



WHHO Newsletter

February, 2022

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

WHHO's Webinar meeting begins at 7:00 P.M., and it is critical you register at www.whho.com in order to attend and possibly participate.

VERY IMPORTANT!!!
SPECIAL TIME: 7:00 PM

WHHO General Meeting
This Wednesday February 23,
The 818 and ESA Hotel Situation

**Ken Craft, CEO of
Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission
&
Councilman Bob Blumenfield
Council District-3**

**Webinar Virtual Meeting – Register to attend
by going to www.whho.com**

Because two hotels across from Taft High School are being offered as homeless living quarters, the entire WHHO Meeting is being devoted to a discussion of these critical decisions and issues.

Ken Craft, the CEO and founder of Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission who is expected to be tapped to run the 818 Hotel across from Taft as an unhoused shelter will appear only for the first hour (due to previous engagement).

Councilman Bob Blumenfield on Extended Stay America Hotel across from Taft as use for homeless quarters will guest host with Ken and can give us more details in the second hour.

Wednesday at 7:00 pm special time: The two hotel/motels across from Taft H.S. being planned for homeless housing.

This Wednesday's virtual WHHO meeting will offer discussions with two key players in the efforts to turn two hotel/motel structures (the 818 Hotel and the Extended Stay America Motel) directly across the street from the Taft High School complex into new shelters for the unhoused in the CD-3 area.

The first hour will be a discussion with Ken Craft, CEO and founder of Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission—the giant non-profit group that will probably be tapped to run and monitor the 818 Hotel if or when the County of LA receives funding from the State to purchase the property and structure. Mr. Craft, who is involved in a marathon in the desert, only has 1 hour available, so the WHHO meeting will start precisely at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, and there will only be a short time available for questions.

Ken Craft will be joined at Wednesday's meeting by Councilman Blumenfield who has steadfastly maintained that the 818 Hotel plan did not come from his office, but he will nevertheless step up to discuss why the Extended Stay America (ESA) motel plan does involve his office and why it makes good sense to have two large homeless shelters directly across from a major high school, close to a Jewish day school, and steps away from fast food restaurants

populated by Taft students. There will be an opportunity to ask the Councilman about the decision his office has made without even first discussing plans with the community.

Your first opportunity

Wednesday’s 7:00 PM WHHO meeting will be the public’s first opportunity to hear details of plans by Hope of the Valley to turn the 818 facility into a shelter for “unhoused families only.” That designation came after a stealth movement by the County Supervisors to list 20+ properties throughout the county as potential locations for the County to deal with the festering homeless problem.

The County is asking the State for \$37 million to convert the 100-room property into an unhoused living facility. The idea to make it for “homeless families only” was raised by Councilman Blumenfield after his office got wind of the Supervisors’ plans. However, there have been no specifics as to what constitutes a “family,” what restrictions would be put on the facility, what types of monitoring would be involved, and what safeguards would be mandated (and pass legal muster) if circumstances should ever change with the “families only” concept.

That’s where Ken Craft and Hope of the Valley come in. Our County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl (who is termed out at the end of the year) never had the respect or honesty to even tell her Valley constituency that this plan was in the works, and has been silent even as the community’s concerns are being expressed. The WHHO is hoping Mr. Craft can illuminate the future plans for the facility and discuss if it will be limited to “families only,” what the community can expect, who will run it, and what will it look like? Most importantly, will it bring problems or deliver solutions to the area and those in need?

Hope of the Valley Rescue Mission is a giant non-profit located in North Hills that states it has provided 408,800 night of shelter and 1,226,000 meals last year.

818: A surprise to the community

The first news of the LA County Supervisors’ decision to offer up the 818 Hotel as a homeless housing location directly across Ventura Blvd. from Taft High School broke only a couple of days prior to the WHHO’s January meeting that was ear-marked to be the occasion when Councilman Bob Blumenfield delivered his annual “State of the West Valley” presentation to the community. Needless to say, the Councilman’s entire evening interface dealt with questions, uncertainties and ire that a site situated so close to one of the major High School complexes in the West Valley would be chosen to be used as homeless living quarters.

