

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Art Liberman, BPA President



By the time you receive our newsletter, the status of the Palo Alto Housing Corporation's (PAHC) proposal for fifteen

market rate single family homes and a 60 unit affordable senior housing project on the Maybell—Clemo property site may be settled. Or perhaps not—the Council members may have weighed in and made their decision approving the project or they may have turned it down and asked for some changes. And there is still the possibility of a legal challenge.

If the project is approved, many of you might feel you were steamrolled by a coalition of housing advocates and city officials who were so keen on this project that they prematurely stuffed it into the Housing Element (a State mandated program administered by a Bay Area group of officials called ABAG) before it was even fully vetted by the reviewing bodies and so intent on satisfying the ABAG requirements that they did not mind setting a bad precedent for spot up-zoning for dense housing a site in the midst of a residential area.

I am writing this at the end of May, following the decision by a 4-1 vote of the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) to recommend that the Council approve the rezoning of the site, from R2 (a strip along Maybell) and RM-15 (orchard behind Maybell and along Clemo) to a Planned

Community (PC) zone to accommodate the higher density required by the PAHC proposal. The next step is the City Council meeting, scheduled for June 10th.

Whatever the final outcome, one fact is very clear; this issue touched a collective nerve in the neighborhood. It brought out an extraordinary, if not unprecedented, outpouring of energy and involvement by the residents who live near the proposed site of this project, which includes part of Barron Park and Greenacres. Extra chairs were required to accommodate the overflow crowd at the PTC meeting on May 22nd. A large number of people had come to speak, and that part of the meeting lasted for two hours with individuals limited to 2 minutes unless they represented a group. The many letters they and others had sent in were stacked high on the table in the back of the Council Chamber that is reserved for copies of the public's comments.

Most of the participants were very articulate and very adamant in their opposition to the PC rezoning. Certainly some local residents, along with affordable housing advocates from elsewhere in Palo Alto, felt that the project was an appropriate use of a vacant parcel, and would provide housing to a needy and underserved community. But the local neighborhood supporters of the proposal were far outnumbered by the opponents.

Why were there such strong feelings?

There seem to be several threads judging by the oral comments and letters. The most frequently repeated one was connected with the traffic on Maybell. It is already bad in the early AM and afternoon PM hours, and the proposed project will make it worse.

Just prior to the school opening hours, packs of bicyclists of different ages coming from a number of neighborhoods cross El Camino each time the light changes. These thick packs of bicyclists, plus those from the immediate streets, ride down Maybell heading to Briones, Terman or Gunn. This is their preferred route: Maybell is on the 'Safe Routes to School' map for several of these schools and plans are afoot to create a Maybell 'Bicycle Boulevard.' Along with some pedestrians who wander off the sidewalk, the bicyclists navigate a road that is too narrow for bike lanes and that is very busy with cars operated either by school parents who will be dropping off their children or drivers attempting to avoid the AM backup on Arastradero. A video of the traffic taken by Maury Green (Barron Square, Thain Way) elicited the only officially sanctioned round of applause from the audience.

A traffic study commissioned by the PAHC claimed that the additional amount of traffic generated by the project would not be noticeable. But the study did not directly address the impact of vehicular traffic on the large numbers of bicyclists or pedestrians on Maybell. Apparently, even for one of the busiest bicycle avenues in Palo Alto, one swarming with bicyclists of all ages, the city requires a methodology for its traffic studies that does not ask about bicyclists or pedestrians—sounds absurd, but it's true.

If the project is approved, some additional
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ART IN THE PARK—SOPHIE CHRISTEL



Sophie Christel has lived in Barron Park for her entire conscious life—she moved here when she was two, and for the

last 18 years, a house on La Donna Avenue has been home. Sophie is a rising Junior at Stanford University, where she is studying environmental science and ecology. She is a passionate birder and an artist by hobby, and loves drawing greeting cards for special occasions—a few of which are published here. When she isn't staring through binoculars or at a piece of paper, she enjoys playing piano (taught by BP's own Sheila Raleigh!), singing, and acting. She adores Shakespeare, and hopes to perform with the Stanford Shakespeare Company next year. You can see more of Sophie's work at birdycards.deviantart.com, and if you're interested in buying any of her cards, send her an email at sophia.christel@gmail.com.



