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SERVING BEVERLY HILLS • BEVERLYWOOD • LOS ANGELES

Issue 462 • August 7 - August 13, 2008



Constructing Beverly Hills

The Weekly gets the scoop from Building and Safety
Division head George Chavez



letters & email

“Board Approves Most Expensive School Bond Ever” [Issue 461]

Major issues and concerns regarding the rush to place a new \$334 million bond before the voters: As referred to in the Weekly: In the 2000 election, Prop 39 was passed by the electorate. (http://vote2000.sos.ca.gov/VoterGuide/text/text_analysis_39.htm) Goldberg got it right about “the rushed process.”

Why are “critical seismic ...upgrades” targeting 6.0 to 7.0 earthquakes when So. Cal. is due for the “big one”?

Lack of public input: Why didn’t (doesn’t) the district publish the survey of seismic upgrades and repairs needed and general facilities issues prior to submitting the bond issue? Prop 39 says, in part, “A specific list of school projects to be funded...”

The bond request is for \$334 million, but the seismic portion is listed as \$100 million. This is hard to believe by itself as all of the schools were inspected after the 1994 earthquake. What is more troubling is the total lack of

information/specificity about the remaining \$234 million!!!

Are State funds available? Prop 39: School Facilities Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade (K-12). ... “Over the years, the state has provided a significant portion of the funding for these facilities through the state schools facilities program.”

Under this program, the state generally pays: “50 percent of the cost of new school facilities...80 percent of the cost of modernizing existing facilities.”

Prop 39 allows, but does not require, a board of education to set the 55 percent threshold as long as two-thirds of the board approves. Otherwise, two-thirds (66.7 percent) of the voters are required to pass a bond.

Property taxes related to a bond measure: In the 2000 election, Prop 39 was passed by the electorate. Related legislation set the allowable property “tax rate levied as the result of any single election be no more than \$60” per \$100,000 for assessed evaluation. It remains unclear how extending the \$49.87 tax rate (mentioned in the Weekly) could be used to pay for the \$334 mil bond proposal when Measure K was a “single” election. The present \$334 mil. bond request would necessarily be a new “single” election.

Fees: Will the school district please explain why we need to spend \$millions\$ on fees.

The statement by Dr. Demeter that

letters cont. on next page

WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

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140 South Beverly Drive #201
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

You can fax us at:
310.887.0789

email us at:
editor@bhweekly.com



SNAPSHOT



“...BEST PLAY SIMON EVER WROTE” *N.Y. Post*
LOST IN YONKERS

BY NEIL SIMON
PULITZER, DRAMA DESK, TONY AWARDS
DIRECTOR HOWARD TEICHMAN
PLAYS IN REPERTORY WITH
THE WEST COAST PREMIERE

PEN

A PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA
BY DAVID MARSHALL GRANT
DIRECTOR JEFF G. RACK

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MAN OF THE YEAR QUEEN MARY, LONG BEACH

Board of Education member Steven Fenton was presented with the Democratic Man of the Year award from the California Democratic Party on Sunday night at the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Democrat of the Year awards ceremony on Queen Mary in Long Beach. Fenton won for the 42nd Assembly District, which includes Beverly Hills.

In this photo: (LR): Frank Fenton, Steven Fenton and Brian Goldberg.

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School Bond Stays on November Ballot

The 3-2 vote falls short to move bond to March

By Jacquelyn Ryan



Myra Lurie



Myra Demeter

The Beverly Hills Board of Education will not be moving the proposed \$334 million school bond from the November election ballot to the March 2009 election ballot, after a 3-2 vote at a special meeting on Wednesday morning. At least two-thirds of the Board (a minimum 4-1 vote) needed to vote favorably to pass the proposed resolution to move to March the bond measure that the Board approved for November's ballot last week.

because each wanted more time to prepare for the bond election.

Board President Myra Demeter and Board member Myra Lurie opposed the resolution based on a poll that indicated that 60 percent would support approval in November and because Demeter did not believe the safety and security repairs funded by the bond could be postponed.

Superintendent Kari McVeigh was not present for the meeting. Assistant superintendent Cheryl Plotkin presided over the meeting. Plotkin's daughter Christine works for the district's contracted project management group Strategic Concepts, whose contract with the district was extended to include work for the proposed bond by a 3-1-1 vote at the meeting. Fenton abstained; Goldberg voted no.

The \$334 million General Obligation Bond is that maximum amount the district could request without "raising the tax rate," according to consultants and firms for the Board. The bond would require that the Measure K tax rate of \$49.87 per \$100,000 assessed valuations of a home would be extended an extra 30 to 40 years after the Measure K bond has

been paid off, according to Karen Christiansen, owner of the district's contracted project management firm Strategic Concepts. If the new bond is approved, the tax would last until around the year 2060.

The special meeting was held after a private bond consulting group, George K. Baum, concluded that a bond could go on the March ballot as a Prop 39 measure, which would allow the bond to pass with 55 percent of the public voters in favor. The Board had approved the bond for November as a safety measure at the last meeting in case the bond could not be a Prop 39 measure in March.

