

# HASLEY HILLS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

CASTAIC, CALIFORNIA

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

May 25, 2010

Dear Mr. Gladbach,

Just one day after sending you our comments responding to the Castaic Area Town Council letter, we learned the West Ranch Town Council sent you a similar letter dated May 15<sup>th</sup>. Like our first letter, this one serves to correct information supplied by the West Ranch Town Council regarding our 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.

Common to both Town Council letters was an attempt to construe a mountain of opposition from a dearth of facts. Both emphasized false and misleading information and rhetoric and baseless outrageous attacks on the good City of Santa Clarita. We respond to each of the "concerns and core elements of opposition" expressed by the West Ranch Town Council in the order received.

1. Our neighborhoods were never "targeted" for annexation by the City of Santa Clarita. *We, not the City*, initiated the annexation and encouraged the City with letters and public appearances before the Council. The City performed due diligence in accordance with its public process, as any responsible City responding to a prospective annexation should. Our petition did not include other areas, so *the Town Council argument that ours "is an effort to pick these neighborhoods while avoiding other parts of the Castaic-Val Verde community for financial benefit," has no merit*. Finally our annexation would not "divide established communities" (more on this later).

2. The concern expressed that, "1500 people, out of a community of nearly 25,000 can effectively determine the fate of the larger community," misrepresented the facts by comparing the number of home owners to the *total Castaic Area population*, ignored the 2009 "advisory" vote results, and misrepresented the views of its West Ranch constituents. The 1,531 homeowners in our proposed annexation area represent an estimated *4,715 residents, or 21% of the Castaic Area population* relative to a State Finance estimate of 22,000. The 2009 vote reconfirmed the strong enthusiasm for annexation among our three neighborhoods while demonstrating very little support for a new west side city among the larger community. Furthermore, West Ranch residents objected *vehemently* to Castaic high school students attending their school until ours is built, a particularly sensitive issue on both sides, validating the advisory vote results showing *Castaic and West Ranch lack support to join together to form a new city*.

3. As explained to us, the City annexation process calls for residents to complete a petition drive of their area before the City will act on it. It seems disingenuous for the Town Council to suggest the City "encouraged / recruited" us and "worked to bypass the Councils" on an Area-wide annexation when they never completed a petition drive. Therefore, *we do not believe the City annexation policy even authorized City officials to engage in Area-wide negotiations*.

4. It is only natural for officials from the County and its Town Council representatives to oppose any challenge to their authority. Frankly, that was not a factor in our annexation debate. Nor were the interests of Newhall Land, *which owns just a small vacant parcel in our proposed annexation*. Overlap between opposing officials first listed and repeated as represented by the Valencia Commerce Center Association makes their opposition look twice as large on the page. More importantly, *we believe the Valencia Commerce Center actually favors our annexation*. For example, see the attached letter from REMO, Inc., a large Valencia Commerce Center tenant.

Regrettably, the first two of three closing paragraphs just repeated prior accusations that demean the City of Santa Clarita as an annexation *pariah* without basis in fact. We believe the City pursues annexation policy responsibly in accordance with public procedures and have seen no evidence the City, "targets specific neighborhoods to obtain additional tax revenues," or the other unseemly accusations. *We think the City welcomes all neighborhoods that petition successfully*. The County opposes the City receiving all of the property and sales taxes from our annexation area because we generate far more County revenue than it spends on local services. *We believe Santa Clarita Valley residents would be served best if all tax revenues generated here were reinvested here instead of diverted to subsidize County-wide operations throughout the LA basin*.

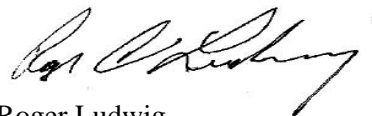
The closing paragraph suggests the Golden State Freeway is or should be a boundary of sorts. That may be the case south of SR-126 by West Ranch but, to the north where it traverses the center of Castaic, *employing the freeway as a boundary would "divide" the heart of the Castaic community like nothing else imaginable. In southern Castaic the I-5 just provides a much appreciated security buffer between our annexation area and the prison "community" to the east*.

We believe the Castaic and West Ranch Town Council letters are replete with false and misleading information and inflammatory rhetoric, including the accusations the City "cherry picks" certain neighborhoods while refusing others. We think they must either be uninformed on City policy, intentionally smearing the City or both in desperation to thwart our annexation. Given that incorporation of a new west side city is unlikely, *we believe the West Ranch Town Council, which only represents areas south of SR-126, is overreaching opposing our annexation*.

Not to denigrate the County here, but we concluded that the quantity and quality of City programs and services exceeds those provided by the County at about the same cost. We relish working with the City instead of navigating the labyrinth county bureaucracy and competing with county communities, agencies, issues and 9.8 million residents for agenda time, a voice and funding. *Ultimately, we decided that local governance by the City of Santa Clarita will support greater property values and provide a higher quality of life for us here in the Santa Clarita Valley*.

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,



Roger Ludwig  
Hasley Hills HOA Treasurer