



Published by the *Old Agoura Homeowners Association*  
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## FEB. '09

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### GENERAL MEETING:

**Sunday, February 8, 2009** 5PM at the church on Foothill Dr.

Membership Dues are due  
Heschel School Update and Fundraising Drive  
Agoura Village Specific Plan  
Residential Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance

Election of Officers  
Speed Humps On Chesebro  
City's Trails Master Plan  
Old Agoura BBQ

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

AGENDA WILL INCLUDE:

**1. MEMBERSHIP DUES are due!** Ah, what the new year brings... Please fill out and mail in the form included in this Gazette. If you're planning on attending the meeting, you may pay at the door. New residents in the neighborhood should attend to get to know your neighbors, get involved, and find out what's going on around town. Attention new members: If your check or ID reflects a non-Old Agoura address, please provide some type of verification of residency, such as a utility bill.

In an effort to reduce our operating costs (and save the planet), please OPT IN to our email distribution list. Send an email to [webwrangler@oldagoura.org](mailto:webwrangler@oldagoura.org) with OPT IN as the subject line.

**2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** The nominating committee has developed a

proposed slate of officers for the BOARD of DIRECTORS for 2009. We will ask for your vote of approval for our choices. Nomination from the floor is always open for anyone feeling strongly about helping to serve. Members must have paid their dues, either before or at the meeting to be eligible to vote.

At times, the press of life changes some board member's ability to serve during the year. We have had to make some temporary appointments between elections. The nominating committee has developed the following slate of proposed officers for your consideration:

President: Jess Thomas  
Vice President: Mark Dixon  
Recording Secretary: Sharon Kennan  
Corresponding Secretary: Phil Ramuno  
Treasurer: Julie Thornbury  
Members-at large:  
Dave Albaum  
Jan Austin  
Mary Keenan  
Avi Nudell

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## 2. HESCHEL

**SCHOOL:** We have now joined with **SAVE OPEN SPACE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS** to officially file a lawsuit against the County and the Board of Supervisors for alleged CEQA violations in approving the school in a location that we have been fighting to oppose for over ten years. Our fund-raising drive continues.



## 3. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD

**COMPATIBILITY ORDINANCE:** After a lengthy period of development and review, our City Council recently passed updated lot coverage regulations for the whole city. The Old Agoura sections of concern were primarily directed at curbing "mansionization", the growing tendency to build huge new homes



that cover a disproportionate available area of the lot. Concerns by residents caused some of the proposed ordinances to be retained as guidelines, rather than hard and fast ordinances. Of special note was the **EQUESTRIAN ZONING OVERLAY** section which designates specific area to be set aside for horse keeping on all eligible lots in Old Agoura, and what uses can be allowed there if the current owner doesn't have horses. (See page 4 for more.)

The full document may be viewed at: <http://www.ci.agoura-hills.ca.us/Index.aspx?page=236>

## 4. CITY-WIDE (& EQUESTRIAN) TRAILS

**MASTER PLAN:** The purpose of the Citywide Trails and Pathways Master Plan is to provide a pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian trail system that will link natural and recreation resources to all parts of the city. The Plan will serve as a guide to future trail planning, design and construction.

One of the guiding principles of the Trails and Pathways Master Plan is the completion of the existing equestrian trail system in Old Agoura. The continuation or creation of 8-foot wide bridle paths

along residential streets will be required for all new development projects. Remodel projects with an alteration/addition of 50% or more with an existing trail easement, will also be required to construct an equestrian trail along the parcel frontage per City of Agoura Hills standards. The City may establish and collect an equivalent fee for those properties that do not have an equestrian easement on their side of the street or for flag lots. The Old Agoura Equestrian Bridle Path is a work in progress. Portions of Chesebro Road—the stretch of road north of Cheseboro National Park parking lot—may be the next portion slated for development, depending on the City's next fiscal year budget. The design will be consistent with the bridle path that borders Driver.

The full document may be viewed at: <http://www.ci.agoura-hills.ca.us/Index.aspx?page=264>

## 5. AGOURA VILLAGE SPECIFIC PLAN:

The intersection of Agoura and Kanan Roads is the major intersection of our city. Most people going to the beach in summer, or just getting off the freeway in Agoura Hills, pass by. Up until a decade ago, there were no buildings on any of the four corners there.

The city founders knew that it would eventually be the gateway of the city. USA Gas and Islands Restaurant came forward to build on two corners and the city started thinking about what the residents would like to have at the gateway. There were no rules in place to deny these projects, so they pressured the two developments to have upgraded designs. Then the city quickly started to decide what the citizens would like to have built on the rest of the gateway. Several years of discussions with experts and citizen/business groups resulted in a Specific Plan to guide the landowners in building something that was worthy and well planned rather than just taking what each landowner thought would sell or rent.

