

Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



June 2010 MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, 17 June 2010, 7:00 p.m.

Oak Tree Committee 6:15 p.m.

The Place – Diamond X – Take Las Virgenes to Mulholland; turn left on Mulholland. For the next 3/4 mile, the King Gillette Ranch will be on your right. After you've passed Stokes Canyon Road, in about 3/4 mile, you will see a sign on your right with "Diamond X" and the National Park Service logo on it. A short distance past the sign a narrow road goes south at a right angle. This is Wickland Road, and, at this point you are entering the King Gillette Ranch. Follow Wickland about 300 yards until the road forks; take the left-hand fork; keep bearing left to the lighted house on the right. Park; enter through the lit doorway.

**Call to Order
Roll Call
Agenda Changes/ Approval
Delegates Reports**

**Correspondence/Announcements
Officer's Reports
Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Old Business/ Reports

- 1. Water Park/Pool Expansion - De Anza Park - Back to Council - Update/Strategy**
- 2. The Edge Update**
- 3. Internal - Tag Lines for Federation & Newsletter**

New Business

- 1. Mountain View Estates Water Committee**
- 2. Mont Calabasas - Update Annexation**
- 3. Old Topanga - EIR Sewers - Discussion/Strategy**
- 4. Guest**
- 5. Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan**

Oak Tree Committee - Healthy Oaks Ordinance (HOO) Discussion/Update/ Prep

“FIREHOUSE HILL” IS SAVED!

**“This has to be the primo acquisition since King Gillette Ranch.”
Ginny Kruger - Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky’s Arts Deputy and Former
Chief Planning Deputy**

Thank you ZEV!

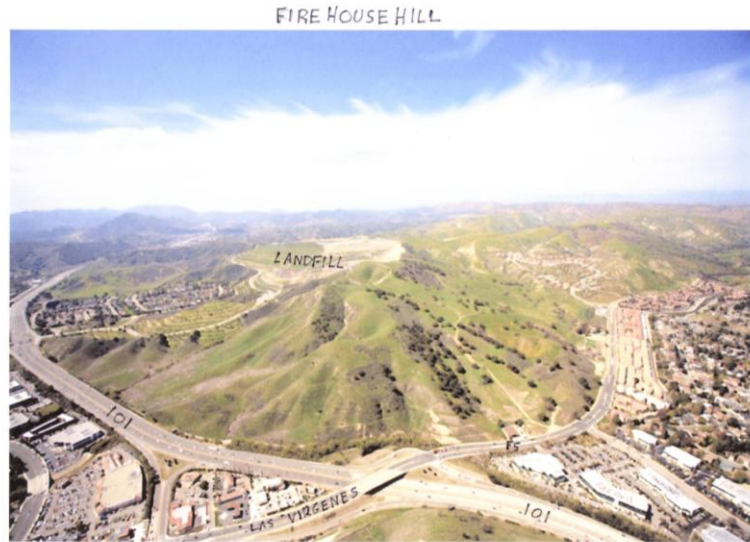
On the morning of June 12th, a Saturday, 10 Federation delegates gathered with many other citizens and elected officials in a grove of oak trees on the hillside known as “Firehouse Hill” above Fire Station 125 just north of the Las Virgenes Interchange on the Ventura Freeway.

The occasion was to celebrate the purchase of the 207-acre, 600-foot high hill and its hundreds of oak trees and to dedicate it as the “Zev Yaroslavsky Las Virgenes Highlands Park.” The land had been purchased just a few days earlier with special acquisition funds from the Calabasas Landfill.



(Clockwise from top center) Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Calabasas Planning Commissioner & Federation Past President Dave Brown, Old Agoura President & Federation Past President Jess Thomas, NPS Outdoor Recreation Planner Melanie Beck, State Senator Fran Pavley, SMMC Executive Director Joe Edmiston, Calabasas City Council Member Mary Sue Maurer, SMMNRA Superintendent Woody Smeck.

Those of us who live on the far west side of the Valley and must commute to our workplaces on the crowded freeways and unsightly boulevards of the Big City begin to notice a difference in our surroundings as we go east from Woodland Hills and start up the Calabasas Grade. The crowded commercial buildings and unsightly billboards of Los Angeles thin out and then disappear altogether, and before long, oak trees begin to replace houses on the hillsides.



As we pass over the crest of the grade, the city disappears from view, and, like a blast of fresh air, a panorama of wooded hills and the Santa Monica Mountains opens up before us.

