

# Friends of the Hills

A PUBLICATION OF HILLS 2000

OCTOBER 2006

## Lest We Forget

**A**t the council election four years ago, the voters made a clear choice by electing two new council members to replace a regime that had fallen out of touch with the town's needs and wishes in three major areas: New Town Hall construction, Pathways and Open Space. This article reviews the progress made by the new council in each area and reminds us of the need to safeguard what we have accomplished.

**Pathways.** Residents successfully initiated a referendum to undo the prior council's attempt to permanently destroy a substantial portion of the town's established pathways.



**Open Space.** Residents successfully advocated an initiative to protect the town's open space assets from sale solely by vote of the Town Council.

**Town Hall.** Residents successfully stopped plans for

the construction of a monumental town hall, and replaced it with one more in keeping with our town ambiance and budget.

These are but three specific examples that demonstrate how residents rose up four years ago to reclaim values that define our community.

As part of the momentum engendered by these efforts, two fresh new candidates were elected to the Town Council in 2002. They are now up for re-election with a track record of accomplishments — a period marked by consensus within our Council and our community. (The most significant of these accomplishments are described elsewhere in this

newsletter.) Now that the election season is again upon us, both of these Council members have offered themselves to run for a second term. We are very glad they did, and hope to reap the benefits of the four years of experience and momentum that they bring with them. ■

### Make Up Your Own Mind



One of the aims of Hills 2000 is to ensure open and transparent government in our town. To that end, we make video recordings of all council meetings available on the web. This makes it possible for any resident to see directly what happens at these meetings and how decisions are made. We urge you to be a direct witness of "Town Happenings," rather than relying on second-hand accounts that have been filtered through the biases of whoever is reporting on the "facts."

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An Open Letter to the Community



Hills 2000 contacted all three council candidates, inviting them to submit statements and a photograph for publication in this newsletter. Only Breene Kerr and Dean Warshawsky responded. Developer John Vidovich, who is a real estate developer and owner of De Anza Properties declined to submit the requested material.

# Breene Kerr

While serving on the Los Altos Hills City Council for the last four years, I have had the opportunity to work with a wonderful

group of fellow council members and commissioners, incredibly enthusiastic volunteer committee members and a highly professional staff. During that time, town government has become a cooperative and consensus driven vehicle for getting things done for our community.

We have significantly improved our town's public infrastructure, municipal finances and recreational assets. We have re-established LAH as a regional leader on environmental issues by preserving open space and promoting solar energy. At the same time, we have clarified our building codes and simplified the development process. Finally, we preserved the Bullis-Purissima school site for public education.

Completing the new energy-saving Town Hall was a particularly important accomplishment for all of us. Chairing the committee that created the building meant a great deal to me. Looking back, I think the extra efforts made to involve the entire community in the project's design and construction is what has made it so successful. I would like to thank all the committee members, the staff and our vendors for their work.

As your elected representative, I have also worked hard with the rest of the Council to raise our profile in the region. As a result of these efforts, over \$500,000 of regional money is being invested in our town's roads and pathways this year alone. In addition, by working collaboratively with other cities,

we were finally able to permanently raise our Town's share of local property taxes to a level on par with other communities in California. This resulted in a permanent increase in our town's annual revenues of over \$400,000, without raising taxes. These incremental dollars mean that for the first time in decades, we can consider large initiatives such as a new park, playing field or other community projects.

I believe that Los Altos Hills is headed in the right direction. I want to continue to work to preserve what we all love about our town while working to get things done for Los Altos Hills. ■



# Dean Warshawsky

As your current Mayor, I thought long and hard about running for re-election.

Since first elected in 2002, my wife Lee Ann and I have started a family and now have a son, Jake. As expected our lives are very busy and we are constantly (as are many families) seeking to balance my community service obligations with our family life.

However, after evaluating how much we've accomplished in the past four-years and the important issues that remain to be resolved, we decided that it was important to finish the job by seeking another 4-year term as your representative on the Los Altos Hills City Council.