George K. Baum's information indicated that there would be an 80 percent voter turnout for the November election, with a majority of those voters having a liberal bias and support for the bond. The information for the March election showed a significantly reduced overall voter turn-out with at least 50 percent of those voters being over the age 65, a group that tends to vote against bonds according to George K. Baum rep.

"We're all on the same page about the need for a bond. We are 5-0 on that. But as a political scientist, I have to say that if there's an 80 percent turnout at [the November] election, I will eat my hat on stage," said Goldberg, who says he feels like the Board is being 'pushed into a corner' by the rushed nature of this bond and lack of alternate opinions or input. "I think we'll pass it in November or March but I think we have a better shot at doing it right in March."

Goldberg's sentiments were echoed by both Fenton and Meshkaty who each referenced the process as too fast-paced with little time to research alternatives. Meshkaty said she wanted to look into raising the price of bond; Fenton said he wanted to be sure there was enough time to campaign to win over the

"pockets of opposition."

It will cost the district approximately \$45,000 to put the bond on the November ballot, with the possibility that it may cost at least three times more than that at the end of the election, according to a George K. Baum representative. For the March ballot, it would have cost the district \$188,000. Those funds will be taken from the bond if it passes, or from the general fund if the bond does not pass.

The General Obligation Bond is slated to address safety and seismic issues that district-contracted architects and structural engineers have identified over the last few years. Mandated building codes and standards have changed since the last retrofitting requiring repairs to all five school sites, according to Christiansen.

"All districts are faced with consistently chasing a moving target," said David Huff, the district's attorney for the bond issue, who said that codes tend to change every three to four years.

Demeter and Lurie both raised concerns about what they felt was the urgent nature of seeing this bond go to the ballot.

"I have confidence in this team and the board... I'm an advocate for curriculum but one can not talk about curriculum until all our students and teachers are sitting in safe buildings," said Demeter. "The community will whole-heartedly support a bond issue."

Goldberg, however, contested that the notion that the school site buildings were not safe as they are.

"If our buildings are up to code on Dec. 31, 2008, and the code changes on Jan. 1, 2009, our buildings are no less safe on Jan. 1 then they were on Dec. 31," said Goldberg. "The standards have just changed."

letters cont. from previous page

"The safety and security of our schools is foremost and it cannot be postponed" cannot be left standing without detailed specificity.

Which brings Measure K to mind. One of the major "selling" features of Measure K was the replacement of the portable classrooms with NEW permanent classrooms. No new buildings nor new classrooms were ever built at three of our schools.

This is such a major issue that the fore-going remains a work in progress...

Craig Davis
Beverly Hills

"How Are Rising Gas Prices Affecting Beverly Hills?" [Issue #460]

Consumers should use and pay for gasoline the same way they use and pay for gas and electricity in their homes.

The consumer should have a baseline amount of gasoline priced at a discount to retail, in order to accommodate low income users. Gasoline usage above the baseline is then priced on a graduated scale. The more gasoline used above the baseline the higher the cost per gallon.

This approach will allow the consumer the ability to control gasoline expenses the same way that gas and electricity costs are controlled in the home.

Implementation details of the approach need to be worked out but it should encourage people to conserve and seek alternate means of transportation.

Paul Bernstein & William Flanzbaum
Beverly Hills

"Hilton Referendum"

A short while ago, I, along with many others, received an invitation to The Maple Counseling Center (TMCC) Annual Crystal Ball – October 15, 2008. That's about two weeks before the November election on which the Hilton Hotel Referendum will appear on the ballot. I was shocked and saddened to note the honoree for the Ball was Beny Alagem, owner of the Beverly Hilton, the developer for the project which is the subject matter of the November referendum.

As one of the five founders of the predecessor to TMCC back in the early Seventies (two City Councilmen, two School Board Members, and one other person), I have followed the organization closely over the years. My wife served as a volunteer counselor for a number of years. In the entire history of the organization, over thirty-five years, this is the first time that it has ever placed itself in the middle of an election campaign, taking sides. As a community-based organization, receiving support from the City

letters cont. on page 7



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The City Council of Beverly Hills, at its regular meeting to be held on **Tuesday, August 19, 2008, at 7:00 p.m.**, in the Council Chambers of the City Hall, 455 N. Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, will hold a public hearing to consider:

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS FINDING THE CITY TO BE IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, AND ADOPTING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §65089

The City of Beverly Hills is required to comply with the CMP, which is a state-mandated program implemented by a designated CMP agency, which is the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The City Council will consider adoption of a Resolution acknowledging the City's conformance with the CMP requirements.

If you challenge the Council's action in regard to this matter in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City, either at or prior to the hearing.

Any interested person may attend the meeting and be heard. Written comments may also be submitted and should be addressed to the City Council, c/o City Clerk, 455 N. Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. The comments should be received prior to the hearing date.

BYRON POPE, CMC
City Clerk

briefs

great work of the BHPD officers.”

Scruggs was taken into custody on charges of residential burglary and evading arrest.

Burglary suspect leads police on wild chase through homes and yards

In a foot chase through Beverly Hills, a suspect arrested on suspicion of burglary evaded initial capture by jumping off a second-story balcony, running through a residential yard then through an unlocked home where he jumped out the bathroom window and over a fence before he was caught by police on North Wetherly Drive around 10 a.m. on July 31, according to police.