As we start down the grade, dominating the view ahead of us is a large hill dotted with oak trees looming over the fire station at its base. Some people call it “Firehouse Hill”; others call it by the name of its former owner, developer Bob Zuckerman, or his development company, “Continental Communities,” which made several attempts to plaster over this hill with a hundred condominiums and dozens of ridge-top “million-dollar mansions.”

Back in the late ‘80s, most mansions were still worth less than a million, so when Zuckerman began to talk about “million dollar mansions,” it piqued a lot of people’s interest, while those who were of a more skeptical frame of mind wondered how those wealthy buyers would get up the steep mountainside to the ridge top. Zuckerman’s reply to his critics was that his millionaire mansion owners would be able to drive their stretch limos up to their high-class digs using the existing access road up to the Calabasas Landfill, sharing the road with loaded garbage trucks.

To make things even more bizarre, Zuckerman’s tract map showed his mansions would be built on the very rim of the landfill, where his affluent buyers would have a commanding view of the vast amount of garbage produced by the entire West Valley as it was being unloaded and carefully rearranged below them. Meanwhile, the ever-present seagulls would fly around, decorating the owners’ million-dollar patios.

Not content to propose a mere 136 condos and mansions on a rugged hill that County planners had zoned for only 20 homes, Zuckerman added “Calabasas Center,” a 46-

acre commercial and retail center planned for a small pocket in the steep cliffs between Saratoga Hills and the Las Virgenes Interchange.

“Calabasas Center” was not to be just a run-of-the-mill shopping center. It would have 40 percent more retail floor space than The Commons (which in the late ‘80s, was yet to be built). Plans also included a 19-plex theater, 281,000 square feet of retail floor space and 1,849 parking spaces. Slick brochures announced the Center would, “serve the affluent areas of Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Agoura, Woodland Hills, Westlake Village, and Malibu, as well as the San Fernando and Conejo Valleys.” The “projected opening” was scheduled for the fall of 1992.

Of course there were still a few doubting Thomases who wondered how the narrow, two-lane Lost Hills Bridge could possibly handle all the traffic from a 46-acre, 281,000-square-foot shopping center plus several hundred existing homes in Saratoga Hills and Saratoga Ranch.

To placate this last group of un-believers Zuckerman revealed plans for a four-lane boulevard along the north side of the 101 connecting Calabasas Center to the Las Virgenes Interchange. (Caltrans later shot down this idea because, among other things, it would have wiped out the northbound on-ramp at the Las Virgenes Interchange!)

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to those of us who were chuckling among ourselves over this crazy developer who was proposing a mega-shopping center half the size of Topanga Plaza in an area where most of the inhabitants were coyotes and rabbits, Zuckerman, operating on the old P.T. Barnum theory that ‘there’s a sucker born every minute,’ was busy lining up investors who were long on cash and utterly lacking in business savvy and persuading them to invest their life savings in Calabasas Center, presumably in the hope that, “If you build it, they will come.”

In those days, all our planning and development decisions were made downtown by the Board of Supervisors, led by our then Supervisor Mike Antonovich, who, it was believed, “never met a developer he didn’t like.”

When the public hearings began downtown, we were surprised at the large number of people from places like Canoga Park, Woodland Hills, Van Nuys, and Reseda who gave glowing testimony about the virtues of the Calabasas Center and how it would benefit the Las Virgenes community. Of course, we soon discovered these were probably the investors, many of whom had presumably turned their savings over to a smooth-talking Bob Zuckerman.

Before too long Continental Communities went bankrupt, leaving the investors and a couple of not-too-savvy-banks holding worthless paper. We thought that was the end of Bob Zuckerman, Continental Communities and Calabasas Center, but somehow, like Lazarus, Zuckerman came back from the dead and managed to buy the property back from the bank. This time he set out to finance his new development proposal by persuading an out-of-state Indian tribe to sign on to a bond issue.

Meanwhile, there had been some changes down at the County that Zuckerman had not planned on. Reapportionment had moved Antonovich out to the North County, and his place was ultimately filled by Zev Yaroslavsky, who had little patience with over-development and shady development scams.

As Zev describes it today, Zuckerman made one big mistake – he took Zev up to see the land, hoping to win his support. Instead, Zev was so impressed with the beauty of the hillside he told Zuckerman he could not support his proposed zone change.

