

Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 3, 2008
Shepherd of the Hills Church
Porter Ranch, California

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

President Mel Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Following this, there followed an informal start of the meeting with a discussion with Jim Savitz who had just attended the first Oversight Committee meeting at DWP and wanted to see if it aligned with what the PRNC wanted to do. Perhaps additional committees could be established – which could include NC members – regarding rate increases and low-income subsidies. The issue of broadening the NC's representation was brought up and how the Oversight Committee's new active stance could be used to achieve more. Mr. Savitz said that we weren't going to be able to stop DWP increases, but we could attempt to manage them and see what we can do locally. Though the Valley gets a special rate because of its hotter climate, other parts of the city get more money and attention, due to their older infrastructure. It's all an issue of how amenable people are to sharing the overall burden. Mel said that we should attend the meetings more, find some way of having the stakeholders know more. It was suggested that perhaps we could arrange some kind of video conferencing, post information on the website or in the minutes regarding DWP activities. It was noted that DWP will have something on their website to help people figure out what their new rates will be. Ron Nagai said that we need more adequate representation to help explain why those south of the Hollywood Hills are paying more, in effect subsidizing the Valley. One of the DWP's special plans was brought up – a plan by which people with special meters pay less, but are subject to being turned off if their usage is excessive. The value of adding a solar panel, if one's bill was over \$200, was brought up.

Melvin Cañas wanted to make one more push with the Board Member and Stakeholder surveys. The deadline for both surveys in June 30.

Becky asked what website to go to find out who's running for NC. It was mentioned to go to the DONE website and click on the Vote button, which will take you to the city clerk's website. Mel expressed a desire to get candidates' statements on the PRNC website.

2. ROLL CALL

Pat Pope, Secretary, called the roll. Board members present: Ron Nagai, Vasdev Singh, Mel Mitchell, Pat Pope, Sue Hammarlund, Bright Aregs, Becky Leveque and Paula Cracium. Ali Dabirian and Chris Cooper were excused.

3. MOTION TO APPROVE PROPOSED AGENDA

Mel Mitchell moved to approve the proposed agenda; seconded by Paula Cracium.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

Following this, there was a brief discussion with Melvin Cañas regarding the timing of the swearing in of NC members after the election.

4. MOTION TO APPROVE MAY 6, 2008 MINUTES

Pat said he will have the minutes done before the next meeting; they are almost done, except the part regarding Hidden Creeks.

Motion tabled.

5. MOTION TO APPROVE SPENDING UP TO AND NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 MORE FOR CASTLEBAY LANE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN ORDER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL AND STAKEHOLDERS

This motion was moved ahead in the agenda, since Sue had to get back to the Election Day polls. Sue is requesting more money for Castlebay Lane Elementary School, in order to acquire 6 LCD projectors and Elmo document readers. Adding these to the existing laptop computers will create a complete media package. It was suggested to increase the amount to \$6,000; any remainder would be given back to the budget.

Sue Hammarlund moved to approve spending up to and not exceeding \$6,000 more for Castlebay Lane Elementary School in order to meet the needs of the school and stakeholders; seconded by Becky Leveque.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

6. MOTION TO ACCEPT THE TREASURER'S REPORT AS PRESENTED AT THE JUNE 3, 2008 MEETING

Discussion: Paul presented the current month's report. Checks in the works for basically \$55,000, including ones already written. At this point we have roughly \$49,000 available; \$5,000 is already encumbered for the police recreation room. Outreach is overdrawn. Mel asked Ron Nagai about whether the expansion of the conservation corps was expanded. Ron replied that the corps was waffling. Corbin Ave. still has to be done, from Porter Ranch Dr. to the 118 Freeway, but there are problems with homeowners with reverse frontage putting garbage on sidewalk. It may take coordination with Street Services. Paul says that invoices, etc. will be needed to work on it. Ron replied that since the 4th of July is coming up (and the trash that comes with it), it may be better to wait until after then to have the work done. In any case, says Paul, an invoice would need to be submitted by June 13th, with a signed proof of work completed later. Paul says he would aim to get it done, for \$3,000 or so, not just trash, but weeds as well. And depending on how much gets done, he may have to revise the budget. Mel asked to have Paul do some quick numbering and asked if there was \$30,000 to carry over.

