

BRENTWOOD HILLS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

POST OFFICE BOX 49495 • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90049

www.brentwood-hills.org

Neighborhood News

June 2002

Upcoming Ballot Measure for the MRCA Benefit Assessment District

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local joint powers authority that includes the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), a state agency. Both agencies were formed to acquire and improve open space and parkland. The MRCA has obtained approval from the City of Los Angeles to establish two Benefit Assessment Districts to raise money for land acquisitions in the City of Los Angeles portion of the Santa Monica Mountains. The MRCA proposal, if approved by voters, would establish two Benefit Assessment Districts under the Municipal Improvement Act of 1913. One district would be for the portion of the Santa Monica Mountains in the City of LA east of the 405 freeway; the other would be for the mountains west of the 405 freeway within the City boundaries, including our community.

Such assessment districts are often used for the acquisition and preservation of open space lands and recreation areas. Recently, several such districts have been formed in Marin County and Santa Clara County. Also, property owners in the Conejo Recreation and Park district, Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and Pleasant Valley Recreation and Park district have recently approved the formation of such districts.

According to information provided by the MRCA, approximately \$25 Million in net assessment bond proceeds would be raised if the measure is approved by homeowners, paid over a 30-year term. The proposed annual assessment rates are a maximum \$40 per single family home, \$40 per .35 acre for most business properties and \$14.40 per dwelling unit for apartments under 20 units. The purpose of both districts would be to raise funds for the MRCA to:

- Acquire and preserve many of the remaining open space, wildlife areas and natural lands in the Santa Monica Mountains;
- Regularly clear brush and excess vegetation to reduce local fire hazards;
- Create additional parklands and trails; and,
- Protect important habitat and wildlife corridors in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Each of the two proposed districts will be divided up into several acquisition areas. The funds raised in each area will be used to acquire and protect open space in that specific area. For example, if the measure is passed, the funds raised in our area will be used to complete the acquisition of the Tucker/Eastport parcel of land, a critical parcel that comprises the majority of the open space along the Westridge Fire Road, stretching from behind the first hill beyond the fire gate all the way up to San Vicente Mountain Park at Mulholland Drive. The funds will also be used to acquire other open space in Mandeville Canyon, Sullivan Canyon and other areas surrounding our community.

Members of your BHHA Board have been attending meetings and working with the MRCA and other homeowners' associations in the area to help define the criteria for how the Benefit Assessment District funds can be used, and to ensure that the money raised will be spent to protect open space within our own community. A small portion of the assessment will help to pay for brush clearance on newly acquired and existing MRCA and SMMC land in the area, but the majority will go toward the acquisition of open space. The MRCA's newsletter describing the proposed district and the uses of the funds in more detail is included in this copy of the BHHA newsletter.

After considering this issue and reviewing the available information, the BHHA Board of Directors voted unanimously at our June 3 meeting to support the creation of the benefit assessment district and to urge a "YES" vote on the measure. We all will be receiving ballots in the mail in the next several weeks on this measure. Since this is a mail-in election, it is critical that everyone carefully review the materials attached to this newsletter and the information that will accompany the ballot, fill out the ballot, and then mail it in within the deadlines specified. This will ensure that your vote will be counted and that your voice on this important measure will be heard.

We all love living in this beautiful area. The things that make this area so special are the sweeping vistas and the undeveloped open space that surround our community. The BHHA Board believes that \$40 per year to enhance and protect this critical resource is a small price to pay, and recommends approval of the MRCA Benefit Assessment District.

Redistricting Update

As we mentioned in our previous newsletter, the 2000 census has triggered the redistricting process for the City of Los Angeles. Under the law, the City Council is required to redraw its districts in light of the new census data. Significantly for the BHHA, the Redistricting Commission recommended including our community in a single coastal district stretching from dirt Mulholland down to Westchester just north of the Los Angeles Airport. This new district would combine portions of Cindy Miscikowski's 11th District with portions of Ruth Gallanter's 6th District.