Meanwhile, the *Los Angeles Times* had run a series of investigative reports condemning County planning practices in the Santa Monica Mountains. According to the *Times* reports,

“ ... an exhaustive computer analysis ... revealed that greed and incompetence allowed one of southern California’s last wild areas to be effectively gutted. While developers funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars into campaign coffers, the Board of Supervisors and its appointed commissioners routinely approved housing projects larger than permitted by (existing county) plans, undermining efforts to protect the area.”

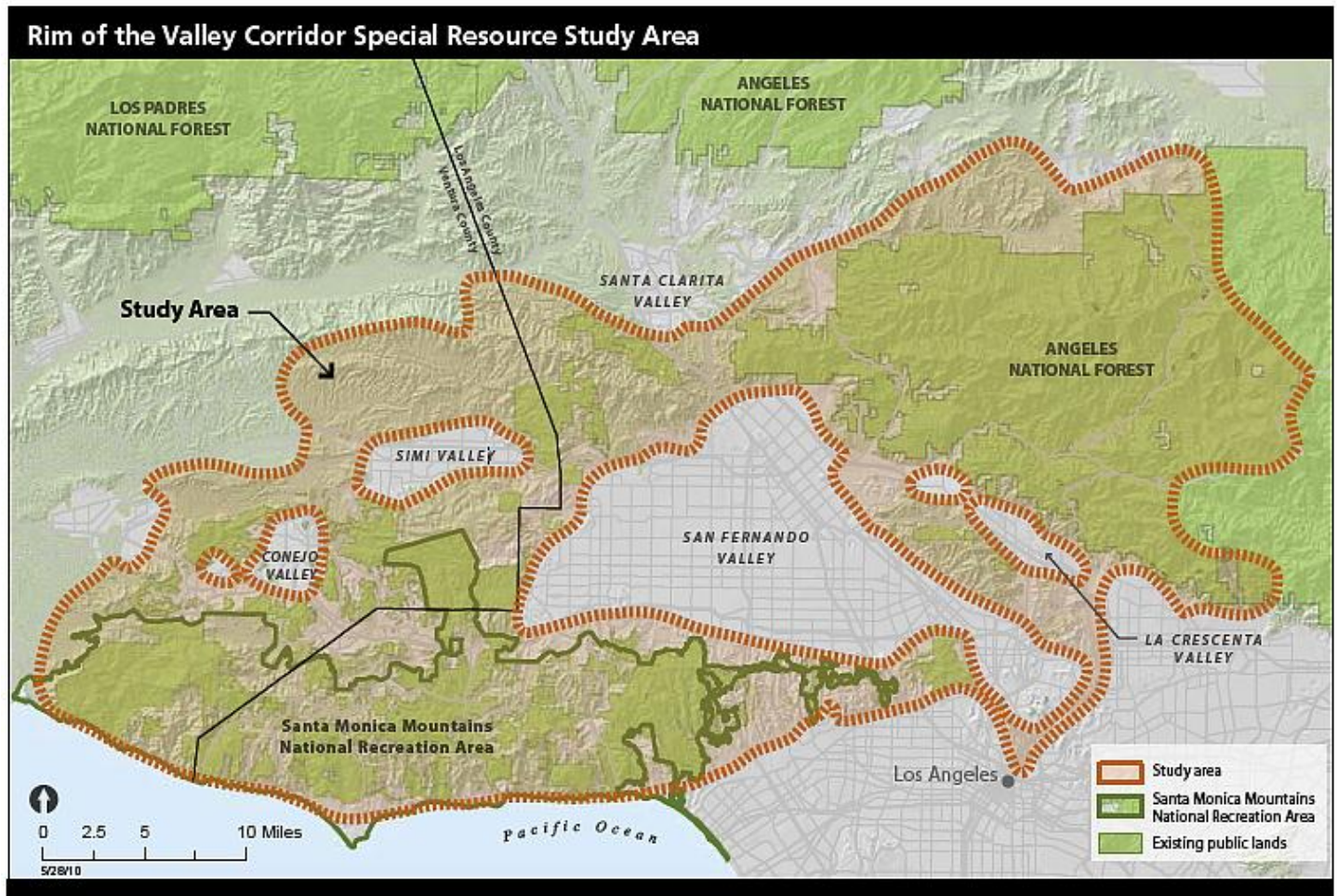
In May, 2000, Zuckerman made one last attempt to persuade the Board of Supervisors to give its blessing to a re-born Continental Communities and Calabasas Center. Armed with ammunition from the *Times*’ investigative reports, Zev Yaroslavsky persuaded his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to take the unprecedented step of voting unanimously to deny a zone change for the first time in at least a quarter century of what the *Times* had called “that oxymoron, County planning”.