A resident called the Beverly Hills Police Department to report seeing the suspect, Charles Scruggs, jumping from a residential balcony on the 200 block of North Lapeer Drive at 9:50 a.m. on July 31. Within one minute, police set up a containment of the area, according to a BHPD official.

Scruggs ran westbound between homes until he ran through a backyard on the 200 block of North Wetherly Drive where he entered the home's unlocked back door. He ran through the house to the bathroom window, where he jumped out of the window then over a fence and continued running westbound. Police captured and arrested him on the same block moments later.

“For criminals, the window of opportunity decreases significantly when you have a lightning fast response time,” said Lt. Tony Lee, BHPD spokesman. “Our officers saturated the area so quickly the suspect lost his chance to escape. It's a testament to the



Judge denies mistrial in Larian's Bratz Dolls case

At a hearing in federal court in Riverside on Monday, U.S. District Judge Stephen Larson ruled that a juror's alleged bigoted remark is not enough to declare a mistrial in the case brought by Mattel Inc. against Beverly

Hills resident Isaac Larian, CEO of MGA Entertainment Inc., who created the successful Bratz Dolls line.

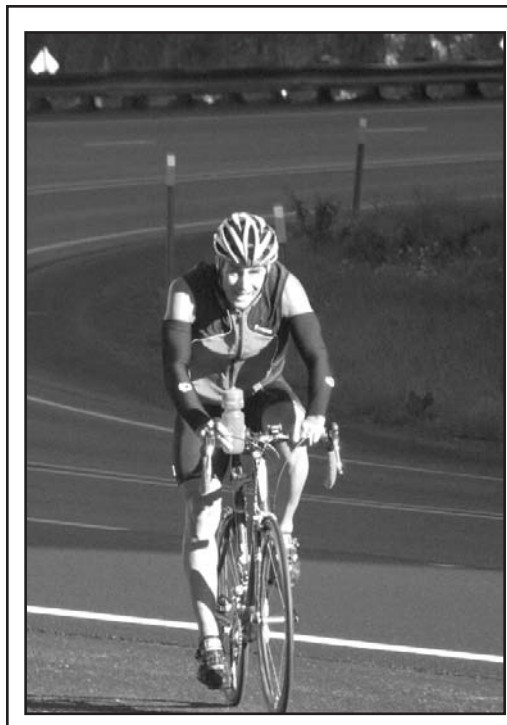
Larson ruled that jurors had already concluded their deliberations before the racial remarks against Iranian-born Larian were made, thus the jury's decision was unaffected by the dismissed juror's alleged bias.

Larian's lawyer Tom Nolan filed the motion to declare a mistrial last week. The trial will continue this week.

Jazz at the House features The Brazilian Project

The Jazz at the House concert series continues on August 14 at Historic Greystone Estate with The Brazilian Project featuring Anthony Wilson and Chico Pinheiro.

Currently touring together, Wilson and



Cancer Survivor Bikes Over 500 Miles to Fundraise For Kids

Beverly Hills resident Vinnie Tortorich, an ultra cyclist and leukemia survivor, recently participated in the Race Across Oregon, a grueling non-stop two day 535 mile bike race known for being one of the toughest cycling races in the nation. Diagnosed with leukemia just under a year ago and now in remission, Tortorich raced on behalf of the Maximum Hope Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance to families who are financially overwhelmed by the costs and problems associated with caring for children and adults with life-threatening chronic illnesses.

Pinheiro will fuse two continents and two cultures as they perform numbers from their new album NOVA, a recording that is neither solely Brazilian nor solely Jazz.

A Grammy-nominated guitarist, composer and arranger, Wilson is one of the leading jazz musicians of his generation with a list of collaborations that include Al Jarreau, Aaron Neville, and his father Gerald Wilson, the legendary composer, arranger and bandleader.

One of the leading figures in Brazilian music, guitarist, composer and arranger Pinheiro is self taught and began playing the guitar and piano at age 7. He has performed and recorded with many notable Brazilian artists such as Dori and Danilo Caymmi, Cachaito Lopez (Buena Vista Social Club) and many more.

All Jazz at the House concerts are held on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. in the inner courtyard of the Greystone Estate, at 905 Loma Vista Dr. Advanced ticket purchases are required.

Admission is \$25 per person – no one under 16 years of age will be admitted. For tickets, call (310) 285-6850 and for information, call (310) 285-6830.

Rudolph and Sletten, Inc. win bid for 9900 Wilshire



The 9900 Wilshire project is going forward now that general contracting firm Rudolph and Sletten, Inc. has won the contract for preconstruction services at the site, owned by Project Lotus LLC. Rudolph and Sletten, Inc. will also be responsible for relocating a large water pipe that currently

runs beneath the lot to public domain where it will run under the adjacent streets.

“As development managers for the project we selected the team at Rudolph & Sletten for their expert knowledge as one of the leading construction services companies on the West Coast of America and experience for handling large projects such as 9900 Wilshire. We will be working closely to ensure that traffic, noise, and other environmental effects during the construction activities are kept to a minimum,” said Nick Candy, co-owner of Candy&Candy Inc., interior design company and development managers for the site, in a prepared statement. “The proposed redevelopment will undoubtedly result in the best residential scheme in Beverly Hills and arguably the world. Project Lotus LLC and Candy & Candy Inc. has assembled a world-class team to ensure this vision is achieved; the selection of the contractor for the preconstruction services is clearly a very significant part of this.”

