

# BEVERLY HILLS COURIER

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**THIS ISSUE**



The BHHS PTSA celebrates parent volunteers with graduating seniors. 4



Beverly Hills parents get the scoop on balancing digital life and the real world. 4



Mayor Gold celebrates Earth Day in Beverly Hills at the Farmers' Market. 5



Sweet Maddie is this issue's adoptable pet of the week. 5



The Bel-Air Association held its first House and Garden Tour on Sunday. 11

•Health & Wellness 8

•Fashion 11

•Birthdays 18

## Inside The 'Basement' Practices Of The Man Trying To End The Beverly Hills Basement Ordinance

By Victoria Talbot

By the time the *Courier* was on its way to the printer last week with a story revealing that Branden Williams was the proponent who submitted 2,966 signatures to repeal the City's newly enacted Basement Ordinance last Friday, Williams appears to have been in damage control mode.

He had engaged Aviv Tuchman as counsel who simultaneously emailed this reporter and the *Courier* with a threat of legal action for "Potential Defamatory Statements & Demand to Correct and/or Remove Defamatory Materials."

"Mr. Williams has advised me that you are contemplating publishing yet another article about him which he believes will contain false statements. If you and your newspaper commit libel against him in any such contemplated article, my client reserves the right to pursue legal action against the *Beverly Hills Courier* and you personally for any defamatory statements."

At the same time, his wife Rayni, a salesperson with Hilton & Hyland, whose license is listed with the Department of Real Estate under Rayni Romito, was trying to broker a resolution.

Before it was too late,

Williams was presented with the opportunity to make it clear that his resignation from the anti-Basement Ordinance Petition Committee was not a subterfuge - but a legitimate withdrawal from the efforts of his client, Francisco Aquilini, to repeal the Basement Ordinance.

The information, which became known to the *Courier* as deadline approached, included the following statement, which was to be submitted to City Clerk Byron Pope prior to 10 a.m. April 13, when Pope was preparing to drive the documents with the signatures to the County Registrar Recorder's office for validation:

"I Branden Williams, a resident of the City of Beverly Hills, withdraw from being the proponent of the petition to rescind the Basement Ordinance and further, withdraw my authorization for Bradley Hertz to file the signed petitions regarding the self-same Basement Ordinance, and he is not authorized to file the petitions on my behalf."

Had he submitted the letter, it would have been over, no signatures would have been delivered and the Basement Ordinance would be secure.

It never happened. No letter

(see 'BRANDEN WILLIAMS' page 13)



**CELEBRATING ISRAEL'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY**— "Shining a local light" on the strong and vital partnership between the City of Beverly Hills and the state of Israel Wednesday evening, Mayor Julian Gold, Vice Mayor John Mirisch and Councilmembers Robert Wunderlich, Les Friedman and Lili Bosse joined with Sam Grundwerg, Consul General of Israel, to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the State of Israel. The event was punctuated with an illuminated image of the U.S. and Israel flags projected onto the tower at City Hall, highlighting the City's unwavering support for the State of Israel.

## El Rodeo 'Share Table' Teaches Lessons In Giving

By Laura Coleman

Thanks largely to the efforts of El Rodeo Principal Kevin Allen to inspire charity on a daily basis in the lives of the K-8 students he is tasked with educating, giving back is now a daily occurrence in the lives of the school's youngsters five days a week.

Following a recent legislative change making it possible for schools to donate certain types of packaged foods to food banks, Allen said he launched the "Share Table" in the school's lunch room. Now, three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the school donates boxes of food, in addition to milk from the cafeteria that is nearing its expiration date, to the Regional Food Bank in



**El Rodeo students Griffin Chirchigno, Tyler Emrani, John Kocinski, Stars Bekhor, Negin Piroan, Santiago Garcia, Mia Arnold-Kraft, Zoe Miller, Ameenah Huntoon, Olympia Lifson and Kiosks Bijari share the bounty at the Share Table.**

West Hollywood.

"Nobody should ever be hungry," is Allen's core message to the students about why they donate, and it's a message that resonates with the kids.

"They take it very seriously and they seem to really enjoy (both donating food and

(see 'EL RODEO' page 16)

## Hadid Submits Plans Claiming Reduced Size At 901 Strada Vecchia

By Matt Lopez

Is celebrity megamansion developer Mohamed Hadid changing his tune as he tries to fend off several upcoming appeals to his oversized project at 901 Strada Vecchia in Bel Air?

After years of legal fights with neighbors opposed to his oversized, nearly 30,000 square foot project, an application for a haul route permit was filed for the project on April 13.

The application shows fairly



**Pictured: 901 Strada Vecchia last summer.**

dramatic proposed changes to the property, calling for a standalone haul route to export 3,000 cubic yards of earth in conjunction with, interestingly enough, a "new

(see '901 STRADA VECCHIA' page 12)



George Christy, Page 6

During The 1990 Kennedy Center Honors In Washington D.C., Barbara Bush Was Curious About Honoree Katherine Hepburn's New Book, *Me!*. Mrs. Bush Commented That "It Takes A Mighty Big Ego For A Title Like That"

**CLASSIFIEDS 21**

- Announcements
- Real Estate
- Rentals
- Sales
- and More

Celebrity Photo Agency/Scott Downie



**FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN**

— Jane Seymour received the Companion of Children Award during The Colleagues 30th Annual Spring Luncheon at the Beverly Wilshire. The Colleagues have raised millions for the Children's Institute to look after vulnerable youngsters who have been harmed by violence, abuse or neglect.