The long struggle over Continental Communities focused public attention on the beauty of Firehouse Hill, but, unfortunately, there were other, more pressing demands on the limited supply of state and federal acquisition funds, such as Ahmanson Ranch and Soka. By the time funds had been found to purchase those properties, Firehouse Hill had a new owner, realtor Fred Sands, who initially had his own grandiose plans for development.

The years went by while Supervisor Yaroslavsky and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy worked to persuade Fred Sands to sell Firehouse Hill at a price the County could afford. He held out for a long time, but the more he looked at the hill; the more he realized how wrong it would be to develop it. In the end Sands agreed to sell the 207- acre property for \$6.25 million.

So, it came to pass last week that Firehouse Hill got a new owner and we got a solid commitment from Zev and the Conservancy that the Hill would always be there to welcome us back home at the end of a busy day in the Big City.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO STUDY POTENTIAL “RIM OF THE VALLEY CORRIDOR” EXPANSION



The National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a “special resource study” of the area known as the "Rim of the Valley Corridor." (see map above). This is the area that generally includes the mountains encircling the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi and Conejo Valleys of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

The \$500,000, four year study will thoroughly examine how and if the 450,000 acre area might successfully connect a series of trails and recreation areas around Ventura and Los Angeles counties to create a vast network of open space for wildlife and humans!

Woody Smeck, Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) said, “It potentially would connect a string of pearls.” He said extending the park’s boundaries would provide better conservation opportunities and allow many different groups – federal, state, local and private entities to work

together to develop solutions to “cutting edge challenges” to protect our finite natural resources.

The study will approach and analyze the benefits of integrating a whole park system rather than just simply fragmented park pockets. It will explore: protection of wildlife habitat and linkages between open space areas; completion of the Rim of the Valley Trail system; preserving recreational opportunities and facilitating access to recreation for a variety of users; protection of rare, threatened or endangered species and rare or unusual plant communities and habitats; and the needs of communities within and around the study area.

According to long time activist Dave Brown.....“It would be especially good to put the entire area of the Simi Hills bordered by the 101 on the south, the San Fernando Valley on the east, Thousand Oaks on the west, and the City Of Simi Valley on the north into the SMMNRA. Existing and potential trails and trailheads could make this area directly accessible to over 100,000-plus residents of Thousand Oaks, 100,000-plus residents of Simi Valley, hundreds of thousands of residents of the West San Fernando Valley, and over 50,000 along the Ventura Freeway Corridor, as well as protecting and opening to remarkably wild and unspoiled wildlife habitat and habitat linkage that could ultimately connect the SMMNRA to the San Gabriels.”

If the Park system expands to encompass a Rim of the Valley Corridor, all private land within its boundaries would remain private and the various state and local agencies would maintain ownership of their properties. Some of the usual suspects, like the American Land Rights Association (ALRA) is already (as reported in the Ventura County Star) making accusations and trying to rattle property owner cages with the unfounded fear that this is some type of land grabbing ploy to control what landowners can do with their property. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Park Service has no power to dictate what landowners can or cannot do with their private property. ALRA used the same tactics in attempting to get homeowners to oppose the establishment of the SMMNRA in 1978. It has long been funded by developers and land speculators with a history of using scare tactics to try and block park proposals.

The National Park Service wants to hear from “you” about the Rim of The Valley Corridor. The initial comment period for the study has started, and will extend through Oct. 29, 2010. They’ve launched a website with information, e-mail notification, and a link where you can conveniently submit your comments electronically <http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley/> .

There will also be initial public meetings held in cities throughout the study area in September and October, 2010.

We’ll keep you posted.....here is a great opportunity for you to weigh in and support designating the corridor as a unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and protection of the corridor by the National Park System - “helping to care for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.”

FIRST AMENDMENT COALITION: CONCERNS OVER SECRECY IN CALABASAS...

The City of Calabasas' ongoing refusal to provide access to or copies of requested public records has ignited the attention of the First Amendment Coalition (FAC).

FAC is a California nonprofit public interest organization dedicated to advancing free speech, open and accountable government and public participation in civic affairs. The Coalition acts locally, statewide and nationally and strives through litigation and other efforts to prevent unnecessary government secrecy and to resist censorship of all kinds.

According to Peter Scheer, FAC's executive director, "The First Amendment Coalition has taken an interest in enforcement of open government laws in Calabasas. We have concerns with the City's compliance with the Public Records Act and the Brown Act."

