

Hiller Highlands Four Association

Quarterly Bulletin
First Quarter 2009
30 Schooner Hill
Oakland, CA 94618
Web site: www.hhiv.org

From the President – Pauly Langguth

The month of January left me with a great appreciation for modern medicine (a new left hip) and a great deal of time to sit on the sidelines and think about a number of things that happened last year, and have happened so far this year, within our Association. As President of the Association, and as a Hiller Homeowner, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working members of our Board of Directors and the members of our Committees. Our Board and our Committees are all volunteers. Their combined efforts save a tremendous amount of money that would otherwise need to be paid to a management company (as some of the other Hiller Associations do). There has never been a time when volunteers weren't needed and, much to our credit, our country and our state are way out in front with the number of volunteer hours our citizens contribute each year. Having said that

Volunteer(s) Needed for HHIV

CORE (Citizens of Oakland Respond to Emergencies) is a training program for Oakland residents that prepares them to respond to disasters in their neighborhoods until outside help arrives. Hiller Highlands CORE has been working to prepare our neighborhood since 1993. There are stocked emergency supply boxes for each Phase and periodic training for Phase Representatives and residents. Phase IV is currently recruiting a volunteer (or a pair of volunteers) to take charge of our CORE program. This is a very important position and it needs to be filled as soon as possible. There is quite a bit of work to be done at first and then less time will be required later on. Our emergency boxes need to be updated and we need a new set of emergency contact forms for our 80 homes. (These can go out with one of our quarterly bulletins.) We need to acquaint our newer owners with CORE and with our emergency supplies. We need to be sure that everyone has copies of

the printed materials we have available regarding emergency preparedness, and we should have an article in each of our Bulletins from our CORE Representative. For more information about the position please contact me. If you would like to attend the March Board Meeting please let me know and we will plan time on the agenda for potential Phase IV CORE volunteers.

Board of Directors update

Helen Marshall has resigned from the board as she and Dan expect to relocate outside of Hiller for family reasons – we wish her well and appreciate her willingness to serve. Bob Farwell of 62 Schooner Hill has graciously agreed to serve the remaining period of Helen's term (through April 2010).

2009 Board Meetings

March 18, Wednesday
May 20, Wednesday
July 22, Wednesday
Sep 16, Wednesday
Nov 18, Wednesday

Unless otherwise announced, the meetings are held at the Hiller Country Club starting at 7pm and are open to all residents of Hiller Highlands Four Association; however California law requires that some types of business will occasionally need to be conducted in executive (closed) sessions.

The agenda for each Board meeting will be posted approximately two weeks before the meeting on the side of the 30 Hiller mailbox and included in the Bulletin if such is being issued within three weeks prior to the meeting.

Annual General Meeting – Wednesday, 4/1/09 – Janet Saalfeld

On April 1st, all owners and renters are invited to the Annual Meeting, which is preceded by wonderful appetizers (enough for dinner!) and beverages. I would love to have you join the event committee to help with arrangements, such as setting up tables, simple flowers or contributing your favorite appetizer, hot or cold and of course, clean-up. I look forward to hearing from you (843-1088).

An RSVP form is enclosed – so that we may plan refreshments, please RSVP indicating whether or not you expect to attend no later than Tuesday, March 24th.

Elections of Directors for the Board will be held during the month after the annual meeting. The Secret Ballot process will be used only if there are more candidates than openings. Pauly Langguth and Bob Kuzma are not standing for re-election; at this time Herb Holman and Gordon Seligson are candidates for the two vacancies.

Welcome Committee- Janet Saalfeld

Welcome to new neighbors at CC17: David Kittner and Connie Abeloff and their dog Ada-Mae.

Don't forget to introduce yourselves to your neighbors. Besides being "neighborly," it is a good idea to let your neighbors know when you are going to be out of town so we can be alert if something looks out of place etc. (and please, pickup any stray newspapers). Let me know (843-1088) if you have additional suggestions or questions.

Financials- Bob Kuzma

The balance sheet showing our fiscal situation over the past three years is attached and a copy of our CPA's 2008 review will be available upon request after March 1st.

