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Issue 488 • February 5 - February 11, 2009

City Council Countdown Who are the 11 candidates, really?



cover story • pages 8 & 9



letters & email

“Permit Parent Standoff” [Issue 485]

Much as we all wish for times gone by, it is becoming apparent that certain members of the BH School Board need to deal with the new realities of school finance. Brian Goldberg’s detailed analysis of the school budget reveals just what the student permits are costing those of us who are footing the bill.

Times are a-changing, and Brian is among the few who understand - and are preparing for - the times ahead. He deserves our support of his positions...and that includes the three ladies on the school board who are living in the past and are in denial of what’s what these days.

Highly recommend my fellow residents contact Brian at brian@goldberg4bhusd.com

for a copy of his report and his very insightful newsletter.

*Betsy Myers
Beverly Hills*

“Local Businesses React to Measure P” [Issue 487]

I recently received in the mail an

“Impartial Analysis of Measure P” which was prepared by the City of Beverly Hills and paid for with tax payer’s money.

My dictionary defines “impartial”... “Favoring no one side or party more than another; without prejudice or bias; fair; just.”

Do you ever get the feeling that there is no end to the city’s constant need for “more money to pay the police firemen and for the

schools.”

Nationally, we are not in a recession... we are in a depression... that includes businesses in the City of Beverly Hills. Now is the worse possible time to make “impartial tax increases on the city’s businesses.”

*Herbert L. Wallerstein
Beverly Hills*

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NEW LA'S FIRST DAY WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

Beverly High class of 1990 grads Matt Albert and Carolyn Yashari Becher helped inaugurate The New Los Angeles Charter School (New L.A.), a middle school that can house up to 225 students inside the Oasis Temple on Wilshire, last week. Albert and Becher hold executive positions at the school.

Pictured (from left to right): New L.A. Board members Andrea Solomon, Bruce Carlin, Lindsay Rachelefsky, Paz Oliverez, Executive Director Matt Albert, Susan Nickerson, Joey Miller, President Carolyn Yashari Becher, Eugenia Mora-Flores, Zoe Corwin.

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briefs



Dr. Willie Brien

BHEA endorses Brien, Maas, Mirisch

The Beverly Hills Education Association, the BHUSD's teachers' union, voted to endorse City Council candidates former Board of Education member Dr. Willie Brien, former Board member Virginia Maas and John Mirisch on Monday.

"Brien, Maas and Mirisch offer Beverly Hills voter a formidable mix of experience on education issues, dedication to our schools, desire to challenge the status quo, and resolve to see their goals through to fruition," reads a prepared statement from the organization.



John Mirisch



Virginia Maas

Nine of the 11 candidates sought the BHEA's endorsements; Abraham Ross and Brent Lilley did not seek their backing. The nine candidates submitted written questionnaires and conducted in-person open interviews with BHEA led by President Chris Bushee, Vice President Mark Frenn and Secretary Kate Biggs.

Bushee said the candidates were interviewed on the topics of communication between the district and city, labor relations between management and non-management employees, approach to the local press, and

views on private schools and competition.

"We worked with [Brien and Maas] on the school board. They naturally come into the process with experience on the issues. In his interview, [it was clear] John Mirisch is very well versed on education in our community," said Bushee.

The fact that Mirisch did not support Measure E, the \$334 million general obligation fund for seismic and security upgrades at the BHUSD that was approved by voters in November, did not deter BHEA from endorsing him.

"Our own association did not take a position on the measure," said Bushee, who personally endorsed the measure. "We were not willing to put our faith in the district with regard to a project like Measure E until our own relationship with management is improved."

This is the first time that the BHEA has ever endorsed any City Council candidates. BHEA became active in local politics after an eight-year hiatus in the November 2007 Board of Education election, in which they endorsed Steven Fenton and Brian Goldberg.

"That's great to have the support of the teachers. They are absolutely one of the most important pillars of our community," said Mirisch, a 1981 Beverly High graduate whose son will be Horace Mann class of 2019. "We believe in public education. Our schools can be a lighthouse district in terms of how good public education can be."

Incumbent candidates Mayor Barry Brucker and Councilmember Linda Briskman were part of the team that monetarily increased the Joint Powers Agreement between the city and district to a record high last year. It's an accomplishment both candidates believe show their support for the local schools.

"All of the candidates support the JPA and we were very pleased to hear that," said Bushee. But that wasn't the deciding factor for

BHEA members, he said. "We feel confident that we picked, among a field of several strong candidates, the three most aligned with our interest."

Brien and Maas did not return phone calls by press time.

NHOA, Muni League give new spin to Council race's final forum

In a room packed with almost 200 people, moderator former Mayor Robert K. Tanenbaum, president of the North Homeowners Association, and moderator Thomas White of the Municipal League brought out each of the 11 City Council aspirants individually to question them on the issues at the third candidates forum last week at City Hall.

Unlike the other candidates forums that organized hopefuls side-by-side at a long table for a one-by-one question and answer session, the last forum provided each candidate 13 minutes with the two moderators. It provided a chance to delve into each candidate's positions on city issues while also preventing mimicry.

"We're the Will Smith of cities, but we're getting deals like we're Strother Martin," said candidate John Mirisch, an IMAX film executive, about his thoughts on improving development in Beverly Hills.

Mirisch finished to a standing ovation of about a dozen people.

Mirisch and many other candidates, like Virginia Maas, Richard Stone and Nili Nathan, are running on anti-development platforms, arguing for less or no "spot-zoning" in the city.

