



June 29, 2014

Ms. Marcia Hobbs, President & Publisher  
Beverly Hills Courier  
9100 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 360  
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Dear Ms. Hobbs,

I'm sorry to hear of the untimely death of Paula Meehan. The community has lost a guiding light in philanthropy and what we hoped would be a new steady hand on the Courier's tiller. We readers wondered how her vision might express itself in the coming months, and her departure came as quite a surprise.

Your role as president and publisher is crucial to guiding this community institution. What will be the mission of the Courier in the year ahead? Will we see the Courier take an active role in addressing the challenges that face our small city? I would like to suggest two for your consideration: low levels of public engagement and street safety in great need of improvement.

Governance. The city's organization chart suggests that Council is accountable to the people. Yet City Hall has long been ring-fenced by vested interests and thus insulated from most residents. Not least, our officials have shirked their obligation to promote meaningful public engagement in the policy process. Lately we're seeing positive change ushered in by councilmembers Mirisch, Bosse and Krasne, however. Improvements in City Hall communication and transparency are heartening.

The chart also says that decision-making flows to departments from Council through the City Manager. But is this really the current practice? Departments appear to be only marginally responsive to residents' needs; staff efforts often seem more pro-forma than substantive. That is, the resident gets a polite call back but not much will change with regard to the service delivery. Under the current City Manager, staff accountability seems insulated from Council oversight. To be fair, though, a minority on the Council dais don't seem much interested in better performance.

We can ensure better local government performance in the years ahead only if local media (like the Courier) supports such measures. This is an opportunity for your paper to play a key role in evolving City Hall toward twenty-first century models of good government.

Street safety: Recent tragic accidents have sparked the Council's interest in street safety and focused the attention of department managers on obvious problems. But only in the hillsides, evidently, as there has been no announced enforcement priority assigned to other areas. We see collisions every day throughout Beverly Hills that are avoidable. Those, like tragedy in the hillsides, would be mitigated by better enforcement and engineering improvements.

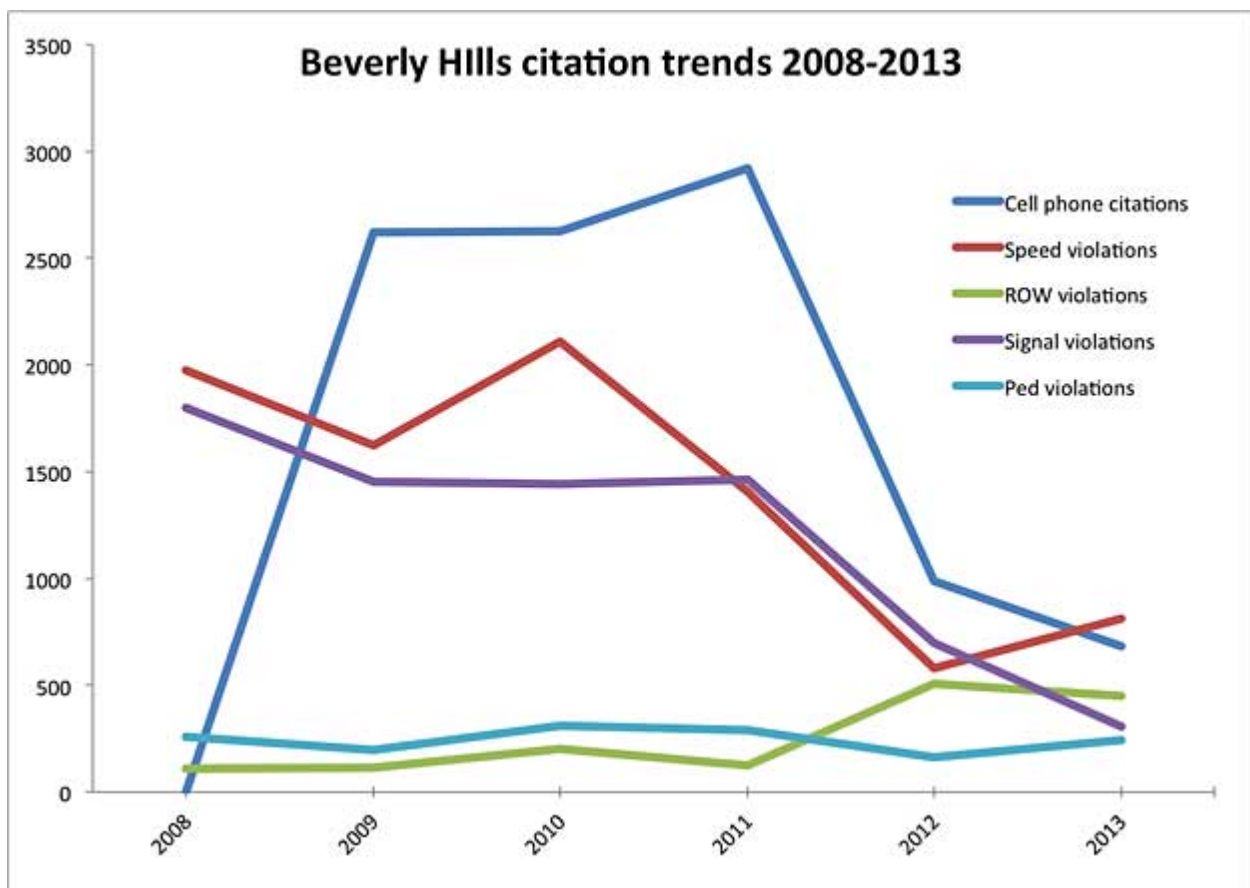
Officials could also listen to residents' complaints. Residents say that calls to police and transportation seem to result in a message slip that lands in a 'circular file.' I concur: scores of

