

BEVERLY HILLS COURIER

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Home Again

John Mirisch talks about his vision for his second term as mayor of Beverly Hills

By Victoria Talbot

Mayor John Mirisch took the gavel last week, bringing an era of song to City Hall with an old-fashioned sing-along

The new mayor's priorities include promoting transparency in government by reviving the Sunshine Task Force (STF), revisiting the issue of lobbyists to bring the City into alignment with his goals, and investigating Parcels 12 & 13 thoroughly, and examining best practices.

The Sunshine Task Force was one of Mirisch's initiatives during his first term as mayor in 2013-14. But last year, the Sunshine Task Force met only once, Mirisch said. He did not waste time; the STF

met Tuesday. On their agenda was revisiting registration of lobbyists.

"The forms that were filled out [to register a lobbyist] are not filled out completely," he said. "There have been abuses."

Mirisch believes that anyone who is paid to influence public opinion is a lobbyist and should be registered. His definition includes people who are paid and don't speak to City staff or at City Council, but counsel others to speak on behalf of an issue.

Mirisch advocated for the City's retention of emails for two years, a fact that has had major implications in uncovering what happened with Parcels 12 & 13.

(see 'JOHN MIRISCH,' page 14)

Residents Elect New Leaders For Bel-Air Association

By Matt Lopez

The Bel-Air Association received good news yesterday morning when L.A. Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff denied a temporary restraining order filed by Ron Hudson the BAA's former President. The TRO request was filed by Hudson in response to a special meeting held last Thursday at the Bel-Air Country Club in an effort to undo its election and reinstate the former board. At that March 17 meeting, attended by close to 150 people and dozens more represented by proxy sent in advance, almost all of whom voted unanimously to elect nine new members to the Bel-Air Association's Board of Directors. The residents also

passed a comprehensive new set of bylaws aimed at providing more transparency and full disclosure for residents.

"The election of the new board and the officers is a victory for the community. The goal is to restore democracy and a voice to all the residents," said Bel-Air resident Fred Rosen. "The community has been held hostage by the tyranny of the few who have looked the other way while untrammelled construction had taken place. The goal is for responsible development and respect for the rights and safety of community."

The new board members include: Marcia Wilson Hobbs, Jim

(see 'BEL-AIR,' page 11)

Pawsitively Yes To Dog Park

Since the Beverly Hills City Council said 'Yes' to the City's first off-leash dog park, residents have been stepping up with donations to help make the vision a reality. The City Council has budgeted \$600,000 to build a basic park—however, most of those funds are earmarked for remediation. Funds for trees, benches, adequate water, agility equipment and landscaping, all must come from private donations as part of this public-private partnership. Together with Councilmember Lili Bosse's lead pledge of \$100,000, an anonymous \$25,000 donation, and \$5,000 each for park benches was pledged by Lili & Jon Bosse, Frances Bilak and The Courier. But more is needed! To contribute, visit: www.beverlyhills.org/dogpark and make a donation!

Judge Wu To Rule Thursday On Beverly Hills' FTA Battle

By Laura Coleman

At yesterday's status hearing regarding the fate of the Metro Purple Line extension project, Federal Judge George H. Wu inched closer to making his ruling final that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when it approved Metro's plan to run a subway tunnel under Beverly Hills High School.

"We were very pleased with the results of the status conference," said City Attorney Larry Wiener.

Judge Wu has faulted the FTA for failing to adequately disclose the risks connected with tunneling through an area riddled with abandoned oil wells and pockets of potentially explosive methane gas. At yesterday's hearing, Judge Wu authorized the City and BHUSD to take discovery about the

declaration Metro CEO Philip Washington submitted in support of FTA's initial brief on remedies.

"The school district hopes that discovery will assist the Court in reaching a conclusion on the appropriate remedy," said Jennifer S. Recine of Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman LLP, lead counsel for BHUSD in its lawsuit against the FTA.

At the close of a 20-minute phone call with representatives for the City of Beverly Hills, the Beverly Hills Unified School District and the FTA, Judge Wu ordered the parties to provide him with "one document" by noon on Tuesday in anticipation of Thursday's upcoming 8:30 a.m. court date. He specified that the joint document should list the parties' disputes,

(see 'BEVERLY HILLS VS FTA,' page 14)

Venoco Files Bankruptcy, City Considers Response

By Laura Coleman

One week after energy company Venoco, Inc., which leases the City's one remaining operational oil well, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in federal court last Friday, the City of Beverly Hills and the Beverly Hills Unified School District have yet to decide what action to take.

Through a \$1.1 million annual lease with the City and the Beverly Hills Unified School District, Venoco extracts roughly 300 barrels of crude oil from beneath the ground via the Beverly Hills High School oil well. That lease, which stipulates that the company must have the site cleaned up by Mar. 31, 2017, is set to expire at the end of this year and bring an end to the oil extraction. The BHUSD and the City have both un-

equivocally informed Venoco that there is zero chance of the lease being extended.