The 9900 Wilshire project, which will include luxury high-rise condominiums, is backed by Candy brothers' CPC Group and Kaupthing HF, the largest Icelandic bank. The project aims to follow a Gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard, a high recognition from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Rudolph and Sletten, Inc. was also the preconstruction contractor for the Beverly Vista modernization project of the auditorium and bell tower as well as the new science building at Beverly High, according to Web site.

The Redwood City-based firm has worked for such institutions as Stanford University, the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

BHHS Alumni Flock To Hilton For Television Press Tour

An unofficial multi-class Beverly High reunion was held last month at the Beverly Hilton under the guise of trying to promote television programming.

Several Beverly High alumni turned producers spoke at the Television Critics Association summer press tour, which consists of news conference and parties to promote programming on the major broadcast

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networks, cable and public television to newspaper and Internet television critics, columnists and reporters.

Beverly High alumni participating on various panels included Jason Goldberg ('89), an executive producer of the ABC game show, "Opportunity Knocks," scheduled to premiere Sept. 23; Jenji Kohan ('87), creator and executive producer of "Weeds," a comedy whose fourth season is airing on the Showtime cable channel; Jonathan Prince ('76), a co-creator and executive producer of the A&E drama "The Cleaner," which premiered July 15; and Adam Small ('78), an executive producer of "Chocolate News," a Comedy Central news magazine spoof set to premiere Oct. 15.

Kohan said she thought a significant number of Beverly High alumni work in the television industry is because Beverly Hills "is an industry town."

"Children of coal miners work in the coal mines and children of show biz folks tend to be drawn to show biz," said Kohan, whose father Buzz Kohan won Emmy Awards for writing for "The Carol Burnett Show," Academy Awards telecasts and specials starring Sammy Davis Jr., Shirley MacLaine and Andy Williams, and whose brother David ('82) was the co-creator of the Emmy-winning comedy "Will & Grace." "It's what we look at as work."

The press tour also drew such diverse figures to the Beverly Hilton as Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the moon; CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer; former heavyweight boxing champion George Foreman; NBC

football announcers John Madden and Al Michaels; "Hardball" host Chris Matthews; NBA all-star guard Steve Nash and former White House deputy chief of staff turned Fox News Channel analyst Karl Rove to promote programming.

The press tour has been an "absolute success" for the Beverly Hilton, according to Lynda Simonetti, its director of public relations.

"When you have all these entertainers descend upon the hotel and you have all of these critics spending day in and day out in the hotel and the community and their spending their dollars everywhere, that exposure cannot be matched in any other city," Simonetti said.

—Steven Herbert

Best Picture Nominee 'Babel' To Be Shown Monday At Academy Headquarters

The 2006 best picture nominee "Babel" will be shown Monday as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' "Great To Be Nominated" series continues at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater at the academy's headquarters at 8949 Wilshire Blvd.

Producer Steve Golin, cast member Aaron Spears, and sound rerecording mixers Chris Minkler and Jon Taylor are scheduled to participate in a discussion about the film following the screening.

"Babel", a drama about four interconnected stories about the difficulties of communication in contemporary life, received seven Academy Award nominations, includ-

ing best picture. It received an Oscar for best original score, composed by Gustavo Santaolalla.

Its other nominations were for best director (Gonzalez Inarritu), supporting actress (Adriana Barraza and Rinko Kikuchi), original screenplay (Guillermo Arriaga) and film editing (Stephen Mirrione and Douglas Crise).

The Oscar-nominated animated short "No Time for Nuts" will be shown prior to "Babel."

"Babel" will be shown beginning at 7:30 p.m. with pre-show elements beginning at 7 p.m.

More information on the screening series is available by calling (310) 247-3600.

—Steven Herbert

Authentic Louisiana Cajun chili wins cook-off



Annie Judis won this year's annual chili cook-off with her Authentic Louisiana Cajun chili at the Beverly Hills farmer's market on Sunday.

In addition to pats on the back from satisfied consumers, Judis won \$275 for her prize.

Pictured (center) Annie Judis, (2008 1st Place Winner) and Mayor Barry Brucker, and from left to right are Binder Kundanmal (2007 Beverly Hills Chili Cook-Off 1st place winner), Marc O'Krent (Vice Chairperson Recreation and Parks Commission), Chef Matthew Gladstone (Luxe Hotel Rodeo Drive), Timothy Scranton (Beverly Hills Fire Chief), and Annette Saleh (Team Beverly Hills participant) who served as this year's panel of judges.



Gary Briskman walks in style in Paris

Councilmember Linda Briskman and her husband Gary Briskman recently vacationed in Paris, where Gary wore his "Beverly Hills Walk of Style" T-shirt as they strolled down St. Honore, which Briskman called "the 'other' Rodeo Drive."

It's Our City. It's Our Future.

Stay Involved!

The *draft* General Plan & Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is now available for review.



