

HASLEY HILLS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

CASTAIC, CALIFORNIA

Mr. Jerry Gladbach
Chairman, Local Agency Formation Commission
700 North Central Ave. #445
Glendale, CA 91203

May 19, 2010

Dear Mr. Gladbach,

This letter serves to correct information supplied to your agency recently by the Castaic Area Town Council regarding Annexation Application #2008-005, for the neighborhoods of Hasley Hills, North Bluffs, Live Oak and the Valencia Commerce Center into the City of Santa Clarita.

Hasley Hills Homeowners Association represents 739 homeowners who have consistently voiced preference for annexation into the City of Santa Clarita. In the initial signature drive, 92% of Hasley Hills residents petitioned for annexation. The total number of homeowners in the proposed annexation area is 1,531, representing an estimated 4,715 residents, or 21% of the Castaic population relative to a State Finance estimate of 22,000. Of the combined Hasley Hills, North Bluffs and Live Oak neighborhoods, 76% of residents petitioned for annexation. It was that overwhelming support that led the City of Santa Clarita to submit our application that sits before your agency awaiting your decision today.

The April 15th letter you received from the Town Council invokes emotionally charged rhetoric and twists the facts to stoke opposition to our annexation. We reject the notion that our annexation application is, "the most egregious and destructive attempt to divide an historic community that has ever been proposed." The map attached to the letter "zooms in" on southern Castaic, excluding vast northern Castaic to make our annexation appear disproportionately larger and more at the "heart" of Castaic than is true.

Just where is the *heart* of Castaic? Is it the central retail area and neighborhoods centered on Castaic Road, the movie sets and beautiful expanse of pristine land to the north, the Hasley Canyon horse country to the west, the Los Angeles County operation to the east, or Castaic Lake and the Recreation Area? While we love the Castaic Area, the neighborhoods of Hasley Hills, North Bluffs, Live Oak and the light-industrial Valencia Commerce Center at the southern edge of Castaic do not comprise what most would call the *heart* of Castaic. Furthermore, Hasley Hills and the Valencia Commerce Center barely existed ten years ago, so it seems ridiculous to argue that our annexation would, "annex the *heart* out of a *long-established* community."

On the issue of dividing communities, the Town Council enlisted Interstate 5 in its argument as a "natural boundary." Our perspective of the 5 Freeway is the opposite: an unnatural expanse of concrete that traverses the Castaic Area arbitrarily without bounding it from anything except the prison in the south, opposite the freeway from our proposed annexation area. Besides, LAFCO has approved 28 previous annexations in the Santa Clarita Valley that effectively divided the communities of Canyon Country, Saugus, Newhall and Valencia.

We view this annexation as a correction of sorts, because the original proposed incorporation included all of those communities, including Castaic, in the initial boundaries of Santa Clarita. The Castaic area had the highest percentage of support for incorporation and was only carved out due to the large portion of undeveloped land at that time.

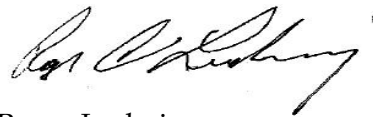
Our annexation never contemplated “the entire Castaic/Val Verde area,” as discussed in the letter. We believe that idea only served to stir negative feelings, along with the “advisory” vote the Town Council encouraged, in hopes of delaying and ultimately thwarting our annexation. Ironically, that vote reconfirmed the strong enthusiasm for annexation among Hasley Hills residents tabulated from our initial petition and demonstrated little support for the Town Council preference for a new west side city. In fact that vote, supported by Supervisor Michael Antonovich, indicated pockets of annexation support throughout Castaic and Tesoro Del Valle. Clearly, additional residents of the unincorporated areas prefer to be annexed into the City also.

The Town Council wrote that the annexation of Hasley Hills, North Bluffs and Live Oak was “long awaited” and “duly encouraged” by the City of Santa Clarita. Actually, we debated the merits of annexation versus remaining unincorporated among ourselves long before approaching the City. In response, the City merely offered a friendly reception and advised on the annexation process. It is not the City but local residents, who did the leg-work circulating petitions back in 2007, and the overwhelming majority who signed them, who have “long awaited” our annexation.

As you know, the legislature’s intent in creating county Local Agency Formation Commissions was to facilitate orderly and timely transitions of local government. So far, we have found this annexation process to be neither timely nor orderly. Our community has been attempting annexation into the City of Santa Clarita for over five years. In late 2008 our application was returned pending consideration of a City of Santa Clarita Sphere of Influence request, and after resubmission in January 2009 it was held up awaiting the illusive “advisory” ballot. It has been sitting before your agency for over seventeen months.

Please complete the processing of our application without further delay and encourage the County of Los Angeles to negotiate a fair tax transfer agreement, as it has in the 28 previous annexations into the City of Santa Clarita.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Ludwig". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Roger Ludwig
Hasley Hills HOA Treasurer