In addition to development issues, the suddenly controversial Measure P was a consis-

tent topic for the night.

Measure P, approved unanimously by the five-member City Council on Dec. 2, would modify business taxes for two classes of professionals from a flat-rate to a gross receipt model, enact a 10 percent private parking structure tax, and charge a gross receipt tax on the city's oil extraction.

The ballot proposition would likely reduce the amount of taxes a professional making \$100,000 paid to the city each year but increase taxes paid by multi-million dollar corporations, according to City CFO Scott Miller. But opponents say that during these hard economic times increasing taxes on anyone, including local parking structures, is simply unacceptable and would run businesses out of Beverly Hills.

All 11 candidates opposed Measure P at Thursday's forum.

Recordings of all three candidates forums are available for viewing at beverlyhills.org. The Council election is March 3.

And the Apple Awardees are...

The Beverly Hills Education Foundation (BHEF), an independent non-profit fundraising organization for the BHUSD, has announced some of its 2009 winners for the annual Apple Awards.

This year's recipients include Hawthorne teacher Bob Bailey, Beverly High math and science teacher Marla Weiss, Beverly High AP European history teacher Pete Van Rossum, Horace Mann third-grade teacher Rachel Pearce and El Rodeo vocal teacher Will Aardappel.

Other winners will be announced soon, according to BHEF CEO Dev Hankin, who

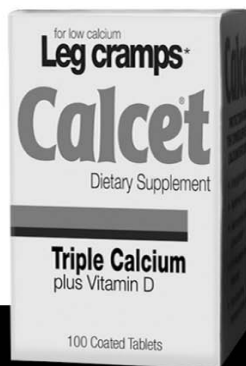
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briefs cont. from page 3
will present all the award recipients at an upcoming Board of Education meeting.



Dr. Gwen Gross

Checking in with (the other) Supt. Gross

The Beverly Hills Unified School District (BHUSD) has taken an inquisitive eye to the Irvine Unified School District (IUSD) as it also inches closer to entering Basic Aid, a valuable status through which school districts are funded by local property taxes instead of California's per-pupil monies.

IUSD's superintendent Dr. Gwen Gross, last interviewed in Issue 328, is a former superintendent of the BHUSD. Her husband, Dr. Jerry Gross, is the current interim superintendent for the Beverly Hills schools.

Like the BHUSD, Irvine's school district is very close to becoming Basic Aid. When it does, it will be the largest school district in Southern California to enter the coveted status.

"It certainly is advantageous [for us]," said BHUSD Board member Brian Goldberg in an interview. "We will be able to learn from Irvine."

Irvine's assessed property value increased by 4 percent last year, escalating the amount of property taxes collected to exceed the state's current revenue limit amount provided

to the district, the base requirement to become Basic Aid. But until the state budget is finalized, the district won't know its official status. Gross could not confirm.

IUSD was facing budget cuts of around \$26.5 million due to the California's budget deficit and cuts to educational funding, according to Gross. If it becomes a Basic Aid district, Irvine may not have to make those monetary sacrifices.

But Gwen Gross said her district is financially preparing for whatever may lie ahead.

"You have to think of the future, not the past. You have to think about going forward for viability," said Gwen Gross. "This is the biggest financial crisis our country's faced... and you have to secure the district for the future."

Beverly Hills assessed valuations increased by 12 percent in 2007, pushing the BHUSD toward Basic Aid although not as closely as IUSD. BHUSD consultants project the district to enter Basic Aid in approximately 2011. Irvine could enter as soon as this year.

The BHUSD has been struggling with what to do with the approximately 600 opportunity permit students currently in the 5,200-student district. Once in Basic Aid, the BHUSD will no longer receive money from the state per pupil to offset the costs associated each student.

Irvine won't face that problem. Due to space constraints, IUSD has little to no permit students in the 27,000-student district. According to Gwen Gross, most districts that become Basic Aid do not allow permit students to attend.

Former BHUSD superintendent Jeff Hubbard (2003-06) currently runs the adjacent Newport-Mesa USD, which is slightly smaller



Walk to School Wednesdays

El Rodeo parents Sandra Walder (far left) and office manager Susie Wallach (left center) join Mayor Barry Brucker (right center) and Councilmember Linda Briskman (far right) for Walk to School Wednesday, an effort to encourage students and parents to walk to school to enhance the health of kids, improve air quality and the environment, and create safer routes for walking and cycling.

than Irvine at 22,000 students. Gross and Hubbard combined oversee approximately 49,000 students, which is more students than the total number who have ever graduated from Beverly High in the history of the school.

BHUSD could face budget cuts

The Beverly Hills Unified School District officials are faced with slashing up to \$3.7 million from the budget over the next three years in the face of potential cuts from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's office.

"We have a lean budget. We sat here last year and cut things down to the bone," said Board of Education member Myra Demeter at

a budget study session on Tuesday aimed at identifying ways to reduce costs even further.

The Board gave direction to cut from the General Fund expenses such as \$300,000 for computer equipment replacement, \$290,000 to set up wireless computer access, \$157,000 for turf replacement, and \$205,000 in deferred maintenance, recommended by Assistant Superintendent Business Services Cheryl Plotkin at a Board of Education budget session on Tuesday night. Those cuts would save the district nearly \$2 million over the next three years, Plotkin says.


