



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



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FEDERATION NEWS WATCH

YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE Calabasas Voters Have A Right To Know...

Calabasas is in big trouble. Mayor Barry Groveman, who along with Councilmember Dennis Washburn announced at the last moment that he would not seek re-election, handed a parting gift to the Calabasas electorate: He and the rest of the City Council selected and endorsed two candidates *before* the filing period for nominations had closed and *before* they even knew everyone who was running! Guess Mr. Groveman couldn't wait to tell Calabasas voters how to keep his legacy alive and perpetuate the status quo.

To say these endorsements are stunning would be an understatement. They raise questions about Mr. Groveman's continuing influence and about what goes on behind closed doors at the Council. Even more disturbingly, they raise questions about how and why the Council made the endorsements. Unbelievably, the Calabasas City Council endorsed attorney Fred Gaines, who makes his living representing developers large and small throughout the Santa Monica Mountains and the rest of Southern California.

The tactic is: Shhh, don't tell anyone in Calabasas. Voters are completely in the dark about Mr. Gaines' profession. He is not an environmental attorney as he pretends to be. His livelihood comes from representing clients seeking to exploit the environment. Mr. Gaines obviously needs to keep the facts of his longstanding career under wraps from the voters (and perhaps from certain Council members) until he is safely elected. This is going to present a conflict should he be elected. Is he going to suddenly give up his law practice (Gaines & Stacey, LLP), in which he has built a reputation as a shrewd and effective counsel for developers? We seriously doubt it. Will he do a 180-degree turnaround as a Calabasas Councilmember and negatively impact his practice (and cause him to lose developer clients) outside the city? We doubt that too.

Mr. Gaines is who he is—not who he says he is, or who he may want to look like in order to get votes.

Fred Gaines' professional commitment is to help his clients develop open space. To even consider someone like him for City Council contradicts the goals and objectives the City's residents so highly value and hold in utmost importance. As it says in the City's 2030 General Plan, **“The preservation of the remaining open space land within Calabasas and acquisition of new lands for open designation are consistently identified as the community's highest priority. Open space is a key component of the City's character, representing a scenic resource of great value and importance to the quality of life for Calabasas residents.”**

Martha Fritz, the other pro-development, Council-endorsed candidate, presents similar problems. At the City's Development Code workshops, she opposed restrictions on ridgeline development, using the issue to vent her frustration with restrictions placed on her own mountain-top property. She too is risky to the city. We can be certain that the sensible land-use policy championed by Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky—“let the land dictate the use”—is something neither Fred Gaines or Martha Fritz respects. It's definitely something Fred Gaines continues to challenge in court on behalf of his clients.

Fred Gaines looks for loopholes and ways around environmental laws for his clients – not for ways to protect our environmental resources.

Calabasas voters have a right to know the truth.

A FOX IN THE HEN HOUSE?

Calabasas City Council candidate, Fred Gaines, often portrays himself as a steward of the environment. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fred Gaines has a long history of representing developers and controversial projects that have had devastating environmental impacts. Case in point is Mr. Gaines' current efforts to transform 58 acres of beautiful open space and a golf course into a dense housing tract. Located in Tujunga, adjacent to the 210 freeway, the project is within the National Park Service's potential “Rim of the Valley Corridor.” Gaines is representing the developer, Snowball West Investments, LLP.

The proposed project is a massive 229-unit housing development with parallel rows of four- and five-bedroom homes. **Gaines contends they [his clients] have a right to build 229 houses on the site and—pending something unforeseen—they plan to do exactly that.** (Visit www.savethegolfcourse.org for more comprehensive information and details.)

Gaines and his client are overwhelmingly and fervently opposed by powerful environmental groups, the surrounding community and local politicians.

Los Angeles Councilmember Paul Krekorian said in a recent statement: “I fully support the efforts of Volunteers Organized in Conserving the Environment (VOICE) and the more than two dozen organizations that fight to preserve the Verdugo Hills Golf Course, an important and popular **oasis of open space** and recreational activity in our community. From the 5,000 active and involved VOICE members, to the hundreds of others in the community groups from Sunland-Tujunga to Studio City, **I am proud to stand with such forceful advocates for open-land preservation and believers in positive environmental policy.** Their efforts to save the golf course reflect a community-wide desire to maintain an open and very beautiful area for people to enjoy in an increasingly developed urban region. I will continue the fightto preserve this much needed green space in our community.”

When you visit the website you will see that much of what Gaines is saying and doing for this developer-client is identical to the shenanigans we often see from him, including his attempts to out-manuever environmental and zoning laws. For example, Gaines said Snowball West is seeking a *lot line adjustment* that would separate the property into two parts: the hillside areas and the flatter portions of the property. Community members have questioned whether the lot line adjustment is intended to avoid the slope density ordinance instituted by the City of Los Angeles?

At a recent presentation that Gaines gave on behalf of his client, members of the public made a point of saying that the event was, designed to put a human face on Snowball West Investments, LLP, in order to mute future community opposition....and despite Snowball West's stated willingness to engage the community, their ultimate goal is to develop the property and secure what they call "a reasonable return" on their investment, even if that requires destroying the golf course.

As stated in the Draft Environmental Impact Report, the project would result in:

- significant unavoidable environmental impacts to: scenic vistas, scenic resources, existing visual character, and protected oak and sycamore trees - to name just a few.
- **the removal of 11 sycamores and 85 coast live oaks (and encroachments on 31 more).**

- greatly diminished open space scenic resource with clearing of 14 acres of pristine native habitat, chaparral etc.



The introduction of the urban development proposed by Mr. Gaines' client and the loss of this major open-space resource will compromise the rural character of nearby La Tuna Canyon. La Tuna Canyon retains its rural ambiance because of open space that has already been dedicated in the area.

We strongly recommend you visit these websites and blogs to read about this for yourself and to see Gaines in action. You will discover what this community and these environmental groups are up against in their efforts to preserve this open space and to prevent Mr. Gaines and his client from developing it.

www.savethegolfcourse.org; www.fight2savevhgc.wordpress.com

As you can see, what Mr. Gaines does for a living is not opinion; it is fact. He represents developers and development, *not* the environment and *not* open-space preservation. He has a track record of looking for ways around environmental protections to benefit his clients and a history of looking for loopholes to circumvent zoning or laws instituted to protect resources.

Do you really think he is going to give up his lucrative client list of developers with deep pockets? Think again. More to come.....

The following is excerpted from www.fight2savevhgc.wordpress.com

Calabasas, You Have A Problem

Posted on [January 9, 2011](#) by [STA](#)



Fred Gaines, the attorney that represents Snowball West Investments in their vehemently opposed efforts to transform the [Verdugo Hills Golf Course](#) into housing, [has announced his candidacy](#) for the Calabasas City Council. He may present himself as an environmental advocate in Calabasas, but he's trying to wreak environmental havoc in Sunland-Tujunga. [Don't buy his lies](#) Calabasas, he's a fox and a developer's best friend trying to get into your hen house.