

CITY OF HIDDEN HILLS  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Hall

Monday, June 11, 2007

***MINUTES***

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Hidden Hills was duly held in the Council Chambers at the City Hall, 6165 Spring Valley Road, Hidden Hills, California 91302 on Monday, June 11, 2007 at the hour of 7:34 p.m. Mayor Stuart Siegel called the meeting to order and presided thereover after leading the Council and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Council:

Mayor Stuart E. Siegel  
Mayor Pro Tem Monty E. Fisher  
Council Member Jim Cohen  
Council Member Steve Freedland  
Council Member Larry G. Weber

Staff:

City Engineer Dirk Lovett  
City Manager Cherie L. Paglia  
Bookkeeper Randee Weinberger

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Upon MOTION of Mayor Pro Tem Fisher, seconded by Council Member Freedland and unanimously carried, it was resolved that the agenda for the June 11, 2007 regular meeting be approved as submitted.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Siegel made the following announcements:

Emergency Services is establishing a voluntary Special Needs Registry; a letter was mailed to all households; if any resident has special needs, the City is asking for that person to complete and return the form to City Hall; if the form has been misplaced, call City Hall for another one; the form will also be printed in the July newsletter; this registry will be available to Emergency Services personnel during an emergency; after the most pressing needs are addressed, the City, if it is able, will provide important announcements and information, and check on the well-being of those listed on the registry; of course, individuals should assume that outside help may not be available for at least 72 hours and be as prepared as possible to provide for themselves.

There will be a bulky item pick-up day on Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>; if you have any large items to be picked up, call your trash hauler (GI Industries at 800/675-1171) to make arrangements.

Congratulations to the City's videographer Connor Weber (Council Member Weber's son) who graduated Saturday from Chaminade and to Kelsey Freedland (Council Member Freedland's daughter) who will graduate Thursday from A.E. Wright.

### **AUDIENCE**

There were no questions or comments at this time.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

#### **Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve (Formerly Ahmanson) Report**

Chief Ranger Walt Young provided the following report:

There are four items to discuss, with the first being the recent film shoot on the property; he would like to apologize as Hidden Hills was the only public entity not notified of the shoot, which included explosions; Ventura County had an engine and Fire Marshall on

site, and also notified were L.A. County Dispatch, L.A. City Dispatch, and Fire Station 125; when they run films, they are handled two different ways internally; since they took over the property, they carried over the firm that handled filming when it was the Ahmanson Ranch; it was his shoot, but it is their property and their responsibility; Hidden Hills was notified about past shoots, so he has no idea why the City was not notified this time; he has added notification of our City to the check list, so this should not happen again; he himself was at the ranch and was surprised by the scope of the explosions, which were very loud; secondly, they now have a two-part plan for trails; the first part is the ongoing Eagle Scout project, which will result in directional arrows for the trails; the second part involves anticipated funding from voter approved Prop 84; this money cannot be spent until the state budget is approved, which will hopefully occur in August; once received, this funding will be used for displays with laminated maps that can be viewed along the side of the trails; there will probably be seven or eight of these, which will include a topographical map and features such as "You are here" and showing the Vanowen, Victory, and Las Virgenes trailheads; the directional signs should be completed in two to three weeks, with the pictograph signs hopefully done in August or September; all of this avoids the bit of a hurdle involved in trying to name trails – with this plan, nothing is being named; on another subject, he would like to invite everyone to a moonlight hike this Friday evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Victory trailhead; more information can be found on their website; lastly, the state has acquired the historic King Gillette Ranch, which was the old SOKA University property; the campus was operated by SOKA with a lease back for the last two years, with the term to expire in January of 2008; SOKA always had a 90-day early out clause, which they exercised two months ago, resulting in the university grounds to be open to the public by 7/1/07; hopefully within one year, the property will serve as a visitor center and offices for all three park agencies – State Parks, National Parks, and the Conservancy/MRCA.

