



**North Hills Community Association  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Claremont Club and Spa, Berkeley Room  
February 20, 2025**

**Board Member Attendance:** Fred Booker, Miki Chan, Donna Karch, David Kessler, Rana Bader Matly, Brian McCroden, Nancy Mueller, Anna Sarukhanov, Elizabeth Stage

**Guest Attendance:** Jared Savas

**1. Call to order:** David called the meeting to order at 4:07 P.M.

**2. Introduction of Visitor:** Jared Savas is an aide to Councilmember Janani Ramachandran

**3. Review and Adoption of Meeting Agenda:** The Agenda was approved by consensus.

**4. Review and Approval of Draft Minutes of January 16, 2025:** Elizabeth made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Fred seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Announcements**

- a. **Board Member Announcements:** Anna said that she'd like to drop off the board as she is busy with work and doesn't have time. Brian encouraged her to stay; David said she has a month to reconsider.

**6. Treasurer's Report:** Donna reported that in 2024, NHCA's total income was \$13,279.50; total expenses were \$9,951.33. Currently the checking account balance is \$17,561.91, with \$650 pending checks to be cashed; the savings account balance is \$16,240.67. The total available funds are \$33,152.58. Donna issued 1099-NEC tax forms for 2024. She filed NHCA tax documents with the IRS, CA Franchise Tax Board, and the CA Attorney General/ Department of Justice. Nonprofits are required to file an Annual Registration with the Attorney General. The cost for NHCA was \$25. Fred and Donna met to begin work on the 2025 budget.

**7. Committee Reports**

- a. **Garden:** Nancy reported that the February 8<sup>th</sup> garden work party was cancelled due to rain, and that Nancy, lead for the day, was sick. The next garden work party is scheduled for February 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Gateway Demonstration Garden. On

Sunday, March 2, UC Berkeley Project Day leaders will work at the Firestorm Memorial Garden from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Andrea Gordon has donated \$500 to be used towards the purchase of sandwiches for the volunteers. Fred is awaiting a response from Diablo Fire Safe Council regarding a grant for the Gateway Demonstration Garden.

- b. Communications.** Donna presented the Communications Report (See Attachment #1). Highlights include a proposed new website and calls for a monthly Constant Contact newsletter. Donna said that Barry had spent more than 80 volunteer hours on the draft website, she commended Barry Pilger and Catherine Moss for their work. The Board discussed the new look versus promoting the three pillars of the association, "Public Safety, Gardens & Community, Advocacy". Fred made a motion to table the discussion until all Board members have had an opportunity to look at the draft website. He stated that these are major changes of the website and is something that needs the full input and discussion of the Board and interested parties talking about why the change is needed and how the change is an improvement. Fred added that the discussion would take up an entire Board meeting. Brian seconded. The topic will be added to the Retreat's agenda and the March Board meeting agenda.
- c. Advocacy.** Elizabeth reported that Councilmember Ramachandran, along with others, has found "extra money" to forestall closing four fire stations. The Council will meet on March 4<sup>th</sup>, all are encouraged to attend. Elizabeth will post the information on Open Forum.
- d. Public Safety.** Miki reported that the quarterly Public Safety Meeting will be part of the Annual Membership Meeting, which will be held on March 15, 2025.

## 8. Old Business:

- a. Annual Membership Meeting:** The meeting will be held on March 15, 2025 at Highlands Country Club from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The guest speakers include Oakland Fire Chief Covington and Councilmember Ramachandran. Fred Booker will discuss the goals of the Gateway Demonstration Garden. Rajni Mandal will discuss her efforts with the Police Commission.
- b. Board Slate:** Other than some current Board members, no one else has volunteered to serve on the 2025/2026 Board. Nominations from the floor will occur at the Board meeting. The current Board slate is Fred Booker, Miki Chan, Donna Karch, David Kessler, Brian McCroden, Nancy Mueller and Elizabeth Stage.
- c. Retreat:** The 2025/2026 Board will meet at Brian's home for a retreat on May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

**9. New Business:**

- a.** Caldecott Tunnel work and Parkwood sidewalk project. David proposed sending a letter to Caltrans supporting Ann Smulka's position that Caltrans should be responsible for clearing brush on their property and installing a sidewalk that had been proposed from the Parkwoods Condominiums to the Gateway Demonstration Garden. Donna so moved; Fred seconded. After discussion, the motion carried 7-1-0.
- b.** Montclair Firehouse proposal. The Montclair Firehouse Arts Center committee has asked NHCA to endorse converting the old Fire House in Montclair to a venue for the Arts. Donna made a motion to send a letter of support. Fred seconded. After a brief discussion, motion carried 7-1-0.
- c.** District 4 advisory council meetings. Several members of the NHCA community have applied for and been appointed to the advisory council, including Elizabeth Stage.