Surplus Funds and Reserves

As bad as the national and world economic picture currently is, I am pleased to report that the Association is in solid financial shape going forward into 2009. At the January meeting, the

Board voted to place half of the surplus funds from the 2007 and 2008 fiscal years into the Association's reserves. The surplus (approximately \$12,000 each year) was primarily due to a sharp reduction in insurance costs over the past few years. Since 2007, we have been budgeting for the possibility that the insurance rates would again rise to their previous level. Luckily, the rates have not returned to previous levels. If the costs of insurance remain stable for 2009, and there are no other unbudgeted contingencies, we should again have a surplus at the end of 2009. The Board will then decide whether to reduce the quarterly assessments accordingly, or to continue to fund our reserves. Although we currently have more than sufficient reserves, we are expected to face an under funded condition around 2016, after we pay for the scheduled asphalt resurfacing of the streets. Future Boards will have to determine what amount should be contributed to reserves in the coming years. For 2009, we have budgeted \$3,000 to be set aside for reserves. This amount will offset the reduction in earned reserve interest, due to historically low interest rates on our CDs.

The other half of the surplus funds will be left in the operating account for unanticipated contingencies. Our accountant suggested this strategy. With a buffer in our operating account, future Boards will not have to budget for unforeseen contingencies. Provided we exercise fiscal discipline and spend according to our budget, we should be able to manage our finances at the current or slightly lower assessment level.

Additionally, we collected over \$6,000 in past due assessments this year, by aggressively pursuing delinquent payments. The past due assessments were however, anticipated income, and not an unexpected windfall. But, since a few homeowners were not reliable payers of their assessments, the Board had to factor in possible cash shortfalls each year in the budget. Hopefully, this situation will remain stable, and in the future, we will not have to budget as much for delinquent assessment collections.

With the surplus funds, the Board was able to make a \$1,000 contribution to the Fourth Bore Coalition. The Fourth Bore Coalition is a local

community group from Oakland and Berkeley, working to ensure that the project to drill a fourth bore in the Caldecott Tunnel, is handled with proper safeguards and attention to the needs of the local residents and community.

ACC – George Innes

Open Garage Doors – Safety/Security Concerns

A garage door that has been inadvertently left opened, either during the day or overnight, is not only unsightly, but can compromise the safety and security of your home. It is the largest door to your home and, when left open, can be an invitation to thieves or other vandals.

We are fortunate in HHIV that thoughtful neighbors, who spot an open garage door, especially at night, will often alert the homeowner. However there are wireless electronic garage door monitoring devices that provide the homeowner a visual signal (located inside the home) indicating whether the door is open or closed. If you would like to look into such devices we suggest you go to <http://www.smarthome.com> on the internet and search on “garage door monitor”.

Smoke Alarm Maintenance

In last Quarter’s bulletin our smoke alarm reminder focused on battery replacement. However some authorities on this subject also recommend that the smoke alarm devices should be checked frequently for proper operation (monthly, perhaps) by pushing the test button (it has a red light in it) that will sound the alarm for a few seconds. They also recommend that holding a lit candle near enough that the smoke from the candle will reach the device thereby activating the alarm test the smoke-sensitivity of the device. (Evidently artificial smoke in a can is also available for this purpose). Further, they recommend the devices be kept free of dust build-up by periodic vacuuming. Evidently smoke alarms can lose their smoke-sensitivity with age so some experts suggest the device(s) be replaced after ten years of use.

Since the smoke alarms in most HHIV homes are well past the ten-year mark we thought some homeowners may want to have their smoke alarm system professionally inspected. We contacted Gill’s Electric (HHIV has used

Gill’s for common area lighting maintenance/installation) regarding the cost of a smoke alarm inspection. Gill’s responded as follows:

Our company routinely performs the following service in dealing with smoke detectors (1) verify that the 120 volt power supply is good, (2) replace customer supplied batteries in the dual voltage type detectors (3) perform a smoke test on each detector and (4) replace non-working detectors. Our standard hourly rate is \$129.50/hr with a minimum of 1 hour plus materials, we can offer an hourly rate of \$109.50/hr with a minimum of 1 hour plus materials as a group rate based on 2 or more units per visit.

If you are interested in this service, please drop a note to the ACC in the Association’s mail box at 30 Schooner Hill by February 28, 2009, so that we can advise Gill’s Electric. Please be sure to include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address (if applicable) so that Gill’s can contact you regarding scheduling.