The Beverly Hills General Plan serves as the community's guide to programs, policies and services, that cover streets, traffic, water, safety, parks, building and development. Residents and businesses are encouraged to provide feedback on the *draft* General Plan.

Copies of the *draft* General Plan and the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be available at the following locations:

- Community Development (9357 West Third Street)
- City Clerk's Office & Beverly Hills Public Library (Reference document only)
- City's Website: www.beverlyhills.org/generalplan

For more information please call the Department of Community Development at 310-285-1123.



from the hills of beverly



A Fine Historical Mess

Inconsistencies and other matters

By Rudy Cole

Naturally, we expect to be safer inside Beverly Hills, but I had no idea that driving one block outside our borders could be that hazardous. That was before I witnessed two fender benders inches from our city limits.

Through the years, Beverly Hills has managed to place four way stop signs or signals at almost every intersection in our village. Not true in Los Angeles. So, what creates a driving hazard?

When motorists exit the southeastern section of Beverly Hills they are not prepared for east-west bound traffic on nearby streets such as Whitworth with only north-south stop signs, and twice I saw inadvertent meetings of cars who apparently assumed that autos entering would have to stop.

And talk about regional planning, most of the Los Angeles streets that become Beverly Hills just past Whitworth have

different names. Glenville becomes Palm, Wooster to Arnaz, Cardiff to Palm and, to the consternation of some of our residents on South Bedford who call for deliveries, there is another Bedford just outside our borders east of Robertson.

As for a stranger finding any address on Robertson Boulevard, forget about it. In the middle of South Robertson before Olympic, Los Angeles takes over and on the Beverly Hills side the street numbers are 2 to 3 hundred, but across the street, Los Angeles has an 800 series.

One block north of Wilshire in the middle of the 200 block, Beverly Hills becomes Los Angeles and, again, a change of street numbers. An enterprising building owner did manage to convince the post office to give a Beverly Hills number to an adjoining structure in Los Angeles and, miraculously, they had a higher than permitted medical building

with a BH address.

There is even an apartment building on Burton Way that is divided almost in the middle between Los Angeles and Beverly Hills. I can imagine their problems when they need emergency services, but I think BH has worked it out and handles assistance calls.

Of course, driving west on Wilshire from Los Angeles can be amusing if confusing. If a visitor is looking for the 8300 block and checks the addresses at La Jolla which is 6300 West, there is the assumption that there are at least 20 more blocks before you can locate the 8383 Wilshire Building. Wrong. There is no 7000 block, magically eliminated by earlier Los Angeles and Beverly Hills planners.

Chicagoans will remember that the symmetry of blocks is mostly very orderly and easy to navigate. You learned early on that every four blocks was a major intersection and, going west on Madison, you knew what street number corresponded with each major street.

Los Angeles and Santa Monica had their own street number issues. When you enter Santa Monica from Los Angeles, you quickly note that a reversal in numbering has taken place – in the

beach city, numbers become smaller.

About 10 years ago, a snarky article in Los Angeles Magazine provided a guide on how to navigate through Beverly Hills more “efficiently” by avoiding major intersections. Among the alternatives were suggestions on how to use a combination of side streets and alleys to get from Wilshire and just east of La Cienega to Olympic and Roxbury. Natives were furious and told the magazine, but it is doubtful that many motorists actually made the effort.

Compared to our immediate neighbors east and west of Beverly Hills, we have far better traffic management systems in place. However, our problems are mostly through not destination traffic which is why we need to continue to work on regional traffic control and diversion and not just put all our hopes on the subway to the sea.

Some years back, a member of the city council took me seriously when I said the most important issue facing Beverly Hills, and I used facing intentionally, was the so called work of art just north of Wilshire on Rodeo that has its torso rear end pointed at Wilshire. A fine first view of our fabled street for tourists! You could say that someone got this ass backwards.

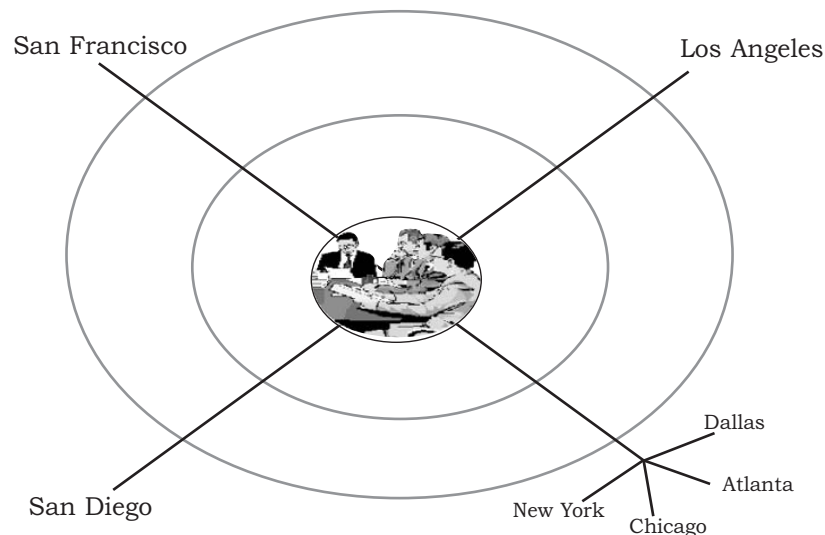
Power of the press? I have inveighed against this monstrosity for a decade without success. There is some solace in remembering how long it took **March**

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Schwartz, then owner-publisher of the Courier, to have the flower pots removed from Wilshire Boulevard. Marchie hated those pots.

