

# THE CAPITAL

*"Preserving Santa Barbara's historic sites of enduring community value"*

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## APRIL MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### PEARL CHASE SOCIETY

In-person **Board Meetings** at the MacVeagh House on the grounds of the Natural History Museum been suspended due to Covid protocols. The Board continues to meet via Zoom; meetings are typically held the first Thursday of the month at 3:30. Next meeting: April 7.

The **Preservation Committee** is being re-organized and regular dates for Zoom meetings will be determined.

### CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

#### City Council Public Comment and Participating Online

In order to promote social distancing, City Council chambers will not be open to the general public. Public participation can be done in two ways: 1) via telephone: Call (805) 564-5301 and leave your name, return phone number and the number of the item you wish to speak on. You will be called back during the meeting and will have the chance to make your statement then. 2) you may participate in the Zoom meeting that may be accessed [HERE](#).

City meetings are broadcast live on City TV channel 18 and streamed live [HERE](#), where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

#### City Council

Tuesdays at 2 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: April 12, 19, 26

#### Planning Commission

First, second and third Thursdays of the month at 1 pm at Council Chambers, City Hall: April 7, 14, 21

#### Historic Landmarks Commission

Every other Wednesday at 1:30 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street: April 13, 27

#### Architectural Board of Review

Mondays at 3 pm at the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Full Board meets April 4, 18

### COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

County Board of Supervisor Meetings and Planning Commission meetings are broadcast live on CSBTV20. They are also streamed live [HERE](#) where they are also archived and viewable on demand.

#### County Board of Supervisors

Three Tuesdays of the month at 9 am. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara in the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room, 105 East Anapamu St., 4th Floor. The second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. April 5 (SB), April 19 (SM)

#### County Planning Commission

Three Wednesdays of the month at 9 am. The first and third meetings are held in Santa Barbara at 123 East Anapamu Street, Room 17, and the second meeting is (typically) held in Santa Maria at 511 East Lakeside Parkway. April 6 (SB), April 13 (SM), April 27 (SM)

#### County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission

Second Monday of the month at 10 am at 123 East Anapamu, Room 17 (unless specified otherwise). April 11

## Society News & Notes

By Cheri Rae

On the afternoon of March 3, 2022, the Board of the Pearl Chase Society met via Zoom for its monthly meeting. Detailed, thoughtful discussions took place about the proposed redesign of De la Guerra Plaza; how best to assist St. Paul AME Church with its repairs and restoration; and reviewing the suggestions about the name of the Pearl Chase Society.

**De la Guerra Plaza:** Many factors of the proposed redesign were considered, including paving, the amount of grass; landscaping; the size and placement of the arcade feature, the location of the restrooms. In evaluating all these features, the overriding question was "What would Pearl do?" There was a general agreement that the "lightest, simplest approach" in updating this significant historic spot would be the best.

It was also pointed out that the city's historic paseo system should be heeded, and that the paseo connection Storke Placita with De la Guerra Plaza should be enhanced to provide both a view corridor and an inviting passageway from State Street.

And the need for creating green space, rather than a large, paved plaza, would be beneficial for downtown residents and visitors alike, creating almost a feeling of a simple pocket park in this neighborhood—as it is, and as it may take shape.

The Board is in the process of writing a letter to the De la Guerra Plaza Committee, with a copy to the HLC.

**St. Paul AME Church:** Several ideas were discussed about how best to maximize any contribution to assist the congregants of this century-old historic landmark with its preservation needs. It was agreed that the Pearl Chase Society could offer guidance about how to enlist appropriate consultants and community support to possibly develop a master plan and access grants and funding to meet the Secretary of Interior standards. Discussions will continue among Board Members and with church officials.

**Name:** Thanks to a good deal of input from members, the possibility of adding to the name of the Pearl Chase Society has been tabled for the foreseeable future.

**A few last thoughts:** Members are encouraged to attend and participate in Board Meetings, to add your thoughts and experience to the discussion. Contained in this issue is the first in a new series of interviews with community members. This month's "Ten Questions With" presents the City of Santa Barbara's Architectural Historian Nicole Hernandez.

As always, feel free to offer your questions, comments, and suggestions, including possible interview subjects you would like to see featured here.



**The next Board Meeting is Thursday, April 7, via Zoom.**

**Want to get involved, or have submissions for The Capital? Email us at [PCS@pearlchasesociety.org](mailto:PCS@pearlchasesociety.org).**

## PEARL CHASE SOCIETY Board of Directors

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### Newsletter

Cheri Rae, *editor*  
Lisa DeSpain, *graphics*

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## Ten Questions With: Tom Modugno, of Goleta.com



Goleta's own Tom  
Modugno.