Paul Drogichen moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented at the June 3, 2008 meeting; seconded by Becky Leveque.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

7. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE 2007-2008 PRNC BUDGET (SEE ATTACHED)

Discussion: Paul said we will have to adjust it by \$700 or so to come up with the \$6,000. It was discussed where to take the money, and how much was left for various expense categories. Paul talked about the fourth quarter budget and where he pulled money. Added money into outreach, though still doesn't leave much, since another mailing is planned for the election. There is \$6,000 left. Mel said \$6,000 in outreach wouldn't be needed before June 13th. Paul said a single mailing is \$4,000 and change. Paul also asked about running ads in the North Valley Community News. Mel said there was a suggestion to run an ad in August about meeting the new Board members. Paul would like to leave money in the budget for that.

Paul Drogichen moved to approve the proposed revisions to the 2007-2008 PRNC budget; seconded by Vas Singh.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

8. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED 2008-2009 PRNC BUDGET (SEE ATTACHED)

Discussion: The budget was based on an overall \$80,000, figuring we have \$30,000 to carry over. Our first outreach will have to be more conservative; we will only be able to budget \$30,000. Items on the budget include amounts that will be carried over. If an item doesn't get done by June 13th, then it can be made a line item, so it can be at least be voted as budgeted. The \$4,000 for Becky's motion (Item 9) will come out of this year's budget (2007-08), since we should be able to get it done this year. Even with this, we should have \$7,000 left over.

Paul Drogichen moved to approve the proposed 2008-2009 PRNC budget; seconded by Sue Hammarlund.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

Following this, the Board paused to hear from LAPD Devonshire Senior Lead Officer Dario Del Core. Dario says it's a pleasure to be here; he always learns a lot. He did a little write-up, which was left for the Board, detailing recent criminal activity. He discussed ways of dealing with, and avoiding, burglaries, which he has noticed have occurred a few times recently, as well as a recent shooting and incidences of domestic violence. He also mentioned a Porter Ranch panhandler, who has been asked to leave; the panhandler has been told he will be arrested if he comes back. There was a sexual assault in Mason Park three weeks ago; two individuals were arrested. Dario was asked about the presence of the MS-13 gang, who has been suspected of tagging, among other things, in the area. Patrick said that the tagging had been eliminated quickly in his neighborhood. Ron Nagai asked about street racing. Dario said more operations are being run in Porter Ranch than any area in Devonshire. A woman in the audience asked about sexual offenders living in the area and if it could be stopped. Dario said we can't stop them from living here if they obey the rules – registering, staying within their guidelines, etc. Becky asked for more information regarding this problem. If there are problems – as there have been with group homes in the past – we will get the City Attorney's help. Another question was asked about home vandalization. Dario said do not hesitate to call 911.

9. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF NEW CARPETING FOR FIRE STATION 28 IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$4,000

Paul wanted to make sure vendor would take a City check for this.

Becky Leveque moved to approve the purchase of new carpeting for Fire Station 28 in an amount not to exceed \$4,000; seconded by Bright Aregs.

VOTE: Unanimous in favor. The motion passed.

10. DISCUSSION - PRNC POSITION REGARDING THE DRAFT EIR FOR THE PROPOSED HIDDEN CREEKS ESTATES PROJECT.

This discussion was delayed, and the representatives from Hidden Creek Estates were asked to wait for 30-45 minutes, to allow the Candidates' Forum for the PRNC Board of Directors to take place first. (See Item 11 below.)

Announcements

Mel asked if the candidates were here. Five people raised their hands. He said the candidate forum would be informal, with the candidate giving a three-minute introduction, followed by questions and discussion. Thirty minutes will be spent for the whole thing.