[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

traffic from the PAHC project will end up on Maybell one way or the other. PAHC has obtained an easement through their Arastradero Park Apartments for vehicles to enter and exit on Maybell. Without this easement, vehicles leaving the project would end up on Maybell anyway; those wanting to proceed north on El Camino would exit on Clemo, turn right on Arastradero and immediately right again on Coulombe and again on Maybell, entering Maybell further into the neighborhood and worsening the traffic in front of Briones school.

What has recently made matters worse on Maybell, exacerbated an already worrisome safety issue for school parents and infuriated many who use Maybell as an access route, is the increase in traffic since the Arastradero 'Traffic Calming' project. The impact is also noticeable on Coulombe and other nearby neighborhood streets judging by the comments from Greenacres residents who live further along Maybell.

The Commission seemed sensitive and sympathetic to the residents' concerns about traffic. Following the public comment portion of the meeting, one of the Commissioners asked Jaime Rodriguez, the Chief Transportation Official and the city staff person most directly behind the Arastradero 'Traffic Calming' project, about the traffic issue on Maybell. Rodriguez said he did not attribute the increased traffic to cut-through traffic—audible groans of disbelief from the audience—but rather to an increase of out-of-district school children assigned to Briones School. The truth is that both factors have been at play as both school hour and non-school hour traffic on Maybell has increased significantly.

I had spoken to Rodriguez earlier about the traffic issue. Couldn't the city modify Arastradero and increase it to two lanes along a greater length to ease the AM traffic snarl and eliminate some of the cut-through traffic on Maybell? His said this might be done, but only as part the next phase of the Arastradero project, which will be happening in the fall when he proposes the City apply for funds to construct concrete islands. So, the upshot is that if you still have misgivings about the current traffic situation on Arastradero, there is still time for some changes, but it is running short. Band together, speak up and don't let the city pour any concrete until the current issues associated with Arastradero are resolved.

There were several other threads of dis-

content. One was a claim of an insufficient amount parking for the seniors. According to the numbers, PAHC's senior parking allocation for this project is larger than other affordable senior projects in Palo Alto, though it is still less than one spot per unit. The neighborhood already suffers from overflow parking from the adjacent Arastradero Park apartments, although these are family apartments where many families have more vehicles than allocated parking spaces. Then there were the concerns about the bulk and height of the proposed senior building. At four stories, it would be higher than most adjacent properties, but it would still be dwarfed by the eight story Tan apartments immediately behind. Others pointed out that the site was not suitable for a senior housing, arguing that it was far from shopping with only Walgreens within walking distance. The counter argument was that it may not be an optimal site, but any sites are difficult to find in a city that is largely built-out, and that PAHC would operate a Van service to assist seniors for their travel to medical visits and for grocery shopping.

A general claim was made by some that the project was too dense, with too many units and would generate too much traffic, and so the rezoning request should be refused, ipso facto. However, this is a very difficult argument to make. The site is currently zoned to accept a 32 unit market rate development, with an additional number as a bonus if it were to include below market rate units (BMR), and would only need Architectural Review Board approval for the design, not a review by the Planning Commission. The traffic generated by 32 family units is projected to exceed the amount PAHC's mixed market homes-senior building project.

Just one proposal sought to find an accommodation with the PAHC project: cut the number of single family homes in half. Fifteen single family homes are too many—the homes are too narrow, too close to each other, on too small lots and would generate too much traffic. Allow the senior housing project and the PC zoning to proceed but only with a smaller single family home cluster—five along Maybell and three along Clemo, scaled down to no more than two stories with standard 20' setbacks. This would make the single family homes and the street front appearance compatible with the surrounding single family neighborhood. Because the fifteen single family

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]

Please give us your thoughts

The Barron Park Association would like to hear from you. Please take a moment to either complete this survey online at surveymonkey.com/s/YVWSWBV or complete it, cut it out and mail it to the editor:

Nancy Hamilton
BPA Newsletter Editor
696 Barron Ave.,
Palo Alto, CA 94306

1. How important is the BPA Newsletter to you?

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
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2. How do you prefer receiving your BPA Newsletter?