Naturally, I came to their defense and even formed a support committee with this writer as the only member. My esoteric group was called SOB, translated into Save Our Beautiful pots. When they were removed, without so much as a good bye ceremony, I congratulated March. How long did it take and how many editorials did he write? Four years and I couldn't even count his page one columns on this pot matter.

As **Ronald Reagan** said so eloquently, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall," I can only continue to ask an uncaring council to turn Torso around so that visitors first see breasts and not behinds.

And speaking of Reagan, and we don't often do that, a recent **John Mc Cain** sophomoric attack add vaguely linking **Barack Obama** with some young, scandal plagued actresses, had a very similar kind of life in Reagan's successful campaign against then Governor **Pat Brown**.

Brown was the instigator then. He quickly pulled a spot that had this message: "Remember, the man who killed Lincoln was an actor," but voters found that tasteless and it hurt our affable governor.

As for Mc Cain, although I like the guy, I really am not his friend, which he seems to always insert in every single speech: "And let me tell you, my friends etc."

Our congressman spoke to Rotary this week and gave a litany of Republican administration failures, especially in the area of congressional oversight of federal agencies. **Henry Waxman**, now one of the senior members of the House, is chair of that committee and has become a vigilant watchdog of possible executive branch abuses. Some of my Republican friends found his talk "too partisan," but hey, it is an election year.

In answer to my question, Waxman said that Obama did have a strong record of support for Israel even before he became a candidate for president. Since Israel probably does not have a better friend than Waxman, I am inclined to take Waxman at his word and not just because it would be natural for him to support a Democrat.

Saw many long time friends at Rotary, although I am not now nor have I ever been a member. Among these were retired Judge **George** and **Joy Dell**, visiting members from Brentwood.

We are, as a community, often too emotional when it comes to decision making. Take the current controversy over whether the Chamber and the Convention and Visitors Bureau should be separated, please.

The city opted for a performance audit by KH Consultants which will be presented to the city council later this month. It is a good, professional analysis and needs implementation. It is not a complete guide to reform or change, but a starting point for city officials.

What proponents and opponents of the splitting of the two agencies now need to do is calmly look at what best serves the city, putting aside personal or political issues. The leadership of the Chamber, and not just their chief executive, need to step forward and become involved. On the city side, the council should also seek direction and guidance from the professional staff.

Slowly, cautiously should be the process. Unfortunately, most residents have no idea what's involved and even less understanding of the work of the Chamber, but the changes being considered could impact future city revenues, and that matters to everyone, not just those all excited about the proposed split.

A nod of appreciation: The most courteous parking lot attendants anywhere? The people who work at the city lots. They actually thank you for giving them a get out of the lot free ticket and are consistently helpful. Smile back and thank them. It couldn't hurt.

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.

sports & scores



BHHS Girls' Basketball Team Finishes Second In Tournament

Normans fall to state champions in final.
By Steven Herbert

A shorthanded Beverly High girls' basketball team concluded its summer play with a second-place finish in the Best in the West Tournament, losing to Long Beach Poly, 47-34, the state Division I champion, in Sunday's championship game.

The Jackrabbits broke out to a 15-0 lead as the Normans were "absolutely not ready to play against their type of game," coach Charles Solomon said.

Beverly Hills pulled to within six, 31-25, in the second half, "then faltered from there," Solomon said. Following an inadvertent whistle, Long Beach Poly turned a pair of steals into 3-point and 2-point baskets, then coasted to the victory.

Sophomore forward Morgan Mason led the Normans with 12 points.

Beverly Hills played most of the tournament with six players and had only five foe one game because of injuries and vacations.

The Normans began the tournament by defeating Pico Rivera El Rancho, 44-16, last Thursday in a game it led 28-6 at halftime.

Beverly Hills defeated Bellflower, 56-42, Friday as senior guard Sophie Payson scored 29 points, including eight 3-point baskets, while Mason added 17 points.

The Normans defeated the Long Beach Poly B team, 47-34, Saturday, as Mason scored 15 and Payson 13.

The tournament was played at Gahr High School in Cerritos.

Solomon called the team's play for the summer "fantastic."

"I could not have scheduled a tougher competition for our team," Solomon said. "We were in the toughest tournaments and the toughest summer league. Winning

a championship, and getting to the final of another [tournament], you can't ask for more than that.

"We're really ready for a huge run this coming year. We should be much better than last year and we had a great team last year," with a 20-10 record, advancing to the Southern Section Division II-AA quarterfinals.

Solomon said the reasons for the team's success was that "everybody stepped and picked their game up a little bit," development of an inside presence and an "unbelievable" work ethic.

Olympics

Dara Torres, a 1981 El Rodeo School graduate, said she is "just looking forward to see how" these Olympics compare to the other four she has competed in.

"The competition is much more competitive than it's ever been," Torres said at a news conference Saturday in Singapore.