Mayor Siegel had several questions relating to the Park Services mapping program and the use of Crummer Road for visitors to the Park, which Chief Ranger Young answered as follows:

He is aware of the mapping program, and they share data and GIS systems with the Park Service; the National Park Service is the driving force in naming trails, and they have been working with them to exclude some trails, including the one leading from the top down to the dead end at Long Valley, so people are not misled in that direction; regarding Crummer Road, they have an easement over the property for administrative purposes and for events, since liability insurance is provided; they cannot invite the public to use the road, since it is privately owned; it does not appear on maps, but at Mureau Road the Park rules are posted along with a sign stating that Crummer Road is for official vehicle use only; so officially, there is no ingress or egress for the public, which is up to the private owner of the property to enforce if they so choose; the road does belong to Mt. View Estates.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **A. Variance No. V-370 24422 Little Valley Road Accessory Structure Within the Rear Yard Setback**

City Engineer Dirk Lovett provided the following staff report:

Notices for the variance were posted and sent to all those within a 500' radius of the property; no comments were received; a previous home on this property was demolished; the homeowner wanted to change the address of the property to Little Valley Road instead of Hilltop Road; the address change was approved by both the City and the Community Association, which also approved the project as submitted tonight; the owner is proposing a detached garage near Hilltop within the required rear yard setback; normally the rear yard setback is 50', unless that setback abuts a street, when it is then reduced to 25'; the structure will look like a small house with similar architecture to that of the main house; the garage door will not face the street, and the setback will be roughly the same setback as other Hilltop properties; staff believes the four required findings can be made, and would recommend approval of the variance.

Mayor Siegel and Council Member Cohen stated they had not visited the site, while Mayor Pro Tem Fisher, Council Member Freedland, and Council Member Weber all did.

Mayor Siegel opened the public hearing, at which time the project's architect, George Dela Nuez, addressed the Council:

He wished to thank the staff for helping them through this process; they started in August, and with the help of the Community Association, thought they had a viable solution that would give the client and the community what they wanted (the garage not visible from the street, and in keeping with the scale of the neighborhood) based on the parameters of the difficulties of the lot; he has been doing homes in Hidden Hills for twenty years and this is the first time he has requested a variance, as he feels strongly about the project; normally he would try to design the project so as not to require a variance, but he does think this is in keeping with the character of the community.

The Council Members had several questions which were answered by Mr. Dela Nuez as follows:

They will keep the driveway off of Hilltop, but have added the driveway from Little Valley; this does help the Fire Department, as there are fire hydrants at both ends; just one side of the structure in the setback has doors, and those doors are on the backside, hidden from the street; the lot was not built up; in fact, it was a bit unstable and actually

was depressed to level it out, with approximately 450 yards of dirt being brought in; a barn will be built on the property.

As there were no further comments from the audience, Mayor Siegel closed the public hearing. In response to Council Member Cohen, Mr. Lovett explained that the owner did not have to be the applicant for the variance (the applicant can be an agent for the owner), as the owners did sign, as part of the application, an affidavit stating they were the owners of the property.

Council Member Freedland asked about the height of the accessory building, and if anyone had any concerns about the hardscape and how the building would look from the street. Mr. Lovett and Mr. Dela Nuez stated that there were three trees that would screen the building from the street view, and that there was an approved landscape plan which included a planter in that area. Mayor Siegel was comfortable with the proposed landscaping since the Association had approved it and there were no concerns expressed by the neighbors. Council Member Weber, after walking around most of the property and looking at the elevation plan, was satisfied, especially since both houses on either side of this property, as well as most others on Hilltop, were also close to the street. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher also expressed no problems with the project. Upon MOTION of Council Member Freedland, seconded by Council Member Weber and unanimously carried, it was resolved to approve the requested variance, as all the required findings could be made, and to adopt by title only Resolution No. 801 entitled: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HIDDEN HILLS SITTING AS THE PLANNING AGENCY APPROVING A REQUEST FOR VARIANCE NO. V-370 FOR AN ACCESSORY STRUCTURE (DETACHED GARAGE) WITHIN THE REAR YARD SETBACK LOCATED AT 24422 LITTLE VALLEY ROAD.