*You have a unique way of making history come alive, with your "Easy to Read Local History" approach. How did that happen? How long have you been interested in learning and sharing the stories about The Good Land?*

I started writing a photo blog called [www.GoletaSurfing.com](http://www.GoletaSurfing.com) in 2007, which I still have going. Basically, I post my pictures and tell the story of a session or an adventure in my own words, the way I would talk to a friend using "Common California lingo". Through the years people would ask me questions about certain places in or around Goleta, and I would be struck by the fact that most locals

don't know much about the history of Goleta.

It occurred to me that really the only source for Goleta history was Walker Tompkins's books, and while lots of folks have them, very few actually read them. Then a follower of my surfing site sent me a historic photo of Old Town Goleta, an aerial from 1949. I noticed a lot of the buildings were still there, (almost all of them), so I did a story comparing the old photo to modern photos. In doing that, I started researching deeper into Goleta history, and really enjoyed it and my readers did too. After that, I did a couple more historic pages and I realized, this stuff does not belong on a surfing website. So, [www.GoletaHistory.com](http://www.GoletaHistory.com) was born in about 2012. (Wow, 10 years already...) My intention was to make the history of Goleta easily accessible, easy to understand and in short snippets. Like an illustrated *Reader's Digest* online. People seem to like the format.

*What was it like for you growing up in Goleta, how much did you know about Santa Barbara? Did the two places seem connected or very separate?*

Well, they're obviously connected, but to me and lots of other locals, Goleta has always been treated as the ugly stepsister. The Shoestring Annexation to get the airport in the city of Santa Barbara is a great example of that. I knew Santa Barbara as a kid, we went to the "big city" on occasion, but I didn't and still don't know all the street names by heart!

As I've learned more history, I've found a lot of the biggest movers and shakers in Santa Barbara history lived in Goleta. And if it wasn't for Goleta oil, the Santa Barbara Courthouse wouldn't exist! So, while Santa Barbara comes up in my stories, I stay focused on Goleta.

*Where do you find all the amazing photos you share with your readers?*

I have been collecting old photos for a lot of years now. I find them in books, old magazines, old newspapers and of course, the internet.

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[www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety](http://www.facebook.com/PearlChaseSociety)

*Continued from page 2*

Lots of people post great stuff on social media and they are almost always happy to share them with me. Since I've started the history site, lots of people give me photos, electronically and physically. Several folks bring me old magazines, newspapers and photos on a regular basis, it can be a challenge to go through it all and I'm starting to be a real hoarder. I definitely have run out of room on my walls for pictures....

***How much time does it take you to research and put together your stories?***

The time spent on a page varies depending on the topic and how busy I am with all my other stuff. I still have a day job that consumes a lot of my life. Starting a new story, I never really know what I'm in for, where the story might take me, so many rabbit holes that can take up hours. Luckily, I enjoy the ride and I don't have an editor breathing down my neck. I've spent as much as several months on a page. The quickest page was the "Ellwood Queen" which I knocked out in a few days because a developer was buying a historic piece of property, evicting the tenants and I had to get the story out quickly.

***You're quite the Renaissance man, balancing many interests. What do you call your historical interest in Goleta—a calling, a passion, a hobby, an obsession or something else?***

Goleta history.com started as a hobby, then it was one of my passions, and now it feels like a calling. But I always emphasize that I don't consider myself a proper historian, I'm a history enthusiast, and if need be, a history activist.

***What is your favorite recollection about a person, place or event in Goleta?***

It would be impossible to choose one thing as a favorite. But the way regular folks worked together to save the Train Depot is a highlight. In modern times, the way Old Town puts together a Christmas parade every year is great. The way people fight to save the natural beauty of the Gaviota Coast and the Bishop Ranch are great. Too hard to pick one event in history, sorry.

***What are a few places you think need some special attention for preservation these days?***

There are quite a few historic places, buildings and trees that need preservation in Goleta today. Top of the list is the Barnsdall Rio Grande gas station at Ellwood. It is by far the most-loved building I have ever seen. I did a petition to save it years ago and the comments



The much-loved Barnsdall Rio Grande gas station at Ellwood.

from people and the things people volunteered to do for free was mind boggling. If I ever post a picture of it or do any kind of story about it the readership is off the charts. And the reason it was built with such beautiful style is all thanks to Pearl Chase.