Important work that needs to be completed:

- Improving our infrastructure – roads, sewers, and cell phone coverage
- Public education – bringing it back to LAH and letting the residents vote on the issue
- Town Asset Management – develop and expand recreational opportunities for residents to get more use from Westwind Community Barn
- Public input – encourage residents to present their ideas and address their concerns regarding personal property rights, open space, and estate homes

It has been very rewarding to be part of a city council that has returned civility to the community and provided solid stewardship to

maintain our open space and rural ambiance – while at the same time providing the essential leadership that our community demands and deserves. ■







## News from Westwind Barn

One of our town's treasures is Westwind Barn. During the past few months many positive things have been happening at the Barn. Under the leadership of the town's Parks and Recreation Committee, a year-round riding program has been developed. One of our residents, Jane Kawasaki, has volunteered to supply 5 horses and make them available for lessons and a summer camp to introduce children to riding. The program was then extended to adults. Currently, the program can accommodate over 160 participants. This program is made possible through the cooperation of Friends of Westwind Barn, which has been operating the barn for 29 years, and the 4H-Riding for the Handicapped, which occasionally lends some of its horses to the program. The Parks and Recreation Committee has recently approved a "pilot" trail riding program which is slated to begin in November. After receiving some basic riding instruction, residents will be guided by instructors on rides through the beautiful trails surrounding the barn and Byrne Preserve.

The Town Council has recently formed the Westwind Barn Standing Committee to develop a plan to further increase the use of the barn by the residents of Los Altos Hills in cooperation with Friends. This cooperative approach will hopefully lead to a consensus solution that will unlock hundreds of thousands of dollars of public and private funds that are available to restore the barn to its former glory. Stay tuned for progress on this issue, and an outcome that will benefit everyone! ■

DUFFY PRICE



# TOWN COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1 Resolved the divisive controversy on pathways with a moderate approach balancing the privacy concerns of residents with the integrity of the network. 90 miles of scenic pathways are providing a unique benefit to our residents.
- 2 Obtained grants of over \$400,000 from the VTA to build pathways in our town, including half a mile along Moody Road.
- 3 Built a new Town Hall that is the pride of our community: beautiful, functional, and green. It was done on time and at a cost significantly lower than previously planned. Its low profile style fits nicely in our semi-rural town.
- 4 Obtained a \$75,000 grant from the Packard Foundation and low interest loans from the State of California for a photovoltaic system for Town Hall that produces 50% of the power consumed by the facility.
- 5 Renovated the Town Riding Ring and started a successful Year Round Riding Program to introduce equestrian sports to our children.
- 6 Unanimously adopted the citizen's initiative on Open Space (thus removing the need for special ballot). This action effectively protects our open space by preventing the sale or change in designation of our major open space parcels without a vote of the residents.
- 7 Expanded cell phone coverage in our town with the approval of 3 new antennas, two of which are now completed with the third under construction. The Council has designated a minimum of 2 operators per tower with antennas housed in artificial trees to blend with the landscape.
- 8 Lobbied the county and State in a cooperative effort with several surrounding communities, a process which resulted in the passage of AB117. This law, recently signed by the governor, corrected unfavorable treatment of our town which dated back almost 25 years. This realignment of property tax percentages will result in approximately \$400,000 additional revenues per year, every year for our community.
- 9 Renegotiated a comprehensive sewer agreement with Los Altos that will remove restrictions on the number of available connections.
- 10 Ran a balanced budget while setting aside money for future retiree medical benefits and preserving significant reserves for unforeseen circumstances.