- By Mail
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3. What do you like most about the BPA Newsletter?

4. What would you like to see in future BPA Newsletters?

5. What suggestions do you have that would improve the BPA Newsletter?

6. Would you like to be part of the BPA Newsletter volunteer staff? If so, check as many as you like:

- Assistant Editor
- Reporter
- Copy Editor
- Proofreader
- Photographer

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homes in the current proposal are projected to generate half of the total traffic from the project, reducing the number of single family homes by a factor of two would reduce the traffic by 25%.

The Palo Alto Housing Corporation claims they need the market rate houses to subsidize the senior units, but they have been tight lipped about how they came up with this number. Why fifteen? Why not eight? Shouldn't the PAHC be more transparent with the financial arrangements for this project when so much City funds were

loaned to them upfront? With new homes in Barron Park now selling for \$2 million apiece, eight new homes should be more than adequate for a non-profit to subsidize this project. I admit to being the author of this proposal, but it didn't achieve much traction, probably because the issue of rezoning quickly became an emotional one and many people had already settled on one of the arguments against it. Among the members of Board of the Barron Park Association, it garnered 4 votes while 6 votes went to a proposal to reject any rezoning.

Besides these specific arguments, many people—not only neighbors—have expressed a visceral anger about the City's hand in promoting the project. The Council provided a large amount of funds upfront that allowed PAHC to purchase the land and propose a project that would ultimately require the Council to approve a zoning change! And this was not just for building affordable housing, but also for market rate homes that could reap a profit for the PAHC or a well-connected private developer. Was this a real conflict of interest by the Council, or merely the appearance of one? The answer may have to wait until a hearing is held in front of a judge; a group of residents has retained the services of a land use attorney who submitted a letter to the city questioning the legality of the arrangement. Whatever happens, a palpable undercurrent of hostility by many citizens exists toward the City staff and Council about their ac-

tions on this project. And they were not mollified by the last minute admission that it wasn't a good idea for the City to put the full number of proposed housing units into the State mandated Housing Element before the PTC and Council hearings. If the Council approves the project as it stands, our city leaders will have some work to do to regain the community's confidence and repair their reputation for objectivity and the independence of their actions.

In summary, it's not clear whether any argument could have swayed the Planning and Transportation Commissioners. Maybe the outcome was predictable from this particular group of Commissioners who has a track record of looking favorably at new developments. Maybe there were too many threads of arguments, the opposition to the project spread in too many ways. Maybe the PAHC housing proposal was the wrong issue on which to address the neighborhood's principal discontent, namely the already unacceptable amount of traffic on Maybell. Or maybe the neighborhood was, in fact, steamrolled by a powerful coalition of housing advocates and city officials.

**BARRON PARK
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

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**Lisa Berkowitz Landers
new membership chair**



My family, husband Joe and 2 children, moved to Barron Park 15 years ago. Our children, now in college,

graduated from Gunn and attended Barron Park Elementary School. My years in large cities, Brooklyn and Los Angeles, makes me appreciate the country-like atmosphere of Barron Park. Over the years, I have been impressed with the small group of BPA members who produce numerous services and programs for our neighborhood. I joined the BPA board in an effort to support my neighbors striving to maintain our unique community.

As an optometrist in Town and Country Village for the past 25 years, I have been fortunate to meet residents from all areas of Palo Alto and realize we share the same basic concerns. There are significant changes being proposed for Palo Alto, along with mixed reviews regarding completed projects. As a board member, I look forward to learning more about Barron Park's concerns, understanding the city's plans, and ensuring those less vocal are heard.