Members of the BHHA Board have been active in this redistricting process to ensure that the interests of our community will be protected. Particularly, we have been working with members of other homeowners' associations to ensure that the Brentwood community is treated as a whole in the new council district, and that the new council district will be designated as Council District 11, which will ensure our continued representation by our elected representative, Cindy Miscikowski. The alternative proposal was to designate the new coastal district as Council District 6, which would have changed our representative to Ruth Gallanter, who will have to cede her council post when her current term expires at the end of this year, due to term limits.

After many meetings, letters and lobbying activities by members of the BHHA Board and other community leaders, the City Council recently voted to designate the new coastal district as Council District 11, which will ensure Cindy Miscikowski's continued representation of our community for the remainder of Cindy's three-year term. In addition, the City Council adopted the adjustments to the 11th District boundaries supported by the BHHA and other homeowners' associations in Brentwood, which will keep Brentwood together as a community in the new district.

If you are interested in looking at a map of the new City Council districts, you can go to the Los Angeles City Council's website, www.lacity.org, and click on the link for the Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting. Then click on the specific links for the various council district maps. The final redistricting vote by the City Council will take place this summer.

Neighborhood Safety

We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful neighborhood, but the proximity to nature means we all share certain hazards. For example, the entirety of our neighborhood is in the city's highest risk zone for fire. This means that we have the strictest brush clearance requirements of any area in the city. It also means that smoking is restricted. We have several popular trails, which introduces bicycle safety and rattlesnake issues. And of course, all southern Californians must be prepared for earthquakes. The striking beauty is certainly worth it, but we can and should do things to mitigate all of the safety concerns.

No Smoking

The Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone designation means no smoking in any public areas, but especially not on streets, trails, or near vegetation. (Yes, this means smoking should be done indoors only.) If you see someone smoking out doors, please ask them to put it out or move inside. Smokers who drive are a frequent hazard, since many unconsciously dispose of their cigarettes out the window, as if the world is their ashtray. All it takes is one thoughtless gesture to create a major emergency. Let us all take personal responsibility to make sure this doesn't happen.

Cyclists

Since our community has two of the most popular trails for mountain biking in Los Angeles (Sullivan Canyon trail and Westridge fire road), we share our streets with many cyclists, especially on weekends. Like it or not, a bike has as much right to the road as any other vehicle. Cyclists should ride single file, but if they do not, take great care in passing. Often, hazards that motorists are not aware of make it impossible for cyclists to ride at the edge of the road (small potholes or debris, tree limbs and brush, and car doors opening to name a few). Avoid passing cyclists on blind turns. Wait until there is no oncoming traffic to overtake bikes if the road is narrow, and allow enough room for them before reentering the lane. Frequently cyclists are able to ride at or near the speed limit, particularly when riding downhill. There is often no reason to overtake a cyclist heading down the hill, so pay attention to

your own speed before determining whether you even need to pass. Whoever is right or wrong in a car vs. bike accident, the cyclist will be the loser.

Brush Clearance

During the last few years the brush clearance standards have changed substantially, and with good cause. There has not been a fire in our area in many years, and after several wet winters a few years ago, coupled with two extremely dry summers in a row, the amount of fuel on our hillsides and in our canyons is at an all-time high. The LAFD has gotten much more efficient in their brush inspection process through the Brush Clearance Unit, and chances are good that if you live adjacent to any native brush you have recently received a notice of non-compliance. Please make sure that you take care of any outstanding brush clearance issues quickly. If you are not found to be in compliance at the time of the reinspection, a \$218 fee will be assessed. If the property remains uncleared by the owner, the fire department will have the brush cleared, bill the owner, and also charge an additional \$314 administrative fee. It is obviously worth saving the \$532 to take care of it after the first notice, rather than waiting.

If you have any questions about the process, or if you would like to report a brush hazard, you can contact the Brush Clearance Unit directly at 818-756-8022, or by e-mail at brush@lafd.lacity.org. Since this is the busiest time of year for that unit, you can also contact Fire Station 19 on the non-emergency number: 310-575-8519.