# “TOWN HAPPENINGS” NEWSLETTER DISTORTS THE TRUTH

**T**own *Happenings*, published by the Los Altos Hills Civic Association (LAHCA), arrives innocently enough in your mail. Its name sounds official. It even looks official with a tree logo at the bottom left. Most residents would assume that it is published by a group of citizens sanctioned by town government, interested in letting you know what is happening around town. The problem is that it isn't an official publication authorized by the town. It promotes one-sided views using inflammatory language, cleverly leaving out details and facts that would allow you to develop an informed opinion. It misleads the residents as to the actions and intentions of the Council. To be clear, our newsletter is not an official town-sanctioned publication either, but Hills 2000 presents “the facts” according to the public record — in the interest of encouraging a more civil discussion of the issues by a better informed public. Below are some assertions from the Civic Association’s newsletter followed by the facts they have ignored. Additional commentary available on the Hills 2000 website: [www.hills2000.org](http://www.hills2000.org)



## Issue: Council Direction

**LAHCA's Assertion:** A “survey” shows that the Council is out of sync with the town.

**The Facts:** The answers to this “survey” were pretty much ordained by the way the survey was set up and how the questions were formulated. The survey was not conducted over a random, scientific sampling of residents, but rather was an “opt in” type of survey, which has a strong tendency to pre-select the results. With questions like “Do you favor property rights?” is it any surprise this survey may claim a strong leaning in a given direction?

Members of the current Town Council are extremely sensitive to residents’ opinions and feedback, and make overt efforts to keep the channels of communication open, whether by personal contact, email, the “Public Presentations From The Floor” item on the agenda of every council meeting, or formal public hearings. Our current council is more in sync with the community than any other council in recent memory.

## Issue: Resident Input

**LAHCA's Assertion:** The Council did not ask the residents about the various issues.

**The Facts:** A public hearing preceded each of the ordinances mentioned. LAHCA seems to suggest that the council should

have a town survey/referendum on each and every issue. Council members are always available by phone and email to discuss issues of interest to the residents, and of course everyone is always allowed to speak before the Council. Why do we bother to elect leaders if a survey should be required for every issue? The council recognizes that more weighty issues, such as public education, are so important that they need to be put to a vote of the people. Our current Council is more responsive to our residents than any other Council in recent memory.

## Issue: Energy Efficiency

**LAHCA's Assertion:** The Council imposed higher standards than the State, despite opposition.

**The Facts:** The energy efficiency ordinance requires that new homes meet a high standard of energy efficiency that pays for itself in energy savings. The public hearing showed very wide support by residents. See detailed article on page 6.

## Issue: Eucalyptus Ordinance

**LAHCA's Assertion:** The Council required cutting down eucalyptus trees as a knee jerk reaction to a tragic accident.

**The Facts:** Only in the case of a new development or a major remodel (>1,200 sq. ft.) is the Council requiring anything at all. In these cases, removal of certain varieties of eucalyptus may be required, but

only then if they are close to structures or property lines. The targeted species are native to Australia where soil and weather conditions are quite different from ours here on the peninsula. Here they grow to enormous heights but without the deep roots to match. In winter, when rain has softened the soil, the larger and more dangerous limbs or even complete trees will come down in a windstorm. Additionally, these trees are widely referred to as “widow makers”, especially by firefighters, because their rich sap causes the trees to explode during fires. Eucalyptus trees were the primary fuel in the devastating Los



Altos Hills fire of 1985 where 16 residences were destroyed or damaged. More than 200 firefighters battled the fire, with 100-foot flames, for four hours. In all, 150 acres were burned, causing an estimated \$9 million in damages and as many as 40 people were left homeless.





## Issue: Wildlife Survey

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council wants to create wildlife corridors.**

**The Facts:** Wrong. The Council merely wants to identify not create wildlife corridors. See detailed article on page 7.

## Issue: Public Education Surveys

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council is wasting money to pay for surveys.**

**The Facts:** The Council is doing exactly



what LAHCA is asking more of, i.e. soliciting residents' feedback on how they feel about

important issues. See detailed article on page 6.

## Issue: Parks and Recreation

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council has outlined plans to spend \$5 million for a park with playing fields- without town-wide input.**

**The Facts:** The Council has identified as a priority the need for a soccer field for our community, but has yet to do any study of whether it is even feasible. In due course, if such a project is found to be feasible, public input will be sought.