**B. Review and Discussion of Preliminary Draft City Budget for Fiscal Year 2007-2008**

Mayor Siegel opened the public hearing after announcing that he and Council Member Freedland recently met with City Treasurer Eddie Bauch and staff to prepare the draft budget presented this evening.

Council Member Freedland stated the following:

The proposed numbers are shown, in comparison to those available for the current year; he thought, from the meeting, that the Fiesta expenditure was going to be changed to \$75,000 (Mayor Siegel concurred); he would also like to suggest something new this year, leaving the details to the City Treasurer and Bookkeeper; the City rarely spends what is projected, and usually takes in more than expected, leaving a surplus at the end of each year to be placed in the City's reserves; during the budget meeting, everyone felt comfortable with the City's reserve amount, so he would like to start earmarking as a separate line item, some or all of the surplus each year for capital improvements such as undergrounding, solar energy for City Hall, and other projects that may come up in the future; no one likes to spend reserves, but if there is an amount set aside, it is usually easier to then spend that money for specific projects, which should also lend support to future Councils to undertake some of the capital improvement projects.

Mayor Siegel added his comments:

Some years ago the City had a utility users tax which helped get the City out of a financial hole; this tax, which went from 10% all the way down to 0%, was the only discretionary tax the City had; philosophically, he believes there should be as little tax as possible, and that the Council should be as fiscally conservative as possible; it is thought that one or two years of reserves should be adequate for a city, with this City now having approximately four years; the City is not really a taxing agency, but rather receives bits and pieces of taxes from the State and County; he does not believe the City should keep accumulating funds, but should find a way to spend some of the money on projects that would provide a long-lasting benefit and improve the entire community; as mentioned, one of those projects could be the undergrounding of power poles, which he sees as both an aesthetic and public safety issue, especially in the event of an earthquake, when residents could lose power, cable, phone, DSL, etc. if the poles go down; he feels the amount of excess revenues over expenditures every year (or more if necessary for some of the projects) should be set aside, not in a separate account, but as a separate line item.

The City Manager pointed out that the projected surplus for the 2007-2008 budget was \$179,850. Council Member Cohen wondered why the expenditure for the Fiesta was being lowered, when more was spent this past year. Mayor Siegel explained that every year the budgeted amount was increased, the expenditures exceeded the budget, and the committee felt the City needed to stop the "creep".

Emergency Services Director Jim Doran then addressed the Council:

He originally submitted \$1600 in his budget for satellite phones, but it appears that new phones may be needed and could cost more in the vicinity of \$13,000; the current Globalstar phones do not work in City Hall – the satellites are failing and the system can get easily overloaded; there is another satellite system available, which was demonstrated by Nida Communications at the last CERT training session; this system can be used to contact those in the field on City radios, a capability the current satellite phones do not have; Nida will provide a phone to the City for a one-month test trial; he feels the best equipment possible should be used for communications, which is one of the most important issues during an emergency; the City currently has two satellite phones, which could be sold if new ones are purchased; the CERT team will try the new phones during the test period, and a demonstration could be provided at a Council meeting; there is still some research that needs to be done before a final determination is made on the satellite phones.

Mayor Siegel felt the Council did not have enough information to change the proposed budget at this time, but suggested that if Emergency Services decides additional funds are needed for new phones, there would be money in the reserves to cover that expenditure if approved.

A short discussion then occurred regarding the possible purchase of a new and much larger generator for City Hall (currently, there are two small generators that only power some outlets for such things as lights). Mr. Doran and staff will continue to research this matter and return to the Council when adequate information is available.

Council Member Cohen did not feel that the Council had done anything wrong in receiving, accumulating, and keeping a large amount of money in the reserves. Mayor Siegel agreed, but stated he personally did not want to continue to accumulate a large amount of money that belonged to the people in the community, and that when money is placed in reserves, it is harder to take it out of the bank and spend it. Council Member Cohen was not opposed to listing excess revenues as a separate line item, but thought the capital improvement projects should be individually designated, rather than showing a lump sum. Mayor Siegel and Council Member Freedland agreed that if the cost of a project was known, that amount of money could be

separately designated, but frequently (for example the undergrounding of poles, the generator), the costs are not immediately known, and at least setting aside some or all of the reserves for capital improvements would be a step in the right direction. Mayor Siegel then asked staff to return to the Council when the books were officially closed for this fiscal year, when the amount of the excess revenues over expenditures would be known, and the Council could determine at that time where to place those excess revenues.