Torres will swim in the 400-meter freestyle relay, whose final in Saturday Pacific Daylight Time, the 50 freestyle, whose heats begin Aug. 15, and the 400 medley relay, whose final is Aug. 16.

Torres, who also competed in the 1984, 1988, 1992 and 2000 Summer Olympics, was among three captains of the U.S. women's swim team chosen in a team vote announced July 30.

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.

letters cont. from page 3

and School District, the potential damage to TMCC by involving itself in a hotly-contested election is incalculable. There may be short-term gain with a large contribution from Mr. Alagem and the numerous former mayors, local lobbyists and PR people in his employ; however, the offsetting loss of confidence in TMCC within the community will have long-term negative effects.

It is not too late for Mr. Alagem to withdraw his name as honoree to demonstrate to the community that, indeed, he does have the community's interest at heart and not just that of the Hilton Project. It is not too late for TMCC to reconsider the short-

term gain of "honoring" Mr. Alagem against the long-term loss which necessarily will suffer by diving into the middle of a very controversial community election.

Before writing this public letter, I first contacted TMCC in an attempt to discuss the issues raised by the choice of Mr. Alagem. Regrettably, I was flatly rebuffed.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Alagem and TMCC will reconsider, for the good of the community.

Richard A. Stone
Beverly Hills

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CONSTRUCTING BEVERLY HILLS

The Weekly gets the scoop from City Building Official
George Chavez

What exactly does the Building and Safety Division do?

The Building and Safety Division regulates all the construction on private property within the city of Beverly Hills. So we do plan review so we check the plans before a project receives their permit and then once they receive their permit then we go ahead and do inspections. So we're really more of a regulatory arm of the development process. That's the difference between what the planning staff does and they're dealing more with the pre-permit and discretionary reviews.

How many staff members do you have?

We have 29 [staff members] in the building and safety division, including myself. We have five in administration, including myself. We have five in plan review—well, five and a vacant manager position, so there's actually six in plan review. Ten in inspection and five of our customer service staff, permit technicians in the front. There are five in the community preservation or code enforcement group also.

Explain each job.

So we'll start with customer service staff—they are the people you see at the front counters. They are the folks who deal with sharing information, show you how to fill out the application, they calculate the fees for the permits, they actually do the first review and do the screening as people come in with their plans to be sure their plans are appropriately filled out, and they actually issue a permit- or take it in for plan review. So that's the face of our front counter.

So once the plans come in our plan review staff actually will take the plans in for review, and they're actually reviewing the plan for building code compliance. They're looking at structural issues, architectural issues, fire and life safety issues, that kind of thing. The things that people take for granted when you go into a building and think it's safe. The reason why [you can do that is because of] the things that we do, during the plan review and inspections process.

So we'll have a set of plans delivered to us and there's actually a whole process of going to plan review to make sure that, depending on the type of use, there's appropriate exiting, that you don't have too many people in one place that may be congested, so we'll calculate the width of exits and the number of exits, depending on the number of people in a room it will determine which way the door will swing. Just think if the door swung in the wrong direction when you're trying to exit a building in a panic situation. The little things that people don't think about that we do to make sure that buildings are safe, emergency lighting those are the types of things that get picked up on plan reviews. Other types of things like structural review. We had an earth-

quake last week, people don't even remember we had an earthquake last week because nothing happened. But one of the reasons that is that we check for seismic strengths of buildings when they get constructed, we look at the size of the foundation, the type of soil that buildings are constructed on and there's a number of different building systems that are incorporated into the buildings to be sure that, because we know we're in earthquake country, that they get designed a certain way so that the buildings don't fall down when we have seismic events. A building system, for example, is like sheer wall or plywood that you see on the exterior of the buildings when you see buildings get built. All the steel that you see and what's incorporated into the concrete before they pour the concrete, those are the kind of structural systems that are designed to be checked in the plan review process.

Inspection is really where we think about the process. We've reviewed your plan and issued you a permit and the developers are out there and start to build and these is where we make what got approved in the office gets constructed out in the field. So the inspectors are out there on a daily basis. We do on the average about 100 inspections a day, so we're going and visiting sites that have permits and are looking at the soil conditions, the foundation, making sure that the proper size of materials are being used. It's kinda where the rubber hits the road.

How many buildings does an inspector look at in one day, on average?

It just depends, if they do 10 inspections, think about the buildings being constructed here in town it could be very simple inspection, if someone is changing the water heater in their house that could be a quick inspection and an inspector doing that kind of work might be able to make more stops. But if we're looking at a 10,000 square foot new house under construction looking at a foundation that's gonna take a lot more time to do an inspection. So an inspector doing that kind of work might spend an hour and half on that inspection versus the other inspector might spend 15 minutes inspecting [the water heater]. So we try to blend the inspections so there's the ability on the average about 10 inspections a day.

So what about the code enforcement staff?

Those are the staff members that actually deal with what I'll call the quality of life issues. They're not necessarily related to construction, what they do mostly is maintaining what the community is about. They're making sure that if there are buildings that are dilapidated they are sending out letters or issuing notices or citations to clean up the property, they are dealing with barking dog type situations, nuisances like that. They deal with general issues. If there's graffiti in the alley, call the code enforcement. They are out there

working with the property owners, making sure they're properly notified. Our goal with code enforcement program is to see that the community is maintaining a certain standard.