This is not a development, but rather a plan to guide future developments there. Each landowner would comply with the types of use and the designs that would compliment a walkable downtown that reflected Agoura and not look like a hodgepodge or a ubiquitous repeat of every other development around.

One local activist, living outside of the city, delayed implementation with a suit to examine the environment more fully. The judge, not fully

# THE HESCHEL SCHOOL ALBATROSS

**F**or over a decade now, our opposition to the location of the Heschel Day School West has required the majority of the time and attention of our Board of Directors. But for this exhausting drain of resources, we would have accomplished many more normal kinds of neighborhood goals and improvements, and had a lot more fun together. The truly rewarding aspect of the grind has been the accumulation and bonding of generous and talented neighbors who came together to contribute their time out of mutual respect for what we have and share in Old Agoura. The core groups, the Board of Directors and the Legal Committee, attracted a combination of personalities, values, and professions that otherwise might have remained casual acquaintances.

A key recent aspect has been the joining of our interests with the heroic local environmental group Save Open Space Santa Monica Mountains, or as they are referred to, SOS. As the name implies, their main objective is to prevent the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped open space. Against what have seemed like impossible odds, SOS has been centrally instrumental in helping prevent both Ahmanson Ranch and SOKA University from being developed into urban-density nightmares. They are named as co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit which we have filed against the County over the approval of Heschel's request for a CUP.

During the history of this ordeal, many Old Agourans have donated generous amounts of money to the legal fund. Throughout all the public hearings, first by the County Regional Planning Commission and ultimately the Board of Supervisors, these funds paid for our attorney fees and opinions by professional environmental experts who countered the claims made by Heschel's consultants. All of this monumental amount of time and money establishes what is known as the administrative record. That record is comprised of written testimony submitted at all the hearings, and transcribed verbal minutes of the proceedings at the hearings. This record will comprise the basis of the lawsuit. A judge will

decide the outcome of the lawsuit based upon his or her assessment of the lawyers' argumentative interpretations of the content of the record and the facts which support it.

Our continuing fund drive will be to pay for our attorney fees, which will be substantial. Some families have donated incredibly generous amounts, and many have not donated anything since the beginning, eight years ago. We've got to do better, from everyone, if we are going to prevail in this fight to protect the safety and integrity of our neighborhood. We realize that some families are having a difficult financial time now. We have developed a monthly payment plan in order to make it easier to contribute. We'll present that at the meeting to determine your reaction.

For families who would appreciate the ability to make a tax deductible donation, Save Open Space has a facility to provide that feature. The transaction absorbs a 6-1/2 percent fee, which lowers the effect of your contribution by that much. Contact us for that information.

There are numerous new residents who may not know the history of this effort or have enough information to realize the consequences of the operation of the school on our neighborhood. If you are considering donating to the legal fund and would accept a private explanation of the school's negative effect on Old Agoura, contact us through the Association's email at [directors@oldagoura.org](mailto:directors@oldagoura.org) to arrange an appointment.

The Old Agoura Homeowners Association is in this legal confrontation to vouchsafe the safety and well being of our families and we fully intend to win. Your past support has been amazingly effective. No other neighborhood in the city could have or would have done what we have to protect ourselves. The last big push has now begun. Talk to your neighbors and make sure that they understand what is at stake.

*Jess Thomas, President*

## A Lawsuit.



White-tailed Kites have been observed foraging on the Heschel site. Photo courtesy of Larry Brown.

understanding that each project that comes forward under the plan would do this, allowed the delay. The plan is now in effect and the landowners are starting to come forward with projects.  
(<http://ci.agoura-hills.ca.us/Index.aspx?page=1>)

## 6. SPEED HUMPS ON

**CHESEBRO:** After growing tired, frustrated and angry about dangerous and illegal speeding, a resident of middle Chesebro circulated a petition to construct speed HUMPS (not bumps) to remind everyone that the speed limit in Old Agoura is 25 MPH everywhere except on Driver Avenue, where it is (once again) 30. The city has already conducted speed surveys, and they will be mailing out confidential ballots. Similar to those in Fountainwood, Chesebro Road--both upper and lower portions--



qualifies for humps if 60% or more residents affected and the city council agree on their construction. With so many horses and small children on the street, often 25 MPH is too fast for safe passage.