The projects themselves will not be cut. The costs associated with wireless comput-

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Myra Lurie ~ Vice President, BH School Board
Myra Demeter, Ph.D. ~ Member, BH School Board
Steven Fenton ~ Member, BH School Board
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BHHS Girls' Basketball Team Ends Six-Game Losing Streak to Santa Monica

Norman boys' soccer team plays 'best game of season.'
By Steven Herbert

Beverly High's 59-51 victory over Santa Monica in an Ocean League girls' basketball game at the Swim-Gym Jan. 21 was almost a mirror image of its 45-30 loss to the Vikings in the championship game of the BHHS Winter Classic Dec. 20.

In the first meeting between the two teams, Morgan Mason, the Normans' leading scorer for the season was held to one point, missing all nine of her shots as she was constantly double-teamed. Sophie Payson, their second-leading scorer, was scoreless, missing all six of her shots.

In the rematch, Payson scored 17 points and Mason 15, as Beverly Hills ended a six-game losing streak against Santa Monica, defeating the Vikings for the first time since Jan. 18, 2006.

"We finally played [against Santa Monica] the way we normally play against everybody else," Normans coach John Braddell said. "I just think it was a mental block against Santa Monica. We just had it in our heads that we couldn't beat them and we finally did."

In the first game, the Vikings "face guard-ed" Payson, Braddell said. In the second game, "we put some offensive stuff in for Sophie," ran her "through some screens which opened her up," Braddell said.

Payson took 18 3-point shots and made four and one of her two 2-point shots.

Mason made four of 12 shots and seven of 13 free throws.

Beverly Hills (15-6, 2-1 in league play) also

benefited as "Natalie Moy made herself an offensive option," Braddell said.

Santa Monica had left Moy open in the first game to double-team Mason. In the second game, Moy scored five points, making a 3-point basket in the first quarter and a two-point basket in the third.

The Normans outscored the Vikings 11-9 in the first quarter and increased their lead to 26-22 at halftime by outscoring Santa Monica, 15-13 in the second quarter as Payson made two 3-point baskets and Mason scored four points.

Beverly Hills outscored the Vikings, 16-11, in the third quarter, with Mason scoring six points and Payson making a 3-point basket.

The Normans led 42-33 entering the fourth quarter. Beverly Hills was outscored 18-17 over the final eight minutes, but was able to withstand Santa Monica's comeback attempt as Payson made a 3-point basket and three of four free throws, while Mason made five of eight free throws and Jovanna Young four of six.

"I thought we played extremely well," Braddell said. "We executed our game plan. The kids worked very hard defensively. We worked real hard on attacking the boards on both ends of the floor."

The Normans had 50 rebounds – 28 defensive and 22 offensive. Young had 13 rebounds and Mason 12.

Young added 12 points, Miranda Abdul-Monsour eight and Chelsea Austin two.

The Vikings were ranked second in the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association Southern Section Division I-A poll released Monday, while the Normans were ranked third in the Division II-A poll.

Beverly Hills 57, Hawthorne 12

The Normans outscored the Cougars, 23-0, in the first quarter of an Ocean League game at the Swim-Gym Jan. 16 as Mason scored 11 of her game-high 15 points.

Beverly Hills outscored Hawthorne, 19-5, in the second quarter, taking a 42-5 halftime lead as Austin scored eight of her 12 points and Payson made a 3-point basket.

The Normans outscored the Cougars, 10-5, in the third quarter, increasing their lead to 52-8, as Jayna Abdul-Monsour scored six of her 10 points.

Beverly Hills outscored Hawthorne, 5-4, in the fourth quarter with Kiarra Brown scoring four points for the Normans.

Brown added six points, Miranda Abdul-Monsour, Jayna Abdul-Monsour's twin sister, four, Payson three, Ariella Hassid, Lauren Kahn and Young two each and Sara Jabbari one for the Normans.

Beverly Hills 55, Redondo 40

The Normans trailed 27-24 at halftime, but took control of the Santa Monica Westside Challenge game with 8-0 and 7-0 runs in the third quarter Jan. 17 at Santa Monica High School.

Mason scored six points during an 8-0 run in a 93-second span as Beverly Hills took a 32-29 lead.

Riki Murakami ended that run by making two free throws, but the Normans began a 7-0

run 57 seconds later on Young's lay-up. Payson and Mason also made baskets during the run, which ended when Mason made the second of two free throws, giving Beverly Hills a 39-31 lead.

The Normans ended the third quarter with a 42-35 lead and opened the fourth quarter by outscoring the Sea Hawks, 10-2. Payson began the run with a 3-point basket and ended it with another 3-point basket and a fast-break lay-up.

Payson scored the final points of the game on a 3-point basket, her fourth of the game.

Beverly Hills was outscored 15-14 in the first quarter and 12-10 in the second.

"I thought we came out a little lethargic," Braddell said.

In the first half, "we had opportunities," but fumbled passes and missed lay-ups, Braddell said.


In the second half, the Normans "played much better" defensively, Braddell said.

"Five girls who were on the floor played defense," Braddell said. "We didn't have breakdowns on the weak side."

Payson scored a game-high 16 points. Miranda Abdul-Monsour added 15, with six in the first quarter, four in the second and a 3-point basket in the third. Mason scored 14, nine in the third quarter.

Young had five points and 12 rebounds, Moy three points and seven assists and Austin two points.


Steven Herbert has covered Beverly High sports for the Beverly Hills Weekly since 1999. He welcomes feedback and suggestions. He can be reached by e-mail at StvHerbert@aol.com, by telephone at (310) 275-7943 or by fax at (310) 273-4519.