An announcement was made regarding the upcoming Playground Celebration and Disaster Preparedness Fair, to be held on Saturday, June 7, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, in Holleigh Bernson Park. Sue said thanks for the fantastic job on the t-shirts. Ron said a great deal of Porter Ranch businesses have stepped up to the plate.

Mel announced that the Porter Ranch Design Review Board will be meeting on Thursday, June 12, regarding the redesign of the Ralph's and TGIF signs.

Mel announced, regarding the PRNC election, if one wants to vote by mail, have your ballot in the mail by June 21. If you want to be a write-in, have your paperwork in by June 25 for the June 28 election. Go to the website or make a call for more information.

Mel announced that the Planning Department is having a meeting on June 26 regarding the City's Housing Element of the General Plan.

It was announced that Neighborhood Councils have been invited by DWP to take a tour of the LA Aqueduct and the Owens Valley. Date is not yet set.

There was an invitation from PAL; they're holding golf invitational on Monday, July 14.

There is a movie night on June 14, in Holleigh Bernson Park. Shrek 3 will be played.

Candidates' Forum for The PRNC Board Of Directors Election on June 28, 2008

The candidates were asked to speak. They spoke in alphabetical order.

Maha Spiridon Batta spoke. She is a local businesswoman who moved to Porter Ranch in 1976 and bought her house 15 years ago. She has worked with local organizations, with the elderly and abused children. She is a member of the Catholic Church; her husband is a Eucharistic minister. She likes the area's beauty, low crime rate. It's a desirable area and she'd like to preserve its status. She has demonstrated a commitment to the community and has 20 years of business management experience. She hopes she will be allowed to serve and work as hard as the Council already is.

Paula Cracium spoke. She has served on the Council since it was formed. She has worked at Shepherd on the Hills Church for 25 years. She sticks to it and always believes in community. The 4th of July event brings the community together. Community, as a whole, glues society together. She wants to make this unit as strong as we can and looks to amplify its voice outside the community. As we face changes, Neighborhood Council is a positive force. We've only begun our work and want to add a greater voice.

Susan Hammarlund spoke. She is running for re-election. She really enjoyed serving and making things better. She has worked with the principal of Castlebay Elementary School to make it a super number-one school. She is also the traffic chair. She would like people to let her know about problems; when they do, she tries to help. She loves seeing issues

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she's helped with become reality. None of this could have been done separately. She is a retired teacher, with 30+ years of experience. She has also worked with the Red Cross and other organizations. She liked getting the kids excited about things; let them see that these local organizations are geared toward them. These little stakeholders are our future. The Neighborhood Council is a good group. She has enjoyed working with them.

Becky Leveque spoke. She has been active in Porter Ranch for 20 years, with the Little League, Police Department and accomplished a lot. Focused on the future instead of the past. We were the first division computerized; she helped get the computers in the police stations. She moved here in the late 1970s. She has three children and grandsons. Castlebay Elementary is the finest school. We wanted a safe neighborhood and a good education. She wants to continue building a new K-8 school, continue working with police on crime and with the Fire Department to get them the resources the city doesn't provide. Please vote on June 28.

Phillip Minton spoke. He moved here from Redwood Shores in Northern California. Has been involved in community issues for 15 years. He has noticed the phenomenal growth here and the possibility of making this vibrant community more so. He wants to add trails for mountain biking and dog parks, things that increase quality of life. He also discussed enhancing the dining experience here to increase interaction with neighbors. He also advocated fiscal responsibility. In previous HOA involvement, he helped to keep fees to a set level, keeping them the lowest in the area for a long time. He has three children. He says Porter Ranch is a community changing and booming. This is a great opportunity to get involved.

Joel Fukumoto did not appear.

Mandhatasinh (Mark) Chauhan did not appear.

Irwin P. Cohen did not appear. He is working at polling places.

Ali Dabirian, Youth Representative, did not appear.

