



*January 2021  
President's Message*

## **WHAT A YEAR. BUT IT WASN'T ALL BAD!**

Pandemic, wildfires, protests, economic stress and general anxiety. This year presented enough challenges for a decade. . . or three. But it wasn't all bad. Although we faced unprecedented challenges, our community rose up to meet those challenges with compassion and enthusiasm. The Cheviot Hills Home Owners' Association (CHHOA) Board made it our mission during these extraordinary times to balance our social responsibility to assist the most vulnerable among us while safeguarding the integrity of our community.

In April, when Mayor Garcetti announced our own Cheviot Hills Recreation Center ("the Park") would become a temporary shelter for dozens of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) who had to be taken off the streets to fight the spread of coronavirus throughout West Los Angeles, the CHHOA Board went to work with local officials to reasonably limit the number of PEH housed at the Park and set parameters to ensure an orderly, safe and clean temporary shelter.

By May, the parking lot at the Park was the site of nearly 100 individual temporary trailers intended to further limit the spread of the virus. The Board worked with local officials to ensure the trailers and the residents housed in them adhered to rules designed to keep the Park safe and secure while protecting the City's most defenseless from the virus. Cindy Kane, Margaret Gillespie and other Board members worked directly with the Mayor's staff to ensure compliance with the security protocols while at the same time raising money to assist the PEH in the trailers with food and cleaning supplies the City could not provide. Cindy and Margaret delivered these items to the temporary shelter residents every week for six months.

In September, the Park tenants were relocated to permanent housing solutions, the trailers removed and the temporary fence taken down. By the end of October, the Park was fully returned to its normal self. During this temporary housing period, only one tenant had to be removed for a violation of the rules and there was one infected person who was immediately isolated and transferred. On balance, the Board and the community were able to assist the PEH while keeping the Park and the neighborhood safe.

As many of you may have read, in May, a United States district judge issued a preliminary injunction ordering the City to provide shelter for more than 6,000 PEH living under or near freeways. This injunction compelled officials to quickly develop a plan for compliance, including identifying spaces across the City that could be used for semi-permanent shelter. The Park was on the list of sites to host a fixed shelter. The proposed plan was that the back half of the Park could serve as the location for as many as 25 "tiny" homes. The Board met with City personnel many times to vigorously object to this well-intentioned but misguided plan. As many neighborhood residents noted, the plan was unworkable for the community and would not have effectively served the PEH, who would have been further removed from the administrative services they require. In early November, the Park

was successfully removed from consideration as a fixed PEH shelter site. (Particular thanks are due to neighborhood resident Nadav Ravid and his group for their efforts in this regard.)

Recognizing that the homelessness crisis will continue after the pandemic ends, the Board is working with West Los Angeles Homeless, a PEH advocacy group that is raising money and working with various outreach agencies to find shelter for *local* PEH. The goal is to specifically help PEH in our neighborhood by finding a suitable long term solution closer to homelessness resources. (More information can be found at [www.wlah.org](http://www.wlah.org).)

Although this was not an official CHHOA effort, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Margaret Gillespie's commitment to raise funds to purchase 500 sleeping bags for PEH as winter sets in. Additionally, the community organized towel, book and cereal drives for local efforts. The commitment demonstrated by Margaret and the community should encourage us all to do more.

Beyond the pandemic, the Mayor recently announced \$150 million cuts to the LAPD budget. Among other things, these cuts will result in a reduction of 350 sworn officers and 150 civilians, which will bring staffing levels back down to those of 2007. (In January 2021, 400 officers will be retiring). Between 2007 and 2020, however, there has been a 60% increase in calls for service. As a result of these budget cuts, LAPD front desk hours of operation will be reduced to Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. Additionally, LAPD will no longer respond to traffic collisions not involving a crime, or respond to calls concerning homeless encampments or civil disputes between neighbors. The animal cruelty task force also has been cut.

In light of these LAPD budget cuts and attendant loss of services, community policing and security become ever more critical. One of the most important services the CHHOA provides is private security. CHHOA funds a 24/7 patrol car by APS Security Systems. In addition to having one car patrolling Cheviot Hills full time, we share a second car with the California Country Club Homes Association. Besides providing patrol service, APS locks gates, checks homes, and provides vacation and after-hours property inspections for CHHOA members.

We would like to increase our security efforts; however, we require the participation of more members in order to do so. There are approximately 1450 homes in Cheviot Hills. Currently, only 350 homes are dues paying members. In 2014, a mere six years ago, we had 524 members. By even sharper contrast, there were 722 dues paying households in 2005. We have the ability to make our community safer and we should.

We hope to do more in the coming year but we need your support. Please join (or renew) your CHHOA membership. The Association's efforts to maintain the residential nature of Cheviot Hills are funded by voluntary annual dues of \$95 per household. You can join online at <http://cheviot hills.org/join/>.

Similarly, we welcome each of you to join us at our monthly meeting to provide input as to how to further improve our community or voice any concerns you may have. During the pandemic, meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month via Zoom. Information regarding participating in these meetings can be found at the CHHOA website. When it is safe to do so, we will resume our meetings in person at the Griffin Club.

Finally, let me close by wishing you all the joys of the season and happiness throughout the coming year. We are so grateful to have the opportunity to represent our great neighborhood. While most of us will be glad to say goodbye to 2020, we wish all of you a much improved 2021.