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION



We, the members of the BPA-Board and as representatives of the entire Barron Park community, wish to express our deepest and

most sincere thanks to Lynn Melena for her more than five years of service to the community as the BPA President.

We want her to know, by expressing our thanks, that serving as BPA President was not—as cynics might say—a 'thankless' task.

For more than 5 years, Lynn provided the Board with steady and competent leadership, organizing and directing our monthly Board meetings, representing the Board in meetings with city policy making and staff

officials, responding to numerous inquiries for support from members and groups in the neighborhood, keeping us all informed and on track to make our decisions while ensuring that each of us was able to express our opinions and have our voices heard.

And she went beyond the call on a number of issues, taking on herself the job to lead efforts—such as the improvement of the Matadero Well Site, and providing us with her knowledge and insight on land use and, on the 'mysterious ways' to those of us never having been in the trenches, the intricacies of the City planning process.

We wish her a pleasant vacation from Barron Park affairs this summer and hope she will re-engage when she returns.

Art Liberman, BPA President

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd

Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

E-mail President@BPAPaloalto.org
for location

www.BPAPaloalto.org

Donkey Funding Committee Forming



We are looking for good people who care about the donkeys to join our fund-raising committee for Niner and Perry.

No donations from you are necessary. Only a little time and your ideas.

Please contact Robert Frost, head volunteer donkey handler: [bobfrost34 at yahoo.com](mailto:bobfrost34@yahoo.com) or phone 493-8272.

EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has four email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, bpa-misc and bpa-jobpostings. They are hosted at Google Groups. To join, go to the BPA Website: BPAPaloalto.org and click on the tab "BPA Email Lists." This provides an easy means to subscribe, and information about the lists.

Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!

All those who care about Perry and Niner seek to guarantee their proper on-going care and shelter, as well as to ensure that funds will be available for health concerns as the donkeys age. The handlers hope that those generous neighbors who have contributed in the past will consider increasing their support this year. Contributions for the donkeys' care may be sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA (Action for a Sustain-



able Earth), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303. The check *must* be made out to "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund." All of the above must be included.

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Bob Frost, 493-8272 or email at [bobfrost34 at yahoo.com](mailto:bobfrost34@yahoo.com).

ANOTHER GREAT MAY FETE

by John King, BPA Treasurer

May Fete 2013 was a huge success! The weather was the best in many years. The dancers and kids around the may pole were perfectly coordinated by the annual dance coordinator and founder of the May Fete, Paul Edwards.

A big thank you to our coordinators Larry Breed for the May Pole and Gary Breitbard for the musicians and dancers. Our event coordinator, Sarah Van Zanten enlisted the help of her family and many friends to set up and run the event.

The event was supported by a number of advertisers including, McLaren Fiskar who displayed their very cool car again,

Gwen Luce Realtor, Ace of Sandwiches, Ernies/Century Wines, Jim Davis Auto & John W. King Realtor. Thank you to Barron Park Market for the flowers atop the May Pole. The raffle items were highlighted by a Creekside Inn gift certificate and Ace of Sandwich coupons. Thank you to additional in-kind donors: Celiás Mexican Restaurant, Copy Factory, Driftwood Deli, Hobee's, Pizza Chicago, Starbucks, and Subway. Also a thank you to the numerous other volunteers for handling their help in setting up and taking down the stage and May Pole. I had the pleasure of handling the grill again this year.

Thanks for a great event. See you next year!



All photos by Art Liberman



Paul Edwards and Larry Breed preparing the ribbons for the Maypole. These folks have done this for 36 years. The time is now for several volunteers from the next generation to step up and keep the May pole ceremonies alive in the future.

May Fete organizer Sarah Van Zanten and Larry Breed, one of the neighborhood volunteers and the artisan behind the assembly and preparation each year of the Maypole, pose holding the gorgeous bouquet of flowers created and donated by Hassan Bordbari of the Barron Park Market that will top the pole.



Gary Breitbard, Jena Rauti and the band of musicians serenading the crowd.



