

"Together  
we have  
clout!"

## ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY MEETING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

— WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 - 7:15 PM — SOCIAL HOUR/DINNER - 6:15 PM —

SHERMAN OAKS EAST VALLEY ADULT CENTER • 5056 VAN NUYS BLVD

# WHAT HAPPENS WHEN OUR CITY CAN'T LIVE WITHIN ITS BUDGET?

## JACK HUMPHREVILLE – LA'S BUDGET AND DWP WATCHDOG – TELLS YOU WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT



- The City of LA's Dangerous Structural Budget Deficit
- Tough Impacts of Labor Agreements on the Budget Deficit
- Depletion of the City's So-Called "Reserve" Fund
- Why Budget Deficits Will Reduce City Service Levels
- A Deferred Maintenance Budget That Exceeds \$10 Billion
- An Unfunded Pension Liability of More Than \$8 Billion
- How Intergenerational Theft Impacts Future Angelenos
- Why Tripling or Quadrupling Water, Power, and Sewer Rates Over 10 years Will Cost Ratepayers Tens of \$Billions
- More ...

Jack Humphreville is a Neighborhood Council Budget Advocate and the chair of the Neighborhood Council DWP Advocacy Committee. Jack has published more than 1,200 articles in CityWatchLA – many as the LA Watchdog digging into the financial details of LA City and the Department of Water and Power – and their impacts on Angelenos. One of his most recent "Watchdog" articles was "Shame on Nithya Raman and Hugo Soto-Martinez." He believes the city must "Live Within Its Means" – which it currently doesn't – and not enter into any labor agreements that will create deficits.

Jack moved to Los Angeles in 1984 and has lived in the same house in Windsor Square for 38 years. A business school graduate, he was an investment banker with Drexel Burnham Lambert in Beverly Hills and an owner of Target Media Partners, the publisher of Recycler Classifieds and other classified ad publications across the United States. He is a long-term dues-paying SOHA member and voted for Valley secession despite living on the Westside.

Email your questions for Jack to [SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com](mailto:SOHAZoomMtg@gmail.com) no later than noon Tuesday September 17th. Streaming starts at 7:15. The Zoom ID is 897 2845 0900 with passcode SOHA914. You can find the Zoom link on SOHA914.com, and we email it to members a day before the meeting. The meeting video will be available about a day after the meeting – search YouTube.com for "SOHA Community Meeting".



**RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH – PIZZA PARTY!**  
**FIND OUT MORE ON PAGE 4 – SOHA SOCIAL HOUR @ 6:15 PM**

## **DON'T LET THE HOMELESS STEAL MY PASTRAMI**

*by Larry Slade, Homelessness Committee Chair*

I read with frustration the recent story about the possible closing of Langer's Deli resulting from the impact of the homeless on its business. I have lived in Sherman Oaks for the past 28 years, but I am still a kid from NYC who needs to have a great pastrami sandwich once every six months. The thought that the best deli in LA would close because their customers cannot patronize the deli since the homeless render the experience unsafe and unpredictable should be unsettling to us all.

Great pastrami notwithstanding, Langer's is nothing but a reflection on the conditions in Los Angeles for thousands of businesses. Faced with the homeless living in front of their storefront or verbally accosting their customers on the way in and out of the business, the owners are at their wits ends. Business owners in Sherman Oaks in particular have been suffering under such conditions for a long time. Unfortunately, the news from Langer's is not news to Sherman Oaks business owners. In some ways the homeless problem has improved. We are faced with smaller and fewer homeless encampments which is a good thing.

However, as I have been ranting about in this column for the past two years, it's the mentally ill and/or drug-addled homeless that have the greatest impact on our local businesses. And you better believe that as customers of those businesses, Sherman Oaks residents feel it as well.

Anyone that has sat at an outdoor café or restaurant patio has been forced to be conscious of their surroundings and on guard in case they need to act fast in response to a homeless assault, verbal or otherwise. Nothing will shift a customer's experience of a restaurant faster than an unbalanced homeless person directing unwanted attention their way. This unfortunate reality forces businesses into the role of law enforcement. Not a good idea.

For whatever efforts and funds LA is expending on preventing and ameliorating the homelessness problem, not enough of it is targeted at the problem I describe. The "dangerously homeless" as I have come to unapologetically call them, still rule the roost and the locals – residents and business owners alike – are left scrambling to grab their purses, hide their cell phones, and look to the server or manager to deal directly with an aggressive and unbalanced homeless person. Again, not a good idea. The city needs to retake the business of enforcing the laws and protecting businesses and their customers. The alternative – the maintenance of the status quo – is not acceptable.

