



WHHO Newsletter

October 2020

Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization

P.O. Box 6368, Woodland Hills, CA 91365 | www.whho.com

WHHO General Meeting

Wednesday, October 28,
7:30 PM

Webinar Virtual Meeting – Invitations will be sent to you by email and on whho.com

Guest Speakers: LAUSD Seat #3: Marilyn Koziatek and Scott Schmerelson (Incumbent).

Topics: Our 5 “endangered” school sites, school parcel taxes, LAUSD on-line school issues, and Charter vs. District schools

**This Wednesday, 7:30 PM:
LAUSD Seat #3 candidates Scott Schmerelson and Marilyn Koziatek answer questions about the future of our 5 “endangered” school sites, Prop.15 and other possible new parcel taxes, and more.**

You’ve doubtlessly gotten dozens of their mailers, received their phone calls, and maybe even heard them at some other debate. But only at this Wednesday’s virtual WHHO General Meeting, will you hear their positions on some of the most critical issues affecting our community and neighborhoods.

The Meeting will start on-line at 7:30 PM, and the WHHO is preparing a list of topics and questions particularly germane to your neighborhood—

specifically how each candidate feels about the possibility that LAUSD could turn any of our 5 “endangered” school campuses (Oso St. Elementary, Collins St. Elem., Highlander Elem., Platt Ranch Elem, and Hughes Middle School) into sites for low-cost housing. That potential housing (apartments, four-plexes, etc.) would be limited to the lowest paid LAUSD employees like custodians, cafeteria staff and others, but not offered to teachers who earn too much to qualify.

There is also a high possibility that LAUSD could lease some—or possibly all—the sites to the State, County or even the City for building low-cost apartments for the homeless. Sacramento—including our own Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel—passed AB3308 and signed by Governor Newsome on September 30 that now allows school districts to construct homeless housing in the middle of single family neighborhoods.

The legislation undermines the original intent of these sites which were created to be used for educational purposes as was originally intended when the West Valley neighborhoods were originally built. That has the potential to be a major factor which could compromise those single family neighborhoods, and the WHHO plans to ask each LAUSD candidate where they stand on these issues.

Along with the “endangered” school sites, another major discussion point will be the candidate’s stand on Measure RR on this November’s ballot that has the LAUSD asking voters to support authorizing the district to issue up to \$7 billion in new bonds—which would require an estimated property tax levy of

\$21.74 per each \$100,000 in assessed value. The question both candidates will have to face is whether an increased property or parcel tax is an equitable way for the LAUSD to raise money, since the a large portion of the children attending LAUSD schools live in apartments and will not be impacted by the additional taxes, and whether homeowners should be required to bear sole financial responsibility for the LAUSD's burdens.

Other important issues expected to be debated are the recent school board vote to defund LAUSD police by 30% (approximately \$25 million), over-crowding in District Area-3 schools, and if utilizing permanent "temporary" classroom plunked down on existing play areas is a good solution to the problem.

Other areas for discussion are the failure of LAUSD to provide adequate internet access and available laptop computers for students during the pandemic, and how the continuous war between Charter school advocates and District school proponents can finally be resolved.

"The choice for filling Seat #3 on the LAUSD Board seat is one that could have a tremendous impact on the homeowners and their families in the West Valley," emphasized Shelly Schwartz who leads the WHHO's education committee. "There are issues that could dramatically change several of the neighborhoods in our community, issues that could impact everyone's budget, issues of maintaining the quality of education in the West Valley, and safety issues for the students, teachers and staffs at each of our LAUSD schools."

Shelly also noted that the WHHO will try to pose questions about the most pressing issues to both candidates, but that if you have a specific question you think should be asked to both candidates, you can post it on the WHHO website at www.whho.com. Again, the WHHO webinar starts at 7:30 PM this Wednesday. Register to watch it live by going to the WHHO website.