As there was no further discussion, Mayor Siegel continued the public hearing to the next Council meeting to allow additional time for public comment on any of the changes and suggestions made regarding the draft budget and reserves.

**C. Consideration of Approval of Proposed Ordinance Regarding Drainage Structures in Setbacks – First Reading**

City Engineer Dirk Lovett provided the following staff report:

Quite a few applications have been received for the installation of drainage improvements, including inlet and outlet structures, in the natural wash along Long Valley Road; the City's Municipal Code (MC) currently does not allow 3' high structures in the setbacks, so these applications required a variance; at the 4/9/07 meeting, the Council Members asked staff to see if there was a way to allow these drainage improvements without a variance; staff has prepared a proposed ordinance amending Section 5-2C-4 of the MC which would accomplish this by defining these improvements as minor structures, which are allowed in the side and rear yard setbacks, as long as certain conditions specified in the proposed ordinance are met.

Mayor Siegel opened the public hearing. As there were no comments, he closed the hearing and stated the following:

Ever since the Long Valley drain was installed by the County, property owners have been covering over the stream bed area (which is often dry) to improve their property; this has been routinely allowed, but through the variance process, which can cost upwards of \$2000; the standards are not being lowered, but the staff will be able to process any such future applications without a variance to allow these small inlet and outlet structures in the setbacks.

Council Member Cohen wanted to assure that this change would only apply to the drainage area that runs along Long Valley Road. Mayor Siegel and City Engineer Lovett both stated that the ordinance amendment was very specific in referring to the natural wash located immediately adjacent to and southwest of Long Valley Road. Upon MOTION of Council Member Cohen, seconded by Council Member Freedland and unanimously carried, it was resolved to introduce and give first reading by title only to an ordinance entitled: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HIDDEN HILLS AMENDING THE CITY'S REGULATIONS REGARDING MINOR STURCTURES IN THE SIDE AND REAR YARD SETBACK AND AMENDING SECTION 5-2C-4 OF THE HIDDEN HILLS MUNICIPAL CODE.

#### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

- A. City Council Minutes – May 14, 2007**
- B. City Council Minutes – May 28, 2007**
- C. Demand List**
- D. Disbursement List – April**
- E. Financial/Treasurer's Report – April**

Upon MOTION of Council Member Freedland, seconded by Council Member Cohen and unanimously carried on roll call vote, it was resolved to approve items A, B, C, D, and E of the consent calendar as submitted.

#### **MATTERS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS**

- A. Report from the 5/15/07 Hidden Hills Community Association Board of Directors Meeting**

Community Association Board Member Ron Wolfe reported the following:

The Board of Directors recently approved the Association's budget, which is being published; by statute, there is a 30 day comment period; Steve Straub, who had been serving as the Board President, recently moved from the City; the Board has selected John McGinnis, who has served on the Gate Committee for three years, to complete Mr. Straub's term.

**B. Report from the 5/15/07 Las Virgenes Malibu Council of Governments Meeting**

Mayor Siegel informed the Council there was nothing new to report at this time.

**C. Discussion Regarding the Possible use of Solar Energy for City Hall**

Council Member Freedland commented as follows:

The utility companies have brought back rebates and incentives for the use of solar energy; he believes it is only a matter of time before residents start to explore solar energy for their private residences; the cost for the installation has come down while the efficiency has gone up; there still is a reasonably long pay-back period; he would like the City to get as smart as possible as quickly as possible regarding rebates, incentives, etc.; he would even suggest that the City conduct a study to determine the cost to convert City Hall to solar energy with roofing tiles, to help defray electric and energy costs; we should know how the whole process works, and possibly consider changing the City's building codes, as homes will be more marketable with solar energy.