## **IT DOES TAKE A VILLAGE!**

*by Maria Pavlou Kalban, Legislative Committee Chair*

"Thank You!" goes out to each and every one of you that took the time to send in a comment to the Planning Department regarding Draft #2 of the Housing Element's rezoning plan. It takes all of us, working together and keeping a close eye on what the city is planning, to ensure good results for Sherman Oaks. We are currently waiting for Draft #3 of the Housing Element to be released sometime in mid-September. We were told the new draft will be based on the recent, public comments received by the Planning Department. By mid-September, we will know whether our single-family neighborhoods and older more affordable multi-family apartments will be protected from being rezoned for more density.

All of us must continue to play a part in supporting more affordable housing in our community. Adding density isn't necessarily a bad thing. – if done correctly, density can enrich our community. But we also want to be sure that as we add housing on our commercial corridors, our existing businesses aren't displaced and our right to have single-family neighborhoods isn't taken away.

We hope our councilmember will help us achieve our vision. She has a big role to play in the future of Sherman Oaks as we continue to work with the Planning Department on our Community Plan.

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# METRO DESPERATELY NEEDS REAL TRANSPARENCY, NEW MANAGEMENT, AND A DIFFERENT BOARD

*by Bob Anderson, Transportation Committee Chair*

On August 14th, as a result of a lawsuit by Keep Bel-Air Beautiful, Superior Court Judge Stephen I. Goorvitch ordered the LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) to provide detailed justifications for withholding records related to its Sepulveda Transit Corridor project that would connect the Valley to the Westside in the late 2030s, and then LAX in the late 2050s. Keep Bel-Air Beautiful had filed a petition for a writ of mandate, requesting that Metro comply with its document requests under the California Public Records Act. The group sought access to records concerning Metro's analysis and public outreach efforts regarding the project. SOHA supported Keep Bel-Air Beautiful's lawsuit since it was first filed.

Judge Goorvitch wrote that some of the requested Metro documents "likely are exempt from disclosure, but that Metro is taking a 'blanket approach' with respect to every document" and cannot do this. Keep Bel-Air Beautiful's lead attorney Eric George, a partner at Ellis George LLP, stated "Today the court validated what LA citizens have long believed – that the substantial amount of documentation the LA Metro has refused to provide the public is, in fact, subject to the California Public Records Act." Judge Goorvitch found that Metro must demonstrate that the public interest in nondisclosure clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure, he said.

This is a critical court ruling that finally addresses Metro's well-known lack of transparency to the public. For once, they cannot hide behind their fabricated cloak of secrecy – it's been breached. And this court ruling will apply not only to the Sepulveda Pass project, but all Metro projects. It highlights one thing the public has always known – that Metro hides information that we the public should have easy access to.

The real question is how Metro has gotten away for so long hiding basic information the public deserves to see. The answer is Metro's executive management – who from the CEO down should immediately be replaced with new management who are given the mandate to make Metro a transparent public servant, beef up safety, stop wasting public funds, and start finishing projects on time and within budget. It also highlights that the Metro Board – comprising mostly elected officials – should be replaced with a business-type board. Let's face it – our elected officials are very busy people and don't have time to effectively oversee out-of-control Metro and its huge \$9 billion annual budget. There's no more time nor excuses for Metro's executives to be left unaccountable and really unsupervised. We all need responsible and capable leadership – and the time is now.

## SHAME ON OUR COUNCILMEMBER'S SUPPORT FOR HILTON TAX BREAKS

*by Tom Glick, Planning and Land Use Committee Chair*

The Universal City Hilton Hotel has proposed a project on their site for construction of a new, 18-story hotel tower which would add almost 400 guest rooms to their existing 500-room resort complex on the Universal Studios site. That is great news for a city that desperately needs to build more guest rooms throughout the city – especially just four years before the 2028 LA Olympics. Any developer that wants to build necessary infrastructure for the city should be applauded. However, in this case the developer, the Hilton Hotels mega-corporation operating through Hillcrest Real Estate LLC, is asking for massive tax breaks from the city – to the tune of \$80 million over a 15 to 20-year period per city records.

Universal City and the Hilton Hotel resort are within the boundaries of our Council District 4 (Councilmember Raman) and her support for this request is crucial to its approval. Hilton/Hillcrest has asked the City and Ms. Raman to approve the Development Incentive Agreements tax breaks and to some surprise, Ms. Raman has given her support. Although the city subsidy to Hilton Hotels would be much less than the economic benefits the city would receive from them and their business operations over the 20-year tax-break period, Ms. Raman has indicated her support because it will bring good hotel union jobs to the city. However, since the developer is asking for discretionary approval from the city to build this hotel, that concession should be part of the conditions for those approvals and not something offered up simply to receive \$80 million in tax breaks. My friend is currently building a new restaurant in CD4 which will bring more jobs and tax revenue to the city. One wonders if he can get similar tax breaks too.