Patrick Pope endorsed Irv, said he has great community spirit.

There were assorted questions and comments from the audience regarding how many positions there are on the Board, and how many are open, as well as basic election procedures. Mel reminded everyone that these are four-year positions. Turnout was also discussed. Paul said about 200-220. Mel wished the candidates luck.

11. DISCUSSION - PRNC POSITION REGARDING THE DRAFT EIR FOR THE PROPOSED HIDDEN CREEKS ESTATES PROJECT.

Discussion resumed to Item 11. Mike Sanders (phone number 805-494-0764) and John Polito, representing the Hidden Creek Estates (HCE) project, were present, as they were at the last PRNC meeting.

Mel noted this project is long in development and the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is now ready to be presented. It's one, very detailed volume; it's also being presented to the Chatsworth Neighborhood Council. Opinions and possible changes to the EIR from the councils are requested by the city. The Board is here to discuss its position – or if it has one.

The location of the project was first discussed. Mason St. will be extended and made the entry point. It will be 282 acres, 188 homes (with up to 17,500 square foot lots) and 25 horse-keeping lots, with most of the development on the mesa. It will be annexed into the City of Los Angeles, and become part of Porter Ranch/Chatsworth, working with the PR Council. The developer is also working with the Chatsworth Neighborhood Council. Per the city's request, there will also be a neighborhood park – with only basic security lighting at night, to keep glare down. Mike doesn't believe the park will be gated. The open space/trail system will be open to the public.

The discussion turned toward traffic issues surrounding the proposed project. There is only one way in and out, with an emergency ingress/egress. It was suggested by many in attendance that traffic will be highly impacted in a negative way. Mike said that studies have shown there won't be a major traffic impact – the original streets were built as thoroughfares – and that the developer will make donations to recalibrate traffic lights. It was commented that Mason is already crowded and asked if the EIR addressed traffic. Mel noted that the EIR is accessible online at: <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/EIR/HiddenCreekEstates/DEIR/TOC.html>

An audience member asked if there was a plan for lights. Another member said that it's important that this issue be addressed in meetings every month and for everyone to remember that this project has not been approved by the city yet. Mel concurred that this project is indeed not yet approved and added that the NC doesn't approve or disapprove, support or not support these projects.

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Mike Sanders said that the EIR is an important, mandated document, which has to go out to many agencies. After all the comments come back, the real working meetings take place. He told the audience that this is a good time to make comments, before the hearings begin.

An audience member noted the thickness and complexity of the EIR and asked the Council what they are doing to digest the information contained therein and how they will communicate what they find to PR residents. Mel agreed that the document is very complicated and that the PRNC has the opportunity to comment, or not, on the EIR. Paula said that even if they're not qualified to address the report itself, they should say what concerns should be addressed, the things PRNC is concerned about. Then, those qualified to read and understand the EIR will know what those concerns are.

An audience member asked what the benefit of the HCE would be. Another asked about the lack of publicity regarding HCE and whether this was deliberate. Mel commented that the developer was originally referred to PRNC years ago, tours were given, changes taken and implemented, e-mails were sent and announcements posted on the website on many occasions.

Bright noted that there's only one, two-lane road leading in and out of this community, which is in brushfire country. Mike responded by saying that Brown's Canyon Rd. would be available for emergencies. He also mentioned benefits of the development: a new park, oversizing water storage by 1 million gallons (for increased firefighting capacity) and adding a heliport by the sports facility. There will also be a dual staging area at the base of Brown's Canyon Rd., which will be equipped with 13 turnouts, to help people get in and out. The houses will be built of non-combustible material and will be spaced evenly. An additional firebreak has been created. Another benefit of the development would be its 150 acres dedicated to open space.

Ron Nagai said the benefits don't impact the vast majority of PR residents on daily basis and suggested adding an additional lane to PR Drive would be beneficial, as well as helping with center medians, beautification, and traffic calming/alleviation, which would be of more benefit to PR than the equestrian features. These opportunities don't come up that often; best to make requests and establish the necessary connections (with the MTA/CTA) to get things done now.

