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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **COMMUNITY MEETING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024 - 7:15 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

WILL THE VALLEY EVER BECOME THE LA POWER CENTER IT DESERVES TO BE?

INSIGHTS FROM THE CITY EDITOR OF THE LA DAILY NEWS

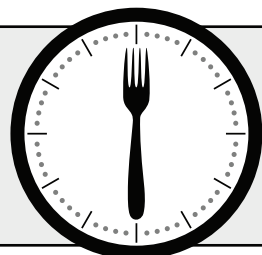


- Why local news is crucial
- Is Investigative Journalism dying?
- Lessons from the March 5th Primary
- The Valley’s growing power base
- What must happen so Downtown recognizes the Valley’s importance?

Jill Stewart is an award-winning print, digital, and broadcast journalist with an extensive background in urban affairs and government reporting, political commentary and analysis, and print and online news management. She has been an editor or reporter at the Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Weekly, Buzz magazine, and New Times Los Angeles. Her work has appeared in the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. Today she is City Editor at the Los Angeles Daily News overseeing content ranging from local government to the environment.

She is also a book editor, and most recently edited a bestselling nonfiction book on education reform, A Fine Line, and an extensive investigation into child abuse for Chronicle of Social Change. In 2020 and 2022 she was an adjunct professor at Chapman University, teaching broadcast investigative journalism.

Email your questions for Jill to SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com by noon on Tuesday March 19th. Streaming starts at 7:15. The Zoom ID is 879 0957 8577 with passcode SOHA914. You can find the Zoom link on our website at SOHA914.com, and we email the link to members before the meeting. You can also listen to the meeting via telephone by calling (669) 444-9171 or (669) 900-9128 and entering the Zoom ID and passcode. The meeting video will be available about a day after the meeting – search YouTube.com for “SOHA Community Meeting”.



RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH - OSTERIA LA BUCA

FIND OUT MORE ON PAGE 3 - SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM

TWO SIDES OF THE HOMELESSNESS COIN

by Larry Slade, Homelessness Committee Chair

Politics is often defined as the art of “of the possible.” Placed into the box of political issues that define homelessness, we must ask ourselves “what is possible?” To be sure, there are competing political interests all around the political hot potato that has become the most pressing issue in Los Angeles politics – homelessness.

On one side of the political spectrum are those who believe that having a roof over your head is not even close to being a fundamental right guaranteed by the US Constitution. They often believe that if you want to live inside, you need to make it happen. It’s not the job of taxpayers to provide anyone with a roof they argue. Personal responsibility is the theme that permeates this thinking augmented by a limited-role-of-government philosophy. Taking care to make sure that all people in Los Angeles live inside is just not part of the equation.

On the other side of the political spectrum is a more humanistic and selfless philosophical viewpoint that ladens our government with responsibility to care for its people and put roofs over their heads. Whatever the resources and costs to get the homeless “safe inside” it’s a price worth paying. We have a responsibility to each other the argument goes, and no one is just “out there” on their own.

For those initiated into the political morass that is “homelessness” these two diametrically opposing sides of the coin lack nuance and a true understanding of how the problem is caused, perpetuated, and (most importantly) solved. Put simply: the problem cannot be reduced to tag lines or a “one-size-fits-all” approach. There is no single strategy to fix the problem. It’s a complex problem that requires a remarkable amount of money, time, and commitment to resolve on a daily and individual basis.

To my mind, both sides of the coin are right, and they are also both wrong. The personal responsibility and it’s-not-the-role-of-government position may sound heartless but there are real limitations on what we can and can’t do to fix the problems of another. The costs are high and concerns about those costs are fair and reasonable. On the other side of the coin, how can we decide a political position which seeks to help and protect the most vulnerable amongst us? Are we not our brother’s keeper?