## Issue: Stop Sign on Moody Road

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council voted to place stop signs at Moody and Altamont without resident input.**

**The Facts:** The Council does not (and did not) direct the installation of any stop signs. The Town Engineer together with the Sheriff determines stop sign requirements

in accordance with State traffic and related safety standards. A few residents complained and the Council did indeed request a review of the issue based on resident's feedback after these signs were installed. At a public hearing, most residents spoke in support with few opposed if the Council chose to support the Engineer and the Sheriff, who have the responsibility to keep us safe.

Based on this incident, the council now also recognizes that it would be best in the future to be informed in advance of new stop signs.

## Issue: Highly Visible Lots

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council is imposing stricter rules on highly visible lots.**

**The Facts:** Exactly the opposite is true. Town ordinances previously imposed potential additional restrictions on the development of lots designated as "Highly Visible." Due to the difficulty of defining which lots fell under this designation, and the associated potential subjectivity in decision making, the Council voted to eliminate this term and its associated restrictions from our site development ordinances. *The vote was 5-0.*

## Issue: Estate Homes

**LAHCA's Assertion: The Council is considering imposing restrictions on Estate Homes.**

**The Facts:** The council has not yet even considered this issue. Currently the Planning Commission is working on a possible ordinance addressing one aspect of very large homes. Such homes placed in a prominent position have the potential to overpower the surrounding neighborhood. Los Altos Hills is the only hillside community that has NO house size limit. (for example, Woodside limits houses to 8,000 sq. ft. irrespective of lot size.) There is no consideration of adopting a size limit for our town. The only consideration at this point is perhaps to require larger setbacks to help make such huge houses less obtrusive. Given the lot sizes required to build in excess of 10,000 sq ft, such additional requirements would be easily achieved. Similarly, increased setbacks are already

required by current code for houses above a certain height.

## Issue: Property Rights

**LAHCA's Assertion: The current Council does not support property rights.**

**The Facts:** The Council has a long track record of support for individual property rights, as evidenced by their vote on various development projects, and the relaxation of some development standards, such as allowing MDA credits for solar panels, and eliminating the "highly visible lot" designation.



Clearly the property rights of one homeowner are neither more nor less important than

those of the neighbors who have an equal stake in maintaining the ambiance of our town. The current Council is very aware of the need for balance, and attempts to respect the desire of most current residents to keep the rural feel of Los Altos Hills, while allowing development that fits town codes. Councilmembers are proud that they are not viewed as extremists on the issue of personal property rights and development, but instead are regularly complimented for their moderate approach. ■

STEVE FINN MAILER

## Issue: Alleged Conflicts of Interest

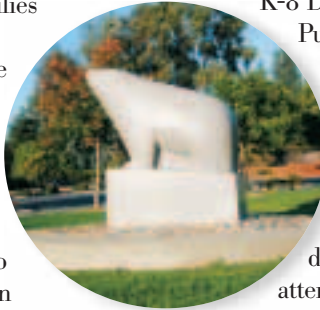
**Steve Finn's Assertion: Breene Kerr and family profited from his council position in conflict with the Town's interest.**

**The Facts:** Mr. Kerr is a marketing consultant and alternative energy expert who works extensively in Silicon Valley. He consults closely with the Town attorney to avoid any conflicts of interest and has recused himself on a number of council votes concerning solar and energy efficiency. His five children have held a variety of summer internships. As a result, he has also recused himself several times on matters involving these companies.



# LAH School District De

Los Altos Hills is split in two – the north is assigned to Palo Alto Unified School District, and the central and southern parts of town are assigned to Los Altos School District. Although Los Altos Hills families continue to pay \$17 million per year to support these neighboring school districts, PAUSD and LASD have closed **all four** of our public schools and we have very no (or very little) board influence – resulting in taxation without representation. LAH families (in PAUSD) overwhelmingly supported a parcel tax increase in 2005, and one of the largest bonds in the state’s history in 1995, yet PAUSD leases a public school building in LAH to a private school rather than return it to our children. LAH families (in



LASD) supported a \$95 million school bond in 1998, and a parcel tax increase in 2002, with the LASD Board promising these funds would “Save our Schools.” But only weeks after passing this tax, LASD closed our last school in town (while spending

\$20 million reopening Covington, including fancy administrative offices). Town residents, outnumbered by the populations of Palo Alto and Los Altos, have been – and continue to be – a last priority. Since PAUSD and LASD are accountable to their own residents, our only chance to control our future is organizing a K-8 Hills School District, putting town residents first. (Grandfathering of current schools is allowed for those choosing that option.)