Patrick asked if there was going to be a traffic light at the corner of Mason and Sesnon. It was affirmed there would be.

From the audience, Phillip Minton wondered if there were any active lists regarding this development, whether there were notes, whether these concerns were being documented. Patrick says the minutes from the last meeting, which contain extensive relevant information, are not done yet. Phillip asked whether notes were being taken on what's being discussed. He also asked what the Council's positions are – we don't want to get stuck with a clogged Mason St. without ever having had any record of the public's concerns. Mel said notes are being taken and concerns are being noted. Emails can always be sent.

Paula would like to end up with a resolution on what the Council is going to do about concerns about the project. She recommended sending emails as a means to voice those concerns. Mel said he sent an email out to the Board of Directors, regarding the draft EIR. This is an important step in the development process and now is the time to bring out any negative concerns.

Vivian Ihori said that unless you voice your concerns at the beginning of the process, you may end up with overcrowded schools, with new schools many years in the future. Regarding traffic at head of Mason/Sesnon, there will be a major block at that location in the morning and afternoon.

Mel summarized things by saying that school is an issue, traffic on Mason is an issue and fire is a potential issue.

A stakeholder asked who is paying for the maintenance of everything that is becoming part of that community. John from HCE said that the infrastructure is being paid for by the HCE. Maintenance of the park will be paid by the Dept. of Recreation and Parks.

Mike from HCE said that they've been transparent. You'll find we've been very responsible. We're going to be of benefit and going to be good neighbors.

Becky noted that PRNC has been working with developers for many years and that this project didn't just start. We've had meetings and publicized this project in many ways, and have taken board members and stakeholders on tours – to visualize the site and how people would enter and exit. Chatsworth and PR are good neighbors; they have their own land use issues, including those about horse property. This developer would include 25 K zoned lots, when they're only obligated to include five. We can't stop development, but we can manage it. There are 800 families around the golf course. This development has 188 homes on big lots; they're not going to be stacked together. She would rather have this

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than apartments or condos. The last part of the Valley is going to be built up. Of course traffic is a negative and there are concerns with schools. LAUSD also has power over this. This is a process. We will have the opportunity to comment, phase by phase. Mike added that it will be three to four years before ground is broken.

Becky was asked if Chatsworth had issues with EIR and she said that they wanted to make sure that people who owned stables were taken care of and that the canyons and trails would be available. Also, they wanted assurances that the streams would be protected.

There was a comment from the audience, from Walter Roid disagreeing with the idea that there's nothing we can do or that it's cast in stone. The only benefit stated by HCE was the addition of a park. When are we going to say enough? He would like a list of everyone running for office. Even if individuals accept something as set in stone, we should still voice our opinions, make an effort. And it starts with people running for office.

Mel asked for other comments and Becky reminded everyone that the city makes decisions regarding traffic lights, streets, schools.

Mike from HCE noted that anyone will be able to make comments throughout the process. Some developers prefer to submit something and get comments. We've been working with neighborhood councils. We hoped the people who would be concerned would be here. The emails and the website are a great idea too. This is the beginning. This is not cast in stone.

Walter Roid said he didn't mean to be negative. The future must be the future. But, when do we stop? That mesa will be tremendously impacted. He apologized after not being involved, after 34 years living here.

Mel said that the council will have to prepare a letter.

There was a comment from the audience regarding the EIR's assertion that Mason will be fine with stop signs. It was urged strongly that this is a major issue. Regarding Brown's Canyon – there should be some other outlet, other than an emergency one. Mason's a mess now, with all the homes. Mike responded that there will be a website for the project. A comment was made that June 30 is the deadline for comments on the EIR.

Mel stated that he thinks the council will have its list of concerns after the minutes are done. Mel polled the board, with its sense of the project.