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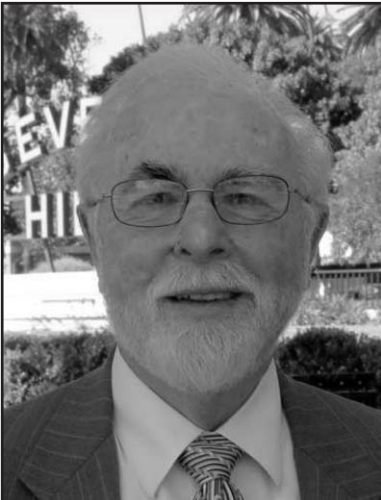


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from the hills of beverly



Strange But True Council Action

Notes on people and local hero returns
By Rudy Cole

This may not be the most bizarre action by any city council in our history, but it comes very close: After voting unanimously to place the tax increase and reform measure on the March 3 ballot, the council has now decided to oppose Measure P!

Measure P was not put on the ballot because the council thought it would be wise to obtain voter approval, and it is not because some citizen group demanded a "vote by the people," this is up for a vote because state law requires an election for almost every kind of tax increase.

In other words, by voting to put Measure P on the ballot, the council made a very clear decision: They agreed, by a five to zip vote, that the city needed the funds Measure P would provide.

Of course, since that vote the economy has tanked, and who wants to support a tax increase during a major recession? But the economy was already going south on December 2, 2008, when "P" was approved for an election vote.

Now, fingers are being pointed all over city hall on who gave birth to this fatherless child, but "P" would never have gone forward without the backing of the council.

The only possible parallel would be a candidate for office announcing just before the election that he too was voting for his or her opponent.

In fact, for months the city had been considering a much larger package of tax increases including some that could have directly impacted residents and property owners. None of these survived the discussion stage.

It's time for some reality checks. First, and most important, the city could soon face a deficit approaching \$20 million - this from City Treasurer **Eliot Finkel**, who is not prone to wild speculations. Measure P will not solve all of our financial woes, but it a step in the right direction.

Is this a tax on consumers or on retailers? No, not even close. Most businesses in our city will either pay the same taxes and some may even pay less. There are NO increases in

the property tax or any other that directly impact residents.

The most significant change is in how professionals such as doctors and lawyers are taxed and even here the change is most likely to be borne by docs with high volume revenues such as plastic surgeons and dental clinics.

Why? Because the professions have been taxed on numbers of employees instead of gross revenue. This measure, despite all the efforts to make it sound like a tax on consumers and business, is really a reform that has long been needed and is fair.

Are there weaknesses in Measure P? Of course, but there is a very simple remedy: Even if approved, the city does not need to act to collect the taxes!

This allows, but does not mandate, any tax.

One the council could and would shelve is a tax on private parking lot's users. This could impact shoppers and other visitors and probably should not have been part of the tax package. It can, according to our city attorney, be avoided even if "P" passes. Again, even if collected, it would still be lower than private parking lot taxes in Los Angeles. The council could also delay implementation of all the increases if other revenues don't continue declining or the economy doesn't improve, whichever comes first.

For residents, despite all the sensational scares you may hear, this is an increase in taxes that will come from one segment of the

business community that will be made to pay for services both residents and businesses enjoy: A safe city with first rate municipal services.

Even if P passes there are likely to be serious cuts in services, including reductions of city staff. These are real people with real families and they have served our city well. Their job loss is not only a personal tragedy, but one that will be felt by both residents and businesses.

Another reality check: Every single proposal in Measure P is still lower than that imposed by our neighbors in Los Angeles and even West Hollywood.

With a unanimous vote of opposition by the board of the Chamber of Commerce and a reversal by the whole city council, P has little chance of winning unless residents understand how much this benefits them.

But if you want the finest in police and fire protection, support the school's joint powers agreement and insist on a maintenance of the best in all city services, reject the voices of doom and gloom and vote Yes on P.

It is true that every time we are asked to vote for a new project, we are told this is for our police, fire and schools and mostly that is true. But this time the crisis is even more real, more immediate.

As for the city council election, it is never wise to make decisions on any one issue, including Measure P. But for those who insist they are pro-resident, including leaders of homeowner associations and anti-growth activists, it would indeed be ingenuous for them to join the fight against P.

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historic Catholic church, Good Shepherd and its school on South Linden Drive. According to some members, the archdiocese will soon force the retirement of the current pastor, Rev. **Colm O’Ryan**.

However, most of our sources say that Father O’Ryan has long wanted to retire and will do so voluntarily this June. He will occupy a residence on the Beverly Hills church property.

Apparently, some church members were displeased by the pastor’s decision not to display an American flag inside the church. Some claim that this is not done because the pastor is a “pacifist” and others because he supports a separation of church and state. In any case, the same policy is followed by many other Catholic churches.

The real problem of both the church and the school is reduction in members and students. Again, according to our sources, Good Shepherd church will be merged with another west Los Angeles church, both served by one pastor.

The schools will also be joined with Beverly Hills reducing grades offered.

Interestingly, although Father O’Ryan had some member issues from those who found him either “too liberal” or “too conservative,” most members we contacted had nothing but praise for his work here.

Note: Efforts to obtain an official comment on the likely changes were not successful, but our sources are reliable and the mergers and retirement are likely to come soon. Personally, although not a member, I always found O’Ryan very dedicated to his church and his community.

One of the best social events each year is the Peninsula’s celebration of the Chinese New Year – this time for the “Year of the Ox.” Saw many civic, government and professional leaders at the party, including a very hearty **March Schwartz**, former publisher of the Beverly Hills Courier, and his wife, **Linda**.

