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The Debate: Who Is Your Next City Councilmember?

March 3, 2015 is election day for a new Councilmember for Sherman Oaks (our current Councilmember Tom LaBonge cannot run for re-election). Meet with the candidates - speed-dating style.

COMMUNITY MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2015 - 7:15 PM
NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL
RIVERSIDE & WOODMAN, SHERMAN OAKS

Do you want to know who will be our next Los Angeles City Councilmember? If you do, it's a must for you to attend our Wednesday, January 21, 2015 Meeting. Since our current Councilman Tom LaBonge has termed out, Sherman Oaks will have a new Councilmember starting on July 1, 2015. The primary election will take place on Tuesday, March 3, 2015.

There will be a debate between the candidates and a chance for you to meet with them one-on-one. Do not rely on campaign advertising literature to make your decision on who to vote for. The best way to decide is to see these candidates in action.

There is no elected official who has more control over your neighborhood and community than your Los Angeles City Councilmember. The Councilmember could serve Sherman Oaks for 12 years.

Jules Feir takes pleasure to announce that two restaurants will be the Restaurant of the Month.

These two new Sherman Oaks eateries are:

Murph's has a local American theme with American comfort food prepared fresh daily using the best products and ingredients. The decor is that of an upscale tavern with classic upholstered booths and an inviting atmosphere.

Tipple & Brine is an elegantly casual restaurant that focuses on fresh, sustainable seafood such as a wonderful selection of fresh Oysters as well as a creative menu of delicious items.

The restaurants are owned by the very talented Richard DiSisto. We look forward to enjoying a sampling of their delicious foods during our Social Hour that starts at 6:15 p.m.

* * *

Our 16th Annual Toy Drive was a great success. The event collected over 1,500 toys. The toys were donated to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. The Agency held a Holiday event for foster children. The toys you donated were the only ones distributed at the event.

Thanks to the following officials for attending the event:

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky (retired), our new Los Angeles County Sherriff Jim McDonnell, City Attorney Michael Feuer, our Councilman Tom LaBonge and Councilmen Paul Koretz and Bob Blumenfield, our State Senator Robert Hertzberg, former City Controller Wendy Greuel, Assistant LAPD Chief Michel Moore, LAPD Captain Ivan Minsel who is in charge of our Van Nuys Division, former Assemblyman and current Los Angeles Planning Commissioner Richard Katz and our Assistant City Attorney Neighborhood Prosecutor (and LAUSD Board Member) Tamar Galatzan.

Many thanks to Jules Feir (Chairman of the Event), Matt Epstein (fantastic antique cars to hold the toys), Chuck Betz, Goodway Printing and, of course, Marshall Long (Santa Claus).

Last and especially not least, SOHA wishes to thank Gelson's corporate and the Sherman Oaks store manager William Issa along with his employees for their continued support. They provided food and drinks to hundreds of people who came to donate toys. Your support for the event made it possible for many foster and abused children to receive a gift during the Holiday Season.

* * *

SOHA was approached by a group, The Festival Companies, that owns the buildings north of Gelson's on Van Nuys Boulevard (the Solley's area). They are proposing a facelift to the buildings. SOHA's Marshall Long met with their CEO, Rosalind Schurgin, attorney Ben Resnick, and their architectural team RED Architectural Group. The group is proposing to reclad the building with a synthetic wood material and to add trellises in front of the stores and restaurants. Their goals are to improve the appearance and to standardize the signage. Landscaping would be added to the parking lot consistent with the Specific Plan and similar to that installed in front of Gelson's.

The group is negotiating with the existing tenants, including Solley's. The plan is to add an additional restaurant. There will be no increase in the size or height of the buildings. The current code allows 440 square feet of signage based on the building façade facing Van Nuys. The currently permitted signage area is 1,400 square feet. The developer is proposing a signage area of 870 square feet.