Wednesday's Candidates:

Scott Schmerelson (Incumbent):

Schmerelson is a retired LAUSD educator who was elected to the board in 2015. He is endorsed by the teachers union and local chapters of the California School Employees Association and Service Employees International Union.

He has said his priorities include eliminating achievement gaps by providing "community schools" with wraparound services that address students' needs and improving programs and services for special-needs students.

He says he is opposed cutting the police budget by more than a third because there was no plan in place to ensure school communities would continue to be protected, including from theft or vandalism while students are distance learning

Marilyn Koziatek (Candidate):

Koziatek, who manages grants and leads the tutoring and enrichment department at Granada Hills Charter High School, does not support a moratorium on charter school growth in LAUSD.

Concerning Charter schools, she states that LAUSD continues to mismanage its finances and that we cannot penalize our children by decreasing opportunities because of the waste and mismanagement of the district. She also says that she said that as a board member, she will be laser-focused on improving the quality of education in all district schools and empowering local schools — both traditional district public schools and charters — to make decisions at the local level to elevate student achievement.

She has also said she believes it's inappropriate for school police to have a role in student discipline, and adds that there are deep-rooted societal issues within the school system, and doesn't feel it is fair to pin that all on school police.

Homeless encampment removal and relocation project in CD-3 continues with underpasses and freeway exits being legally cleared and cleaned.

Blessed by the U.S. District Judge who is front and center on California's homeless encampment issue, the project to remove tents and structures from the encampments at 101 Freeway underpasses, relocate the homeless to shelters and bridge housing, clean out and disinfect the areas and prevent anyone from relocating in the area's underpasses is currently taking place.

Judge David O. Carter is working with the LA City Council to try and solve the surging homeless encampment problems, and CD-3 Councilman Bob Blumenfield's District is among the first areas in the City to roll out the program. This week, the Freeway encampments under Shoup, Winnetka, Corbin and several others in Tarzana are being cleared, cleaned and posted with notices declaring the Judge's decision on a lawsuit filed against the problem. The notices state that all tents and dwellings are being removed and that shelter housing is being provided.

The notices also warn that any future attempts at encampments under the Freeways will be immediately removed and that homeless individuals who refuse the provided shelter rooms cannot set up camp within 500 feet of any underpass. The Judge and City chose to initially focus on encampments under the Freeway and near the exits and entry ramps because of the magnified health risks and pollution. The Judge believes that their proximity to cars and emissions poses a distinct health threat especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Blumenfield and the City Council have also received mounting pressure from Woodland Hills and Tarzana residents to do something about the problems associated with these encampments. Human waste, drug needles and paraphernalia, and rotting garbage have posed serious threats to anyone passing through

the underpasses. Additionally, numerous residents have posted on social media sites complaining about homeless individuals threatening them or preventing their use of the sidewalks, thus forcing them into the heavily trafficked streets in order to get around the large tents and piles of old couches, furniture and mattresses.

LA Family Housing, a nonprofit organization that coordinates the homeless services in this area of the city has accepted the responsibility to execute the Judge's plan.

The CD-3 was chosen as the pilot area because it has one of the smallest homeless populations in the city. Blumenfield has also stated that it answers two important objectives: getting the homeless into a shelter where they can get the help and counseling they need, and fulfilling a promise to residents who have grown weary and afraid of the encampments and their inhabitants.

Of course many important questions remain unanswered like where will the homeless who refuse shelter go now that they are not able to set up encampments at freeway underpasses? Judge Carter's ruling doesn't prohibit those encampments from popping up elsewhere.

Developer is accused by some of "dirty tricks" to mislead Planning Commission over 19 home project on old Girard reservoir tract. City Council hearings set for Nov. 5th.