Councilman Blumenfield pointed out that this was a decision made by out-going Supervisor Sheila Kuehl and the entire Board of County Supervisors to ask the State of California to advance money to purchase the property (along with 28 other properties in the County), and that he and the CD-3 were “not consulted when that decision was made.” He did state that he was the one who floated the idea that the site be used for housing “unhoused families”, but there have been no particulars advanced on how the “families only” policy would be maintained and the technical aspects of what actually constitutes a “family.” For example, Councilman Blumenfield defines ‘family’ as a household with a child; LAUSD has a much broader definition.

For her part, Supervisor Shul has been a ghost in the West Valley, and to date, has failed to comment on the project, discuss its impacts on the community, or reveal why she failed to offer even one objection when the Board of Supervisors voted on this. As previously noted, Kuehl is termed out of office this year and it not running for another office.

Surprise #2: Extended Stay America

While the announcement of the 818 Hotel plans may have come as a surprise to everyone—including the CD-3, the announcement of the City of LA purchasing the Extended Stay America (ESA) Motel

astonished the community but came as no surprise to the Councilman or his minions at the CD-3.

Two doors down from the 818 Hotel, the City of Los Angeles announced it is purchasing the Extended Stay Hotel for approximately \$62million. The WHHO learned of this after the January 25 meeting, even though Councilman Blumenfield’s office has been actively involved in talks with the City Department of Housing about this purchase for *months*, per a direct conversation WHHO Board members had with the Department of Housing.

Apparently, the plan for the Extended Stay Hotel is for the City to convert the building to a 146-unit housing facility managed by the LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). On February 10, Councilman Blumenfield requested that the facility be designated for seniors, age 55+ years, yet the City Housing Department is researching that request, which apparently might conflict with the Fair Housing Act. Currently this property remains slated as general housing for the entire homeless population, and there is no legal guarantee that it would not turn into general housing for the homeless sometime down the line.

A bad place to try and do a good deed

Both of these hotels are located directly across the street from Taft High School and Kol Tikvah Temple and Pre-School. As part of the “Housing First” program, the WHHO is concerned that these facilities will most probably have a low barrier for entry, meaning that it is “wet” housing – individuals do not have to be sober, drug-free or mentally stable. That would be a completely unacceptable situation so close to schools according to parents of students attending Taft and members of the Kol Tikvah Temple. Additionally, the cost of conversion is estimated to be approximately \$500,000 per ‘door’, plus monthly operating costs—a very expensive public investment considering that the structures already exist. What’s important to remember is there is no ‘exit plan’ should these two facilities prove a problem for the neighborhood.

Also impacted could be a senior care facility, an office building and the new Chick-Fil-A at Winnetka and Ventura Blvd. There is also a 7-story luxury hotel that has been approved by the City just west on Ventura Blvd., and a revolutionary new design Porsche dealership currently under construction. An existing Denny’s has been closed and plans for it call for it to be turned into a Starbucks coffee facility.

The WHHO General Meeting Zoom Webinar will start on-line at 7:00 PM, and to gain access to Wednesday’s WHHO Webinar, simply go to the WHHO website (www.whho.com) and register there.

City Council committee to vote on funding to purchase homeless site—including Extended Care America on Ventura Blvd.

The day after the February WHHO Zoom Webinar, the City Council’s Homeless and Poverty Committee will be voting on 10 sites that the city intends to buy for homeless housing—with Number seven on their list being the Extended Stay Hotel across from Taft on Ventura Blvd.

According to a press release from Councilman Bob Blumenfield, he only recently learned the Extended Stay America was on the list. His release states, “While the 818 Hotel is being sold to be used exclusively for families in need of transitional housing, the Extended Stay is being sold to be used for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). The Extended Stay would therefore no longer be a place zoned and used for transient housing as it is now, but it would become a place of stability where people would permanently reside — specifically people who are either seniors or disabled and in need of supportive services.”

The Councilman goes on to state that it is no secret that both the Extended Stay and the 818 Hotel have a long history of serious crime issues, including people overdosing on fentanyl at the Extended Stay leaving toxic materials littered around the area.

The Councilman claims that the conversion of the Extended Stay will “serve clients who are already on their road to stability and who were referred by our service providers because they’re ready to be placed into PSH.” He goes on to note that his goal for the site is to have 24/7 security and wrap-around, on-site, services — including mental health/drug counseling for those who need it — so that the City can bring a level of safety and cleanliness to this area that hasn’t been seen in a long time. He concluded that a 1,000-foot, “no encampment 41.18 buffer zone will help tremendously as well.