Managing Director **Offer Nissenbaum** was his usual gracious persona as he welcomed guests to what really was a delightful event. They could not have known that I too was born during a Year of the Ox which could explain my stubborn if very lonely support for Measure P.

Down the street, The Montage is a destination too for good times. This week a small birthday party was held in the Parq restaurant for **Dalia Minoo** with local and out of town guests that included **Jilla Abrams, Behnaz Karlin, Shirley Zaman** and **Guitty Kadaz**. Why do they rate a mention? They announced they were faithful readers of The Weekly.

At another table, Councilmember **Linda Briskman** and City Manager **Rod Wood** told us they were preparing for a critical visit to Washington to make sure Beverly Hills is included in all city funding proposals from the new administration. Mayor **Barry Brucker** also recently visited Washington for the inaugural celebration and a meeting of the League of Cities.

Speaking of Mayor Brucker, probably still time to join the party honoring Barry and wife **Sue**, president of Temple Emanuel, as they are recognized by the Temple at the Purim Ball on

Feb. 11. (Call (310) 288-3737 x 242 for info.)

There is one way you can help our economy: Make sure you eat and shop in our city and also urge out of town guests to stay at our hotels.

There is something very special about our local hospitality industry: The pride the staffs all seem to have in their work and their hotel. The four I always find most impressive are the Beverly Hilton, the Peninsula, the Beverly Wilshire and now the Montage Beverly Hills.

The others are good, but don’t seem to rise to the level of these four.

Parking lot workers are the same: The Beverly Wilshire, the Montage and the Peninsula guys are totally friendly and, more important, actually retrieve your vehicles before you feel the need to rent a room for the night.

All have good wait staffs, but the most friendly, attentive and helpful, as a group, are the men and women at the Hilton. I doubt that few of us could maintain the good spirits they demonstrate to patrons all day, every day.

Now, frequent readers know that my favorite restaurant captain is the ever helpful and knowledgeable **Michael** at the Peninsula. But he now has a rival, **Kelly** at the Montage’s Muse. This restaurant server knows her menu, responds quickly to patron questions and has a comfort level diners soon appreciate. Ask for her table, she will be easy to spot – the tallest, and unless **Josette** or **Sooky** are there, the most attractive woman in the room.

LOCAL HERO IS BACK, WITH YOUR HELP. Once again, we will try to honor some person in our community who does something special or unique.

The “heroics” can be public service or just being a good citizen who gives back to the city, and your suggestions are most welcome.

This week the nod goes to the venerable and 97 year old **Ernest Ach**, a former leading member of our school board whose late wife, **Fran**, was a long-time civic leader and city commissioner.

Ernie Ach now gives his time, among other activities, as a docent of our great Friends of the Library book store inside our city library. It is a well organized venue with a good variety of fiction, non-fiction, biographies and even first run videos and cds, all at top bargain prices.

Ernie works the front desk with his always present good cheer and organizational skills. His memory is terrific, one I envy. In the interests of full disclosure, and because he reminded me, I did manage his last, successful campaign for school board. He never made me regret the effort.

So, do yourself and your reading needs a favor. Visit the Friend’s book store and say hello to a city treasure: Ernest Ach.

Rudy Cole served for eight years as a member and chair of the city’s Recreation & Parks Commission. He was also President of the Greystone Foundation and served on three other city committees. Rudy can be reached at: Rudy@bhweekly.com.

briefs cont. from page 4

er access, turf replacement and deferred maintenance can be covered by funds from the \$334 million Measure E bond, approved in November. Even the labor hours by district staff can be paid with bond funds, according to Plotkin.

Several other ways to save district money were discussed but the Board will not make any final decisions until the second interim budget is presented to them within the next few weeks. The Board also hopes to receive a finalized state budget, indicating the amount of funding schools will receive, as soon as today.

“This is going to be a very open process in trying to come up with ways to [cut costs],” said Plotkin in an interview.

Among the solutions discussed by the Board to address the budget problem was increasing classroom sizes from 20 to 25 students.

Demeter said she had research that showed there was no correlation between class size

and student achievement.

However, interim Superintendent Jerry Gross pointed to a University of Tennessee study that proved otherwise. When Beverly Hills Education Association president Chris Bushee asked Demeter for copies or samples of her research, Demeter was unable to provide any evidence, arguing that she did not save all of her research but that Bushee was welcome to conduct “a Google search” for himself.

The implications of increasing the class size by 5 students “are fairly severe,” said Gross. “For every four classes, you eliminate a teacher.”

Board member Brian Goldberg suggested the Board evaluate the costs of the three assistant superintendents. Cutting one assistant superintendent could save the district about \$120,000 annually; that could translate into two teachers’ salaries. Similar school districts like San Marino and La Canada reduced the number of assistant superintendents in their district offices.

Of the \$3 million cut in last year’s budget, approximately \$1.9 million was reinstated this year after the Board deemed it unnecessary to make so many cuts. Costs for things such as catering and travel were virtually eliminated in last year’s budget session.

AARP offers free tax help

The American Association of Retired Persons (A.A.R.P.) in cooperation with the IRS will sponsor a free Tax-Aide service for all middle and low income taxpayers, with special attention to those 60 years and older. The program begins Feb. 4 and continues through April 10. Sessions will be held each Wednesday and Friday afternoon from 1- 4 p.m. at Roxbury Park Community Center, located at 471 S. Roxbury Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212. Appointments are required and will be made on a first-come first-serve basis. So don’t be left-out – reserve your spot today.

