, working with CJ, arranged a 4-day Plastering workshop, which was filled with information experience and just plain fun!

Our 2009 Spring Conference at Walker Creek Ranch was again a great weekend of sharing information and networking. It is always a very positive experience to gather a bunch of bale heads in the same place for a weekend – and you never know what new information you might learn.

We have been averaging 2-4 new members each month from the web site – and for the information of all but especially those of you who subscribe to our Resource List (Find a Professional on the web home page) we have been averaging over 1000 hits per month on our web site and can only hope that some of those hits translate into business leads.

Many thanks to those of you who have spent a lot of your time (and money) on projects and workshops for CASBA – C J Cavet, Bob Theis, Tracy Thieriot, Jim Furness, Bill Donovan and Kathy and Storm Gregor on workshops, Jim Reiland, Joy Rogalla, Celine Pinet and John Swearingen on revising the detail book, Tim Rudolph for developing an Engineering Module for presentation, Martin Hammer for his work on both State, National and International Codes, Dan Silvernail for his untiring efforts publishing this newsletter, I hope that we have not left anyone out – if we have let us know because we do sincerely appreciate everyone’s efforts.

Now for what’s coming up.

1. We have booked Rancho El Chorro, an educational center just north of San Luis Obispo, for our 2010 Spring Conference – dates APRIL 9 – 11, 2010. Look for details on the web site as soon as we finalize catering etc.

2. The International Straw Bale Building Conference is planned for 2010 in Colorado. No date has been set as of yet but keep your eyes peeled – what a great opportunity to attend an international so close to home. CASBA has offered to assist if needed.

3. Dues – our dues run with the calendar year Jan 1 through Dec 31 – SO DUES ARE DUE. Remember membership is $50 or whatever you can afford and a Professional Listing is an additional $150. We would appreciate early remittance since memberships are one of our primary sources of income.

4. CASBA has a CASBA Members Google Group which is open to CASBA members for the exchange of information, asking questions about problems encountered, notices of bale raisings or other related events, help wanted etc. We have made an effort to either notify existing members to join or in some cases we have taken the liberty of just adding you to the group. If you are not receiving posts to this group, please “Google” “CASBA MEMBERS GOOGLE Group” and ask to join –this is a CASBA members group so we limit access.

5. Support The Last Straw – this quarterly journal is an invaluable source of information regarding not only building with straw but also the whole natural building world. If you do not now subscribe, DO IT NOW!!!!!

Remember this is your Newsletter – please support it with your articles and news.
CASBA Advisory Board Meeting
Minutes
November 7, 2009

Place: Offices of Skillful-Means in Berkeley, California.

Board Members Present:
• Maurice Bennett
• Joy Bennett
• C J Cavet
• Kathy Gregor
• John Swearingen
• Ray Sheehy
• Celine Pinet
• Leslie Christians
• Jim Christiana
• Kelly Walters

The Meeting was called to order at 10:15am.

Maurice Bennett reviewed the financials including a review of income/expenses for 2009 ending October 31, 2009. As of November 1, 2009 there was a balance of $6,185.65. The following topics were addressed:

Newsletter
The Fall edition of the newsletter has been prepared by Daniel Silvernail but because of it’s digital size it cannot be uploaded to the web site or promulgated to members by e-mail. Silvernail has been asked to reduce the size of the document so that it can be uploaded and sent electronically. The Board discussed and decided to add a “Meet CASBA Members” article so that all members can become acquainted with other members. The Board suggested that Silvernail seek journalism students to generate cogent articles for the newsletter – College journalism students might be a source for this effort.

The Board agreed that the newsletter should have two new features – (1) a list of new members since the last edition and (2) a “Meet CASBA members” introducing CASBA members starting with the Advisory Board.

Detail Book
Jim Reiland, Joy Rogalla and Celine Pinet have been diligently pursuing review and editing of material for the new Detail Book. Celine Pinet asked those attending this meeting to submit review of material NLT Dec 7, 2009. The Board discussed how to best present this material to the public – digital, print, downloadable PDF and how does CASBA maintain control of access, distribution.

T-Shirts And Other Salable Items
Joy Bennett asked the Board on their preference for ordering more t-shirts as a promotional/sale item. The Board agreed to obtain cost data and that there should be a “women’s” shirt in addition to the standard men’s design. Ray Sheehy also suggested that the Board investigate baseball caps with the CASBA logo and he would look for producers.

Annual Conference And Pow Wow’s
The Board appointed Joy Bennett and Ray Sheehy to coordinate the Spring 2010 conference. Leslie Christiana also agreed to scope out a Fall 2010 Pow Wow site. The Pow Wow would be an informal, no agenda gathering. The Board also agreed to establish the following Conference fee schedule(s)
• Member
• Non-Member
• Student
• Scholarship – the scholarship would be for one individual to attend the conference at no charge and there would be a deadline for submission of applications for the scholarship. The conference coordinators would be responsible for choosing the “winner”.