Many areas of the former Boeckmann property are not compliant with the fire code, and the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy is taking steps to deal with the problem. If you are aware of a brush hazard on that property, or if you are paying a FAIR Plan surcharge, please contact BHHA secretary John Given at 310-471-8485, or by e-mail at webmaster@brentwood-hills.org.

Rattlesnakes

There have been many reported sightings of rattlesnakes in our neighborhood this year, especially on the Westridge fire road and surrounding area. Rattlesnake bites are somewhat rare (believe it or not, rattlesnakes are much more afraid of you than

you are of them), and a little common sense is all that is necessary to avoid being bitten. When hiking, stay on the trail. Whether on the trail or in your yard, keep your hands and feet out of areas you can't see. If you should happen to see a snake, don't bother it. Most bites are the result of being too close or attempting to catch the snake. Safely getting by a snake is a matter of leaving enough space, usually six feet or more. If you are bitten, get medical attention as soon as possible, but try not to panic. It is good practice for at least one person in every hiking/biking group to carry a cell phone, which you can use to call 911.

Due to their energy and curiosity, dogs are more frequent victims than humans, so keep your pet under your control and on the trail, where they will not be as exposed to snakes, ticks, or the temptation to chase rabbits and deer.

CERT

Enclosed with this newsletter is a flyer from CERT, the Community Emergency Response Team. CERT is currently being organized for better emergency and disaster preparedness. If you are interested in becoming a CERT team member, we would encourage you to get involved, especially if you have any special skills that would be of use in an emergency.

On page six of this newsletter is a special message for licensed amateur Ham Radio Operators from David Ditlow (son of BHHA Treasurer Loretta Ditlow). If this applies to you or someone you know in our community, please contact him.

Other Safety Issues

Obviously, no single newsletter article can touch on every potential safety issue. If there are any additional items of concern that you would like BHHA to address, please get in touch with us or attend one of our meetings and let us know. While it is always important to discuss safety and be prepared for natural or man-made emergencies, after the events of last fall it seems especially important to be prepared. Thank you for helping to make our community more safe and secure.

Important Note

Due to the July 4th holiday, our next board meeting will be held on August 7th.

Sullivan Canyon Update

In our last newsletter, we included an article on the efforts by the Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD”) to sell the Sullivan Canyon open space and riding facilities at the mouth of Sullivan Canyon on Old Ranch Road for private development. This eight-acre property has been used by many members of our community for walking and for riding at the equestrian facilities. The property was acquired by LAUSD many years ago by eminent domain for potential use as a site for a new school. Since then, it has been held for public use, including as a riding facility under lease from LAUSD.

In response to LAUSD’s efforts to sell the land, the BHHA Board coordinated with some of the other homeowners’ associations in the area to attempt to save as much of the open space in Sullivan Canyon as possible and to preserve the equestrian facilities on Old Ranch Road. Although we initially

hoped the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) would be able to purchase the property, the LAUSD’s asking price made that impossible. As a result, an organization of concerned citizens was formed to purchase the property from LAUSD. Although their acquisition efforts were successful, LAUSD’s asking price was so high that it appears that the group will have to sell a couple of lots on the eight acres in order to help finance the acquisition. However, the good news is that the group intends to keep as much of the property as possible as open space and to preserve the equestrian riding facilities in Sullivan Canyon.

All of the details of the acquisition are not yet finalized, so we don’t yet know how much of the property might have to be sold to fund the acquisition. The BHHA Board will continue to monitor this issue to ensure that as much of the property as possible is preserved as open space and equestrian facilities.

Dues Reminder

Treasurer Loretta Ditlow reports that our membership response is still a little lower than in recent years, so please get your dues in if you have not already done so. If you have already renewed, please double check that you actually contributed to BHHA. If your check was not made out to Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association or BHHA and sent to us at our PO Box, then you may not have renewed. There are other homeowners associations nearby, which sometimes results in confusion. We are the only homeowners association dedicated to Brentwood Hills, in existence since 1964. We only deliver newsletters to our own area, so if you have received this, your primary homeowners association is almost certainly BHHA.