I have been advocating in this column for a balanced, nuanced approach to mitigating the problem which now affects everyone in LA in one way or another. As I stated above there is no simple or cheap resolution to the problem. I fear that mitigating the problem of homelessness is the best that we can hope for, and I am left wondering if, notwithstanding our differing philosophical differences on whose job it is to fix it, to what extent can we impact the outcome that we all desire – to get the homeless off the streets.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MAYOR BASS EXECUTIVE DIRECTIVE 1 PROJECTS

by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair

As you might remember, shortly after Mayor Bass took office, she started issuing Executive Directives – a means to quickly start her housing policies. The first directive, ED 1 was intended to streamline the planning approval process for any 100%-affordable housing project in hopes of getting needed affordable housing built quickly. ED 1 saves developers a lot of time and money by not having to go through environmental or community reviews. This streamlined process helps make many projects “pencil out” financially for developers. However, ED 1 was initially issued with no detailed guidelines in place to protect communities from overly aggressive development.

As a result, soon after ED 1 was announced, projects began to be proposed for several sites in single-family neighborhoods. The mayor’s intent was never to allow apartments in single-family neighborhoods, so her office quickly corrected the omission and exempted single-family R1 zones from eligibility. There are three projects still in single-family neighborhoods in the Valley that were submitted before the neighborhoods were exempt and are now in litigation. But this was not ED 1’s only shortfall. Now, throughout LA, communities are noticing inappropriate projects being proposed in their neighborhoods. A proposed project in the Hollywood Hills is a 10-story apartment building on a substandard single-lane, curvy hillside road.

Another ED 1 project in Windsor Village is seeking waivers from the city on setback requirements, parking requirements, tree preservation, bike spaces, and open space – and more. Another large Japantown project is proposed on Sawtelle in an historic Japanese community with small duplexes and single-family homes. Lawsuits are mounting up.

Currently the city is moving to make ED 1 a permanent ordinance. Once that happens, detailed guidelines for what is allowed must be made clear and legally binding. We are currently working with the mayor's ED 1 point person to help add common-sense guidelines to the ordinance to avoid the problems the directive is causing. We have submitted ten guidelines for the draft ordinance that we feel would protect communities from these problematic projects while supporting all other 100%-affordable housing projects. The draft ordinance must go before the City Council's PLUM Committee. We are currently trying to meet with committee members. If our guidelines make the draft, we feel the entire city will benefit. It doesn't help anyone if lawsuits keep being filed. With the right guidelines, ED 1 could help bring to reality 100%-affordable housing projects that are worth fast tracking while protecting communities from invasive projects. We think this was the mayor's original intent. But that intent failed because ED 1 lacked detailed guidelines.

SOHA DEMANDS METRO ANSWER 20 QUESTIONS

by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair

On February 28th, SOHA submitted our strongest letter yet to Metro about the Sepulveda Pass Transit project. We demanded that Metro respond to 20 "reasonable" questions, announce when Metro will release the Draft Environmental Impact Report, and give the public no less than 90 days to review the report which will be at least 25,000 pages. On February 29th, Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins replied and said "I have asked my staff to review your comments and questions and prepare a response." You can read our letter on the SOHA website at www.SOHA914.com at "Click Here to Read Letter to Metro".

Our letter asked for Metro responses by March 14th. We told Metro that if they did not respond by then, SOHA would elevate our concerns with federal and state transportation authorities to convince them that Metro has withheld essential project information from the public, provided misleading and possibly fraudulent information to the public, and purposefully undermined the public's ability to make educated relevant comments and ask intelligent questions about the project. It's not an idle threat.