Workshops
CJ Cavet announced that Mike Long and Rebecca Tasker would be the workshop leaders for CASBA
workshops in Southern California. The spring 2010 workshop will be in Butte County. The Board agreed that CASBA would issue a Certificate of Completion for each workshop. This certificate would only certify that an individual had attended a specific workshop and would not state or infer any degree or level of expertise. C J will develop scholarship guidelines for workshops.

Web Site
While the Board agreed that the current web site is a vast improvement over our old web site the Board felt that the site was too stale in content and that there was not sufficient variety – the Board agreed that we need an active update policy without specifying how we would develop that policy and who would monitor the implementation and long term activity.

Presentations And Outreach
The Board discussed means to broaden our outreach effort(s). One suggestion was to develop a modular folio of presentations and a concurrent list of presenters who could use a module to address a group or organization regarding building with straw. These presentations could be used to educate and or update municipal building/planning departments as well as organizations such as engineering and or architectural groups, plan check societies, and appropriate county/state officials around the state. The Board agreed that in order to have maximum effectiveness the presentation would best be done on a regional rather than an individual municipality basis. Each presentation module would also have at least minimal documentation to use as a handout for each module.
In addition to full blown presentations the Board
suggested that we develop a short program for use at brown bag lunches, etc.

The Board also suggested that this outreach program could be funded by grants.

The Board did not appoint or designate anyone to develop this program.

Hers Rating System

Jim Christiana noted that straw bale construction is not included in the HERS Rating System. The problem with inclusion of straw bale is the unique properties straw bale structures such as “breathing” and baking and how to deal with these qualities.

Again the Board did not designate anyone to pursue this topic.

Pending Items

1. Who will be responsible for writing/editing the “Meet a Member” article for the newsletter?
2. Development of an active update policy for the web site.
4. Investigation of possible grant’s for funding an active outreach effort.
5. Determination of how to include straw bale construction into the HERS Rating system

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Concrete as a Green Building Material – March Presentation at USGBC-MBB

At its upcoming monthly meeting on March 3rd, 2010 USGBC-MBB will present a discussion entitled “Concrete As A Green Building Material”. The meeting will start at 5:30pm, with the talk beginning at 6:00pm. Speaking will be Benjamin Licari of GraniteRock, Brian Curtis of the Calera Corporation, and Rodney Cahill of Mesiti-Miller Engineers. The moderator will be Daniel Silvernail A.I.A.

Concrete is far and away the most ubiquitous construction material worldwide. It’s advantages,
including low cost, local availability, and breadth of applicability all contribute to it's huge popularity. Concrete is inherently an environmentally friendly material, a fact readily demonstrated by life-cycle analysis.

But there is also an environmental downside to the use of concrete, a problem magnified by the billions of tons of natural materials mined and processed each year. The first and foremost downsides are the enormous amounts of energy involved in it's production, as well the huge volume of CO₂ released into the atmosphere during processing.

The first of the three to present will be Ben Licari who will describe the overall picture in terms of the environmental cost-benefits of the material, with an eye toward how to use the material wisely, minimizing those negative impacts while optimizing it’s environmental upside. Next, Brian Curtis will discuss the cutting edge work Calera is doing in terms of product development. The corporation, whose mission is “sequestering CO2 in the built environment” has developed among other products “Carbon Negative Concrete” in support of this mission. Finally Rodney Cahill of Mesiti-Miller, involved in the local design application and specification of the material, will describe how concrete's use specifically dovetails into the LEED matrix of point scoring, as well as how it’s positive environmental aspects are being employed locally.

Article contributed by Daniel Silvernail
A.I.A. He is principal of the firm Daniel Matthew Silvernail Architect, a Certified Green Professional (CGBP) and LEED AP firm located in Soquel. His interests include competitive fencing at which he is rated at both the epee and the foil, and a passion for the argentine tango which he shares with his dance partner Carola Cuenca. He currently serves on the Advisory Board of CASBA as well as in the capacity of Co-Chair of USGBC, Monterey Bay Branch.

What Would I Do Differently
By Joy Bennett

- Not use cement stucco. (the spiders just love it).
- Put in a root cellar (so not to run to the store more than necessary).
- Be sure I installed solar attic fans, initially, not later (they seem to really be a big help for us) Thanks, Keith! Our home is much cooler this summer. Yah!
- Be sure you plan for shade if you build in hot temps. Plant trees, etc., early-0n.
- Think, do you really need radiant heat in each room?
- Think about concrete floors as you get up in years (they are hard on the body) Oh, hard bodies are what we want, isn’t it?
- What about storage under those great s/b seats?
- If building in hot temps--be sure you design your main room in the proper place. (the correct orientation) ( I think this is very important).
- Be sure you have proper ventilation.
- Think twice about what material you use outside on the South side (if in high temps) You do not wish more heat to bounce into your home than need be.

That's it for this edition! Please send your ideas in to this column! Its to help everyone and I am not a professional! (just a happy straw bale home dweller!)