On June 2nd, the City received a request from an attorney for the Coalition to provide records that the City had recently denied as not being subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act. The FAC disagrees; its detailed and inclusive two-page Public Records Act Request demands that all documents be provided.

Stay tuned....we'll keep you posted on the people's right to know.....the Brown Act....and freedom of speech in Calabasas.

WELCOME TO THE CITY OF CALABASAS.....OR...NOT?

Mayor Barry Groveman threw out a *welcome* to Calabasas mat for potential new Mountain View Estates (MVE) residents on May 26th at a Council meeting that can only be described as embarrassing and that casts a shadow on the city.

Up for consideration was Council approval of the pre-zoning of the Mountain View Estate subdivision and its open space—a 385-single-family-home community and 560 acres of open space (total 840 acres)—in preparation for potential annexation into the City from unincorporated Los Angeles County. The City of Calabasas has proceeded with annexation despite opposition in the Mountain View community.

Seven Mountain View residents and one Calabasas resident took the time and effort to prepare testimony and trek into City Hall, likely expecting they would have opportunity to be heard. Mayor Groveman quashed that expectation and began the public hearing by saying, "We have a *number* of speakers so I am going to ask that we limit comments to **one** minute which will be enforced by the clerk". Allotting one minute to speak has not been customary practice in Calabasas, especially for a mere eight speakers on a particularly important, controversial and impactful community issue.

The mayor's aggressive tone and discourteous treatment displayed toward several of the speakers, as well as his abruptly cutting them off, and interrupting, was clearly

perplexing and gave the impression that he either didn't like, didn't agree with or wasn't interested in what they were trying to squeeze out in a minute.

Mountain View residents had anticipated more time than one minute; several were reading comments they could not finish despite best efforts to race through them. One resident who verbalized he had expected three minutes was told by the mayor, "I apologize but it's one minute." As the speaker sped thru through his comments, approaching a minute and a half, the mayor cut in and said, "I've asked you to wrap it up." The resident asked, "May I finish my sentence?" Mayor Groveman said an emphatic NO. "You have 10 seconds." The frustrated resident replied, "Great to know—you want us to annex, but you won't even listen to us."

Public comment for the MVE hearing was limited to less than 10 minutes.

We compared the MVE public hearing to another recent hearing that similarly concerned a narrower community issue as opposed to a citywide issue. This hearing focused on the Calabasas Park Homeowners Association (CPHA - the master association for Calabasas Park) – the controversy over funding maintenance of Lake Calabasas, and if all residents who live in *that community* and pay taxes should be given access to walk around the lake regardless if they choose to become members of CPHA or not.

The scope, flavor and tone of this hearing was completely different. The mayor was accommodating and very generous with time and comments, frequently asking the speakers, "How much time do you want?"

He began with, "I've got a lot of cards. I'm inclined to give two minutes, except the leaders, who I will allocate more time." He then asked, "Three minutes for each, will that do?"

The first speaker said, "Maybe longer for me." The mayor said, "All right, four for you...."

As you can see below, there was no actual *enforcement* of time. There were 13 speakers (five more than spoke at the Mountain View hearing), and they were given significant amounts of time; two were given more than nine minutes each, as much as all the MVE speakers combined!

Speaker 1	5 ½ minutes
Speaker 2	9 minutes
Speaker 3	8 minutes
Speaker 4	4 ½ minutes
Speaker 5	4 ½ minutes
Speaker 6	4 minutes
Speaker 7	5 minutes
Speaker 8	2 minutes
Speaker 9	2 minutes
Speaker 10	1 minute
Speaker 11	1 ½ minutes
Speaker 12	1 ½ minutes
Speaker 13	9 ½ minutes

Five of these speakers were allowed to come back up and testify again, adding four minutes more of public comment.

Public comment for the CPHA hearing was a total of 62 minutes.

Unfortunately, what transpired at the MVE hearing gives a bad impression of the City to Mountain View residents who came to testify and to others now who surely have “tuned” in. Why would anyone want to annex to a city that treats any of its *residents* that way?

Subsequently, at the June 9th Council meeting a resident from MVE came back to protest: “I am protesting the fact that the Mountain View Estates residents choosing to have their voices heard at the public hearing were limited to one minute per speaker. Regardless of whether you are for or against annexation, zoning, as a condition of annexation is a grave and significant issue to the whole Mountain View Estates community. Why hold a Public Hearing if you're not going to hear the public?”

