Water Board Election Results
Newcomer Jacquee McClish was the top vote getter in the November election. Brad Cooke placed second and retained his seat on the Board.

City Attorney Resigns
City Attorney Holly Whatley announced her resignation, and the resignation of the firm Colantuono and Levin from La Habra Heights. Prior City Attorney Sandi Levin resigned in 2013. Michael Colantuono or Colantuono and Levin had been the City attorneys since 1994. Ms. Whatley cited a decline in effectiveness as a reason for leaving, without mentioning specifics.

A recent article on Public Agency Attorney Ethics suggests a reason for the City’s Law Firm resignation: “if indeed it is clear that the agency is taking an unlawful action and the attorney’s efforts to encourage corrective action have failed, the attorney’s only recourse is to resign.”

The City hired the firm of Jenkins & Hogins to be the new City Attorney. Michael Jenkins was the top vote getter in the November election. Jenkins & Hogins was hired as “disruptive” to Staff working, the Council voted to cut City Hall hours in half.

Council Cuts City Hall Hours in Half
With one Councilmember blaming Citizens seeking service as “disruptive” to Staff working, the Council voted to cut City Hall Office hours to save money. The Council queried staff as to what were the most popular hours for builders to ensure City Hall was open for them. Effective January 20, 2014, New Hours are 8-11 A.M., and 2-4 P.M. - Current hours are 7:30 A.M. - 6 P.M.

Water Board Removes Publications from Office
At its December meeting, the Water Board voted to remove all non-government publications from distribution at their office. State Law requires all publications be treated equally.

During discussion the existence of La Habra Heights Improvement Association political Enemies was disclosed and that recently resigned Councilmember Higgins received $500 per month for Heights Life editing. An Emergency item regarding the City of La Habra takeover of L.A. County Cal Domestic Water customers led to discussion of the advantage to La Habra Heights County Water District taking over the customers as a defense against the District being taken over by the City. The Board decided not to take the customers and to support the La Habra takeover.

More Information on All Stories can be found at www.LaHabraHeights.net

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Council Posts Armed Sheriff Deputies to Prevent Public & Press from Attending Secret Back Room Trash Deal Meeting

Sheriffs posted to keep public out of Trash meeting

A City search for a new trash hauler, advertised by the City to be done with “integrity and transparency”, got off to an opaque start as the City posted armed deputies to keep the public and press out of a November 14th orientation meeting for prospective trash haulers.

The City would not answer questions of where the townhouse condominiums were planned, or why forcing haulers not to disclose to customers an annual $80,000 payoff to the City was an example of “integrity and transparency.”

The proposed contract also includes free service for the City and free service for certain La Habra Heights Improvement Association events with the costs to be built into rates. The Council told residents contracting with one hauler would bring economies of scale and reduced trash bills. The Contract and winning bidder is scheduled to be brought to the Council at the February meeting.

Does Eden-the-Llama Scare Employees Away?

Tweet used as example of scaring potential employees

The Council approved spending $25,000 to hire an independent recruiter for a new City Finance Manager, after a Staff report indicated difficulties filling the position, including Tweets that the City claimed scared off potential employees.

Investigations of City Continue

At the December Council meeting, City Manager Shauna Clark revealed outside investigations of the City.

A DA Criminal investigation is now completed with no evidence of wrongdoing found within their jurisdiction. The Citizen Finance Committee is now able to petition the State Controllers Office to investigate allegations of missing checks and admitted off warrant spending. Multiple CalPERS investigations are ongoing as well as a Gas Tax Audit. The City Manager also admitted all kinds of things need to be straightened out in the Finance Department.

Follow-Up - Road Tax Refund

We requested invoices from the Zone 4 and 5 contractor which were released after a 2 month delay. Invoices revealed that no slurry seal was done, denying taxpayers the same benefit received in other zones.

A request to see documents from the City Attorney identifying the legality of diversion of funds from the intended use received a response that the documents are “attorney-client privilege.”

Another request to see Road Maintenance Plans for 2014 was non-responsive referring us to the City Budget which had no plans.

City Councils have prohibited north bound oil trucks due to danger and noise early in the process. Plans include drilling or deepening of 30 wells. Wells take one month to drill, with Matrix planning 24/7 drilling.

Neighors will be subject to 24/7 noise for several years with the entire construction phase taking 5 years. The Noise Study did not consider noise impacts of trucking along the truck route.

City Hall Remodel Now Exceeds Cost of New

City Hall Construction December 30, 2013 Cost continues to escalate

With the Council’s vote to expend $270,000 to defend a public interest lawsuit against the City Hall expansion and remodel and the cost approaching $3 million, questions have been raised why the Council did not take the new construction choice, estimated at $1.9 million at their February 2013 meeting.

Asbestos - Did the City Council Cry Wolf?

Council and Staff Statements and multiple City documents identified lead paint, and asbestos containing ceiling tiles and walls in the Administration and Planning Buildings as a danger to Staff and impetus for the almost $3 million rebuilding of City Hall. Roofing, plumbing, electrical, hazard abatement and other repairs identified in a facilities assessment would only have cost about $1 million spread out over 10 years.

After asbestos removal was completed by a contractor, residents visiting the unlocked and open work site found debris piles of drywall and ceiling tiles. Concerns were raised that these contained asbestos, according to City documents. City officials stated they didn’t contain asbestos, even though a court document filed days earlier corroborated that they did. Had residents not visited the site that day, the discrepancy would not have been known.

Roads deteriorate without crack seal and slurry

Oil Field Plans - 24 Hour Drilling

Environmental Documents available only upon special request, reveal inconsistencies with Matrix Oil statements.

The Traffic Study assumes that oil will be trucked out, with no plans for a pipeline. Widening of Las Palomas Drive to accommodate the large trucks is planned as “mitigation”. The trucking route will send heavy oil filled trucks up steep and winding Hacienda Road. Past

Would the Council and Staff have exaggerated the dangers in order to get the rebuilt facility with multiple staff lounges, private office suites, and residents separated from city departments and accountable service?

LHH Fire Watch - Filling a Need

The drought has again raised awareness of fire safety. In recent years, the City Council has eliminated the Emergency Preparedness Committee, cut Fire Engine staffing from two engines to one, replaced the full time fire chief with part-time, eliminated on-site volunteer dispatch, removed the Fire Department Training Room from the new city hall and reduced Sheriff Dept patrols to about 12 hours per day.

Seeing a need, a group of residents got together and started La Habra Heights Fire Watch in 2008. The group has a radio network consisting of individuals throughout the community with portable radios. A transmitter network (Repeater) exists in and out of town to provide coverage under most conditions. The group patrols the city during times of high fire danger looking out for problems before they develop, and during other significant events.

The group also keeps an eye out for suspicious individuals or activities and alerts the Sheriff Dept. One of its most valuable services is an online resource that allows anyone to listen to the La Habra Heights Fire Dept, the Sheriff Dept and Fire Watch radio communications.

You can obtain ‘real time’ information on what’s happening. More and more residents have tuned in when they hear sirens approaching and want to know what is going on. Access the link at www.LHFFireWatch.com.

Fire Watch has monthly meetings at Hacienda Golf Club. New members are enthusiastically welcome.

Code Changes - Petitions Circulating

Residents opposed to proposed Code Changes which will endanger our rural environment are circulating petitions to present to the Commission and Council. The petition identifies proposed changes including:

• Weakening the Landscaping and Lighting Plan requirements by giving the city staff too much discretion to approve projects without requiring limits on lighting and landscaping.

• Weakening the requirements which are designed to stop construction of large big boxlike houses

• Increasing new construction allowed in the setbacks without proper review