What the Councilman failed to note is his message to constituents was that he has previously stated on numerous occasions that, “the CD3 currently has enough shelter for our unhoused residents”—including two “cabin communities” for homeless housing—one in Tarzana and one behind the CD-3 officers in Reseda, as well a “Bridge Housing” in several locations.

Also scheduled to be voted on in the Homeless and Poverty Committee is a motion from out-going Councilman Mike Bonin of Venice and seconded by Councilman Blumenfield to consider amending sections of the LA Municipal Code to allow “shelters for the homeless” and other forms of interim housing to be established and operated on properties located outside of certain zoning designations during a declared shelter crisis; and streamlining the administrative process to allow existing and new/temporary shelters to extend their operation or be made permanent; and related matters.”

Currently, the LA Municipal Code restricts homeless shelters to areas zoned for higher residential density and for commercial and industrial uses. This change could open the doors to large homeless shelter being made legal in R-1 districts (mostly residential homes) near religious facilities, provided the religious entity or charitable organization qualifies with non-profit status.

This so called “streamlining” could result in large homeless shelter and care facilities being set up in the

middle of a typical single family neighborhood with real limitations or sunset clauses being established.

City sweeps away impound threats for vehicles that build up numerous parking tickets.

The City of LA has just added to the illegal parking crisis that is starting to overwhelm many areas with broken-down RVs, old busses, campers and live-in trucks that form the nucleus of the worst RV encampments in Los Angeles.

The City has ordered its parking enforcement division as well as its police officers to immediately stop impounding vehicles that have accrued numerous unpaid parking tickets because of a pretrial ruling in a lawsuit that City Hall believes could profoundly change the city's parking enforcement in the future.

Effective immediately, the towing authority for five or more unpaid parking citations is going to be temporarily suspended, meaning that the owners of these vehicles have a free pass to park when and where they want, and for as long as they want—until a new towing ordinance is written and blessed by a judge.

One attorney who specializes in these types of cases stated, “This kind of ruling is a victory for the people at the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder.” The attorney failed to note the impacts on businesses and residences that are often negatively impacted by the RV encampments.

The order for parking enforcement officers only apply to so-called “scofflaw” impounds of vehicles that have amassed five or more parking tickets. The city will still tow vehicles for other reasons, including cars that are parked in anti-gridlock zones, are blocking fire hydrants or driveways, and those that present an immediate traffic hazard.

Amazon is the secret buyer of the defunct Catalina Yacht property on Victory Blvd. in Warner Center. Will it be an Amazon warehouse?

The empty and long-neglected Catalina Yacht headquarters and boat manufacturing and storage facility on Victory Blvd. between Variel and Canoga, has been sold for \$61 million. And the secretive buyer has been exposed as Walton Street Capital, an investment firm owned by Amazon.

The rumors have started that the 183,000 SF buildings (two structures and significant open land) on nine acres will become an Amazon Warehouse and Distribution Center.

The site was originally one of the largest private pleasure craft manufacturers in the US and was surprisingly not on a major lake or the ocean. When Catalina made the decision to move operations to Florida, the site attracted several developers interested in using the location for either large residential or mixed-use projects. One developer produced full architectural and construction plans and had them approved through both the Woodland Hills Neighborhood Council and the CD-3, but then never preceded any further. Apparently, the developer was trying to market the site and the approved structure to another buyer who would actually construct it, but failed to consummate any deal.

Although no plans have officially been filed or presented to the Neighborhood Council or to the CD-3, there may be some questions about its use to become a distribution warehouse. Since the site is located in the Uptown District of Warner Center, using it as a site for a major warehouse may come into conflict with the current 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan. Additionally, since the site was originally used to create numerous products using numerous highly volatile and possibly toxic substances, those chemicals and toxic salts may remain in the soil and will have to be removed and approved by the State before any construction can occur.

The site is very close to a major senior care facility that is currently being built and nearing completion. There have been no discussions about what the possible noise impacts of numerous semis and trucks could have on the projected senior residents.

Recently, Amazon has expanded its operations in the Woodland Hills-Warner Center area, adding an Amazon Fresh.