Administered by IRS trained and certified volunteer tax counselors, the Tax-Aide program will provide confidential assistance in

preparing Federal and State tax forms, and answers to your tax questions.

To participate in this program, the following information & documents MUST be brought to your appointment: Proof of identity, Copies of your 2007 income tax returns, Social security numbers or individual tax identification numbers for all persons listed on the tax return, W2s, 1098, and 1099 forms from banks, savings & loans, pension funds, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and any other evidence of income, Care provider’s identification number, Banking information (voided checks and/or savings deposit slips) for refund deposits.

For additional information, or to make an appointment, call (310)285-6840. The City of Beverly Hills Community Services Department will assist in the dissemination of information regarding income tax preparation, but will in no way be responsible for the accuracy of the information provided in the program.

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coverstory

CITY COUNCIL COUNTDOWN

Who are the 11 candidates, really?

By Jacquelyn Ryan

With a five-member Council, the candidates voted into the three available City Council seats on March 3 have the potential to function as the majority in upcoming decisions.

With these big decisions looming over the voters' heads, we here at Beverly Hills Weekly began wondering, who are these candidates, really?

Candidates appear in random order:



William [Willie] Brien, M.D.

Currently chief of staff at Cedars Sinai, Dr. Willie Brien is operating the most organized and well-funded campaign of the non-incumbents running for City Council, thanks in part to seasoned campaign manager Judie Fenton.

Brien, 50, has been a figure in the Beverly Hills community for years. Brien was a Parks and Recreation Commissioner from 1998 to 2000. He served on the BHUSD Board of Education from 1999 to 2003, during which time he served with fellow candidates Barry Brucker (1997-2005) and Virginia Maas (1995-2003). Brien, who took his seat the year candidate Richard Stone (1991-1999) retired from the Board, was elected as president immediately upon joining the Board.

As a Board member, Brien helped to dissect the district finances line-by-line and create a balanced budget with no loss of funding to the classrooms. He also maintained amicable tones in meetings, a change from the infighting between previous Board members.

Three of Brien's children graduated from Hawthorne and Beverly High, with his youngest daughter Ashley currently attending Marlborough School, where she is on the equestrian team.

Brien's family tree has yielded other leaders. He is the grandson of three-time former governor of California and Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren, whose legendary decisions included *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed segregation in public schools, among others.

Brien hasn't taken a public stance on Measure H, the Beverly Hilton's plan to add condominium buildings and a Waldorf=Astoria hotel to its property, but has said that as a Councilmember he would have "fought for a better project."

"Let me be clear, I am opposed to Measure P," said Brien, who originally considered supporting the measure, at last Thursday's candidate forum. Measure P would modify several tax models in the city. "The question is, should [the measure] have ever been on the ballot itself?"

Many believe that if elected Brien would hold similar politics and positions to outgoing Vice Mayor Frank Fenton.

Brien's campaign contributors include former Mayor Allan Alexander, Geary's CEO Tom Blumenthal, Lili and Jon Bosse, Les Bronte, Lya Cordova-Latta, Planning Commissioner Craig Corman, Board of Education vice

president Myra Lurie, Playboy executive vice president Richard Rosenzweig, former Board of Education member Alissa Roston, former Mayor Maxwell Salter, BentleyForbes Chairperson C. Fredrick Wehba, and former Board of Education member Herbert Young. Brien has been endorsed by the Beverly Hills Education Association (BHEA), the BHUSD's teachers' union.



Linda Briskman

When Linda Briskman announced last year she would not be seeking reelection for her third term on Council, an almost 200-member collective of residents bought ads in the two local newspapers beseeching her to run for office once more.

If elected, Briskman will become mayor for the second time in her Council career, due to her seniority. Her first term as mayor was in 2005. If Briskman is not elected, Nancy Krasne would have seniority.

Briskman, 60, has been an active supporter of bringing more public transportation to Beverly Hills as a member of the Westside Cities Council of Governments and co-chair of its Transportation Committee. She is a vocal supporter of the "Subway to the Sea," the proposed underground subway to Santa Monica via Wilshire Boulevard with stops in Beverly Hills.

Briskman was chair of the Planning (1996-2001), Traffic and Parking (1992-1996) and Solicitations Advisory from (1990 - 1992) commissions before joining the Council. She was president of The Maple Counseling Center in 1999 and 2000. She was also president of the Beverly Hills Education Foundation, an independent nonprofit that raises funds for the BHUSD.

Both of Briskman's children graduated from Beverly High.

"I'm an advocate for the City," Briskman has said on several occasions, and has spent years as the legislative liaison for Beverly Hills corresponding with state and federal government officials on issues in Beverly Hills. Briskman says one of her "most meaningful accomplishments was establishing Beverly Hills as a powerful partner in the legislative process in Washington, D.C. and Sacramento." She worked to create relationships with state and national representatives that have "translated into tangible accomplishments for the City of Beverly Hills" including securing over \$1 million in state and federal funds for safety and security measures in the city.

Briskman has been criticized by anti-development proponents who believe she too often allows "spot-zoning" in the city. Briskman voted yes as a Councilmember for the controversial Beverly Hilton Revitalization Project and for the Montage. But Briskman says that she's ready to say no as often as she's ready to say yes. Briskman voted no on several projects, including Gelsons, Sav-on, and others.

Briskman voted as a Councilmember to place Measure P

on the March ballot but has said she does not support it, in part, because "the city has not made its case."