Then there are the original two hangars that are overflowing with history and the airport is just letting them rot. UCSB is letting several historic buildings out at Devereaux Point deteriorate into oblivion. The Ellwood Queen I mentioned earlier is a National Champion Tree that has recently been sold to a developer that told the tenants he was going to have it removed. So far, he hasn't, and the city is working on getting it on their historic index.

***A lot of your stories seem to focus on regular citizens spurred to action to save something historic. What can you suggest for others who might be similarly inspired?***

Just do it! Don't let the improbability of success stop you. If you are seriously passionate about it, people will join you. Everyone can complain about something and turn their back. But only people that do something can ever succeed. Like Pearl Chase did!

Walker Tompkins said, "The only thing more destructive to historical landmarks than a bulldozer is procrastination on the part of preservationists." That is truer today than ever before.

Read more of Tom Modugno's work at [www.goletahistory.com](http://www.goletahistory.com)

## County Planning and Development Usurps Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission's Authority

By Paulina Conn

**O**n Monday, March 14, 2022 the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) brought to the County Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission (HLAC) its proposed changes to the southwest part of the SBBG. The plan, a concept since 2015, was to create a children's exploration and play area in the four acres that extend from west of the Campbell Bridge south and westward to the Mission Creek boulder crossing.

When HLAC first heard about it, Planning and Development (P&D) had already preempted HLAC's jurisdiction. HLAC was only allowed to vote on new stone benches, the placement, size, bulk, and materials of the shed and the same for a new composting toilet. Commissioners were only allowed to make comments on other aspects of the plans despite the fact that Historic Landmarks Resolution No. 2003-059 (February 25, 2003) gives HLAC express authority to weigh in when changes are proposed that "substantially deviate from the..... historic design concept or historic use .....unless express consent in writing is first had and obtained from the Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission". There is no historic designed children's play area. The SBBG's 1943 Master Plan by Lockwood de Forest and Beatrix Farrand is being substantially altered by new trails, new style walls, group areas and features designed specifically for children.

Lansing Duncan, HLAC Commissioner, 3rd District, had read the entire 2012 Cultural Landscape Master Plan prepared specifically as a landscape treatment guide for all SBBG stewards by Van Atta Associates, Inc. and Charles Birnbaum. Commissioner Duncan very respectfully, stated into the record, with page and paragraph the many things the SBBG was discouraged from adding or changing including adding new stone benches as these would impact the original de Forest designed benches.

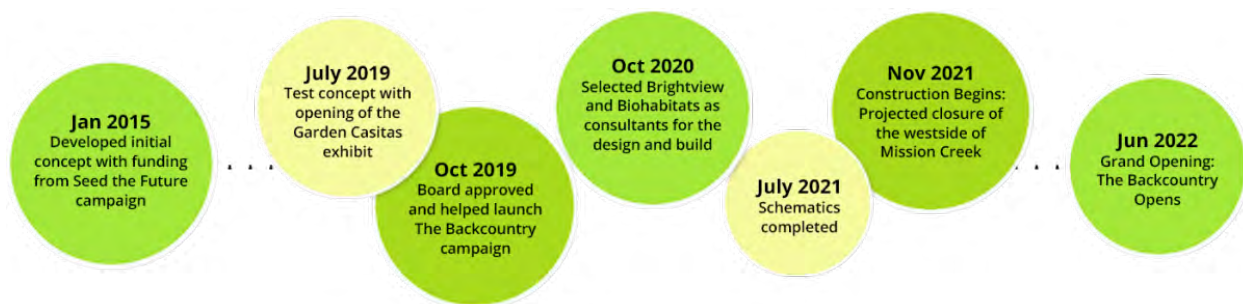
Commissioner Duncan also read into the record paragraphs 2Bi and 2Bii of the Resolution where HLAC must give permission in writing for changes.

The Commissioners voted to accept the changes over which they had been given authority by P&D and they voted to write a letter to P&D and County Counsel stating exactly what the process should be when a historic landmark, especially a landscape, comes before P&D for alteration. To summarize:

HLAC should have been in on the planning process when the "Backcountry" design was begun not after changes had started.

Truckloads of boulders for the "Backcountry" play area have already been delivered from the Montecito Debris Basin site. Twenty-four Western sycamore trees have already been planted, and the new undulating rock walls below the Pritchett Trail have already been installed.

Link to the Garden's "Backcountry" project. <https://www.sbbg.org/the-backcountry>



Timeline of SBBG's Backcountry Children's Play Area. (from SBBG website)

Note: No consultation or approval from HLAC or P&D is in this diagram.