**Adjournment:** As there was no further business, David adjourned the Meeting at 5:46 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

S/ Nancy Mueller and Donna Karch  
Co-secretaries

## **Communications Committee Report – Donna Karch**

### **February 20, 2025 NHCA Board Meeting**

For the past month or two I have been working with Barry and Catherine to improve our website.

- Finding basic community information on the current website is impossible
- When viewed on a tablet or phone, our current website appears only with a panoramic photo
- The chronological 'newsfeed/post' format buries critical information
- Younger neighbors expect to locate information easily and will not read through long narrative text but they will scan if information is formatted clearly
- For example, the current website's link discussing how to report blight conditions to the city is buried in a 2019 post making it impossible to find

The new draft website displays links to resources that residents need most and serves as a tool kit full of easily accessed, essential information to support an informed citizenry.

The new website serves the mission of the NHCA.

### **THE NEW WEBSITE**

See the **draft** version of the new NHCA website here:

[www.site.northhillcommunity.org](http://www.site.northhillcommunity.org).

- Bonus: This eliminates the need to pay someone to do website maintenance since updates such as new phone numbers are easily changed, and new content is easily added.

### **PROPOSED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR 2025**

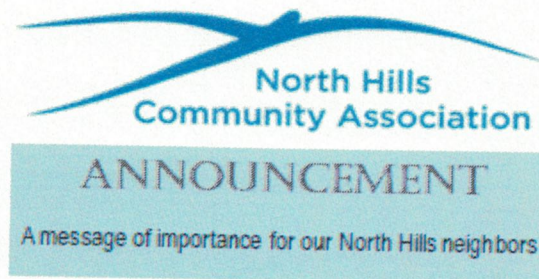
1. Issue a monthly newsletter on our Constant Contact platform. It will contain routine, need-to-know material. Posts that might have been made to the previous newsfeed/post formatted website would be appropriate content our newsletter.

**ATTACHMENT #1**

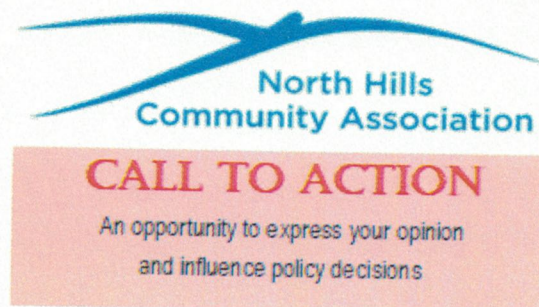
*It would contain NHCA Board and public safety meeting schedules, Tunnel Road repair updates, street repaving schedules, garden workdays, wildfire prevention activity, etc.*

- Published on the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month
  - Compiled by communications chair
2. Time-sensitive issues: Announcements email from Constant Contact.

When residents need to be informed of an event, not already covered in the newsletter, or a time sensitive situation develops for which special attention is warranted, we will send a Constant Contact blast using the Announcements logo:



3. When a critical issue requires prompt community response - such as a proposal to close our fire station - we will send a Constant Contact blast using our *Call to Action* header:



- The Public Safety Committee reports that Rajni has been doing, for example, asking for neighbors to attend an upcoming Police Commission meeting, would be done in this format, rather than be posted on Open Forum.

## Feedback

While we welcome feedback from Board members, we will simultaneously beta test the new format and content to assure all essential information is included and presented clearly and resources clearly identified. Please review the proposed website and forward to me your comments – brief comments, please.

- Please keep in mind this is a work-in-progress

In submitting this report to the Board, I wish to acknowledge the many hours Barry has devoted to this project and commend his and Catherine's interest in continuing to work on improving our ability to communicate with and engage members of our community.