Here are the links to both hearings: paste them in your browser and check out what occurred for yourself.

Link to Mountain View Hearing May 26th Council Meeting (Total meeting time 01h 17m)
Item #13 - 26:43

http://calabasas.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=2873

Link to CPHA Hearing April 14th Council Meeting (Total meeting time 03h 01m)
Item #13 - 16:14

http://calabasas.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=2813

MOTORCYCLE NOISE AND AIR POLLUTION: FRAN TRIES AGAIN

As part of her continuing efforts to curb climate change, our own State Senator Fran Pavley has reintroduced last year’s Senate Bill 435, an emissions control enforcement program for motorcycles. The Motorcycle Tampering Enforcement Act addresses the root cause of noise and air pollution from motorcycles: the illegal removal of catalytic converters and other pollution control equipment. Current federal law regulates emissions-control equipment on motorcycles, but it lacks proper enforcement mechanisms. Pavley’s bill, now before the Assembly transportation committee, would empower law enforcement officers to cite an owner who tampers with EPA-approved equipment.

If you support this bill, address a letter of support to the Members of the Legislature

and submit it—*before June 21*—to:
Senator Fran Pavley
State Capitol, Room 4035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Include your name, contact information and the name of your organization, if any.

YOUTUBE VIDEO PROMOTES DANGEROUS DRIFT RACING IN OUR SANTA MONICAS

Speeding, performance driving and motorcycle racing in the Santa Monica Mountains probably started as soon as the pavement was laid down. But in the last decade, the problem has worsened dramatically, partly due to stunt drivers' promotion of their favorite roads on the Internet. At last month's meeting of Operation Safe Canyons, a traffic-safety task force formed by Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's office, CHP officers and Sheriff's deputies reported on the latest enticement to race our roads: a video on YouTube that has become a monster hit.

About six months ago, the Los Angeles Film Office granted a permit for a Mulholland Highway film shoot sponsored by the energy drink Rockst*r. The 4-minute, 15-second video celebrates a dangerous form of driving called "drifting" or "drift racing" and so far has viewed by nearly 850,000 YouTube visitors. Shot near Seminole Drive, "Tanner Foust Street Drift: Mulholland" provides viewers with the GPS coordinates for the start and finish of the two-mile course. It has brought a massive influx of drifters, motorcycle racers and wannabe stunt drivers into Las Virgenes.

As a result of this unprecedented influx, CHP Public Information Officer Leland Tang foresees an increase in traffic fatalities in the Santa Monica Mountains. "We had 18 fatalities in our patrol area for 2009," he said, "and we were looking to reduce that number to 16 or 17 for 2010. Instead this year has the possibility to be much worse, unless we start being proactive now!"

To help deal with the expected increase in unsafe driving, the Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff's Station's Canyon Deputy Patrol sends deputies into neighborhoods covered by the CHP to assist with the expected increase. If you see or hear racing and stunt driving, call the CHP dispatcher at 323-982-4900. Or call the Lost Hills Sheriff's Station at 818-878-1808 and ask that they send someone from the Canyon Deputy Patrol.

Be careful out there.

To watch the video, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Kaj0QyAUoo

COURTROOM CALABASAS

“I am not going to be intimidated by five people”

Mayor Groveman in reference to members of the public testifying

It’s been three months since the Calabasas City Council’s yearly re-organization and like every other Councilmember it became Barry Groveman’s turn to rotate in as mayor for the year.

Sadly, the expectation of democratic participation in decision-making has frequently disintegrated into Council meetings and public hearings that at times resemble a personal courtroom where the mayor is judge, jury and attorney, where the public is subject to being bullied or ignored and where staff is also subject to be led into presenting/swaying information like “leading witnesses” on the stand to prove a desired result.

This was all too evident at last week’s (June 9) Council meeting and the now infamous On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) update hearings. This time, the impact for the tiny Old Topanga Canyon neighborhood was not just the OWTS Ordinance but also the consideration of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an EIR to expedite sewer expansion into its rural and distinct community, despite opposition to sewer expansion by all 38 homeowners.

To provide some context, Calabasas implemented “by choice” a stringent and what many consider punitive OWTS Inspection Ordinance for its 141 septic homeowners. (There are 1.2 million septic systems state-wide). We excerpted the following from a letter sent by Calabasas Community Development Director to local environmental groups prior to finalizing the Ordinance:

Today, we are writing to seek your collaboration and endorsement of our proposed City inspection program for on-site wastewater treatment systems (OWTS) which exceeds the proposed AB885 regulations now under review throughout the State.