Patrick said he didn't want to take a position until the board has had time to digest this and couldn't vote yes or no on EIR. It will be a traffic load, not as big as the S&S development north of Sorrento on Mason. He would like the idea of exploring something other than the Mason corridor, and hearing other traffic mitigation ideas. As far as development, big houses and big lots add to aesthetics of PR

Bright said it's a nice development and he's very impressed. He asked what is going to be done with the traffic mitigation and traffic calming. If this doesn't happen over the next year or two – after all the applications, etc. – I can't support this.

Patrick said he liked the idea of using Brown's Canyon Rd.; the impact would be a lot less, coming off De Soto. Brown's Canyon is underutilized.

Vas said it was hard to give a decision. There should be more than one more entrance and exit.

Bright said we should have more time to look at this. Hopefully by next time, there will be more to say about it.

Paula said she doesn't know if we're ever going to be qualified. It's just a matter of taking the concerns we have, putting them in a document and saying these are our concerns – and how we would like them to be responded to. She understands the Brown's Canyon issue. There is a freeway off-ramp there. The developers have done a beautiful job.

Becky asked about the locations of Brown's Creek and Mormon Creek on map. She asked what was the reasoning for not allowing people off on De Soto. She was told the location of park determined the roads.

Following this, there was a discussion about the fact that in Brown's Canyon there is an abandoned Nike missile site at the top of the hill (which is used as an LAPD SWAT training site). After the Northridge earthquake, some of the property was sold and it's thought the city of LA owns the easement, but no one wants to maintain the road, though equestrians use it. There are some environmental concerns about the road and streams.

Becky said she likes the project a lot. She likes the downsized number of homes and the number of horse lots. She added that she thought it would be nice if emptied out onto De Soto.

Paul said, as far as supporting it or not, we can't do it on the basis of what little we know. Ron has a good idea about how other things could be helped. We're going to be impacted by traffic. Off-ramps on the 118 freeway were stopped in the past like Winnetka south, Zelzah and White Oak leading to more congestion in Porter Ranch..

Mike from HCE asked for one minute clarification: The city of LA, when we gave them the EIR, gave us list of stakeholders. The city is contacting them for comments. All this doesn't mean stakeholders won't have other opportunities for comments. This is just one milestone in the approval process. The city has deemed this the best way.

Mel said that he has a sense that we're not in a position to approve/support EIR. But we have some concerns. We also have a sense that people on the board like the project. We'll have to draft something and send it out. The project has positive aspects.

John from HCE says that there are many other milestones along the way and perhaps workshops would be a better forum for these concerns, rather than NC meetings. He also suggested that concerned residents check the EIR online. Mike from HCE said perhaps there would be a dog park; there's enough open space.

Mel closed the discussion by saying that he thought they would be back.

General Meeting/Open Discussion

There was a discussion about the poor quality of the sidewalks where trees' roots have broken and warped the concrete surface. Susie Roid spoke. She said she was told to contact Ron Nagai regarding the problem, specifically on Rinaldi, all the way to Reseda Blvd. She said she can't walk on the sidewalk without tripping; it's impossible to jog or walk on these sidewalks. Anybody with a wheelchair wouldn't be able to use the sidewalks at all.

She also mentioned the new triangular kiosks on the sidewalks, which also make pedestrian passage difficult. These signs are approved by the city. Ron responded by saying that sidewalks are very expensive to replace (and there is no budget for this); individuals can make a 50/50 payment arrangement with the city, but this will only fix the sidewalks in front of one house. Also, the city doesn't want to do a root prune of the trees causing the problem – the Canary Island Pine – since this type of pruning could result in the tree's death. It was noted the problem is mostly in residential areas. Mel suggested a presentation by Street Services to help find a solution to this.

Paula announced that the July meeting is on the 8th. There was a discussion about the upcoming schedule of meetings.

Paula mentioned that at this Saturday's park event, anyone who wants to volunteer should wear their green shirts. The student representatives should have them, as should the Board Members.

Adjournment

The meeting was concluded at 9:07 pm