LA City Controller Ron Galperin was to be WHHO’s February speaker. But, we’ll try again.

Originally, LA City Controller Ron Galperin was scheduled to be our speaker for February. But, because of schedule conflicts, he had to back out of his commitment. So we’ve brought you the man who is on the hot-seat with the 818 Hotel situation.

We still intend to ask LA’s City Controller to help us see where tens of millions of dollars may be wasted or producing less-than-expected results. “The WHHO is looking forward to rescheduling Mr. Galperin,” said WHHO President John Walker. “In the past, many of his revelations have been real eye-openers, and we believe he can—and will-- provide some insights into how LA’s governmental agencies are being run. We think everyone is curious where our money is going.”

Neighborhood Council’s PLUM Committee to evaluate expansion of West Valley Food Pantry at Prince of Peace Church at March 2 meeting

A request to expand the West Valley Food Pantry’s operations will be reviewed and discussed at the March 2 PLUM Committee of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center- Neighborhood Council before the request goes on to a Zoning Administrator hearing later this month.

Since 1975, the Food Pantry has been based at the Prince of Peace Episcopalian Church on Rudnick

Avenue. Starting as a small closet at the church where canned goods and supplies were distributed by a few volunteers to three to five families a week, the West Valley Food Pantry has grown to a point where they now serve over 11,000 every month and there are now seven employees and 33 volunteers each day, 5 days per week. There are now more than 200 active volunteers, and most on-site volunteer shifts are three hours.

Obviously, the West Valley Food Pantry at Prince of Peace Church has been highly successful. But the neighbors in single family homes surrounding the church are questioning if the operation has become *too successful* to be located in a low-density residential neighborhood.

Homeowners have complained that the escalation in size has created traffic and parking issues in the neighborhood, with some residents voicing that their streets and sidewalks are already flooded with homeless people, mentally ill transients, drug addicts and criminals taking advantage of the free mobile shower in the Church and collecting free food.

There is also a question of whether the food pantry was properly permitted to operate on this property within a single family zone, and a growing number of homeowners are asking for the City Councilman to examine City records.

To complicate matters, State Assemblyman Jesse Gabriel arranged for \$.5 million of taxpayer money do be donated to the organization, raising concerns if his efforts to steer money to a religious organization is a violation of federal and state constitutions requiring separation of church and state.

At the last WHWCNC PLUM Committee meeting, the Chair noted that the City hearing on the matter was rapidly approaching, and that in the last 6 months, leaders of the Food Pantry and Church haven't made themselves available for a public discussion on the matter at a PLUM Committee meeting. A PLUM hearing is required for the matter to go before the Neighborhood Council Board, and

that failing to provide the CD-3 and the Planning Department with a carefully weighed motion can be damaging for a community seeking a voice in government.

The matter of the West Valley Food Pantry expansion, construction project, and growing size will be webcast on a Neighborhood Council webinar starting at 6:30 PM on Thursday March 3. Information on how to access and possibly participate in the PLUM meeting will be available on the Neighborhood Council website: whcouncil.org.

In Case You Missed Our WHHO Jan. Meeting...

...you missed a doozy! It was recorded and you can get the link at www.whho.com web pasge.

In what was initially intended to be his annual "State of the West Valley" assessment by Councilman Bob Blumenfield, turned out to be a hotly contested discussion about the County Supervisors' clandestine efforts to turn the old 818 Hotel across the street from Taft High School into a shelter for unhoused West Valley homeless.

Because much of the January meeting was encapsulated in the lead article on the 818 Hotel fiasco and the ESA Hotel announcement in this WHHO Newsletter, we'll only touch on some of the other topics that Councilman Blumenfield was able to start off with.

The Councilman started of recounting that a lot had been happening in the Third District and the City as a whole. He highlighted the mandated redistricting of the City's 15 Council Districts based on the last Census data, and noted that the first few attempts by the group appointed to redraw District lines had created several Council Districts that were wildly misrepresentative and would have thrown numerous Council members into battles where they unfamiliar with the constituents and the issues impacting those communities. The entire San Fernando Valley was almost turned completely upside down where the CD-3 could have stretch eastward from the Ventura

County line all the way to Valley Village. That particular reassessment would have split Warner Center into two separate Council Districts, removed Pierce College from the CD-3 and basically disqualified 3 Council members because their residences were shifted out of their Council District.

