



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301

Sept, 2007, MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, September 20th 2007, 7:30 P.M.

The Place – Diamond X – Take Las Virgenes to Mulholland; turn left on Mulholland. For the next 3/4 mile, the King Gillette Ranch will be on your right. After you've passed Stokes Canyon Road, in about 3/4 mile, you will see a sign on your right with "Diamond X" and the National Park Service logo on it. A short distance past the sign a narrow road goes south at a right angle. This is Wickland Road, and, at this point you are entering the recently acquired King Gillette Ranch (Soka) property. Follow Wickland about 300 yards until the road forks; take the left-hand fork; keep bearing left to lighted house. Park; get out of your car; go into the lighted part of the house.

Call to Order

Officers' Reports

Roll Call

Correspondence/Announcements

Agenda Changes/ Approval

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Special Guest:

Calabasas Councilmember - Mary Sue Maurer

Old Business/ Reports

Delegates Reports

Calabasas General Planning (GPAC) update – report on recent public events

Agoura Village – Status of the project & legal battles

Opposition to Triangle Ranch strengthens – an update

CPHA WITHDRAWS FROM THE FEDERATION

The Board of Directors of the CALABASAS PARK HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, a sort of “mini-federation” of several associations within the CALABASAS PARK community has voted to cancel its membership in the Federation.

Because CALABASAS PARK is in its own valley, somewhat isolated from communities to the south and west by surrounding hills and oriented geographically more toward the West Valley, it has not always felt the same need for passionate involvement in issues that stirred communities “over the hill” to the west and south.

In addition, CALABASAS PARK was originally developed as a master-planned community, and its HOAs frequently have more say in design land and construction issues within their communities than do most volunteer HOAs, possibly causing them to feel less need to be involved with land use issues outside their community.

In spite of all that CALABASAS PARK leaders have played a key role in local land use issues in the years before incorporation of Calabasas, especially in opposing the monster 1500-home BALDWIN development, which blocked incorporation for several years.

When the time came to reach a settlement with BALDWIN – now NEW MILLENIUM - CPHA members voted in a general meeting to accept a settlement which clustered 550 homes at the end of PARKWAY CALABASAS creating over 5000 additional vehicle trips through their community, while placing the 640 acre open space dedication on slopes facing the Freeway out of sight of their community, but quite visible to MALIBU CANYON, LAS VIRGENES VILLAGE, and Freeway travelers. How many other associations would be willing to make that kind of sacrifice to enable the total community to achieve self-government?

CALABASAS PARK attended Federation meetings until just a few months ago. Relations began to become strained when CPHA differed with the Federation on MEASURE C, the annexation of the proposed MALIBU VALLEY INN complex. At least one CPHA delegate appeared to actively support the project and acted to undermine Federation efforts to oppose what some Westside residents saw as a major threat to their area.

Forgotten later by Westside activists was the fact that two of the three precincts in CALABASAS PARK joined the rest of the community in voting down MEASURE C. Only the newly-arrived residents of NEW MILLENIUM voted for it.

Meanwhile, a few Westside and Mulholland area activists began to express open resentment against CPHA leaders claiming they were trying to push all the “bad”

development over the hill into the “Westside”. These claims carried over into the last City Council election and into the battle over STANDARD PACIFIC and further strained relations.

Much of the antagonism was created and inflamed by the actions of a small handful of individuals on both sides, but it sometimes ended up being directed at whole groups and communities, including the Federation. As a result, instead of better communication with and greater sensitivity to the concerns of residents of various parts of the City, we now find ourselves with mutual antagonisms and polarizations that may take a long time to heal.

This is, unfortunately, happening at a critical time when the community is about to face some very difficult, potentially divisive decisions on the proposed CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN, and when CALABASAS PARK is about to face some potentially controversial land use issues within its own community.

As Congress was signing the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN was heard to remark,

“Now, if we don’t all hang together, we will surely all hang separately”

Franklin’s wisdom has been one of the guiding principles of the Federation from its beginnings in 1972 to the present day. We can point to a long list of potentially destructive developments that would have radically changed the character of our community that the Federation, with the support of its member associations, has helped prevent and to some of the most enlightened land use plans in the country that we have helped create. Las Virgenes would be a very different place today had the Federation and its member associations not heeded BEN FRANKLIN’s advice.

