

PARK LA BREA
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
MINUTES
July 7, 2021

ALL FIVE BOARD MEMBERS WERE PRESENT

Bob Shore
Chelle Buffone
Angela Gyetvan
Michael Easton
Brenda Stone

32 Park La Brea residents attended, as well as Patricia Lombard from the Larchmont Buzz.

6:03 MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER by Bob Shore

Bob opened the meeting by requesting that all attendees mute themselves unless they were talking and alerting them to the fact that the meeting was being recorded.

June minutes were not yet available, so approval was deferred until August meeting.

Bob announced that Secretary Madison Charap had stepped back from her role. Vice President Angela Gyetvan volunteered to take on the additional role of Secretary; the change was approved by unanimous consent of the entire Board prior to the meeting.

Bob then opened the meeting to public comment at 6:05 pm, first requesting a moment of silence on behalf of José Tomás Mejía, the Able employee who was murdered on site on June 16th.

After the moment of silence, Bob began public comment by requesting questions on safety and security.

The first question was about Security Head Angelo Dahlia's lack of presence at the meeting. Bob indicated that Dahlia had been invited, but had refused to attend. The questioner speculated that Park La Brea management prevented Dahlia from attending, and found that troubling. Bob agreed that that behavior was consistent with PLB management's continuing policy of refusing to meet with the PLBRA.

The second speaker made an observation that the Villas At Park La Brea seem to have improved security to deal with issues surrounding homelessness, while security at Park La Brea

has declined noticeably over the past 40 years as PLB management has opted for cheaper contracts and fewer patrols.

The third speaker noted that PLB management probably doesn't care much because statistically two murders in five months is better than what is happening in the rest of the zip code. He noted that PLB has continued to promote itself as a "security" residence. In the meantime, gates are always open so people come and go without security even noticing. One of the storage rooms in Tower 45 was ransacked a couple of months ago. PLB has posted signage disclaiming responsibility for items in the storage area, but the resident's insurance company disagreed because the storage unit door was unlocked and a sock was shoved over the security camera - while records indicated that Patrol had not checked the room in at least 48 hours. Resident noted that Patrol's role seems to be limited to responding to incidents, taking notes and making a report. That limited role means they are inherently not doing their jobs, which should include patrolling the perimeter and gates. The resident noted that he didn't expect PLB to feel any pressure to "step up" to address the issues.

The fourth speaker noted that she didn't have any information regarding the murders on site, and wanted to know if they were random or targeted acts. Bob responded that the second murder was a domestic situation and the victim was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Another resident spoke up to provide more information: The first murder was a drug deal gone bad in a tower. But both incidents were committed by non-residents who had gained access to PLB.

The fifth speaker shared that she has been a resident since 2017 and had noticed an uptick in security incidents since COVID, including three different incidents since June 2020. She and her husband talked with Patrol personnel, who shared that PLB had reduced security during COVID, and that the personnel themselves were very worried about the situation. The speaker went to talk to Chris Scroggin's assistant Ileana Firchau, who stated that security had not been reduced. However, that statement doesn't square with the fact that gates are constantly open and there are no controls on who is going in and out of PLB. The speaker asked if there was anything residents could do to push back and also help the PLBRA.

Bob responded by indicating that there is nothing residents and PLBRA can do from a legal perspective to get PLB to improve security. However, there are ways to pressure them by imposing PR, and ultimately economic, consequences. But those steps will require buy-in from residents throughout the property. Bob asked two questions:

- 1) What steps are the people who are attending the meeting willing to take to get involved?
- 2) What steps are the activists among us willing to take to recruit more residents to stand up and fight for our home?

Angela spoke up to suggest that it might be appropriate to segue into the next two agenda items - resident feedback from the June 16th incident, and the Security and Safety Petition - to inform the conversation.

Bob noted that the Board had an action item for the petition: to take a formal position on the items requested in the petition.

A sixth speaker noted that he had requested to speak but had not been granted permission. Bob and Angela agreed that he should be given time to speak.

The sixth speaker noted that he had been a resident for 18 years and his wife has been a resident for almost 30 years, and that he is very disappointed in the current Residents Association. He suggested that Bob had taken office on a platform with an antagonistic viewpoint towards PLB management and that the result is no communication. The speaker indicated that he would like an RA that “works for us” and follows Robert’s Rules of Order, including publishing minutes. [NB: the RA keeps minutes.] The speaker conceded that Bob’s point about finding activists was a good one and suggested that, if residents were to take charge and just call Patrol, the outcomes would be better. Speaker stated that he was a “pro PLB management person,” and that, despite the fact that he has had problems, that if the RA and residents as a group would just “calm down” and speak nicely to management, things would be better.