The Councilman stated that he believed cutting Woodland Hills in half was a disservice to the residents and businesses in the CD-3, and lobbied to have the City Council create another commission to redraw the new lines in a much less haphazard way.

He also reported on the successful attempts to establish new and efficient Covid testing and inoculation sites at several locations in the CD-3, including Pierce College. He stated that the inoculation sites resulted in 30,000+ individuals getting shots, and thousands of individuals receiving masks, testing kits and other Covid-related services. He also pointed out that the CD-3 currently has 2 large warehouses filled with the appropriate Covid medical supplies.

Then it was on to the homeless issues, including housing, encampments, mental health issues, drug abuse and enforcement, he reported that some—but not that much—progress was being made. The Willows was now operating serving 80 individuals and even their pets, and the two “Cabin Communities” in his District were almost fully occupied and getting several hundred people out of tent encampments. He noted that each community had separate bathroom and shower facilities as well as caseworkers, and that the communities were gated and closed to access at night.

Councilman Blumenfield related that his office was working with I-Share, an organization that helps steer individuals into shared housing options. He also said he was trying to get the City to take more ownership of the 4118 program that removes encampments off of public streets without criminalizing them. He reported that the City Council member were getting “cold feet” on moving the homeless off public streets and he was trying to make the City’s more effective

is taking a chunk out of homelessness. He underscore that, unfortunately, you have to create a separate motion for each incidence, and that it takes a long time and a lot of work to even create a 500’ “buffer zone.”

Then, it was the news of the 818 Hotel move by the County Supervisors, and the fireworks started. The Councilman maintained that he didn’t have a hand in choosing the 818 Hotel site, and that when it was revealed by the County Supervisors, he tried to impose the restriction that it could only be used to house homeless families.

But that comment was quickly jumped on by people who said there was no official, legal definition for “family, that there were not enough specifics as far as enforcement and oversight that were presented, and that the location directly across Ventura Blvd. from one of the largest and most active high schools in the Valley made the selection of the 818 Hotel entirely inappropriate for a homeless facility—families or not. The Councilman disagreed, emphasizing that there is “no perfect place to put homeless housing, but because he was pushing for ‘homeless family housing,’ the location across from Taft was one of the best choices.”

He continued, saying that the people who were selling this site and asking that Hope of the Valley run it as a homeless shelter for families were doing this all for a good reason. “This may be an up-grade for that site,” he said. “There is currently a lot of crime and violence there and that a lot of villainous people were often holed-up there.”

At the meeting, there was no mention of using the Extended Stay America hotel (2 buildings away) by the City of Los Angeles as a second homeless shelter. It was later revealed by the Councilman and the CD-3 several days after the meeting that Councilman Blumenfield was actively involved with selecting the Extended Stay America facility for use as a homeless facility, and that knew all of the facts before the WHHO meeting ever began.

The WHHO needs You to be part of us in 2022.

We've just started another year—one that should prove to be monumental in trying to resolve some of the biggest crisis our community and our City have ever faced. And the WHHO wants to help be your voice as well as your eyes and ears into what's going on that will impact your lifestyle, your property and your neighborhood.

As you know, the Woodland Hills Homeowners Organization holds forums on critical issues impacting you, your home and your community. We actively lobby City and State decision makers on your behalf. Our meetings are free and open to all. But, it does cost money for insurance, electronics and hopefully in the not-to-far in the future—for a meeting hall.

We are a Community Organization, and we'd like to gain your help in helping us sustain and invigorate every neighborhood in Woodland Hills and Warner Center. Individuals who often try to take on City Departments or City officials often run into brick walls or get tossed a few meaningless promises. The WHHO has been around long enough, and we've created big enough waves, so that we don't get ignored. So if you have an issue or a cause you want help in, we'd like to help you reach your goal.

And 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, hosting the City and State officials who can answer your most pressing questions, and speaking up for you at the endless calendar of meetings and hearings, 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 to WHHO, and your membership helps to sustain us by covering taxes, insurance and other legally required fees.

You'll find an Application at the top of the first page of our web site, WHHO.com. So please fill it out. In fact, you can even pay for your membership using

Paypal. So, join us today. We look forward to having you part of our family.

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