Success in stopping and controlling destructive, but potentially profitable development is not universally admired, and the Federation has always had its critics among those who would like to make a fast buck at the expense of our community. That will always be the case, but we don’t need to help those folks along by shortsightedly creating unnecessary polarization within our own ranks.

Since a couple of associations that are part of CPHA are also members of the Federation, the Federation will probably continue to be asked to be a player in some issues that affect The Park. We look forward to cooperating with CPHA on issues of mutual concern in the future, and we wish them and their member associations well in their future endeavors.

CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

We can't emphasize enough how important it is for member associations in CALABASAS to stay in touch with the evolving GENERAL PLAN, the first draft of which is now being put together by the GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GPAC), which will hold its SEPTEMBER MEETING this coming THURSDAY NIGHT at CALABASAS CITY HALL (not the Community Center) at 7:00 P.M.

This meeting's agenda includes,

- General Plan themes and Overarching Policies**
- Potential Land Use Map changes**
- Public Comment**

For more information and meeting materials, contact Tom Bartlett at 878-4225 x234.

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Though surveys indicate a high level of public satisfaction with the current CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN and the policies it contains, there are powerful pressures emanating from the STATE OF CALIFORNIA and SCAG (Southern California Association of Governments) that may compel the City to draft a Plan different in some important respects from the current one.

The reason would be the RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Assessment) numbers that mandate that CALABASAS not only provide for 521 NEW HOUSING UNITS in the NEW GENERAL PLAN, but that 85 of those units must be "low income" and 136 must be "very low income"

It's not so much a matter of snobbery as it is that there is very little land left in the City that is flat enough to build new housing without major grading and, therefore, site preparation costs that could preclude affordability.

Consultants have recommended the City consider the possibility of placing the lower income housing in more intensive MIXED USE areas, specifically in the CALABASAS ROAD/ COMMONS area and along AGOURA ROAD between Las Virgenes and Lost Hills. However, since these existing commercial areas consist of relatively new buildings, there would be no incentive for the owners to tear them down to put in affordable multi-family housing unless the new GENERAL PLAN permitted much higher commercial and residential densities than it does now. How this would affect traffic along CALABASAS ROAD and in OLD TOWN and around the LOST HILLS and LAS VIRGENES INTERCHANGES can be left to the imagination until the City completes an EIR on the DRAFT GENERAL PLAN.

(Keep in mind that current CALABASAS and AGOURA HILLS GENERAL PLANS limit AGOURA ROAD to two lanes west of LIBERTY CANYON and CALABASAS ROAD to two lanes in OLD TOWN, and that there is no provision in any plan – or any funding - for extending AGOURA ROAD easterly from LAS VIRGENES. There are only limited funds available for improving – but not widening – the LOST HILLS INTERCHANGE.)

Ah, you say, but wouldn't all that new development provide sufficient funds to widen CALABASAS ROAD through OLD TOWN and extend AGOURA ROAD eastward to connect to CALABASAS ROAD, widen the LOST HILLS BRIDGE, and improve the LAS VIRGENES INTERCHANGE? That question will need to be asked – and answered – as we proceed through the process of drafting of the new CALABASAS GENERAL PLAN.

So, what happens if the GENERAL PLAN fails to meet the RHNA goals?

CITY ATTORNEY, MICHAEL COLANTUONO has sent out a memo to GPAC and City officials enumerating the legal consequences if the GENERAL PLAN fails to provide for the RHNA numbers. These could include,

- **Lawsuits resulting in court supervision of adoption of a General Plan that met the RHNA goals.**
- **A court-imposed requirement to zone land at twenty units to the acre and approve development of that land on an “over the counter” basis with no public hearings. (If you enjoyed the STANDARD PACIFIC brouhaha at four dwelling units per acre, you should really love this one!)**

According to Colantuono, Calabasas must either,

- **Adopt a HOUSING ELEMENT in the GENERAL PLAN that “provides an inventory of sites sufficient to meet its RHNA goal”**
- or, **“Adopt an element with an insufficient inventory that includes a program to rezone land to accomplish a sufficient inventory and to allow multi-family housing on a use by right basis.”**

On the other hand, some City officials feel the City can certify its own GENERAL PLAN and thereby avoid the consequences of not meeting the RHNA goals. More information is needed on that option.