Briskman's endorsers include from Rep. Henry Waxman, former Mayor Donna Ellman Garber, Design Review Commissioner Hamid Gabbay, Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Sen. Fran Pavley, Assembly member Michael Feuer, attorney Michael Karlin, Russ Levi, Councilmember Jimmy Delshad, and Vice Mayor Frank Fenton.



Virginia Maas

Virginia Maas, 61, is known for her fundraising work in the Jewish community, at Temple Beth Am and University of Judaism.

In her time on the Board of Education from 1995 to 2003, Maas, and candidate Richard Stone, was criticized for voting against fellow Board member Gerald Lunn, Jr., to take his seniority traditional place as president of the Board. That vote effectively placed candidate then-freshman Board member Willie Brien as president of the Board of Education during the first year of his first term. Brucker voted for Lunn but withheld his vote for Maas as vice president, denying Maas her earned place in the hierarchy.

At last Thursday's candidates forum, Maas said she regretted withholding her vote from Lunn and would not make the same decision today.

Maas is also a former El Rodeo PTA president.

Maas says she has attended the majority of City Council and Planning Commission meetings over the last year to prepare herself to "address the important issues" facing Beverly Hills.

Among those important issues, Maas says she is concerned about overdevelopment in the city and that she voted no on Measure H.

She opposes Measure P.

Maas has received contributions from Barton Tanenbaum, Janis Black Warner, Arnold Rosenstein, and Burton Levinson. Maas has been endorsed by the BHEA.



Barry Brucker

Current mayor Barry Brucker, 51, has the most cash-on-hand of all 11 candidates, with over \$21,000 as of the most recent campaign statement filing on Jan. 17.

Brucker was elected to the Board of Education by a landslide with the first write-in victory in California in 15 years. He received more than 1,550 write-in votes in 1997, after declaring his candidacy only a month before the election. Clearly, the man knows how to run a campaign.

During his time on the Board of Education, Brucker often

had strong clashes with fellow Board members now-candidates Virginia Maas and Richard Stone, who were often allies on the issues. Though all three candidates seem to have mellowed out in the last several years, the combination of their personalities on a governing board might lead to animosity again.

Brucker was a key supporter and mentor for both current Board vice president Myra Lurie and current Board president Nooshin Meshkaty to join the Board of Education.

Brucker is a Beverly High graduate ('75). Both of his children graduated from Beverly Hills schools.

In his time in office, Brucker has made environmental issues his cause, establishing the city's Green Team and working to enact stricter "green" commercial and residential building codes.

Brucker voted against the Beverly Hilton Revitalization Plan when it came to the Council in 2008 and says he voted against Measure H on the November ballot. By contrast, Brucker voted to place upcoming Measure P on the March ballot when it came to the Council last December but has taken a public stance against Measure P in the last few weeks.

Brucker's endorsers include Lili and Jon Bosse, style maven Fred Hayman, City National Bank chair Bram Goldsmith, Planning Commissioner Noah Furie, Board of Education vice president Myra Lurie, Lya Cordova-Latta, Richard Rosenzweig, Warren Roston, and Sherry & Yoel Neman.



Fran Cohen

Fran Cohen is the current chair for the city's Architectural Commission. Profiled in Issue 469, Cohen has decades of experience in architecture and urban planning.

Originally from Tehran, Cohen, 48, has a master's degree in architecture from Massachusetts

Institute of Technology, Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. She also received master's in management from Purdue University.

Cohen and her family lived in Indiana, where her husband was a professor at Purdue University, until late 2001 when she and her children moved to Beverly Hills. Her children attended Beverly Hills Unified for a few years before graduating from Harvard-Westlake.

She voted against Measure H because "I wasn't sure if our infrastructure could support such a project." She is opposed to Measure P because "I believe it should have been three different categories: a business tax, parking tax and oil tax, not a lump sum."

Cohen believes that her experience in urban planning and architecture will be a critical asset as the city analyzes and finalizes the new General Plan. She notes that no other Councilmember brings a background in city development to the table.

Cohen also wants to create an Economic Commission to "do case study and analyze the situation for the best interest of the city."

Cohen has received contributions from fellow commissioner Allen Rennett and Design Review Commissioner Susan Strauss. She says she has not sought endorsements.



John Mirisch

Of the challengers, IMAX film executive John Mirisch inherited much of the "No on H" support base. He was the only candidate to receive a partial standing ovation at the most recent candidates forum at City Hall last week.

Mirisch, 45, is running on an anti-development platform and was a very active opponent of the

Measure H referendum. He was a signatory on the opposi-

tion's ballot statement for the measure, arguing, "It's just too big."

"I absolutely think three-stories and 45-feet [for zoning restrictions] is a great recipe for bringing out what makes the city so special. I'm not saying there can't be exceptions but the spot zoning we've seen in the last couple months is not in keeping in the spirit of our city," said Mirisch.

Mirisch gained his reputation in Beverly Hills as the editor of BlogBeverlyHills.com, which featured lengthy provocative editorials about politics and issues in the city that often included satirical photos many felt were too acerbic.

Before moving back to Beverly Hills about three years ago, Mirisch spent 20 years in assorted Europe countries including Sweden for almost 10 years as a film executive.

He attended Beverly Hills schools, graduating in 1981. He says he intends to send his 20-month-old son to Horace Mann when he's old enough. Mirisch has taken a great interest in current events at the BHUSD, attending Board of Education meetings and participating in school events.