Interestingly, the Ordinance attached to that letter was for the most part a copy of Malibu’s Ordinance, which, as we reported last month, is completely different, far less severe and activated by triggers, such as renovations or sales. Also, since that time, AB 885, which mandated state-wide inspections, has been rejected by the citizens and local governments throughout the state and taken off the table.

A slide presented at the June 9 hearing entitled RWQCB MOU *OBLIGATIONS* ignored the fact that the City of Calabasas *voluntarily* signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Water Quality Control Board to mandate inspections. The City was 1 of only 13 cities in LA County that did.

Suspicious from the beginning, Old Topanga Canyon residents had feared that the strict OWTS Ordinance was a ploy to justify bringing in sewers and development. This, in fact, appears to be the case. At the June 9 meeting, the Council gave a go-ahead to the City Manager, in a 3 to 2 vote, to get bids for an EIR on the sewer expansion, an item that wasn't even agendaized as an action item. Mayor Groveman and Councilmembers Washburn and Wolfson voted to go ahead with the RFP, while Maurer and Bozajian opposed.

Mayor Groveman addressed the Old Topanga Canyon residents' concerns as: "a phony environmental movement, disguising a public health threat and a lot of violators."

To be clear: The Federation has long advocated for clean water. We have supported inspections for OWTS systems statewide. Our hope is that AB 885 eventually returns to the table. We voted to advocate for inspection, cleaning, repairing and or replacing septic systems in Old Topanga, but we are strongly opposed to bringing in sewers that will also bring in a slew of new potential development, changing the face of that rural community forever.

At the meeting, Councilmember Maurer brought up the significant costs associated with sewer expansion as opposed to bringing 38 septic systems (some of which are not problematic) into compliance, especially when sewers are not warranted, not wanted and not an environmentally superior alternative.

Staff Estimated Costs:

Sewer installation: **1.2 million** (exclusive of what it will cost the 38 residents to hook up; staff didn't have that figure to report, but it is anticipated to be in the tens of thousands of dollars each)

EIR: **\$60,000-\$90,000**

Enforcement attorney, legal costs of serving notices of violations to residents, staff time: Unknown.

Is the city looking for OWTS problems to expose? Or is it looking to help its residents overcome OWTS problems? According to an Old Topanga resident who testified, last month an 82-year-old neighbor was served with a 15-page Notice of Violation. He had run over a septic-system pipe with his tractor and was in the process of fixing it when city officials asked to have a look at the problem. He was suddenly faced with demands to pump his system daily; the city notified his lien holders and video-taped the inside and outside of his home. "This has got to stop, you are beating up people, he's sick, you've got 4 people crawling all over his house, his house was built as a boarding house in the '30s," the elderly man's neighbor testified. "There were different codes back then, you need to help these people, work with them, don't attack them."

So what are the ingredients that could possibly lead to such a situation? Old Topanga is a small community. Its 38 homeowners have virtually no political clout. It is an older

more vulnerable neighborhood of residents living in older homes built mostly prior to the city's incorporation. An issue like "septics" can easily be exploited and sensationalized, and most Calabasas taxpayers have no idea what the real issues are. A city without the financial resources that Calabasas boasts would not even consider wasting taxpayer money on sewers for 38 houses.

During the June 9 meeting, the Mayor focused on the six people in Old Topanga who purportedly expressed an interest in sewers. He asked about offering "an amnesty program for people to come forward and say they want the sewers." "Could we provide assistance or an incentive," he asked. "What could we come up with for them to bridge the gap, seek the safe harbor, assuming we are going to accelerate the sewers and get it done?"

It took City Councilmember James Bozajian to set the record straight, time and time again. "The staff report says six people *enquired* about sewers, not that I want to get on the sewers as soon as I can...somehow that got overlooked. We need to make that clear. Somewhere that line was totally crossed."

Councilmember Maurer agreed, saying, "Let them come forward. I haven't heard from one person who said they want sewers."

Another question the Mayor focused on—looking for the answers he knew were there— "Are you finding unpermitted structures," he asked a building official.

"Oh yeah, we find that every week," was the answer.

Councilmember Bozajian then responded that he wanted "to make it clear that by including this report in here you are segregating this [Old Topanga Canyon] as a rogue community...finding unpermitted structures or code violations can happen anywhere, with or without septic systems or sewers. These have nothing to do with this issue and they have no business being in this report. We are taking a closer look at these homes than any others in the city...of course you are going to find violations. If they are not directly related to septic issues why are they here?"

