



June 24, 2004 Editorial

CHOA Connects Residents to City

Communication is never an easy endeavor, particularly when the discussion revolves around political issues.

Whether you're interested in city government or international affairs, there are myriad sources of sometimes conflicting information. That's why it's important for people to have access to their elected officials -- they can get information from the source. This is extremely difficult on a national or international level, and it's no simple task on the local level, either. City council, school or library board meetings allow constituents to see their officials in action, but there's little room for personal contact. So it's great to see an organization like the Rancho Palos Verdes Council of Homeowners Associations, or CHOA--a grassroots group that connects residents to City Council members and other local officials -- experience somewhat of a renaissance.

The Peninsula News encourages CHOA to continue its recruiting efforts and public outreach during a time when the association has seen unprecedented success.

Founded in the mid-1970s partly to help stop Los Angeles County from turning RPV into a series of dense developments, CHOA has undergone rises and falls in membership. But the organization got a needed boost last year when former Planning and View Restoration commission member Jon Cartwright took over as president. With 14 years of experience in city politics, Cartwright has the know-how to streamline operations. Immediately, he and a corps of volunteers mapped out a strategy for CHOA.

A simple but key move for CHOA was deciding to hold business meetings once a month. That way, association officers could discuss routine matters without burdening members with the boring details. Now regular meetings, held once every three months, are open to topics ranging from open-space preservation to traffic safety. Cartwright and company also ensure that a City Council member is at those meetings to answer residents' questions. This connects the community with its government in an intimate fashion not found in many public forums.

CHOA officials have given their organization more clout in the past year as well. Not only

do City Council members field questions but they also value members' opinions. That much was clear in April, when City Council members asked CHOA to review guidelines for underground utilities in RPV. Also, CHOA members convinced officials to notify neighboring residents before workers install cell phone antennas in the city's rights-of-way. It behooves other homeowners associations to get on board with a revitalized CHOA if they are to influence city policy.

While members were successful in getting more associations involved -- last year's membership of nine homeowners associations has risen to 42 associations representing about 6,000 households -- they know there is more work ahead of them. If CHOA members come your way during this summer's membership drive, give them a chance and listen to what they have to say. From city business to effectively running a homeowners association, CHOA has it covered.