

CONSTITUTION OF THE VERANO RESIDENTS COUNCIL

**Ratified by the Residents of Verano Place
June, 2001**

PREAMBLE

The Verano Residents Council (VRC) is the democratically-selected body representing the residents of Verano Place. It is elected and budgeted to provide services, goods, and advocacy, to the benefit of Verano residents. In co-operation with the Verano Housing Office (VHO), it is the task of the Verano Residents Council to ensure the continued success of the Verano Place residential and community environment, by representing and responding to the interests of Verano Place residents.

This constitution is designed to facilitate the Verano Residents Council's mission, by establishing the rights, responsibilities, and procedures of that organization and its membership.

ARTICLE I

Name and Purpose

The Verano Residents Council subscribes to the regulations and policies of the University of California Irvine. The purpose of the Council is to foster, support, and encourage the creation and maintenance of a home environment for students and their families, in order to facilitate the highest levels of academic achievement, and to represent the interests and community needs of both student and non-student residents. The Council is established as the democratically- elected body in Verano to advocate the interests of Verano Place residents to the Verano Housing Office and the University administration.

The term "residents" shall, throughout this document, refer to all authorized Verano Place residents, including both students and their resident families, children and adults.

ARTICLE II

Voter Eligibility

The Verano Housing Office shall maintain a complete list of eligible voters for the purposes of community elections, as described in Articles IV and IX and Bylaws 1 and 2 in this document. All authorized Verano Place residents over 18 years of age are eligible voters.

ARTICLE III

Council Members

The term of office shall be from July 1 to the following June 30. Any authorized resident who has resided in Verano Place for six months prior to the day of the election may run for election to serve on the Council. The Council will have five members elected to serve one-year terms. No Council member may hold any other paid employment with Verano Place.

A Council member may be removed from office when a majority of the current Council members presents to the Verano management a petition calling for the recall of a Council member -- on the basis of demonstrable non-performance of Council duties (as outlined in Bylaw 3 of this document), or violation of the campus community regulations -- bearing valid signatures of ten percent of eligible voters. If a branch of the UCI Administration agrees that the petition is in keeping with extant university regulations, that member will be removed from office.

The subsequent vacancy in the Council will be filled according to Bylaw 2 and 6 of this document.

ARTICLE IV

Elections

A regular election will be held no later than the eighth week of Spring quarter, as prescribed in the Bylaws 1 and 2 and. Special elections will be held as prescribed in Bylaws 2 and 6. Elections shall be well publicized. Residents shall have no less than three business days in which to submit electoral ballots.

Elections shall be overseen by an Elections Commissioner, who will be responsible for the performance of a fair and unbiased election, according to the relevant articles and bylaws of this document. The Associated Graduate Students (AGS) of the University will be asked to appoint a Commissioner, to whom adequate remuneration for the position will be provided. Should no AGS-appointed Commissioner be available, a Commissioner agreed upon by the VRC and the Verano Housing Office will be appointed.

ARTICLE V

Freedom of Information

Any information generated or collected by the Council in its normal course of business, excluding only that information which is protected according to principle of resident confidentiality -- is public information belonging to the community and shall be released expeditiously as prescribed in the bylaws, upon written request. No fee beyond actual copying costs may be charged for information.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings

The Council will hold regular meetings, generally bi-weekly during the school year and monthly during the summer, to discuss Verano business at places and times to be announced. These meetings shall be open to all Verano residents, although a portion of the meeting may be closed, when resident confidentiality may be compromised. A quorum of three members is required to hold an official meeting.

As outlined in Bylaw 3, at least one Council member will meet regularly with representatives of the Verano Housing Office, in order to foster communication and advocate resident concerns. As well, the Council shall delegate one or more council members as appropriate, to serve on Verano committees. Council members will meet with other University officials as necessary.

ARTICLE VII

Voting

The Council shall decide their opinion on an issue by a simple majority vote providing a quorum of three members is present.

ARTICLE VIII

Ratification

This Constitution shall be ratified if approved by two-thirds majority of those voting in a regular or special election.