* * *

The developer of the Sunkist development, IMT presented their plans to the Neighborhood Council. Their project consists of the existing Sunkist building (120,000 square feet of office space) plus 359,795 square feet of additional new construction. This breaks down to 40,000 square feet of retail space, 298 new apartment units, 7,241 square feet of retail/commercial tenants including restaurants, and 1,345 parking spaces in a 4-story parking structure.

Renee Weitzler, who represents the Council office for this project, has suggested changes that would make it more acceptable. These include 1) a reduction in the number of units, 2) a stepback in building heights, 3) greater setbacks from Hazeltine Avenue and Riverside Drive, 4) retention of more of the existing trees, 5) additional loading dock spaces for delivery trucks and moving vans, and 6) easier truck access to the loading areas. SOHA and the Council office have requested CAD plans of the proposed project for further study.

The proposed buildings would be lot line to lot line obscuring any significant view of the existing building. In fact the best view of the Sunkist structure will be from the freeway. For more information from local news sources, go online to <http://www.dailynews.com/government-and-politics/20140729/los-angeles-planning-department-to-review-development-plans-for-sunkist-building-in-sherman-oaks>.

You can also access more information on this project at www.shermanoaks914.com.

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SOHA's Bob Anderson reports that the scourge of mansionization is getting worse and won't get better soon! As we reported a few months ago, there has been a motion before the Los Angeles City Council since May to eliminate counterproductive loopholes in the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance that let developers exploit size bonuses and build even bigger houses.

In November, the Council adopted a Planning Department "fix" for the problem that established an Interim Control Ordinance in five specific areas (Sherman Oaks is not one) and included an 18-month effort to close known loopholes in only the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (for flatland areas). The Baseline Hillside Ordinance (for hillside areas) has similar loopholes that are not yet being addressed. This is a sad result.

But, the mansionization problem is actually even worse. We are hearing about compliance problems with the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO) in hillsides across Los Angeles. The Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) is also a weak point. Applicants at LADBS counters are required to complete a Hillside Referral form that LADBS uses to determine whether or not a project falls under the BHO or is "by right." The form is not working. Just look around at how many huge homes are being built on very steep hillsides as "by right" in every council district with hillsides. It's staggering!

Hillsides from Bel Air to the northeast are being gutted, and most projects are being done "by right". This means no hearings, no public notifications (unless you count the 8x10 red posted notice at the property), no advance notifications to council offices so they can react proactively, and no chance for the public to know what is about to happen until the dump trucks show up to haul away the hillside. SOHA will keep working to protect Sherman Oaks, but we are very concerned that the City is not reacting strongly enough or quickly enough to solve this problem.

* * *

You may have heard rumors about a possible new traffic signal on Beverly Glen where the eastern end of Valley Vista is located. Currently, it is in preliminary review and there are no official plans. However, if you have any concerns, questions or feedback about this possible new traffic signal, you can contact our Council District 4 Sherman Oaks field office at (818) 728-9924 or email your concerns to SOHA's Bob Anderson at BobHillsideOrdinance@roadrunner.com.

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Councilman Tom LaBonge obtained funding for the Moorpark Street Improvement Project. Street improvements are set to include widening Moorpark Street between Woodman and Murietta Avenues from the existing one traffic lane in each direction to two traffic lanes in each direction. Additional improvements include construction of concrete curbs, gutter and sidewalk, new pavement, storm drain and sanitary sewer, street trees, street lighting and traffic signals.

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Former SOHA Board Member Nancy Kaleel alerted Councilman Tom LaBonge's office about a traffic safety concern in Sherman Oaks. Since the opening of the new Ralphs grocery store, many drivers are confused by the configuration of the lanes heading south on Hazeltine Avenue toward Ventura Boulevard. Motorists often, in essence, turn that intersection into "a triple left turn" when only a double left exists. After witnessing near accidents several times, Nancy photographed an instance of the "triple left" and sent it to Field Deputy Erich King who is seeking solutions. We look forward to hearing back from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and Field Deputy King about how to correct this potential hazard.

Very truly yours,


Richard H. Close, President