**7. OLD AGOURA BARBECUE:** Long-time resident Karen Marriott has joined with other mourners of the hiatus of our annual neighborhood party, and agreed to chair an organizational group to get it going again. The big challenge is to find a site that is safe and has adequate parking. If you would like to be involved on this committee, or have suggestions, please let us know.



# Overview of Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance

**A**fter a lengthy period of development and review, our City Council recently passed a Residential Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance. The main purpose is to address neighborhood compatibility in all of the city's residential neighborhoods and to ensure that new single family homes or additions to existing single family homes are built in scale with the surrounding neighborhood.

Specific to Old Agoura, a new Equestrian Overlay Zone has been created for all single family zoned properties in Old Agoura. Minimum horse keeping standards have been established as part of the overlay zone. This measure will help to insure that as potential equestrian properties are developed or redeveloped, they are not made untenable for horses. The Equestrian Overlay Zone will keep Old Agoura horse-friendly.

Old Agoura Residential Design Guidelines were adopted. The issue of mansionization was addressed with a cap of 8,000 square feet on the size of a home. Administrative changes were made, including early notification signs advising of application submittal to allow greater public participation in the planning review process. And neighbors within 750 feet of a proposed project will now receive notification. Many Old Agourans were concerned about lot coverage issues

as they renovate and remodel. Due to their efforts, the Planning Commission now has the discretion to exclude flag lot and long entrance driveways from lot coverage percentages.

A number of items the City originally proposed as code were retained as guidelines. The City and the Planning Commission have committed to revisiting these in two years to ensure that the ordinance, amendments and guidelines are all working as intended.

The complete text of the Residential Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance and web casts of all public meetings can be viewed on the [City's website](#).



Thank you to all the neighbors who attended the Planning Commission meetings, city workshops, an HOA informational meeting for members, and two City Council meetings. Thanks to those who answered questionnaires, wrote letters to the Planning Commission and to City Council, and who gave public testimony. Through your efforts, concerns were raised and changes, both small and large, were made. Old Agoura once again came out in force and, while not everyone agreed on everything, the neighborhood's voices were heard. An involved citizenry is one of the things that make Old Agoura a truly special place to live.

**OLD AGOURA HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION  
2009 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE!!!**

Most homeowners associations require heavy, mandatory fees each year from their residents. Because your board believes in a laissez-faire approach to neighborhood management, membership continues to be optional. However, your HOA still needs basic funding to continue its involvement in regional and city issues that concern Old Agoura's quality of life (and to bring you fun events!)

Use the form below to indicate your level of support and send your checks. In addition, please consider a separate contribution to the Old Agoura Legal Fund (see below).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of contribution:

Member ---\$25

Patron -----\$50

Pioneer----\$100

I am a renewing member.

I am a new member.\*

\* If your check reflects a non-OldAgoura address, please provide some type of verification of residency (eg. utility bill).

**Make your check payable to:  
OLD AGOURA HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION**

Correspondence should be addressed to OAHA, 6064 Chesebro Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301

**LEGAL DEFENSE FUND:**

I wish to make a contribution to the **OLD AGOURA LEGAL FUND** in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I wish to make a contribution to the **OLD AGOURA LEGAL FUND** on a monthly payment plan. I wish to pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month for \_\_\_\_ months. Please contact me (or email us at [PZ@oldagoura.org](mailto:PZ@oldagoura.org)) for arrangements.

I wish to make a *tax-deductible* contribution through **Save Open Space (SOS)**.

Mail a check to: Save Open Space, P.O. Box 1284, Agoura, CA 91376-1284  
(818) 226-8315 info@saveopenspace.com

Credit Card Online: [www.saveourplanet.org](http://www.saveourplanet.org) and click on the link [**Donate Now!**] to a secure form.  
**IMPORTANT!** FILL OUT THE PROJECT NAME: **Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor/Heschel**

Credit Card by Phone: Save Our Planet (310) 737-9148

*For all credit card transactions, please be aware that a 6.5% fee will be deducted from your contribution.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*All donations are kept confidential.*

The Old Agoura  
**GAZETTE**



6064 Chesebro Road, Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Current Old Agoura Resident or:

## **Opt In for e-News!**

A note to our neighbors: In an effort to cut expenses, Gazette copies are available in electronic format ( a PDF file) can be emailed to you or downloaded from our our recently remodeled website.

We can notify you by email if you have opted in to be on our distribution list. Our privacy policy does not allow other entities access to your addresses and we do not purchase mailing lists. Opt In by sending an email to: [directors@oldagoura.org](mailto:directors@oldagoura.org)

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Please stay involved and connected to your community: [www.oldagoura.org](http://www.oldagoura.org).