We get a lot of calls for gasoline-powered leaf blowers; we chase down a lot of gardeners, issue citations for that. The graffiti had become quite a bit of a problem in the alley, at certain times in the year that peaks up. If somebody's got weeds or tall grass or if a building becomes vacant that becomes a problem. We vigorously chase those types of violations down.

What ever happened with the proposed apartment inspection program?

It's on our program of things to do. Like anything else, we are dealing with juggling priorities and such and we are actually ready to move forward with the rental house inspection program. We've done the research, it's just a matter of having it set as a priority to bring forward. We got into different development programs that took time to get through and we brought forward the green building ordinance. We are ready to bring the rental housing inspection program forward.

What are your responsibilities?

My role is primarily to be the administrator for the buildings and safety division. I manage the budget, the overall operation of the dept, of the building and safety function. I'm the building official so ultimately I'm responsible for what goes on here.

We're moving into our brand new customer service center soon. One of our biggest goals in the next year is to improve our customer service and in the new customer service center, which will be a big responsibility of mine to oversee.

I'm involved in the streamlining efforts. [For example] we might issue about 6,000 permits a year. Some of the exciting things I see is that we've got some automation in our permitting center that's going to allow us to reduce the actual number of permits we're issuing by issuing combination permits, meaning that we bundle permits together. So that will improve our customer service, by reducing the number of transactions that we're doing and creating some efficiency along the way. We'd like to get to a point where we're submitting all our documentation electronically so that all our paper that gets generated from developing building plans. Our goal is to have a really strong Web presence and a really strong e-commerce ability.

How do you fall into this line of work?

It was many years ago. I started work here in the city as a building inspector 20 years ago. I was a building inspector for, well I'm guessing, but I think it was seven years. I have a complete understanding from how buildings are put together, how they're inspected. It gives me an advantage to understand the development construction process.

I was hired into Building and Safety in 1988. Ron Clark was the Director at the time and he retired in 2003. When Ron retired, my title was Deputy Director of Building and Safety. Additionally, just after Ron retired, the Planning and Building Departments were merged and renamed the Community Development Department.

Once I got into government service, I just fell in love with helping people and facilitating their construction. I love construction and I love helping people and this is really the best

way to put those two passions together and feel like you've made a difference. I try to facilitate the construction process rather than regulate it. When I became more passionate about this work, I became interested in getting further into with different levels of responsibility and ultimately different opportunities presenting themselves to me. Here I am 20 years later as a building official. It's an interesting love story in a way. I consider myself a very lucky person to be here with this responsibility in this community.

Currently my title is Assistant Director of Community Development /City Building Official. Vince Bertoni, our most recent Director of Community Development, left in June of 2008 to become the Deputy Director of Planning for the City of Los Angeles. Anne McIntosh is currently serving as Interim Director of Community Development.

If I were to come to you and say I want to build an extra room onto my house, what would that process be like for me and how long would it take?

If you wanted to add a room onto your house and it didn't require any design review or discretionary process, meaning you were within the limits of the code, the key is if you had a complete set of plans and specifications available to submit it could be as early as a one-week long review. The key to a question like that is how good of documents we have to review. At the end of the day, we review things. If we had a complete set of plans for a small room addition, you should be able to get a permit within two weeks. If you had to go through a discretionary process, if you do a good job with your presentation and plans and how it complies with zoning code, that could be a month to get through that process. If you're building a new house, the planning process would be about four weeks also. For a new home that doesn't have any problems. We tell people four to six weeks on the outside to get a plan check completed and a permit issued. Comparatively speaking, that's a quick amount of time.

Tell me about the ISO award.

The ISO stands for the Insurance Service Office and they are actually an insurance underwriting firm that grades and evaluates buildings and apartments throughout the country. The whole reason this is important is because if you have an organization like ours, a building and safety division in our case, that applies the codes, meaning the building codes and other technical codes, if we do a good job of administering the codes then we receive a high score. And why that's important to the community is because when insurance companies actually write a policy for a building in Beverly Hills, they would go to a company like ISO to get a sense of how well the building might be built based on the score. So that really translates into lower insurance rates for the better score that you get.

What's in the future for you

Well, I love helping people and I love buildings but the greatest thing I enjoy right now is younger generation of city employees. I enjoy teaching them what I know and setting them up for the future. I'm on the other side of 45 now and I want to leave a mark.

I think I want to be a teacher when I retire. I want to be able to give back. I just feel so lucky. But I don't have any plans to retire soon.



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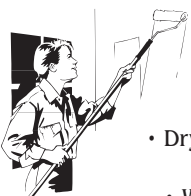
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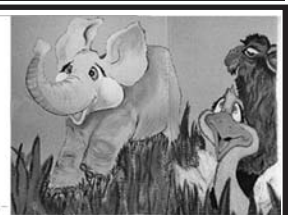
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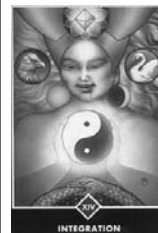
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