

Friends of the Hills

Spring 2002

OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS ARE UNDER SEIGE ~ RESIDENTS MUST BE ALERT TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN LOS ALTOS HILLS

Open Space Should Not Be Sold

Town-owned properties and Open Space should not be sold without a VOTE of the residents.

- ? Residents are dedicated to serve as good land stewards for future generations.
- ? The trails and easements that the Town holds are publicly owned assets which are an integral part of the recreation and circulation of the General Plan of Los Altos Hills.
- ? The LAH City Council must follow its own rules and regulations as outlined in the General Plan to maintain Open Space and easements consistent with the Circulation Element of the General Plan.
- ? Easements have value, they represent tens of thousands of dollars in property value and are a *public asset*. They should not be given away.
- ? By vacating the easements, the city council is giving the property owner financial reimbursement from the "public trough."
- ? On **May 16**, the council will hold public hearings on amending ordinances.

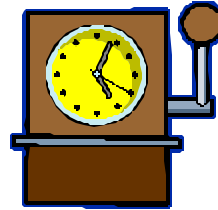
LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

YOU'VE GOT THREE MINUTES . . .

If you go to a LAH Town Council meeting to give them the benefit of your experience, or to explain your view, you will find something new. Mayor Toni Casey had a three-minute clock with a buzzer installed **to limit your speech**.

If you wonder what happened to the Town Community Preferences Survey and wonder why your opinions on the Town appear to be ignored, the answer is simple. Once you have three votes on the council, it really doesn't *matter* what the community wants.

Regardless of your views of the Town's pathways, you can't ignore the political power that was demonstrated recently. On 3-2 council votes, people who don't like the trail and pathway system were appointed to the Pathway



Committee. Once a majority on the Pathway Committee was achieved, the Co-chairs were replaced and the Committee proceeded to eliminate 2/3 of the total proposed trails (off-road pathways) in Town. ***The trails are a resource that once lost, can never be replaced.***

Regardless of your views on Open Space, you can't ignore the squandering of land that was donated to the Town. Does the Town actually need money so badly that it needs to sell 14 acres of Town owned land? ***An Open Space Preserve is a resource that once lost, can never be replaced.***

This council is making decisions that should be made by the community. These are decisions that will change the Town forever. The Town survey and the recent elections do not indicate that this is the direction that the Town wants to go. These aren't decisions that should be made using heavy-handed back-room politics. We have an election coming up soon. There is time to put these specific proposals on the ballot. If the council majority believes that what they are doing is the will of the people, they should leap at the chance to put them on the ballot.

If the council doesn't believe it represents the will of the people, they should remember that they represent the interests of the entire community, not just their campaign contributors.

Westwind Barn Land for Sale? Save Our Open Space!

Westwind Barn sits on 14 acres next to Byrne Preserve. The council majority and the Finance Committee are looking at selling off Westwind and moving the barn to Byrne Preserve. This makes no sense. Portola Valley and Woodside are actively acquiring more open space, while LAH looks at ways to sell its open space! The council majority would like to make Byrne Preserve into a park like Cuesta or Rengstorff Park in Mt. View. The Council states that Byrne Preserve should be more user friendly—picnic tables & BBQ's. Whoa! Not here, not ever! Why is the quiet respite that we all know and love up for grabs? Any town can have a park with BBQ's and play areas, but how many are blessed with a spectacularly beautiful "nature preserve?"

IS THE TOWN BROKE?

? Why is the Mayor leading the charge to sell off our OPEN SPACE? Our neighbors, Portola Valley and Woodside are trying to buy OPEN SPACE to enhance & preserve their communities.

? Is this just a "scam" perpetrated on the Town by the Mayor who wants to give away Town assets to special interests?

? Isn't it time we got some answers?

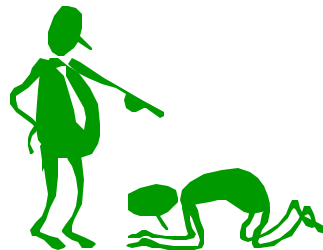
New Member of Pathways Anoints Himself As Chairman

On Wednesday, April 17, 2002, a special Emergency Meeting of the Los Altos Hills Pathway Committee was authorized by **Mayor Toni Casey** without first consulting the Pathway Committee Co-Chairs Nancy Ewald or Ginger Summit.

An additional agenda item was added to the meeting by one of the newly elected pathway members, **DuBose Montgomery**, to throw off the existing committee co-chairs and elect himself as the new chairman. The air in the room was sucked out by his very own comment stating

that, "I want to be chairman!"

