

**John Harbison Comments at
PVE City Council Meeting on July 23, 2013**

I applaud the City Council for stepping back and developing a framework for guiding future maintenance and access to the trails of Palos Verdes Estates.

When PVE was founded in 1925, the Olmsted Brothers design showed great foresight, with 28% of the land dedicated forever as open space spread in bands throughout the development. Rather than build sidewalks, the Olmsteds created corridors with trails and pathways that allowed residents to walk through open space to get to schools or wherever else they cared to go. Some of those trails are still in use, and others have been neglected. I encourage you to refer back to the original design and preserve that original intent.

Some of the people tonight have expressed concerns over privacy due to trails that are near their homes. Since these trails pre-dated all homeowners buying their property, they need to accept that. Also, it is inappropriate for homeowners to encroach on pathways and open space adjacent to their homes, and there are many many examples of blockages by structures and plantings that should be removed. This open space is a public asset, and intended for public use. To do anything other requiring encroachments to be removed is a violation of the Protective Covenants written into the deeds going back to 1925, and forever "running with the land" through successive owners.

Thus the process needs to differentiate "modifications to old trails" from "creation of new trails." The plan should start with the trails in the original Olmsted design, and include pathways. Basic principles should include:

1. For trails that are in the original design for PVE, neighbors cannot block those trails simply because they want privacy. They need to accept any trail that pre-dates their purchase of property, and they must live with these trails. They can build fences or hedges on their property for privacy in accordance with the protective provisions, but they cannot build these on the public property
2. Process should reiterate that it is illegal for residents to build any structures on pathways or public open space without prior authorization of City Council
3. Any authorization by City Council of encroachments must comply with the Protective restrictions, including minimum distance of structures from lot lines
4. Process should reiterate that it is illegal to block pathways with vegetation

Finally, it is important that the committee that works on this framework represents a diversity of perspectives including those who use the trails and are familiar with the history and precedents. I'd like to nominate Ried Schott as just such a person to be among those on the committee.

Thank you again for your thoughtful preparation of a framework and process for developing a trails policy.

**Renata Harbison Comments at
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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight, and thank you for recognizing the need to establish a framework that guides the use and maintenance of one of PVE's greatest assets – its parklands.

My husband and I hike quite a bit. Our vacations often take us to wonderful places, such as Patagonia, Tibet, the Canadian Rockies, National Parks in the US. In fact, for our honeymoon, I took a leave of absence from work in NYC to join him on a 3-month backpacking, hiking trip to the Canadian Rockies, the Yukon, Alaska and California. I had never been camping before, so you might say that I jumped in "head first" and I've never looked back!

I treasure the fact that we have accessible hiking and walking trails in our own backyard. Growing up in NYC, I walked in Central Park almost every day when I was old enough to walk our dog myself. Central Park was designed by a master of landscape design, Frederick Olmsted. He thoughtfully created both "wild" and civilized areas that wind throughout the park, connected by walkways and paths. New Yorkers treasure their oasis within the concrete canyons created by buildings and paved streets. I don't think it was a coincidence that the Olmsted brothers were asked to carry on their father's legacy in Palos Verdes in those early formative years when our City was being formed. The Olmstead brothers encouraged early residents to use the parklands by interspersing the larger parkland areas with wide paths or pathways that connect the tracts to each other. People who grew up on our street have talked about using the paths when they were growing up years ago.

[I made some comments at this point acknowledging agreement with residents who wanted a curfew and some other points...]

I view our open space (whether parkland, paths or pathways and trails) as a jewel. As with most jewels, there are multiple facets to see, and understandably we want to keep our jewel to ourselves – sharing is often challenging, but I believe the Olmsted brothers envisioned our parklands as a benefit to be enjoyed by all of us.

In closing, I hope you will gather a diverse group of people for an exchange of ideas so that we can all enjoy our parkland whether as view corridors or as places to explore.

Thank you.