According to BHUSD attorney Jeffrey Vinnick with Haight Brown & Bonesteel LLP, in January Venoco informed him that it estimated it would take several years to remediate the site at an approximate cost of \$10-\$15 million. Vinnick said he is unaware of any insurance that would pay to remediate the contamination related to operating the BHHS oil well if Venoco fails to uphold the terms of its lease.

"The [BHUSD] continues to expect Venoco to comply with its contractual and legal obligations for the Beverly Hills oil wells, including safe operation and abandonment at the end of the lease," Vinnick stated.

(see 'VENOCO,' page 14)



Celebrity Photo Agency/Scott Downie

MIRACLES NEVER STOP — Jennifer Garner and Queen Latifa attended the premiere of Columbia Pictures' *Miracles From Heaven* at ArcLight Cinemas in Hollywood.

For more photos, see George Christy's column on page 6.

Largest 'Home' In L.A. History: Avoiding Public Scrutiny For Giga-Mansions Is The New Normal

By Victoria Talbot

Trailer park magnate Michael Scott wants to build a "giga-mansion" at 10101 Angelo View Dr., totaling as much as 139,062 square feet by some estimates. Scott is proposing the enormous project as a "single-family home" in the Benedict Canyon area.

According to sources, the details are shrouded in obfuscation. *The Courier* obtained renderings only because they were unofficially leaked by the applicant's team.

Scott failed to provide a promised Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Instead, according to sources, the applicant provided an incomplete and inaccurate Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND).

In the original MND, the applicant's hydrology expert stated the project would consume nearly 600,000 gallons of water per day, or 218 million gallons per year—twice the amount the enormous Hollywood Millennium will use.

According to land use and

outreach consultant Aaron Green, the actual amount of water is less, but the mistake highlights serious errors in the MND.

The project includes three swimming pools, a heliport, an athletic facility with a yoga room, sand volleyball court, workout area, bathrooms with lockers, tennis and paddle tennis pavilions, an entertainment deck to accommodate 550 of his closest friends, six bar areas, underground parking for as many as 47 vehicles, at least 19 bathrooms, an aviary and more.

Scott, an avid party enthusiast, has been quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, as saying that security at his home in Beverly Park is, "a little too



10101 Angelo View Drive

restrictive."

This week, the Los Angeles Board Of Building And Safety Commissioners considered the MND and the application to export 51,050 cubic yards of earth from the project site.

Residents insist the project should not be considered a residential home. In a letter dated March 2, 2016, to the Department of Building and Safety, Fifth District

(see 'ANGELO VIEW DRIVE,' page 12)



NEW IN TOWN—Compass, a technology-driven luxury real estate platform, opened its Beverly Hills office at 9454 Wilshire Blvd. Pictured (from left): Gordon Golub, Leanne Rogan, Stan Richman (regional VP – Beverly Hills), Gene Martinez, Robert Reffkin (CEO), Robert Lehman, Leah Sternberg (regional VP – Pasadena) and Jay Rubenstein (manager – Malibu).

Channing Hansen's First Solo Gallery Exhibition Now At Marc Selywn Fine Art In Beverly Hills

By Laura Coleman

At 43 years old, it seems that life cannot move fast enough for Channing Hansen. Indeed, the L.A.-based polymath artist finds it near impossible to refrain from using his hands at all moments. Thankfully, about 10 years ago, Hansen discovered knitting—a pastime that eventually bled into his art practice.

"I've been making art since I can remember," he said. "Art was never really tied to a specific medium."

Inspired by his grandfather's participation in the Fluxus movement of the 1960's (essentially, a Dada-inspired anti-art group), Hansen said he has always been in pursuit of finding a true artistic voice to add to the conversation.

Hansen's first solo show,

now on at Marc Selwyn Fine Art in Beverly Hills through April 9, offers viewers the chance to engage with art works that are truly unique.

The paintings, intricately knitted wool canvasses from hand-spun yarn stretched across frames to become, in essence, living sculptures, are Hansen's interpretation of Albert Einstein's greatest dilemma—quantum mechanics.

The large scale works now on display at the Selwyn gallery, which Hansen created specifically for the show, are more than just about knitting—changes in color, pattern, stitch and shape are all dictated by a computer algorithm he authored that uses an iconic painting's CMYK value as a point of departure for his unique mode of creation.



PAINTING WITH WOOL— Local artist Channing Hansen has his first solo show at Marc Selywn Fine Art in Beverly Hills. For information, visit: <http://www.marcselywnfineart.com>.