See why it's going to be very important for citizens and member associations to stay in touch with the situation while GPAG, the PLANNING COMMISSION, and the CITY COUNCIL work up the new GENERAL PLAN?

BIG (?) DOINGS ON THE CALABASAS PEAK MOTORWAY

The CALABASAS PEAK MOTORWAY is the fire road that heads west and south along the currently undeveloped ridgeline above OLD TOPANGA, CALABASAS HIGHLANDS, and MOUNTAIN PARK ESTATES from the top of OLD TOPANGA to CALABASAS PEAK. Most of the Motorway is in the County, but a short stretch is in the CITY OF CALABASAS.

Fire Roads or “Motorways” are not public roads; they are built on easements owned by the COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT for firefighting purposes, and do not confer legal access to private parties or the general public unless the user has purchased a separate easement giving him access rights.

Unfortunately, in the bad old days the County permitted landowners along fire roads to subdivide their property even if they didn't have legal access to it, resulting in hundreds of 5, 10, 20, and 40 acre parcels that often have no legal access, but might have physical access over steep dirt fire roads that often do not meet Fire Department road width and gradient standards for streets or driveways. This practice has left hundreds of landowners “landlocked”- including a couple of dozen along the CALABASAS PEAK MOTORWAY - with lots of fire-prone view acreage, but no legal way to access, subdivide, and develop it according to Code.

For the last few months rumors have been flying around CALABASAS HIGHLANDS, OLD TOPANGA, and TOPANGA that several landowners along the Motorway had banded together to improve it preparatory to developing an estimated 150 homes along that ridgeline. Details about access and conformity to the NORTH AREA PLAN and the COUNTY RIDGELINE ORDINANCE were a bit fuzzy, but the rumors flew nonetheless.

In recent weeks the situation has clarified a bit. As many as eight lots seem to be involved. Under the ten acre minimum lot size in the NORTH AREA PLAN, they could conceivably be subdivided into 25 or 30 parcels.

A couple of the owners claim they own 60' wide easements connecting the CALABASAS PEAK MOTORWAY to ELSIE DRIVE in CALABASAS HIGHLANDS and the “hairpin turn” above OLD TOPANGA. City and County staffs are investigating these claims. The easements - if they do exist – may turn out not be well designed, and may require major grading. Some of the lots have County site plans that were approved just before adoption of the NORTH AREA PLAN, but these will expire in a few months.

Stay tuned.

SUPERVISORS SCHEDULE HEARING ON LOCAL COASTAL PLAN FOR OCTOBER 23rd

The LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS has scheduled a public hearing on the SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS LOCAL COASTAL PLAN (SMMLCP). The hearing will be held on TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23rd at 9:00 A.M. in the Board Hearing Room at the HALL OF ADMINISTRATION, 500 WEST TEMPLE 'way downtown in the Big City.

In our area the SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS LOCAL COASTAL PLAN will become the equivalent of a GENERAL PLAN for the unincorporated County communities comprising the majority of TOPANGA, all of MONTE NIDO, most of COLD CREEK, lower STOKES CANYON, and part of MALIBOU LAKESIDE. It will also protect large areas of mountains and canyons visible from MALIBOU LAKE, MEDEA VALLEY, LIBERTY CANYON, the LAS VIRGENES VALLEY and communities along Mulholland south of CALABASAS HIGHLANDS.

The NORTH AREA PLAN, combined with the SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS LCP will form the County equivalent of a GENERAL PLAN for all unincorporated communities in the Las Virgenes area.

There's expected to be the usual large turnout of development supporters at the hearing on OCTOBER 23rd, and the resident population of the area directly affected by the LCP is not as that affected by the North Area Plan, so it's essential that MONTE NIDO, COLD CREEK and all member associations that care about preserving the area show up in force. Of the SUPERVISORS, ANTONOVICH and KNABE are guaranteed to oppose the LCP and BURKE is "on the fence" and will probably be heavily lobbied by the "dark side", so the outcome is very much in doubt.

So, one more time – hopefully just about the last - the survival of the natural beauty of the hills, canyons, and streams that make Las Virgenes so special requires that we hop in the old buggy, leave our oak-dotted hills in the rear view mirror, battle the crowded Freeway one last time, and try to convince a bunch of urban politicians that our area needs the special protection from high-density development, ugly mansions and scarred hillsides that the SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS LCP will provide.

Is it worth it? Consider the alternative, then decide.