M A Y F E T E 2 0 1 3



Morris dancers.



Three-legged race.

All photos on this page by Jeff Dean

M A Y F E T E 2 0 1 3



Sack race.



Jumping ball structure.



Barron Park history exhibit.

All photos on this page by Mollie Graham

USA High School Program for International Students

[Editor's note: The June 10th date will have passed by the time you are reading this. However, I understand two hosts have changed their minds. Please contact Shawna Wise, Regional Director for CIEE (swise@ciee.org). You can still be a host family this year.]

The CIEE USA High School program sponsors international high school students from more than 55 nationalities to attend school and live with American host families each year.

Change starts with you — become a CIEE host family, host school, Local Coordinator, or international exchange student; and share in our mission of over 60 years “to help people gain understanding, acquire knowledge, and develop skills for living in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world.”

Host Families

As a CIEE host family, you will give a young exchange student the opportunity to discover America through your eyes, as well as open a window to a different culture in your home.

We are looking for host families for these high school students. We accept all kinds of families (kids, no kids, empty nesters, single parents, same-sex couples, etc.) Our students have the appropriate visa, medical insurance and pay for all of their own personal expenses. All that is required of a host family is to provide and bed and an extra plate at the table!

We have 4 students that are looking for good families with whom they can live for one semester or two. Although they don't arrive until August, we are securing their placement with their American family by June 10th.

Here are notes about our students:

Laia is a 15 year old girl from Spain. “I have to mention music as it is for me one of the most important things. I could not imagine a world without it.” Here she would like to participate in drama club, and other school activities related to music. She plays piano and has been teaching herself to play guitar recently. Laia also loves dance, especially ballet and jazz. Laia has spent two weeks with a host family in Dublin, and attended two different sum-

mer camps in England. She is an only child but always dreamed of having siblings. GPA: 3.9.

Amelie is a 16 year old girl from Germany. “I love to help people because I am an open minded and curious person.” Amelie enjoys dancing, photography, fashion, paint, reading, animals, designing clothes, baking, and traveling. He competed in the 2010 World Cup for modern dance. She looks forward to dancing, cheerleading, photography, and field hockey while in the US. She has a younger and older brother. GPA: 3.4.

Katherine is a 16 year old girl from Australia. “Some people fondly refer to me as a ‘word-nerd’ because I’m quite a fan of pushing my vocabulary to its limits, and I love learning new words.” She really likes to spend time outdoors, going to the beach, hiking, and horseback riding. She also likes to shop, read and hang out with friends. Here she would like to take a journalism

class and help with the yearbook or newsletter. She doesn't have any siblings. She has two dogs and four chickens. She loves animals, but she is allergic to cats. She is excited to experience American culture. GPA:3.6 (Kate will be here for one semester only).

Sakdipoj is a 17 year old from Thailand. “I have a good disposition. I am polite but creative and kind.” He likes sports, especially soccer and football and playing tennis with his family. In his free time, Sakdipoj also likes to cook Thai food and enjoys gardening and spending time outside. He has one younger brother. Skadipoj is excited to share his Thai culture with his new friends and family and experience new things during his stay. “I am interested in American way of life and the culture differences...I believe that I can bring Thai cultures and cheerful time to the family.” GPA: 3.9.

<http://www.ciee.org/highschool/>

Doug Graham is on Vacation!

Look for more Barron Park History articles in coming issues



Photo by Verna Graham

ART IN THE PARK—DYLAN THOMAS



Dylan Thomas is a 15-year-old rising junior at Gunn High School with a passion for photography. He's an active Boy Scout and also a law enforcement Explorer with the Palo Alto Police Department (you've likely seen him doing traffic control at a Juana Run). His favorite place to photograph is Yosemite National Park and two of the three photos included are from Yosemite. The other was taken at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno on the Saturday before Memorial Day when he and his Scout troop took part in placing flags at each of the headstones and grave markers to honor our veterans.



BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2013

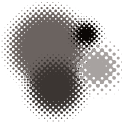
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