A seventh speaker responded that he was not of the mindset to ask for permission to take what should be rightfully accorded to residents - “the right to feel secure in our homes” - which is given when residents sign a lease. The speaker advocated for creating a list of strongly worded expectations with “no backing down,” given that residents are paying a huge amount of rent to live in a place that markets itself as being committed to security. He was disappointed that Angelo Dahlia chose not to attend the meeting, because, he said “security here sucks.” He has witnessed Patrol pulling up in front of a tower to respond to a call, and then never leaving their cars. Patrol is also supposed to check the laundry rooms and storage rooms once to twice a day, and that there is “hardcore evidence” that they do not. The PLBRA should be the voice to encourage PLB management to enforce their commitments.

The eighth speaker concurred with the previous speaker’s opinion, but stated that, if Dahlia had attended the meeting, his response might be that the role of private security is to observe and report, and that is all they’re obligated to do. They don’t have any authority beyond that. However, when a resident spoke up in the June meeting to say that there was someone sleeping in the hallway outside her apartment and Patrol declined to observe and report the incident, it became clear that Patrol is actually not doing that part of their job.

Public comment concluded after the eighth speaker.

Angela then delivered two items from the Vice President’s report: Comments from residents after the June 16th incident, and the Safety & Security Petition.

- 1) Comments from Residents: Immediately after the June 16th incident, PLBRA invited residents to share comments about the event on the PLBRA website. There were approximately 60 comments within three days, centering around four core issues:

1. Continuously open gates, including pedestrian gates, and the decline in gate pass and parking enforcement, making it very easy for anyone to enter the complex whenever they want.
2. Petty theft, especially package theft from mail rooms, which is rampant.
3. Car theft/items being stolen from cars. Comments included three car/scooter thefts from carports and garages.
4. General lack of communication from management on all fronts - not only with PLBRA, but with residents.
 - a. This included lack of response to the two onsite murders. Several residents who were directly affected by the Jun 16th incident, including a mother with young children who were exposed to the victim's body, and another resident who heard the screams, were never contacted or supported by management. The mother had not even returned home since the incident, and is planning to move.

Angela indicated that she was planning to post the comments on the PLBRA website, with identities removed.

Speaker nine noted that prior to current PLBRA officers, the president of the organization had a liaison with PLB management, and suggested that such a structure needs to be re-instituted because "with no communication, you really have no power."

Angela responded that PLBRA is building a plan around that issue, and is not interested in "forcing" anything with management. Instead, the way to get their attention is to grow the size of the PLBRA community while being active politically and in the press.

2) Security and Safety Petition: The petition requests five things from PLB management: Adding more security cameras; enforcing their own rules around gate passes and parking; enforcing lease rules when it comes to partying, disturbances and altercations; and resuming regular meetings with the PLBRA.

The petition already has 200+ signatures, and can be signed online at plbra.org.

Bob then stepped in to raise a formal motion to support the requests in the petition. Brenda seconded the motion. The Board unanimously voted to support the petition.

Angela then reminded everyone on the call that the plbra.org website is a useful reference point for all PLBRA activities, including meeting and event notices, news and updates, and all of the organization's social media activity. There is also a link to join the PLBRA.

Bob then stepped in to deliver the rest of the President's report.

- 1) Meeting: Bob held multiple meetings with local lawmakers and other officials, the most important of which was with the local LAPD Senior Lead Officer who covers Park La

Brea. Officer Schube provided a good idea regarding what residents can and cannot expect from the police. Two things became clear:

- 1) Given that PLB is private property, LAPD expects PLB management to be responsible for it. In the absence of an actual crime report, LAPD is not going to get involved.
- 2) LAPD's stats indicate that PLB's crime numbers are no worse than any others in the area, so they don't see the need to give us any extra attention.
- 3) To mitigate this, PLBRA suggests that, instead of calling Patrol, PLB residents should begin reporting things like package theft, theft from cars, homeless people sleeping on the property and other incidents directly to LAPD. Even though LAPD is not likely to take any action, it will give them a more accurate picture of what is actually happening on the property, and possibly eventually push more resources in our direction. Residents can go to [LAPD online](#) to report non-emergency incidents. Personal incidents, such as domestic disturbances and assault/battery, must be reported via phone.