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It is just very sad that a mega-profitable hotel which is projected to make massive profits from this venture is asking for tax concessions to build their project. It is even sadder that our councilmember has bought into this travesty hook, line, and sinker. Our community will be denied necessary monies to pay for things our current local leaders tell us they do not have money for. To that point, Ms. Raman always likes to portray herself a fiscal watchdog, especially when it comes to necessary services like police. Every time she speaks to our community, she talks about the lack of funds to do important projects. This support for the Hilton at Universal City seems to fly in the face of everything we are being told about the fiscal state of the city. We deserve better than this from our councilmember. As Jack Humphreville stated in an August 19, 2024 City-Watch article (<https://www.citywatchla.com/la-watchdog/29414-shame-on-nithya-raman-and-hugo-soto-martinez>) "Shame on Nithya Raman ..." for supporting these efforts by Hilton/Hillcrest to get massive tax breaks. SOHA shares in his sentiments of "shame".

**RESTAURANT OF THE MONTH**



**PIZZA PARTY!**



*By Jane Kaplan, Restaurant Chair* – As you all know, we’ve indulged in some truly unforgettable dining experiences over the past six months, from the mouthwatering delights of Osteria La Buca to the comforting flavors of HomeState and the iconic dishes at Casa Vega. But with the end of summer on the horizon, we decided it’s time to mix things up a bit and keep it relaxed with a laid-back pizza party!

Picture this: a warm evening, a table laden with pizzas hot out of the oven, their crispy crusts and bubbling cheese just begging to be devoured. Whether you’re a fan of classic Margherita or something a bit more adventurous, there’s nothing quite like the simple pleasure of a perfect slice. So come join us, grab a slice (or two), and dive into the lively conversation that’s sure to be as satisfying as the pizza itself.

After all, nothing says “good times” like a great slice of pie!

**NEIGHBORHOOD COMINGS AND GOINGS**

*by Matt Epstein, President*

In the realm of surprises, there are moments that leave you scratching your head, and this one certainly did! Imagine my shock when I discovered that Jalapeño Pete’s, 11618 Ventura Blvd, the vibrant Mexican eatery with its signature large blue doors on the south side of Ventura in Studio City, has officially closed its doors for good. This place was always bustling with people and seemed to be doing brisk business, so this news was a real curveball. You just never know.



Speaking of surprises, let me tell you about my recent experience with Go Greek, 12930 Ventura Blvd, the yogurt spot tucked away in the Coldwater Collection, right behind Western Bagel. As a self-proclaimed frozen yogurt enthusiast, I was ecstatic to finally try their much-talked-about Greek frozen yogurt. So, off I went, eagerly ordering two small cups – one vanilla, one chocolate – plain, just the way I like it. No toppings, no frills. But when the cashier rang up the total, I was hit with a price tag that nearly knocked me off my feet – \$29! For two small, half-filled cups of yogurt, no less. Yes, the

yogurt was great, but so is Menchie’s, and it’s certainly more wallet friendly. I shudder to think what the bill might have been if I’d dared to add some toppings! Undeterred, I gave it another shot, hoping the first experience was a fluke, and because, well, it’s conveniently close to home and I do have a bit of a sweet tooth. But alas, the second visit was no different – \$30 for two small, plain cups of yogurt. While the yogurt is undoubtedly tasty, the price is, in my humble opinion, simply outrageous. Perhaps I’m just a bit old-school, but the idea of paying \$30 for two small yogurts is tough for me. Though, who knows? Maybe one day this will be the new norm – after all, I have friends who shell out \$20 for a green drink at Erewhon! The times, they are indeed a-changing’. Maybe, just maybe, I’m getting older...

And as if that weren’t enough for the “you-just-never-know” file, it seems the much-anticipated Anahita Persian Cafe and Bistro, 14531 Ventura, which was supposed to open its doors on Ventura Blvd, won’t be opening after all. Something must have gone terribly wrong because there’s now a “For Lease” sign hanging where their dreams were supposed to flourish. Another twist of fate in the unpredictable world of business. You just never know!



## WATCH THE VIDEO OF LAST MONTH'S COMMUNITY MEETING AND LAUSD DEBATE!

See it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/HVvpAmNWJog>



## Sherman Oaks

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**Jack Humphreville, LA's Budget and DWP Watchdog,**  
**reveals what happens when LA can't stay on budget** ◀

▶ **Find out about the sad link between homelessness**  
**and pastrami, how Metro needs to rebuild itself,**  
**and shameful Hilton tax breaks.** ◀