ARTICLE IX

Amendments

An amendment to the Articles or Bylaws of this constitution that is consistent with University policy shall be put on the next regular election ballot by the consent of a majority of Council members. Alternately, such an amendment shall be put on the next regular election ballot upon presentation of a petition bearing valid signatures of ten percent of registered voters. The amendment shall take effect if approved by a two-thirds majority of those voting.

Constitutional amendments and bylaws may also be subject to a maximum of one special election per term, in accordance with Bylaw 2 ("Special Elections") below.

Approximately three weeks prior to the vote on amendments, the Elections Commissioner will announce proposed amendments in the Gazette, and publicly post a neutral statement of the substance of proposed amendments. The Elections Commissioner will subsequently make copies of the proposed amendments available to residents, upon request.

Following publication, the Verano Residents Council will hold an informational meeting, publicly inviting questions about and responses to proposed amendments, in order to permit voters to make as informed a decision as reasonably possible.

ARTICLE X

Council Resolutions

Resolutions to determine the Verano Residents Council's 'position' on issues may be passed with majority support of Council members. Such resolutions shall be taken as advisory to Verano Management.

BYLAWS

1. Elections

Elections will be conducted by the Electoral Commissioner, in a manner commensurate with Article IV ("Elections") above and the procedures outlined here. The manner of balloting will be at the Election Commissioner's discretion, after seeking consultation from the Verano Residents Council, the Verano Housing Office, and interested community members.

The schedule for the conduct of the regular elections outlined in Article IV above is as follows:

Five weeks prior to the election, the Elections Commissioner shall place in the Verano Gazette an announcement of the elections, its balloting procedures, and a call for candidates, as well as a schedule of relevant dates throughout the election process. This schedule shall be updated as appropriate, and publicized in the Gazette throughout the weeks leading up to the election.

Four weeks prior to the election, the Elections Commissioner shall organize an informational briefing session for candidates, detailing the nature and duties of the Verano Residents Council, as well the rules and procedures for campaigning and election. Attendance at this meeting shall be mandatory for candidates who wish to be included on the ballot.

Three weeks prior to the election, any Verano resident eligible for election according to Article III above who has attended the aforementioned informational meeting may place her or his name on the ballot by filing an election statement, not exceeding 250 words to the Elections Commissioner, for assembly and publication.

At least one week prior to the distribution of electoral ballots, announcements of the time and place of balloting shall be announced in the Gazette and publicly posted. At the same time, a copy of the candidate statements shall be distributed to each eligible voter by direct distribution via Verano Place staff. Simultaneous to the distribution of candidate statements, the Elections Commissioner will also be asked to organize, advertise, and moderate a public all-candidates forum, for the purpose of fostering communication between residents and candidates.

Votes will be counted by a neutral body selected by the Elections Commissioner, to ensure a secret and impartial ballot.

For the week following the end of balloting, the Elections Commissioner will receive and respond to any challenges regarding nonperformance with election procedures, as outlined herein.

In the second week following the election, complete election results will be posted publicly. The membership of the newly-elected Council will be published in the Gazette.

2. Special elections

Should no individual be able to fill a Council vacancy per Bylaw 6 below, a special election shall be held to fill that seat. The election shall be conducted by an Elections Commissioner, who shall be responsible for conducting an election that is consistent with the stages and schedules outlined for General Elections. Special Elections shall be governed in such a manner as to provide every eligible resident with a fair and reasonable opportunity to stand for election and/or to vote.

Special elections may also be conducted in the case of emergency amendments to the constitution or by-laws, given the support of four of the five Council members, or a petition signed by ten percent of eligible resident voters.