During her most recent term in office, Mayor Casey has seen to it, that vacancies on the committee were filled with her "team" – who *oppose* pathways. Therefore, with a 5:3 ratio (1 abstention)



Volunteers are being stomped on by the Council majority.

the "packed" committee had the votes to put onto the agenda anything that they wanted.

Some might consider this a brilliant strategy, worthy of a Washington, D.C. lobbyist—but not in our lovely Town of LAH.

Just because it was legal, doesn't make it ethical. DuBose Montgomery and his big city backroom politicking will defeat the spirit of community volunteerism.

Hills 2000 asks that our leaders to be both legal and "ethical."

Council Majority Demonstrates Its Power—Upholds Coup

Although the Town's Committee charter clearly states that committee chairs are to be elected in July at regular committee meetings, the Pathways Committee election took place in April—and **DuBose Montgomery** who orchestrated the agenda, was elected chair of the committee and controlled the meeting. Former Path-



Absolute power corrupts!

ways Committee Chair, Nancy Ewald was not allowed to even distribute copies of the committee charter.

At the next night's City Council meeting, **Council member Mike O'Malley** placed the item to reverse the election on the council agenda for discussion.

The council discussed this political coup, its legality and

the validity of the special meeting election. Many residents spoke in favor of reversal. **Sadly, the council majority—Casey, Finn, Fenwick voted to uphold the election,** O'Malley against, Cheng abstained.

Just another example of absolute power.

View the council meeting on: www.hills2000.org

REMEMBER NOVEMBER 5

ELECTION DAY

YOU CAN CHANGE ALL OF THIS BY VOTING FOR CANDIDATES WHO WILL REPRESENT ALL OF THE COMMUNITY!

Hills 2000 Mandate—We Urge That Our City Council

- ? **Immediately stop (correct)** all illegal actions taken to abandon Town Recreation and Open Space Areas.
- ? **Show respect for the Town's legacy and its citizens by providing PUBLIC HEARINGS:** The community de-

- serves a full public hearing before the City Council abandons Town Recreation and Open Space
- ? **Provide Clear Agendas:** How can the public understand why community resources are being given away

- without first being given a clear set of criteria from the Council?
- ? **Voting: Residents should be given an opportunity to vote on any sale of Town Open Spaces.**

HIRED WALKER - A WASTE OF \$3000 OF TAXPAYER'S MONEY



Why are we appointing people to the pathway committee who want to hire someone to walk the pathways for them?

Why did the Los Altos Hills Town Council decide to hire a "paid walker" to hike the Town's trails and advise the Council on "vital" links & conditions?

He is neither a professional planner nor a civil engineer - just a nice guy who likes to hike. This is analogous to the Town hiring Mario Andretti to drive around Town to determine which roads we should keep and which ones to vacate.

The hired "walker" was paid \$3000 for his services. Guess how many miles the hired "walker" walked? Assuming that there are approximately 62 miles of

existing on & off-road trails, we paid him about \$48/mile. If he maintained a leisurely 2.5 mph then he received \$120/hour. Not bad!

At the conclusion of the first Pathways study session, the audience was incredulous when the "hired walker"



\$120 per hour—not bad for walking around Town paths!

asked the Council: "What is the purpose of the Town's pathways." Further, he inquired: "What are you trying to connect?" Clearly he had not read the Pathway Element nor had he received any basic orientation. What a waste of \$3000. **Dubose Montgomery suggested this nice young man for the job, right? Was DuBose also responsible for his orientation?**

This City Council should be ashamed for wasting the taxpayer's dollars on such frivolous contracts.

A group of town residents working with the pathway committee are also doing a similar survey of the on-road

and off-road paths for "free" and were providing their information to the town for this project.

PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday,
May 16, 2002
at 6:30 pm

ORDINANCE CHANGE

New standards for fences, driveways, and conservation easements (incl. change from 30% slope to 40% slope), which is not consistent with General Plan.

Council Majority Side-steps General Plan and Ignores Community Survey

The mayor's own goals and those of her supporters (who financed her campaigns) have superseded her duty & responsibility to uphold the General Plan. It is very clear that her real goal is "more development, less control." The cumulative impact of the changes that she has introduced will forever

change the rural ambience of Los Altos Hills. The recent *Town Community Preferences Survey* provided clear direction of what the residents want for the Town. Instead—the opposite has occurred. Changes implemented include throwing out the design guidelines, increasing home heights to 32 feet *with*

no view protection, increasing development formulas. Pending changes include *eliminating 2/3 of the off-road pathway easements*, selling open space, conservation easements to start at 40% slope rather than 30% slope as stated in the General Plan. And there are more—all will result in significant impact on the rural nature of the Town. **Is this what you want? In November you can make your wishes known!**



Power & Dollars—and there goes the Town!