The oak-laden wooded tract adjacent to the old Girard reservoir between Mulholland Drive and San Feliciano Drive and across from Louisville High School has been a battleground between the surrounding neighborhoods and a persistent developer for over 15 years. But at the most recent Planning Department hearing, some claim that the developer escalated his war by recruiting

questionable “in-district stakeholders” to call in and voice their support for the project. The concern? They say that no one who lives in the neighborhood has ever met or heard of these specious stakeholders, and they have not appeared or submitted any previous written support at the 15 years of hearings before this one. We will see if the developer has an explanation for these concerns at the next hearing.

The neighborhood coalition group Save Oak Savanna (SOS) has been in the forefront of the battle as the primary appellants to the development application, and they have been joined in their efforts to stop the development by Louisville Girls Private School, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains & Recreation Conservation Authority.

At a South Valley Area Planning Commission (SVAPC) hearing held over Zoom on September 24, the commissioners voted 3-1 to grant the appeals of the community and deny the project despite the “questionable” call-ins. But then decided to reconsider and postpone any decision until the City Council Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee weighs in on the appeals for the approvals of the Tract Map and Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The allegations of suspected “specious call-ins” aren’t the first questionable tactic” used by the developer according to some. S alleged that after working with the Woodland Hills Neighborhood Council’s PLUM Committee, the developer decided to halt all on-going discussions, bypass the Neighborhood Council entirely, and seek a Planning Department decision. At least it seems that way t the casual observer. It was thought that they bypass a SVAPC hearing during the pandemic, but were eventually forced to go back for a hearing. That’s when the commissioners were besieged by numerous calls from these so called “in-district supporters” of the project.

Traditionally, Planning hearings are held as open meetings where the public can register their opposition or support for a project in two ways. They

can write a letter containing their name and address, or they can appear in person and state their name and address. But during the pandemic, all City Planning meetings are virtual, and the public can just call in and make their statements for or against the project. Lately, it could be said that it appears that some developers have attempted to game the system by having individuals who work for them, friends, or even paid callers phone in as homeowners or stakeholders from the area and voice their bogus support for a project. That’s the perception at least and as we know perception can become the reality. That is why open and transparent hearings are so important - it keeps the process and participants trustworthy.

Alarmed by this seeming ruse to convince City commissions to rule in their favor, several homeowners in the neighborhood, have asked the City Attorney to look into these tactics and investigate the validity of the testimony. They are also asking why the Planning Department doesn’t create penalties for applicants deploying this kind of alleged unethical behavior.

Now that the SVAPC has delayed their decision, the next major hurdle will be the LA City Council PLUM hearing at 10 AM on November 5th. The SOS group as well as the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, Mountains & Recreation Conservation Authority and Louisville H.S. are requesting your help to counteract any phony calls. They would like you call into the hearing and offer your one minute opposition to the project. The call-in numbers and information will be available two days before the November 5 hearing on the SOS website: www.saveoakssavanna.org. You can find more information about project there. An informed community is a better community.

Homeowners on the “outs” with plans for huge In-N-Out replacing an old car wash on Venture and Capistrano.

Plans for replacing the old 1950's car wash at 22503 Ventura Blvd. with one of the largest In-N-Out hamburger restaurant facilities in California has homeowners on the quiet neighborhood streets behind the site broiling mad. At a Woodland Hills Neighborhood Council PLUM Committee broadcast via Zoom, 22 neighbors voiced their opposition to building the huge In-N-Out on the corner of Capistrano Ave. and Ventura Boulevard, citing numerous potential problems and dangers.

Although it was the 6th PLUM meeting presentation, neighbors said the City had failed to notify them of the plans and that they had major concerns over the increased traffic, noise, speeders, safety issues and other negative impacts the drive-thru and sit-down restaurant facility could create.

The abutting neighborhood, has single family homes fronting on low volume streets that have no sidewalks for pedestrians, and are so narrow that two cars can barely pass each other. The neighborhood homeowners expressed considerable concern that the Department of Transportation's traffic flow plan for the restaurant's two lane drive-thru would divert hundreds of cars through their small streets as drivers tried to find ways to access the restaurant and exit from the area after they had gotten their food.