3. Council Duties and Compensation

As a unit, the VRC is entrusted with the following responsibilities:

Organizing community projects

- Allocating over \$10,000 for community programs and projects
- Attending and/or conducting VRC and various project and planning meetings
- Informing the community about VRC activities, upcoming events, and items of community interest
- Assisting residents through advocacy and referral
- Promoting positive community involvement
- Working in an advisory capacity with Verano staff to represent the interests of Verano residents in:
 - a) Formulating and reviewing community policy
 - b) Developing the Verano Place budget
 - c) Participating in staff selection processes
 - d) Alerting Verano Place staff to community concerns and ideas

In order to maintain good standing as a member of the Verano Residents Council, each individual member must:

- Attend VRC meetings regularly, missing no more than twenty percent of the meetings over the course of the term of employment
- Serve as VRC chair for two months, performing the Chair duties outlined below
- Serve as VRC secretary for two months, performing the Secretary duties outlined below
- Organize or co-organize at least two VRC events throughout the course of the term, performing the Event Organizer duties outlined below
- Participate in at least one Verano Place committee throughout the course of the term, performing the Committee Member duties outlined below
- Check correspondence every two business days
- Attend an orientation session with the Verano Housing Office and Housing Assistants, at the beginning of the term
- Attend at least 85% of VRC events throughout the course of the term, unless specifically exempted by the Event Organizer(s)
- Distribute flyers throughout Verano Place, when needed

VRC Chair duties:

- Conducting semi-monthly VRC meetings in an orderly fashion
- Attending weekly VRC/VHO meetings, taking minutes
- Soliciting agenda items for both VRC and VRC/VHO meetings from VRC members
- Responding to or referring resident concerns or questions
- Reserving space for scheduled VRC meetings and/or forums

VRC Secretary duties:

- Recording minutes of VRC meetings
- Collecting minutes of VRC/VHO meetings from the VRC chair
- Distributing minutes of both meetings to VRC members, as well as to a publicly-accessible VRC folder
- Submitting VRC articles to the Verano Gazette, for publication

Committee Member duties:

- Attending all committee meetings, taking minutes
- Attending, upon request, all weekly VRC/VHO meetings at which information relevant to that committee will be discussed
- Reporting on committee proceedings to residents and VRC members, at VRC meetings

Event Organizer duties:

Overseeing the reservation of facilities and equipment for the event

- Filling out requisition forms needed for event purchases
- Ordering supplies needed for event
- Securing transport of VRC supplies and equipment to/from events
- Overseeing the advertising of the event, submitting proposed Gazette article to the VRC Secretary, and/or distributing flyers to VRC members for posting, where necessary
- Ensuring proper set-up before the event and proper clean-up afterwards
- Delegation of duties to VRC members during event
- Attending, upon request, VRC/VHO meetings relevant to that event
- Completing and submitting a program planning packed for review with the Verano Place Associate Director, Apartment Life.

In addition, the VRC will divide the following tasks among its members:

- Creation and maintenance of a VRC budget
- Obtaining and processing requisition forms
- Obtaining information relevant to the VRC budget from the Housing Office
- Researching and ordering VRC purchases of items for VRC and/or community use
- Editing and publishing VRC newsletters
- Creating posters and flyers, and distributing them among VRC members, and throughout Verano Place
- Maintaining a VRC E-mail list
- Drafting amendments to the VRC constitution
- Compiling and publishing a quarterly report of VRC activities
- Storing VRC equipment

Compensation:

Compensation for council members is a monthly stipend, which is determined by the Verano Housing Office budget.

4. Continuity

Outgoing Council members shall assist newly elected members by briefing them on ongoing projects and activities, and by working with the Verano Housing Office to co-organize an orientation program.

5. Attendance

An attendance record of Council members and visitors present at meetings shall be incorporated within meeting minutes by the designated Council secretary, and shall therefore be made public on a monthly basis through a designated folder.

6. Council Vacancies

If a Council member resigns or moves out of Verano Place, the next highest placing eligible candidate in the most recent regular election still wishing to serve on the Council shall be appointed to the vacancy. Should no eligible and willing candidates remain, a special election shall be conducted according to Bylaw 2 ("Special Elections") above.

7. Length of Service

Verano residents are allowed to serve on the Council for no more than three consecutive years after which they must take a one-year break before running for re-election.