Landscaping – Barbara Schindler

Nothing special to report, maintenance continues and the new plantings beside 2 Clipper Hill are doing well despite the drought. Generally we have the (somewhat aging) irrigation system on reduced hours, and we appreciate your vigilance in watching for and reporting leaks.

Bentley School update – Linda Harris

There’s an update but no solutions yet. Here is where we stand:

1. The Planning Commission held a meeting on 12/3/08 at which comments on the Draft EIR were presented. The response period ended on 12/11/08. Our attorney and about 20 neighbors attended the meeting.
2. Neighbors for Safety in Hiller Highlands (NSHH) presented a 2 volume bound document that was a very detailed response to the DEIR. It is available from Heather Klein in the Planning Department: HKlein@oaklandnet.com. It is my understanding that as a public document, she has to make it available on request but there might be a fee. If anyone wants to see it and has trouble getting it from Heather, I can provide an electronic version of it without all of the attachments. We also submit-

ted a 5 minute traffic video including highlights of typical traffic problems at Bentley.

3. The EIR preparer made an unexpected decision that the EIR was not actually required and that therefore they didn't have to offer mitigations. In addition, they chose to compare the school's current non-permitted enrollment to their proposed enrollment. So the comparison for environmental impacts was between 352 and 360 that obviously results in absolutely no impacts.
4. In response to this decision, our attorney submitted a legal opinion that this was an incorrect interpretation of CEQA law.
5. In addition, we hired a traffic engineer whose report found significant problems with the use of the cones, the installation of virtual turn lanes without road striping (road is not wide enough) and the inappropriateness of running the AC Transit bus through the Bentley lot.
6. The purpose of the meeting was to receive information, not to make a decision. So the meeting ended after brief comments.
7. I understand from Heather Klein that the EIR preparer is now starting to go through our document and the other comments from neighbors (none of those were substantive).
8. NSHH is continuing to meet with council members and commissioners to focus their attention on the major points in our response document.
9. It seems unlikely that there will be a final EIR or another DEIR sooner than 3 months from now. If our comments are given any consideration, there is quite a lot of work left to do.
10. Bentley is in the final admissions process for 2009-10 with decisions made in March. Since the city has continued to refuse to enforce their CUP, it is certain that the school will enroll as many students as possible up to 360. We have heard, however, that all schools are experiencing shrinkage in their application pool this year and so there might be some attrition that helps with traffic.

We are fortunate to have a committed steering committee that has worked into the night to complete the document and get it printed before the deadline. At the same time that we were researching and writing, we were also fund raising to pay for our experts. We are very pleased with how the report came out and with the words of the experts that added substantially to the authority of our report. We are still in need of about \$3,000 to make the final payment on the experts and therefore would gratefully welcome any additional support from associations or individual members.

CONTACT NAMES & NUMBERS
Board of Directors

President

Pauly Langguth (3 CC)
pl2gs@sbcglobal.net
510-549-9081

Vice President & Treasurer

Bob Kuzma (7 CC)
robbil32@pacbell.net
510-981-1445

Secretary

Cheryl Brodsky (50 SH)
clbrodsky@sbcglobal.net
510-548-8866

Director (& Parking Chair)

Dick Saalfeld (5 CC)
dsaalfeld@sbcglobal.net
510-843-1088

Contact Dick regarding parking violations.

Director

Robert Farwell (62 SH)
robert.farwell@cushwake.com
510-848-2818s

Bulletin Editor

Gordon Seligson

Committees

Architectural Control Committee

Chair

George Innes (2 CH)
georgeinnes@sbcglobal.net
510-486-1902

Members

Bob Kuzma (7 CC), Keith Beckwith (14 SH)

Landscape Committee

Chair

Barbara Schindler (1 SH)
wschindl@bechtel.com
510-841-7753

Contact Barbara regarding landscaping requests and to report irrigation leaks.

Streets and Lights Committee

Chair

Gordon Seligson (6 CH)
sixchx@att.net
510-845-1216

Contact Gordon to borrow the 24' extension ladder and to report non-working streetlights.

Welcome Committee

Chair

Janet Saalfeld (5 CC)
saalfeld@sbcglobal.net
510-843-1088

In case of an emergency, use the appropriate number below rather than calling 911, as 911 calls got to the CHP dispatch center in Vallejo, which delays any response:

Oakland Police 510-777-3211

Oakland Fire 510-444-1616

Berkeley Police 510-981-5911