Council Member Cohen stated there was just an article in the *L.A. Times* regarding this. Council Member Freedland, having read that article, explained the following:

There was a quirk in the law regarding the use of solar energy; if a homeowner applied for the solar program and rebate, he was placed in a different fee structure which actually made it more costly; the law has since been changed to now assure there is a financial incentive to go to the solar energy; converting City Hall to solar energy might be a very good use of capital improvement funds; it might even be possible in the future to offer incentives to residents to add solar power.

Mayor Siegel informed the Council of the following:

He has invited the City's SCE representative to attend the next Council meeting to discuss residential time of use meters; regular meters charge a uniform amount per kw hour; with a time of use meter, if residents can keep electric use at a minimum from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, when the rates are high, they can get a much reduced rate the rest of the time, including weekends, when there is much more available power; he has asked SCE to provide more information at the 6/25/07 meeting, and that would also be a good time to discuss solar energy and any possible incentives SCE might be able to provide in that regard.

In response to Council Member Weber, Mayor Siegel and Council Member Freedland stated that the Architectural Committee could not deny solar energy applications, per federal law.

Council Member Freedland pointed out that there are new solar panels that can be integrated into regular roofing tiles, placing the panels flush with the roof, for a much better look. Council Member Weber was aware of new technology that has produced concave solar panels, allowing for better airflow underneath and thus higher efficiency.

**D. Rocketdyne/Santa Susana Field Laboratory Site - Update**

Mayor Siegel provided the following update:

He has been involved with State Senator Sheila Kuehl and other legislators in following this matter; at this point, a federal court has agreed that this site will be held to the higher EPA standards for cleanup; there is also a state bill being proposed, SB990, that would prevent the site from being used by humans until it is brought up to the strictest cleanup standards; he will continue to follow any progress and report back to the Council.

**MATTERS FROM STAFF**

**A. Coyote Trapping Program - Update**

The City Manager reported that the trapping program began on 5/22/07, and officially ended 6/8/07, although the trapper had one more coyote he wished to capture, so would be activating the snare traps this Thursday and Friday, after which the traps would be removed. She added that the six-month guarantee would then be in effect to remove any additional coyotes exhibiting aggressive behavior.

Mayor Siegel stated the following:

Specifically, two adult males and two adult females were caught, two near Bridle Trail and two near Jim Bridger, including the female that had frequently been seen with pups; with the six-month guarantee, the trappers will return if there are any additional reports of aggressive behavior, so residents should continue to report any such behavior; he wished to point out, however, that seeing coyotes is not aggressive behavior, as there will always be coyotes in Hidden Hills; although he was not at the last meeting, he believes both trappers agreed that no responsible adult should leave a child unattended in the yard, even after the trapping occurs; it was also pointed out at the meeting that one report listed three million dog bites in the same time period that there were 300 coyote attacks; again, parents should not leave young children alone in the yard, nor should small dogs or

chickens be left alone in the yard, as that represents food to the coyotes and they will come to eat.

In response to Council Member Freedland, the City Manager stated that information from the Animal Pest Management report on the trapping program would be placed in the next newsletter and on cable TV channel 3 as soon as it was available.

**B. Tentative Map 63567 (Ashley) - Update**

City Engineer Dirk Lovett reported that staff members completed their review of the screen draft environmental impact report, comments were provided to the consultant, and the consultant will be meeting with staff on Monday, 6/18/07.

**C. Charles Abbott Monthly Report - April**

The report was received and filed.

Council Member Cohen wished to announce that the Association's Welcome Party for youngsters would be held Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the Community Center.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Council, upon MOTION of Council Member Freedland, seconded by Council Member Cohen and unanimously carried, it was resolved to adjourn the regular meeting of June 11, 2007 at 8:35 p.m.

---

Stuart E. Siegel, Mayor

ATTEST:

---

Cherie L. Paglia, City Manager/City Clerk

Minutes of City Council Meeting  
June 11, 2007  
Page 13