Councilmember Bozajian then hit on the most important issue: "I can't get away from the growth inducing impacts," he said. "'I think that in the long run this is one of the worst effects - to develop a lot of those lots classified as undevelopable - what a shame that would be if that was the main side effect of this - if we could have had a much less alternative...keeping up our enforcement, monitoring the situation and not having the additional development out there. I am not in support of the EIR; I could not foresee voting for that at this time."

Councilmember Maurer agreed saying that, "residents should be encouraged to fix the septic."

Mayor Groveman then retorted. “For the record, let me be one person on behalf of others in the city who says that if several people buy property years ago, they all have an entitlement to develop that property,” he said. “Just because somebody moved in first doesn’t give them the right to block the other people who also envisioned a retirement home in the same place and to make it undevelopable is unconstitutional.”

As Councilmember Bozajian pointed out again regarding the property the mayor was referring to: “It was undevelopable at the time.”

Old Topanga lots are, of course, anything but standard. They are small substandard lots that for the most part could not be created today because they are too steep or are too close to the creek or have no access. They were created before there was any environmental regulation. Over 80-plus years since they were created, the good cabin lots have been built on. The ones left empty are problematic at best. How would the narrow, antiquated, or “paper” streets of an ancient, pre-CEQA subdivision of over 200 lots designed for weekend camping accommodate the eventual build out of over 200 modern homes?

Based on the mayor’s comment about property “entitlements,” it appears the issue may not be health and safety, as he has been espousing, but rather expediting development. Since he is speaking “on behalf of others in the city” perhaps these others should identify themselves. Are they property owners/developers that have an interest in developing out every lot in Old Topanga?

It is not the responsibility of the residents of Calabasas or Old Topanga to make lots developable for any person who purchased real estate that, for whatever reason, was or is impaired. Neither should the citizens’ pay for an expensive sewer under the guise of comparing it to other environmental battles like Ahmanson Ranch, which was also alluded to. In actuality, the fight for Ahmanson Ranch stopped build out, whereas sewer installation in Old Topanga will expedite build out.

But don’t hold your breath. As the mayor said, “I am “not sympathetic to this problem.....” “I am not going to be intimidated by five people” (referring to the Old Topanga residents who had spoken during public comment).

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION SENDS UNANIMOUS MESSAGE TO COUNCIL – “NO” POOL!

Residents just keep saying NO any way you package it

Last night, June 14, 2010, the City of Calabasas Parks and Recreation Commission held a hearing concerning whether Westside residents wanted a pool on the

Westside. After extensive testimony, the overwhelming majority of which again showed that Westside residents were opposed to such a pool, the Commission voted unanimously to report to the City Council that the residents did not want a pool.

This was a follow up meeting to the April 28, 2010 public hearing the Calabasas City Council held concerning discussion and direction to staff regarding Swim Center West at De Anza Park. Despite overwhelming citizen testimony against a swim center, the Council in a 3-2 vote led by Mayor Barry Groveman, Council members Dennis Washburn and Jonathon Wolfson referred the matter to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Councilmembers Mary Sue Maurer and James Bozajian had no problem hearing their constituents and voted no.

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City Hall filled to capacity Monday night as Westside Calabasas turned out to say an emphatic “NO” to the question the City Council assigned to the Commission: Do Westside residents want a pool and, if so, where?

Commissioners revealed that e-mail responses mirrored the high proportion of opponents to proponents present at the meeting. Only five people spoke in favor.

Speakers shunted about many alternatives, all of which were prefaced with statements about West Calabasas not being interested in hosting the proposed regional, commercial enterprise, but that if the city did somehow find it in its best interest to impose the notorious “water park” that it should be located...well, almost anywhere except in their neighborhood park. King Gillette Ranch, the Water District Headquarters, Viewpoint, office buildings, the Salvation Army camp, and other community’s neighborhood parks all came up as alternatives, but a joint use agreement with the school district for shared use of existing facilities was the most commonly offered alternative.

One of the Commissioners initially lectured about how naysayers show up for public hearings and how the comments at the hearing had smacked of Not In My Backyard syndrome (NIMBY), but then she apparently remembered that, in fact, the question posed by the city in an individual mailing to every Westside resident had essentially been, “Do you want a pool on the Westside (in effect in your backyard?)”. She then ended up proposing the motion to tell City Council that “NO” – Westside residents did not want a pool.