The Beverly Hills Electric Fountain

Fully Restored Electric Fountain To Be Unveiled April 5 To Public

By Laura Coleman

The iconic Electric Fountain at Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards will make its debut, now fully restored, at an unveiling ceremony on April 5 at 1:30 p.m.

Named for the colorful lights, which originally changed every eight minutes in concert with the dancing water when it was inaugurated in 1931, the historic fountain has been undergoing a facelift for the past several months.

"The Electric Fountain is one of our most recognizable and treasured landmarks and has become a symbol for Beverly Hills," Mayor John Mirisch said.

The fountain was designed by architect Ralph Carlin Flewelling; a sculpture of a Tongva Native American tribal member kneeling in prayer on top of the fountain was designed by Robert Merrell Gage.

The fountain was a gift to

the City of Beverly Hills from the mother of silent-screen star Harold Lloyd who was a visionary and pioneer of the City.

The installation of the original fountain was funded by the Women's Club of Beverly Hills, which is celebrating 100 years this year.

The Electric Fountain restoration, which cost \$1.5 million, is part of the entire Beverly Gardens Park Restoration project and was made possible by the Friends of Beverly Gardens Park. The City matched funds raised by the FOBGP.

Following the successful completion of the Lily Pond two years ago, and now the Electric Fountain block, the restoration of Beverly Gardens Park continues with the blocks comprising Whittier to Rodeo, including the specimen Cactus Garden.

The event is free and open to the public.



CELEBRATING THE BARD—At a press conference yesterday at City Hall, Mayor John Mirisch (center) and Bob Peirce of BritWeek celebrated the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death and the start of the 10th annual BritWeek. Shakespearian scholar Louis Fantasia and British actors Michael York (left of Mirisch), Neil Dickson (right), Judy Geeson, Jane Carr (second from right), Jimmy Akingbola, Joan Van Ark (third from left), Jack Lowe and Lexis Helgerstrom were on hand to accept the proclamation declaring Shakespeare 400 Day in Beverly Hills. The actors are members of the cast of *Murder, Lust & Madness*, coming to The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, April 23. Narrated by Ioan Gruffudd and Joely Fisher, the show will feature actors including Joe Spano, Sir Patrick Stewart, Harry Hamlin, Michele Greene and more, in scenes from *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and more, plus Shakespeare-inspired pieces like the balcony scene from *West Side Story*. "It's 90 minutes of Shakespeare's greatest hits," says Fantasia. "It's a roller-coaster ride of human emotion. The language and intensity are un-matched in English literature." Tickets are \$75 and available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2491676>. For more information, visit www.britweek.org.

BEVERLY HILLS REAL ESTATE

ANGELO VIEW DRIVE

(Continued from page 5)

Councilman Paul Koretz agreed, saying the project requires an EIR.

"The scale and scope of the project is more in line with a commercial development," he wrote. "The project is not truly a single-family dwelling," he said, calling it a "particularly egregious example of the giga-mansion phenomenon."

However, in recent months, Koretz has fallen silent in his support for an EIR or opposition to project.

His office provided this statement: "My staff and I have worked carefully and diligently to make certain all parties have been heard and that the community's input has been fully taken into account. We appreciate that the City Attorney and various other involved city departments have weighed in throughout the process, to ensure that we have an appropriate outcome.

"Applicants have some legal due-process rights which, if ignored, can lead to the city being placed in a position of risk. We therefore treat the process with respect. That said, I certainly take quite seriously the community's varied and important concerns, and that's why I called for an extensive environmental review.

"The haul route aspect will be before the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners, and we are expecting an important decision at that time. It is absolutely essential that safety be the #1 priority in the commission's deliberations."

Koretz's current silence leaves many to wonder what his

position really is.

Commercial developments that are much smaller in scope, such as hotels and shopping centers, are held to the EIR standard; an MND is much less rigorous, and in this case, the draft MND before the Building and Safety Commission for such an enormous project falls far below the standards the community reasonably expects to protect the health, safety, environment, habitat and quality of life in the canyon, say residents.

On April 16, 2015, Scott wrote to the Department of City Planning, "I have agreed to conduct a full environmental impact report," a decision he rescinded Aug. 28 through his land-use attorneys. "The depth of the analysis required for an EIR, along with the City's process and backlog, makes it infeasible to prepare an EIR." In lieu, the firm promised an expanded MND.

But the draft MND they prepared under-represented key factors and failed to provide enough accurate and consistent information to assess the real and numerous impacts of the project, according to public documents.

On Tuesday, the Los Angeles Board Of Building And Safety Commissioners considered the draft MND and the application to export 51,050 cubic yards of earth from the project site.

Technical consultants created the draft MND with outdated plans that significantly underreported the scale of the project impacts.

At the request of the applicant, the Building and Safety Commission continued the hearing on the project, for the second time.