2) Utilities Pass-Through Ordinance: Bob also reported that he met with staff from Councilmember Raman's office, in addition to being in regular contact with the PLB field deputy, Tabatha Yelos, who reported that the office had heard from a number of PLB residents supporting the Utility Pass-Through Transparency ordinance. Bob thanked everyone who had emailed Raman's office and asked that everyone continue to spread the word - the more PLBRA does to get the ordinance passed, the more attention the Association will get from PLB management.

3) Request for meeting with management: Bob also reported that PLBRA officers had sent a letter to PLB management, requesting that they resume regular meetings with PLB, and that the response had been a "deafening silence."

Angela then returned to the rest of the Vice President's report:

- 1) Secondhand smoke: Angela is pursuing legislation with city groups to ban smoking in RSO's, partially driven by the fact that she is bothered by secondhand smoke in her building and is dealing with a health condition that makes the ADA applicable to her situation. The staff at CD4 put her in touch with Tobacco Enforcement in LA County Dept. of Health, and the coordinator there, Micah Zimmermaker, will send a letter to PLB management for every complaint that is made regarding secondhand smoke. Anyone who would like to file a complaint should contact Micah at MZimmermaker@ph.lacounty.gov. The letter will not include any personal information, only the building or block number where the problem is occurring. Given that PLB residents live in 1940's-era buildings, the county is also willing to come inspect HVAC systems and vents to assess the effects of secondhand smoke.
- 2) Sustainability Committee: the PLBRA is working to reconstitute what used to be called the "Clean and Green" committee to deal with sustainability issues at PLB. The

committee will be responsible for the semi-annual Hazardous Waste collection events, as well as issues like composting, recycling, electric vehicle charging, etc. The committee has one holdover member from Clean and Green and PLBRA is looking for other volunteers. Interested residents can email parklabreaRA@gmail.com.

- 3) Membership Drive: Angela is researching ways to build membership, which includes getting an accurate count of current members (the number is affected by the fact that people join/pay dues year-round). There are current somewhere between 150 - 175 members; Angela would like to get that number to 1,000 by the end of the year. The petition drive is helping build out the PLBRA email list, which currently numbers 400+. PLBRA is seeking 3-4 volunteers to join this committee, Again, interested residents can email parklabreaRA@gmail.com.

Michael then reported on the Hazardous Waste collection event held on June 26th, with support from Athens Recycling, Homeboy Industries, IDR, and A&B. 200 residents participated - 193 dropped off items and 7 requested pickup of heavy items from A&B. In addition to hazardous items, expired medicines were also collected. This was the largest turnout for this event, ever. The next event will be held in January, 2022.

Chelle then gave the Treasurer's report, covering four items:

- 1) Pool and Gym: Chelle and Angela spoke with Steve Lubarsky from PLB Fitness regarding malfunctioning gym equipment, rising dues, and shortened hours. As a result, the malfunctioning gym equipment was fixed. Steve also reported that gym and pool hours have been shortened because traffic is light in the evenings, but that he would monitor the situation and expand hours as needed. Chelle will continue to reach out to him.
- 2) Garden Club: PLBRA has finally retrieved the funds owed to the Garden Club that Bernie Clinch did not turn over after he left office. Clinch ultimately agreed to work with PLBRA to get the situation resolved, and Chelle is now completing the transfer with the Garden Club, and will report back next month.
- 3) Fundraising: PLBRA is starting a fundraising initiative, but needs some legal advice on what is permissible for a 501(c)4 organization. Chelle is researching possible legal help, and will have an update next month.
- 4) Computers: The computers in the PLBRA office are dinosaurs. Someone also switched off the main Windows desktop, despite being told not to, resulting in the loss of a number of archives.. PLBRA is now in a position where updated technology is desperately needed. Chelle is researching costs for a new Windows laptop that can function as the official PLBRA computer.

Speaker 10 then raised a question, asking if there is anyone at Park La Brea who is willing to speak with residents. Bob responded that Ed Groleau in maintenance services is generally very responsive (ed.groleau@parklabrea.com) and that Ileana Firchau was often helpful (ileana.firchau@parklabrea.com), depending on the scope of the issue. The other likely people to try are the PLB block/building coordinators or the appropriate accounts receivable contact.

Bob then asked for a motion to adjourn. Angela made the motion, which was seconded by Chelle. The Board voted unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

The next Board Meeting will be held on August 3rd at 6 pm, via Zoom.