At \$35 per year, you will not find a better deal. Some of our recent projects include: supporting

acquisition of the Boeckmann property for parkland, the Westridge Road trailhead, the LAUSD/Sullivan Canyon issue, MCR speed tables discussion, LA City Council redistricting, brush clearance, repaving our streets, and numerous other smaller items. To stay in touch, we maintain a useful web site (located at www.brentwood-hills.org), and we publish multiple newsletters per year. We have excellent relationships with the city, especially Councilmember Miscikowski and her deputies, and we can be a valuable resource for homeowners. We are only as strong as our membership, so please stay up to date in your dues and participate in our organization.

If you have not renewed yet this year, please cut out and enclose the form below, and return it to:
BHHA
PO Box 49495
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Brentwood Hills Homeowners Association - 2002 Renewal

Please enclose check payable to BHHA for \$35

All membership information is confidential

Name: _____

E-mail address: _____

Address: _____

To opt-in for BHHA e-mails, check here:

Director Election/Annual Meeting Date Set

As usual, there will be five seats up for election for director late this summer, and if you would like to nominate someone (including yourself) the requirements for nominees are that they be a fiscally current homeowner. The deadline for nominations this year will be August 16th. Contact BHHA Secretary John Given at 310-471-8485 for additional information.

Results of the director elections will be announced at our annual meeting, which will be held on the afternoon of Sunday, September 22nd. Guest speakers at past annual meetings have included representatives of City Police and Fire Departments, Edison Security (now ADT), Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, neighboring homeowners associations, and our City Council Member Cindy Miscikowski. Please save the date.

Important Contact Information:

Los Angeles Police Department
West LA Division
Emergency #: 911
Non-emergency #: 310-575-8401
Community Relations/
Crime Prevention: 310-575-8431
Senior Lead Officer
Dennis Hinman: 310-573-0953
website: www.lapdonline.com

Los Angeles Fire Department
Fire Station 19
Emergency #: 911
Non-emergency #: 310-575-8519
Brush Clearance Unit: 818-756-8022
website: www.lafd.org

Councilmember Cindy Miscikowski
Council District Eleven
West LA Office
1645 Corinth Avenue, Rm. 201
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-575-8461
website: www.lacity.org/council.htm
e-mail: miscikowski@council.lacity.org

other important numbers:

ADT Security: 310-478-0301
24 Hr. SMMC Ranger: 310-456-7049

MRCA/Westridge Trailhead

Design work continues on the Westridge Road trailhead. Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a public entity of the State of California with joint powers with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) among others, has a basic design scheme for the parking area and trailhead created by Stephanie Landregan, Manager of Development Projects and Landscape Architect for MRCA. A groundbreaking could occur as early as August or September. We will bring you more news about the trailhead project as it develops.

If you would be interested in making a donation specifically for the trailhead project, all contributions to MRCA are fully tax-deductible according to Ms. Landregan. Be sure to write "Westridge-Mandeville line item" in your check's memo space and it will be earmarked for the trailhead. Ms. Landregan's estimate of the cost is currently estimated at between \$250,000 to \$300,000. An exact number will be determined during the summer months.

Where Is Our High-Speed Internet?

High speed internet has yet to be rolled out here despite recent upgrades locally by Adelphia and Verizon. Adelphia's recent corporate problems probably explain why cable modems are not here yet, but there is currently no reasonable explanation for the delay in DSL. While there are other options available (including satellite DSL and ISDN), they all seem to have comparative compromises (usually price). We will notify you of developments, but for now it appears that lack of high-speed internet is yet another trade-off for the quality of life we enjoy here. Watch for updates as either could be available soon.

Our Contact Information:

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Los Angeles, CA 90049
website: www.brentwood-hills.org
e-mail: webmaster@brentwood-hills.org

This edition of *Neighborhood News* was written by Michael Leslie and John Given