If Mirisch wins a seat on the Council on March 3, he says it would be a loud and clear message that the residents of Beverly Hills are ready to move in a new direction.

Mirisch received endorsements from Larry Larson, Planning Commissioner Noah & Amy Furie, surgeon Gary Hoffman, former Board of Education members Gerald Lunn, Jr. and Herb Young, and Toni & David Yarnell. Mirisch was endorsed by the BHEA.



Richard Stone

Richard Stone probably has the most experience as a sitting member of government, with eight years of Board of Education experience (1991 - 1999) and 12 years on City Council (1968 - 1980).

Stone, a lawyer and former CPA, is also running on the anti-development platform. Stone feels

strongly that no development should be allowed within Beverly Hills' city limits that doesn't adhere to the current General Plan's restrictions of 45 foot height limit and a 2:1 floor area ratio. He was against both The Montage Hotel and the Beverly Hilton Revitalization Plan.

"For years, the City Council has refused to enact a definitive General Plan which would preclude developers from seeking spot zoning for each project," reads one of Stone's mailers.

Stone has come out against Measure P strongly. However, Stone was responsible for enacting the business license tax in Beverly Hills, shortly before the passage of Prop. 13, which limited the amount of property tax government could collect from land owners. Stone, an attorney, alongside Councilmember Dr. Charles Aronberg included exemptions for doctors and lawyers in the original business tax, which Measure P seeks to amend.

Stone received contributions, in part, from attorney Larry Larson, real estate agent Michael Libow, Herb Wallerstein, investor Robert Schwab, philanthropist Stanley Black, and Gary Hoffman.



Michael Hakim

This will be Michael Hakim's second bid for a seat on City Council after his last run in 2005.

Hakim garnered 1,714 votes in 2005, placing him fourth and approximately 1,000 votes behind Briskman, Brucker and Fenton.

Hakim, whose family owns the office building that houses Beverly Hills Weekly, is a real estate property manager who owns residential and office buildings throughout Los Angeles. He is a graduate of Beverly High ('95).

One of Hakim's central concerns is the "chronic traffic

gridlock and parking nightmares" in Beverly Hills. In addition to curbing "overdevelopment," he suggests creating a mini-bus network throughout the city as well as expanding diagonal parking, designating bike paths and adding street medians as ways to calm traffic.

Hakim envisions the minibus as an emissions free bus that would stop all the local hotels and parking structures, allowing residents and visitors to leave their cars behind while traveling through the city. The costs for the minibus would be offset by the price of fare, according to Hakim.

Hakim says he hopes to convince the mayors and representatives from the Westside cities to allocate 10 percent of their budget to addressing regional transportation and parking. As a group, Hakim says, we can put an end to the traffic problems.

He has received contribution from Koss Corporation CEO Michael Koss.



Nili Nathan

Newcomer Nili Nathan currently has a child attending first grade at Beverly Vista School. She has a background in banking and finance as a former loan officer at JP Morgan Chase.

Nathan, 52, moved back to Beverly Hills in August 2008 from Burbank, where she had lived since 2000. She lived in Beverly Hills with her family in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.

Her top three priorities as a Councilmember would be "finishing the General Plan, economic development and maintaining our world-class city services."

With an anti-development philosophy, Nathan believes that once a General Plan is in place, no development should be allowed to build outside of those restrictions without a vote by the residents.

Nathan says she voted "no" on Measure H and opposes to Measure P.



Abraham [Avi] Ross

Abraham Ross, 30, is a nearly lifelong resident of Beverly Hills, graduating from Beverly High in 1996. He runs his own law practice on Wilshire.

Ross currently splits his time between his solo practice and working part time as the Naturalization Coordinator at Jewish Family

Services of Los Angeles. Ross focuses primarily on immigration related issues but has experience dealing with a wide variety of matters ranging from personal injury to business litigation to criminal law.

Ross says he is interested in running for Council because he has a desire to serve his community, and provide access to those who feel underrepresented by city government.

Ross says he voted "yes" on Measure H but is opposed to Measure P.



Brent Lilley

Brent Lilley, 30, is one of the two youngest candidates, graduating from Pepperdine University in 2005.

Lilley says he is the "voice of the renters" in the city, as a renter on Canon Drive near Wilshire. He works as an associate for Foursight Entertainment, a small scale production company based in Beverly Hills.

"My mentor in this town, [the late producer] Bernie Brillstein taught me—the little things matter most," wrote Lilley in an e-mail.

Lilley says he voted "yes" on Measure H but believes that enacting a General Plan is crucial for the city.

Candidates for Beverly Hills City Council are Voting **NO** on Measure P

Dr. Willie Brien	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Councilmember Linda Briskman	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Councilmember Barry Brucker	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Fran Cohen	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Michael Hakim	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Virginia Maas	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
John Mirisch	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Nili Nathan	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Abraham Ross	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Richard Stone	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO

Also: The Board of Directors of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce voted unanimously **AGAINST** Measure P

And: The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association urges you to vote **NO** on Measure P

NO on P

***Measure P is bad for business and bad for Beverly Hills.
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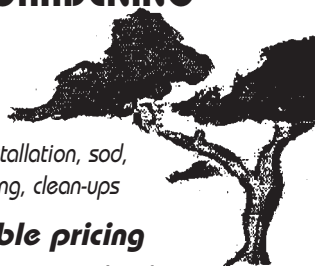


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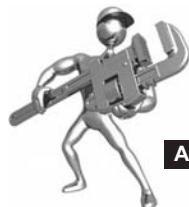
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