There was also anger that the Department of Transportation's traffic studies were both outdated and inaccurate, and that the proposed traffic flow plan called for motorists to attempt to make U-Turns in several of the area's busiest intersections.

The study that the DOT provided indicated that the restaurant would bring over 1,000 new vehicle trips into the area, and residents voiced concerns that there was no research into the added vehicular exhaust problems, and no noise analysis that took into consideration the audio pollution produced by revving engines, car radios, horns and more.

A number of the PLUM Committee members also had reservations about the project, citing the huge

blank wall of the building facade facing Capistrano, and the unattractive configuration for an outdoor dining pavilion.

Based on the input received from both the community and the PLUM Committee members, a new motion concerning the project will be written and voted on at the Neighborhood Council's November 5th PLUM meeting which will be broadcast via Zoom and posted on Neighborhood Council's Facebook page.

Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel is the featured guest for WHHO's November 18 virtual meeting.

The WHHO has confirmed that State Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel will be our featured guest for the WHHO's November 18 virtual General meeting that will start at 7:30 P.M. and be live on Zoom.

One of the major focuses of the evening will be why the Assemblyman co-sponsored the legislation AB-3308 that could have serious impacts on the neighborhoods surrounding the West Valley's five empty elementary school sites. The bills passed through both houses of the Sacramento legislature and was signed into law on September 30 by Governor Newsom.

AB-3308 was created to allow school districts like the LAUSD to build "low income housing" for school employees, but was then amended to include City employees and then further amended to allow all low income individuals. There has been some debate if the LAUSD can relinquish or sell their "unused" land to be used for homeless housing and other non-educational related uses.

That means there's a green light to allow the five West Valley school properties (Oso Street, Collins Street, Highlander, and Plat Ranch Elementary schools and Hughes middle school) to be vacated and used for whatever projects the County, the City and possibly private developers propose instead of being reserved for only for educational purposes.

“We believe that Woodland Hills homeowners deserve to hear the Assemblyman’s explanation for pushing through a law that could potentially allow the construction of apartments, duplexes, four-plexes and homeless “villages” in the very centers of neighborhoods of single family homes,” stated WHHO President John Walker.

Walker pointed out that the homeowners living around these sites, along with the WHHO, worked diligently to protect the properties for educational purposes only. “We received an assurance from sitting LAUSD Board member Scott Schmerelson that he would make every effort to protect those sites,” Walker noted, “and our City Councilman Bob Blumenfield provided written documentation that he would do everything to protect those properties if the City attempted to use them for anything except school sites.”

The WHHO President also stated that homeowners have continuing concerns that the State Legislature will make an attempt to “trim” or even eliminate the limitations on home tax evaluations that are currently protected by Prop 13.

“We recognize that the State faces a huge financial crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the closing of the majority of tax revenue generating businesses, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs,” Walker observed. “But we’d like Assemblyman Gabriel’s insights as to whether the Legislature will attempt to do away with the tax protections for homeowners of Prop 13 and, if not, where they believe necessary revenue will come from.”

The Wednesday, November 18 virtual meeting will start at 7:30 P.M., and information on how to join the will be posted on WHHO’s website, the WHHO Facebook page, and on Nextdoor.

If you haven’t voted yet, be sure to check the ballot that was mailed to you.

Over a thousand Woodland Hills residents have already cast their ballots in this year’s election. But if you haven’t yet made out your ballot, please check it. There was a huge printer’s error for a number of ballots mailed out to Woodland Hills voters—there was no space to vote for a Presidential Candidate.

More than 2,100 of the flawed ballots were sent out around October 6. But the LA County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk has informed the public that they were sending out corrected ballots to those who got the misprinted ones.

You should have already received a new ballot if yours was one of the flawed ones. But if you haven’t sent yours in, double check that yours has a space to for a Presidential choice, and if not, contact the County Clerk’s office immediately. Or you can bring the flawed ballot with you if you intend to vote in person and a new ballot will be issued to you there.