For more photos, see George Christy's column on page 6.

# BEVERLY HILLS REAL ESTATE

## Bel-Air Association Sues Former President Over Lost Records

By Matt Lopez

The Bel-Air Association is taking the legal fight to a former organization president who was ousted in 2016 after years of tumult.

Ron Hudson, the BAA's ex-president, is being accused – in a complaint filed last week in L.A. Superior Court – of stripping the organization completely bare of its money and records after being voted out of office by members in 2016.

According to the complaint, Hudson – aided by former BAA director Bruce Kuyper, stripped the BAA of its “books and records, money was diverted away from the BAA, and to a pretend-BAA that Hudson helped Kuyper run, and substantial confusion was caused among, and damage done to, the community” upon being ousted by voting members in March 2016.

The complaint alleges that when the BAA's new Board of Directors were voted into office on March 17, 2016, the organization's office – which was under the control of Kuyper and Hudson – was “bereft of even the most basic records, except for a small number of materials dating back decades.”

Among those records missing were valuable legal files and research on key real estate issues which the BAA had paid law firm Latham & Watkins to perform.

Not long thereafter, Kuyper and

Hudson filed a series of lawsuits, seeking to annul the March election and have the previous regime reinstated to lead the BAA. One day after the court ordered a BAA directorship election be held in July of 2016, Kuyper dismissed his lawsuit. Hudson wrote a letter to the judge, threatening that any election would “only be the beginning of litigation, not the end of it.”

Kuyper, according to the complaint, tried to hold an unauthorized “BAA” election on Dec. 14, 2016 that was attended by approximately 10 people at most. Because of the low attendance, the meeting was woefully short of the 100 members required for a quorum, and the meeting was called off. Hudson was among those attending and was falsely listed on the makeshift ballot as BAA director.

The complaint alleges Hudson participated in “fraudulent, unlawful, unfair and/or fraudulent business acts, as well as unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading advertising.”

“Unfortunately, it's come to this,” one source close to the BAA who wished to remain anonymous said of the lawsuit. “Mr. Hudson is under the delusion that fiduciary means a pasta dish at the Olive Garden.”

The BAA is seeking unspecified damages.

## 901 STRADA VECCHIA

(Continued from page 1)

2-story, 13,990 square foot single-family residence.”

Of course, as residents have learned after dealing with the project over the last several years, what's on the approved permits can be vastly different from what actually ends up being built. The original not-yet-completed megamansion, which is still standing in Bel-Air, ended up with several underground bedrooms and a theater, as well as an unapproved basement, that did not appear in the original plans.

Still, a 13,990 square foot, two-story home is a far cry from the monstrosity that has loomed over the heads of Bel-Air residents since roughly 2014; a home so large and built outside of legal permits that L.A. City Councilman Paul Koretz called for its demolition last summer.

Neighbors, however, are hardly convinced.

Jordan Ferguson, an attorney for Manatt, which is representing neighbors such as Joseph and Beatriz Horacek in their legal dealings against the property, said he reviewed the plans, calling them “totally inconsistent... a complete mess.”

“Some areas show them removing the attached pool and

pool deck, others show those things staying,” Ferguson told the *Courier*. “It's unclear at best what the plans are.”

“They're trying to remove one the floors of the house, changing that floor into what will now be a huge roof deck with a pool, spa, game lounge, dining area,” Ferguson added. “It's not really going to be a two-story house. Properly calculated, we estimate it's probably still somewhere near 30,000 square feet.”

Construction permits for the site were revoked after an LADBS investigation found that work on the site had been done illegally and outside of permit. Hadid pled no contest last summer to misdemeanor charges stemming from the illegal construction.

In the midst of the new haul route application, appeals regarding soil erosion plans and granting haul routes without CEQA review are tentatively set to be heard by the Los Angeles Building & Safety Commission, as well as the Zoning Commission, in the coming months; possibly in June.

“I'd be surprised if a plan checker didn't have a substantial issue with these plans,” Ferguson said, adding that “LADBS appears to be bending over backward to find a way to legalize this house. There is no way this structure can remain standing the way it is.”



### Beverly Hills Building

Custom Office Space Available  
Price Reduced!

190 North Canon Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Penthouse: ~1,355 SF  
Penthouse Lease Rate: TBD  
Suite 200: ~1,222 SF  
Suite 210: ~1,041 SF  
Suite 313: ~1,458 SF  
Suite 405: ~734 SF  
Lease Rate: \$6.00/SF/month  
Commission: 4%  
Floorplans Per Request  
Submit all offers!



#### HIGHLIGHTS

Located in the coveted Beverly Hills Triangle, this boutique building with privacy, security and parking is conveniently located adjacent to Spago restaurant, across from the world-famous Montage Hotel.

Conduct business like no one else can from the Penthouse. Hand picked marble flooring, fleetwood sliding doors that create an amazing indoor/outdoor workspace, custom Wenge doors, kitchen and outdoor patio.

Highly desirable customized office suites are the hallmark feature of this boutique building.

Rent abatement and tenant improvement allowance available for qualified tenants. Owner wants to lease all vacancies by April 30, 2018.

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