Former Mayor Speaks Out . . .

SAVE THE PATHWAYS

(Note: This Letter to the Editor appeared in the *SJ Mercury News* on May 1, 2002)

Los Altos Hills has something that most cities long for – a beautiful pathway system and open space lands that have greatly enhanced the desirability of living in our town. The real estate values reflect this unique rural look and feel.

It has taken many years to

develop the pathway system and it takes government officials with some foresight and care to maintain and enhance this system. Unless the citizens of our Town strongly voice their concerns about what is going on they will find Council votes to unravel this system within a few months time. Vacating one easement in a series will

block the balance of the pathway. The value of the "on road" pathway system will be greatly diminished if the "off road" pathway system is destroyed.

The speed with which the current council is eroding the Town's pathway system plus now the talk of selling Town owned lands tells me residents need to get actively in-

involved. The citizens should insist on professional advice and well advertised public input on any pathway easement removals and be given an opportunity to vote on the sale of Town owned properties and open space lands.

—Sid Hubbard
Former Mayor and
Council member

HILLS 2000—FRIENDS OF THE HILLS

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Newsletter Statement of Purpose

To provide factual communications on significant issues to all residents of Los Altos Hills. The Friends Newsletter is published with the assistance from members of the Friends of the Hills.

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website www.hills2000.org

We're on the web!
www.hills2000.org
See Town Council
Meetings on Video

Open Letter from Ginger Summit Volunteers Under Siege

Dear Friends & Neighbors:

The Town of Los Altos Hills relies heavily and profits greatly, from the volunteer services of Town citizens. On, April 17 an event transpired which brought out the dramatic changes that are emerging in the spirit of volunteerism in Los Altos Hills. An emergency meeting of the Pathways Committee was called by the mayor, and rather than contacting or working with the co-chairpersons, the agenda was set by one of her newest appointees, *Dubose Montgomery*. The meeting was ostensibly called to review an issue, which has been addressed many times over the past several years. But the second "emergency" was a well-crafted and orchestrated replacement of the chairpersons.

Re-election of officers would normally occur in July. However, the manner in which this issue was introduced and enacted was the most revealing of the

changes that have taken place in our town politics and citizenry. Clearly orchestrated by some of the members of the current council, the meeting was dominated by behaviors that were entirely aggressive and thoroughly destructive. Premeditated tactics brought out mean-spirited behavior that was shocking to other members of the committee and the entire audience. Two members of the Town Council and city staff, including the Town Manager, were in attendance at this meeting.

It is shocking to see how the mayor has been able to orchestrate the committee to fulfill her stated goal to 're-examine' (i.e., dismantle) the pathway system. But a much greater principle is at stake here, and that is the changing nature and the role of the volunteer in our community. I have served as a volunteer in various venues in both Los Altos and Los Altos Hills for over 25 years. When groups are bonded

by a common goal of community enrichment, disagreements are easily handled with discussion and compromise.

Many of the new volunteers who have been appointed to committees in the past four years are motivated primarily by self-interest and personal gain. Our committees are in a position to make far-ranging recommendations that can have direct impact on properties, development, and land use. Given the real estate circumstances, *many individuals are in a position to benefit greatly by even small changes in many Town regulations*. The effect of these changes may not be apparent in the short-run, but as individuals rush to take advantage of the 'adjustments', the nature of our community will be forever altered.

Our current Town council is dedicated to enhancing and strengthening the interests of the individual property owner.

But, who is protecting the larger rights of the Town itself? The open space, the trails, the views, the harmony between homes and hillsides, the recreational opportunities—all are being dramatically challenged. Where is the voice that can protect our assets for future generations—I see that voice being silenced by intimidation. But the town will persevere long after individual homeowners have moved on. What kind of a legacy will be left? The wonderful qualities that attracted us all to this area are being whittled away by decisions being made by these very 'volunteers' who are supposed to be protecting these assets. This is a sad and dangerous situation, and I feel it is important for all members of the community to become informed.

—Ginger Summit, Former
Co-Chair Pathways Committee