In Case You Missed It:

Incumbent Henry Stern and challenger Houman Salem faced-off at WHHO’s September virtual meeting.

The second WHHO virtual community meeting went off without a hitch in September as the WHHO utilized a Webinar format instead of a traditional Zoom broadcast to decrease the possibilities of any idiotic juvenile “bombing” and foul language.

The guests were incumbent State Senator Henry Stern of the 27th District and West Hills business leader Houman Salem, and the discussion covered a wide range of pertinent issues: taxes, wildfires, the endless Sacramento bills to remove zoning control from cities and place it in the hands of developers, and the continuing homeless crisis.

Both candidates discussed their stances on several key issues that may impact our city and state. This how we heard it:

Sen. Henry Stern:

- *Doesn't think criminal justice system is working.
- *Opposed to housing initiatives that take away local zoning—took a stand against the initiatives pushed by San Francisco legislatures.
- * Very disappointed that legislation to allow more development in hills shows no concern for wildfire dangers; density in hills increases fire dangers.
- * Doesn't want to water down Prop 13.
- *Thinks retail throughout state is in trouble. Sees major loss of income for State and City needs.
- *If the Federal government won't help the State, we will see massive cuts in fire, policing, nursing and more.
- *Thrilled Judge Carter has come to LA to solve homeless problem. We need to stabilize many of those people and compel them to get help. Doesn't think they should be able to refuse care.
- *State needs to address the sober living home issues their laws have created. Too many of these facilities are treating patients like “cash cows.”

Houman Salem:

- *Bills being introduced to wrest control of local zoning are irresponsible proposals by San Francisco elites and will destroy many LA neighborhoods.
- *Super majority in Sacramento not fairly representing all Californians. Sacramento needs to be better balanced politically so there is a real exchange of ideas.
- *Endorses Howard Jarvis tax initiatives—especially Prop 13. Thinks Prop 15 on this year's ballot is an attempt to water down Prop 13.
- * Wants to offer small businesses in the State a Small Business Bill of Rights to stop all of the nuisance lawsuits.
- * The “housing problem” isn't about not having housing. It is about not having affordable housing. State needs to address that issue first.
- * Doesn't think Sober Living homes and rehabilitation homes belong in the middle of residential areas. State has to re-think existing laws and place real limitations on them.

The WHHO needs You to be part of us and share your ideas.

The Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization holds forums on critical issues impacting your home, your lifestyle, your neighborhood and this community. We actively lobby City and State decision makers on your behalf. Our in-person meetings are free and open to all and during the pandemic we've made our virtual meetings available to everyone. But, it does cost money to run Zoom meetings during the pandemic and file paperwork on behalf of the community.

So, if you believe that the WHHO is providing a valuable public service in addressing some of the most critical issues impacting you and your neighborhood, and hosting the City and State officials who answer your most pressing questions, then we invite you to step up and become an *official* member of the Woodland Hills Homeowner Organization.

It is only \$25 a year for an *entire household* to belong, and your membership goes helps cover Zoom meeting expenses, as well as for taxes, insurance and other legally required fees. There are no paid positions on the WHHO. So, please become an official WHHO member today. You'll find an Application on our web site, www.whho.com. We look forward to having you part of our family.

WHHO Officers & Directors for 2020:

- President: John Walker - (818) 719-9181
- Vice-President: Dennis DiBiase - (818) 346-9567
- Vice-President: Marty Lipkin - (818) 999-4340
- Treasurer: Silvia Anthony Murley - (818) 404-1945
- Secretary: Nancy Porter - (818) 349-8869

General Board Members for 2020

- Armen Hovanessian
- Aaron Williams
- Shelly Schwartz
- Emeritus Board Member**
- Shirley Blessing, Founder
- Pat Patton, Founder

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- Founder (In Memorium): Gordon Murley
 - Co-Founder (In Memorium): Herb Madsen