By Jane Kaplan, Restaurant Chair – SOHA members are in for a delightful treat this month as Osteria La Buca prepares to serve up their pasta dinner. This beloved establishment, which originated more than 20 years ago on Melrose Avenue, has become a cherished part of the culinary landscape. During the challenging times of the pandemic, Osteria La Buca ingeniously pivoted to a pop-up restaurant format right here on Ventura Blvd in Sherman Oaks, much to the delight of local food enthusiasts. Osteria La Buca, 14235 Ventura Blvd, (818) 456-1216, www.osterialabuca.com



In recent years, Osteria La Buca has evolved into a beautiful, permanent fixture in the Sherman Oaks community, offering an array of delectable dishes crafted from only the highest quality ingredients. At the heart of their culinary philosophy lies a commitment to simplicity and authenticity, reflecting the essence of Italian country food. What sets Osteria La Buca apart is their dedication to sourcing ingredients locally, with a substantial portion of their produce harvested from their very own garden in Southern California. Embracing the joy of eating seasonally, they celebrate the freshness and vibrancy of each ingredient, resulting in dishes that are both flavorful and satisfying.

One of the hallmarks of Osteria La Buca's menu is their house-made pasta, crafted with precision and care. This commitment to tradition, coupled with the bounty of California farming, has elevated Osteria La Buca to premier status in the realm of Italian cuisine. It's no wonder that my family and countless others have developed a deep appreciation for the culinary treasures offered by this esteemed establishment.

As we anticipate the pasta dinner event from Osteria La Buca, let us celebrate the marriage of Italian tradition and California ingenuity that has made this restaurant a cherished gem in the heart of Sherman Oaks. Join us as we savor the flavors of Italy, crafted with love and devotion by the talented team at Osteria La Buca.

LESSONS TO COME FROM CD4 PRIMARY ELECTION

by Tom Glick, SOHA Board

The LA City Council District 4 election should be a referendum to any candidate coming out on top that ignoring the primary needs of the district's constituents doesn't lead to good results. Case in point: Our current Councilmember Nithya Raman who is in a tough reelection campaign of her own making as a direct result of putting the needs of her constituency second to that of her other interests. Many in CD4 felt that they were never given a seat at her table which was filled up by her own special interest groups, namely the Democratic Socialists of America LA Chapter and Abundant Housing. Decisions from her office seemed to be made unilaterally without any significant community input. In the end, incumbent Raman could have had an easy 2024 reelection campaign if only she supported key fundamental issues important to her constituents such as keeping the homeless away from our children and schools, protecting businesses from the homeless, supporting efforts to protect single-family neighborhoods, and voting for police budgets and pay increases, just to name a few.

Recently, Ms. Raman has been on record as critical of independent Political Action Committees or PACs that were created to oppose her reelection, due to their feelings about many of her questionable priorities. Those PACs could have easily been supportive of her reelection if only she was more moderate in her views. But in the end, her opponents like Ethan Weaver can't be blamed, as Ms. Raman would lead you to believe, for PACs created because they don't like her or her stance on many issues. While Mr. Weaver is a very worthy candidate and can bring a lot of fresh, new ideas to City Council, in some ways he is just the beneficiary of the dislike Ms. Raman has garnered over her three-plus years in office, especially by the police and fire unions. Ms. Raman in this campaign hopefully has gotten a better idea of what is important to her constituency, 72% of which is in the southern San Fernando Valley where the police need our support and funding, our school children need to be protected from homeless, our single-family neighborhoods needs unwavering support, and our fire fighters do not need to concentrate resources on fires in homeless encampments and in RVs parked on streets.

Conversely, if Mr. Weaver is elected to serve CD4, he needs to take his victory as fact that many believe he will reverse current trends, allow his constituency back to the table, and allow those most affected by issues into the dialogue and decision. For example, the 7-story Ethel Ave apartment being built in a Sherman Oaks single-family neighborhood had no local involvement in any decisions. Mr. Weaver states that his constituents will always be his number one priority. He understands that if he ever strays from that fundamental premise, he may have a similar fate in 2028 to that of his two predecessors, who didn't make it past one term. Mr. Weaver has pledged to be directly available to his constituents by having weekly district "office hours" where constituents can come meet with him.