In what appeared to be an

effort to disenfranchise the community, the applicant claimed that the City Planning Department "needed more time to study" the project according to legal counsel for the opposition.

The meeting lasted more than three hours in order to accommodate the multitude of people who opposed the project.

However, the Planning Department released 50 new pages of analysis and reports just last Thursday, calling into question the true reason a continuance was granted. It will come before the board in a special meeting on April 5 at the commission offices, 201 N. Figueroa St., Room 900.

A vigilant neighbor, Jeff Franklin, has invested time and energy unearthing the details, informing the community and performing analyses of the project.

"If we hadn't been engaged and Jeff Franklin hadn't done the work, nobody would have known. Michael Scott did not engage in any outreach," Green said.

The project is likely to have a significant impact on Benedict Canyon and Beverly Hills' residents and the entire area, both during and after construction. The building is carved from a mountaintop, and projected to be more than 85 feet high, though the MND only reports 29.6 feet. However, the MND claims there is "no impact" on aesthetics.

As is the "new normal" in Los Angeles' oversized homes, plans submitted bear little resemblance to the MND, and are based on plans for a two-story home of 82,000 square feet. The proposed haul route would stop traffic on Benedict Canyon for up to 15 minutes every hour, with more than 10,000 hauling trips by 60,000

pound trucks, for 11-15 months, if not more.

"This is the type of mega mansion the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) was intended to preclude," wrote Marion Dodge, president of the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations.

The haul routes say there will be 22 trucks per day, or that the applicant will "attempt to obtain access to property... that lies below the project site. Soil shall be conveyed downslope to this property and exported from there," in 44 trucks per day.

Such a plan would avoid the sharp turns; switchbacks and tiny streets make it nearly impossible for large haul trucks to navigate.

The proposal is in the MND, but was never presented to the astonished property owner, who opposes the plan and the project in a letter to Building and Safety.

During construction as many as 160 workers a day will be on site, and they are expected to park remotely and shuttle to the site, though no parking site is proposed. The impact of an estimated 80 trips generated in morning and evening hours will be substantial.

Neighbors, the Hillside Federation, the Bel Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council and the Benedict Canyon Association did their own traffic impact studies, environmental impact studies, engineering and geological surveys and wildlife preservation reports, which refute nearly every conclusion reached by the MND.

One oversight for example is the proposed removal of 20 trees, eight of them protected, and all of them part of a native walnut woodlands dominated by oak-walnut and a wildlife corridor. The MND states there are no significant environmental impacts.

The geotechnical analysis ignores significant documented landslide history and does not have adequate information on the depth of the pilings and other engineering features to complete the analysis.

"This MND has more holes than Swiss cheese. I can't imagine who in their right mind would believe that this flimsy, inaccurate study is appropriate for the biggest hillside house in L.A.'s history. This project needs to be sent back to the drawing board," said Green.

Scott's representatives made only one public appearance, turning down at least five invitations to present his project to the public, and Scott has refused to meet with community groups in person.

Mohamed Hadid is facing criminal charges only because vigilante neighbors insisted that Building and Safety investigate their observation he ignored Stop Work orders and continued construction beneath a tarp. Scott's MND might have been approved without opposition if not for Franklin's investigation.

The new normal seems to be that in Beverly Hills' and Los Angeles' desirable hillside neighborhoods, government is more tolerant of big developers and deaf to the concerns of residents, turning a blind eye to the regulatory procedures that affect "the rest of us" and enabling the continuous degradation of fragile and precious hillside areas.

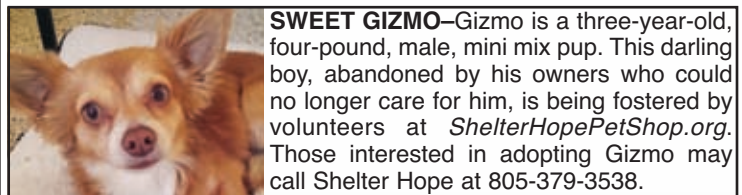
Now the community must wait to see if the Building and Safety Commission will actually consider the sham MND and the impossible haul routes on April 5. The hearing is at 9:30 am at 200 N. Spring Street, Room 900, in Los Angeles' Building and Safety headquarters. Opponents have created an online petition at <https://goo.gl/P7jZzH>.



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Celebrate Earth Day at the Beverly Hills Farmers' Market

The City of Beverly Hills will celebrate Earth Day on Sunday, April 17, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Farmers' Market, hosted by the Public Works Department. The event will bring global awareness to Beverly Hills with demonstrations and booths on water conservation and rainwater harvesting, sustainable food sourcing, solar power alternatives, smart bikes and bike sharing, sustainable gardening and pet adoptions (recycled pets!). Children will be treated to a special booth hosted by the Beverly Hills Public Library featuring recycling-themed crafts and books.



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