As state funding and property tax “follows the student,” a Hills K-8 District would be among the best funded in the state. Public Education Committee analysis shows enough K-8 students in town, with \$10K+ per student funding – eliminating constant bond issues and additional parcel taxes. Starting by regaining Bullis Purissima and Eastbrook sites – with accompanying playing fields – we can begin serving ALL our children and erase the line cutting through the heart of LAH. Current districts are not serving us well, as 40% of LAH kids attend private schools compared with less than 10% in other similar communities. It’s time to bring them home. LAH could offer premier education, fund top academic, arts, music and sports programs, and have our first ever local School Board, with genuine community influence and priority.

Hills 2000’s goal is to provide information that supports giving the citizens of LAH the opportunity to make the choice to stay with their current school district or to reorganize.

Hills 2000 recognizes the importance of the democratic process, and feels strongly that the electorate must be allowed to vote on this issue.

## Environmental Initiatives

Utility records confirm what most of us probably suspect – that the residents of Los Altos Hills use more energy per household than nearly every other community in Northern California. Research shows that the most efficient homes in town consume 3 kWh per year per square foot or less, while the least efficient consume 7.5 kWh per year per square foot or more. (How efficient is your home?) The Town Council encouraged the Environmental Initiatives Committee to investigate whether there were some

common-sense measures that would enable residents to use energy more wisely.

After extensive consultation with experts, it was found that new homes of the type built in Los Altos Hills can achieve a permanent energy efficiency that is 15% better than the basic state requirements, with little increase in construction costs. These measures pay for themselves through energy savings in a few years, while benefiting the homeowner and the environment for many years afterwards. This 15% efficiency improvement

is already the EnergyStar Home standard, and is a reasonable requirement. Whole subdivisions of EnergyStar Homes are built in Santa Clara County and elsewhere in California, and some builders take pride in building only EnergyStar Homes.

Included in the energy efficiency requirements adopted by Los Altos Hills are some important features that take into account the unique desires of our residents. Many of our residents install solar electric power systems. Unfortunately the “standard” EnergyStar

requirements do not recognize the contribution made by such systems. The Los Altos Hills efficiency requirements take the contribution of these systems into consideration in their calculations, thus bringing a tangible benefit to residents who opt to go this route. On the other hand, the Los Altos Hills requirements are not prescriptive – the homeowner may choose



# serves a Vote

When our town began organizing our own district, LASD (choosing their words carefully) said Bullis “will reopen as an LASD school.” They’ve discussed many options for reopening Bullis: a district-wide magnet school; a school for special education students throughout the district; keeping it as an all day kindergarten site; etc. What about a neighborhood K-6 school? There is one guarantee with LASD: A LAH school would be the first to close with downturns in funding or LASD population. Opening Bullis-Purissima, LASD suggests re-drawing school boundaries - bringing Santa Rita and Covington children into our attendance area. Will Los Altos parents like crossing the expressway our children have crossed the last three years while losing access to their own neighborhood schools?

The only guarantee for neighborhood schools throughout our town is forming our own district. **We can, for the first time in our history, democratically vote on what we want:** bring back public education, community meeting space, and youth and adult recreational facilities, insure funding control and educational choices, enrich our quality of life and sense of community, and attract many youthful and vibrant families with children to LAH. ■ SHARI EMLING

which measures, solar or more conventional – to meet the requirements. The Los Altos Hills requirements involve no judgment or subjectivity – the projected benefit of efficiency measures is determined through approved calculation methods that builders are already required to use throughout the state, and compliance is mathematical. Finally, formal EnergyStar Home certification is not required.