In the end, this election is hopefully a learning experience of everyone involved, especially any politician who thinks that once elected they are anointed to govern as they see fit. This election should come with a warning about governance stated best by Winston Churchill, "... *nothing would be more fatal than for the Government of States to get in the hands of experts. Expert knowledge is limited knowledge, and the unlimited ignorance of the plain man who knows where it hurts is a safer guide than any rigorous direction of a specialized character.*"

CITY COUNCIL PUTS BRAKES ON VAN NUYS AIRPORT EXPANSION

by Jay Weitzler, Airport Committee Chair, with big thanks to Tom Materna

Good news for efforts to regulate Van Nuys Airport (VNY)! Just this past Friday, the LA City Council denied the request from the Bonseph-Helinet company to redevelop and expand their helicopter operations at VNY as they enter into an expected 25-year lease. In addition, while Bonseph had not specifically requested they be allowed to expand into jet service, their application might have allowed that to happen. The council urged Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), which controls VNY operations, to complete the VNY Specific Plan before allowing expansion. As we know, there has not been a formal review of Van Nuys Airport operations since the last specific plan way back in 2006. The council is also requesting a new advisory body, the Community Council, be formed to add more input from the airport's neighbors about designing operations and expansion. At present, the voices heard are overwhelmingly airport business based, explaining the enormous growth of VNY over the last five to ten years without any community input. SOHA thanks member Tom Materna for his time and efforts urging the City Council to adopt these motions to protect our neighborhoods.

Do you receive our email updates?

If not, we do not have your email address. Email it to us at soha914@gmail.com.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMINGS AND GOINGS

by Matt Epstein, President

In recent months, the Comings and Goings column has been expanded to include a new section called “Staying”. This month, I am delighted to share news about another Sherman Oaks establishment that will remain open – the Antique Mall located on Ventura Blvd at Hazeltine. Originally slated for closure due to the impending sale of the building, the owner has made the decision not to sell, ensuring that the Antique Mall will continue to serve the community. When I wrote about the closing of this landmark establishment about six months ago, I received so many responses of disappointment from the community. This enduring indoor venue boasts more than 100 dealers and has been a cherished part of Sherman Oaks since 1982. The decision to keep their doors open is undoubtedly welcome news for both proprietors and patrons alike. 14034 Ventura Blvd, (818) 906-0338, www.soantiquemall.com

In addition to this, residents can anticipate the arrival of Cava, a Mediterranean restaurant, in the vicinity of Anajak Thai on Ventura Blvd. Cava offers a contemporary culinary experience centered around healthy fast-casual dining. With a mission to infuse heart, health, and humanity into their food, Cava embodies the Mediterranean way of life, where food serves as a focal point for culture and connection. Currently operating in 25 states, Cava will soon be extending its presence to Sherman Oaks. Having personally dined at their Westwood location, I eagerly anticipate the convenience of having a Cava establishment in our own neighborhood. 14708 Ventura Blvd, (747) 788-5794, www.Cava.com

For those unfamiliar with Valley Current, allow me to introduce this invaluable resource for staying informed about the latest developments in the San Fernando Valley. Originating on the Westside, Matt and Jamie recognized a void in the news coverage of their community and established the blog and newsletter, Westside Current, which quickly amassed more than 200,000 subscribers. With a commitment to keeping readers “in the know” and “in the now”, they delve deeply into community issues, providing comprehensive coverage that matters to residents.

Upon relocating to the San Fernando Valley, Jamie and Matt identified a similar need for enhanced local news coverage and thus Valley Current was born. As the Valley’s premier hyper-local news source, Valley Current engages in investigative reporting, delivers breaking news, and shares stories that resonate with Valley residents. Their dedication to covering neighborhood issues fills a crucial gap in local journalism, and I commend Jamie and Matt for their efforts in establishing a platform that truly serves our community’s informational needs. www.Valley-current.com

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Power Center it deserves to be - insights from
LA Daily News City Editor Jill Stewart ◀

▶ **Find out about SOHA's strongest letter yet to Metro, how**
Executive Directive 1 could ruin your neighborhood,
and good news about the Van Nuys Airport Expansion. ◀