**Better Bike**

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my reports to police about speeding and joyriding have produced no focused enforcement. At last night's Municipal League meeting, though, police officials again offered the unconvincing claim that resident complaints do shape traffic enforcement priorities. Ridiculous!

Consider the data: CHP figures show our city to be among the most dangerous little cities in California in which to drive, walk or ride. So I looked at citation data, and for the past five years I saw not greater enforcement but a clear downward overall trend in officer-issued citations. Meanwhile, automated citations via cameras remain rock steady month-after-month, year-in-and-year-out.



Though I do drive, I am also an advocate for non-motor mobility. I support the forward-looking mobility principles enumerated in our General Plan which, for example, call for 'multimodal districts' served by "frequent transit service, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle systems." Such

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Re: Improvements to governance and street safety

planning is crucial for congested Beverly Hills given the massive development coming to our city and nearby.

Though our plans say the right things, City Hall has yet to implement any measure to make multimodal mobility a reality. Consider our city's Bicycle Master Plan: it dates from 1977 (the last bicycle renaissance!). The General Plan calls for a bike plan update but implementation has been stillborn in the four years since Council gave the OK to the broader plan. No step has been taken to plan for the citywide bicycle network envisioned in that 1977 plan even as we enter a neo-bike renaissance coincident with a tapering of interest in car ownership.

It's not just about bikes, of course. Few pedestrian crossings outside of the triangle have been upgraded to high-visibility continental (aka zebra) crosswalk striping. The safety improvement has been widely deployed in Santa Monica and West Hollywood (cities in which our top two transportation planning officials live, as it happens).

Beverly Hills policymakers make no plans to move people more safely yet our city continues to: approve commercial development in the business triangle; permits more outdoor restaurant seating (and soon a rooftop 'lunchroom') for South Beverly Drive; and actively promotes a revitalization of the southeast with more intense commercial activity expected. How will we accommodate the added vehicular traffic?

The Courier can play a key role in addressing the mobility challenge by promoting safe, multimodal planning alternatives. You can begin by supporting a bicycle lane for Santa Monica Boulevard – an item that may come up on Tuesday's agenda.

These are some of my priorities as both a resident and 'complete streets' advocate. I hope they are the Courier's priorities too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Elliot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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