While the Los Altos Hills residential efficiency requirements reward residents who have chosen to incorporate solar power systems in new construction, there was also a desire to provide incentives to residents who might not

otherwise consider solar power, particularly for existing homes. The Town Council has adopted a measure that grants additional development area to lots where residents install solar power systems.

The Town Council considers it important for Los Altos Hills to set the pace within our region with common-sense measures to improve our energy efficiency and reduce the demands our residents place on the power production industry, one of our nation’s greatest sources of pollution. Neighboring communities and the State of California have already expressed interest in following our lead. ■ PETER EVANS



## WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

**D**espite scare tactic accusations to the contrary, the town’s current “Wildlife Corridor” study is intended to remove unnecessary obstacles to responsible development.

The term “wildlife corridor” refers to the fact that wildlife (deer, fox, coyote, rabbits, etc.) circulate through defined areas and passageways in order to find food, water, and shelter. Unwitting changes can cause unexpected side effects: blocking an established corridor will cause the wildlife to seek other paths, such as through residents’ backyards where they are not welcome, or over major roads resulting in traffic accidents.

As part of our General Plan’s intent to preserve our rural, natural character, our current development process includes examining each proposal for impacts to open space resources, including waterways, significant trees, native vegetation, wildlife, topological features, etc.

The goal of the Wildlife Corridor study is to limit the need for subjective examination of each development project for its effects on wildlife, replacing subjective examination with an established map that indicates which areas of the town are truly the most sensitive.

This project is expected to result in a map which both town planners and homeowners/developers alike can use to see where the sensitive areas are (or more importantly, aren’t), and to assure that effects of development keep wildlife channeled appropriately away from yards and roads, and towards already-protected areas such as streams, creeks, and drainage areas.

Thus, the result of this project should be to require fewer development restrictions while maintaining a healthy natural environment, and keeping wildlife in their natural habitats, and out of our yards and roads – goals that everyone shares. ■ JITZE COUPERUS





## Friends of the Hills

**President:** Jim Steiner

**Secretary:** Duffy Price

**Treasurer:** Nick Dunckel

**Newsletter Statement of Purpose:** To provide factual communications on significant issues to all residents of Los Altos Hills. The newsletter is published with the assistance of members of the Hills 2000.

If you liked receiving this information, please consider joining Hills 2000 and contributing to the education of our residents. Thank you!  
[www.hills2000.org](http://www.hills2000.org)

### CANDIDATE FORUM/POTLUCK PARTY

Join us for this special event on Sunday, October 29, 3:00-6:00 pm at Duffy's home. 26435 Anacapa Drive. RSVP 650-948-0596 or [duffy@duffysmail.com](mailto:duffy@duffysmail.com)

Friends of the Hills  
P.O. Box 31  
Los Altos, CA 94023-0031  
[www.hills2000.org](http://www.hills2000.org)

我认为目前 Los Altos Hills 镇议会成员们都很胜任。他们对我们的镇管理已有四年，对各种问题都有很深的了解。比如对自然环境和房屋建筑的平衡，新居民常会有不同的要求。镇议会在努力满足新居民的要求同时，尽量保存我们山镇的乡村秀丽。一流质量的建筑和空闲的绿化空间使我们的乡镇具有独特的吸引力。当前的镇议会成员们注重居民的意见，并会及时作出反映。

对于目前学校分区问题，他们表示不强加形成独立学区，但希望把决定权送到全镇居民手里，用投票的方式去解决。所以多数人的意见将会获胜。

I believe the current Los Altos Hills government is doing a great job. During the last four years of serving our town, they have a deep understanding of our town's various issues. Newcomers and long-time residents often have different requirements, such as housing construction and protection of the rural environment. The town council strives to balance the needs of newcomers with the desire of all to preserve the rural beauty of our town. Superior quality housing construction combined with open space makes our town uniquely attractive. Our current town council members listen to citizens and are responsive. Regarding the school redistricting issue, my understanding is that the Council does not seek to impose the formation of an independent school district, but wants to bring the issue to a vote of the people, so the will of the majority will prevail.

**Michelle Wu**

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