

# HALO, Neighbors!

*The Newsletter of Home And Landowners Organization, Inc.*  
April 2011

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## **April Meeting Recap:**

Were you one of those in the audience for our April meeting? If so, you heard details about the proposed Potter Creek LLC's new subdivision, adding 32 new homes in this first stage of development. You also heard about the neighborhood's life safety issues on Finland and Portugal Roads due to greatly increased traffic using these small roads to access Goldenview. You also learned all about the implementation of the new Well Water Protection Program. Read more about it below!

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## **For Your Calendar**

The next board meeting of HALO is **Thursday, May 5th**. Happy Cinco de Mayo! Items on the Agenda will include a special presentation by the Municipal Tax Assessor Marty McGee. Read on for details about this presentation. Chris Beck of Agnew::Beck will also attend to give a presentation about an exploratory well on the Campbell BLM Tract.

May is also the Annual Meeting, where HALO will select officers and area representatives for the upcoming year, enjoy a wonderful variety of refreshments, and have a chance to win some outstanding door prizes.

Remember that HALO always meets on the first Thursday monthly at 7 pm. Regular board meetings are held at the Holy Spirit Retreat, corner of O'Malley and Hillside Drive. Everyone is invited to attend these meetings and take part in the discussion.

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## **Municipal Appraiser to Speak at Annual Meeting**

Guest speaker at our May 5th Annual Meeting will be Municipal Appraiser Marty McGee. McGee will be able to answer our questions regarding the official property appraisal process.

As we know, the annual property appraisal is the amount placed on our individual properties, and this number is used as the basis of our annual property tax assessments. McGee will bring a copy of the Residential Manual, which outlines the exact appraisal process. One item that often brings confusion is the selection of 'comparable properties' used to reinforce the amount assigned to each property. McGee will be able to shed some light on this process.

McGee will not answer questions regarding specific individual properties or specific individual appeals. For those questions, a property owner will need to make an appointment with a staff appraiser. These are considered 'open' litigation, and are only discussed through the formal appeal

process. He will provide explanations that will be comprehensive and specific to valuation issues.

Anyone that hopes to better understand the appraisal and valuation process that determines our tax burdens should attend this meeting, and bring questions. Remember that it is the Assembly that sets the mil rate and the budget, not the Municipal Appraiser. State Statute requires that all properties are assessed to market value. The Muni Appraiser has nothing to do with actual taxes, and cannot answer questions like 'why is my property tax so high?' Those questions must be made to our Assembly representatives and the Mayor.

*Submitted by Steve McKee, HALO Board*

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## **--->New Hillside Well Water Quality Report<---**

Incumbent with the right to draw from and discharge into groundwater reserves is the responsibility to protect the quality of the groundwater.

A first step towards protecting our water is to understand what's out there now. The MOA collects information on water quality when homes are sold. The Alaska DEC collects water information from "public wells" on an annual basis. Those are wells that serve places like churches, schools and more than one home. There are some 42 public wells on the hillside. That information is available online but not in a form that is easy to interpret.

As one part of the Well Water Protection Program recommended in the Hillside District Plan, HALO will fund a report on the quality of the Hillside's well water using the data that has already been collected by the MOA and the State. The report will summarize the statistics to show trends on nitrate and arsenic levels in the water. Nitrates are a minor problem in most cases, but high levels can indicate a problem with a well. Arsenic has not been a problem with hillside wells but there is enough misinformation out there that it is deemed important to report the facts. The report will also provide a map showing the level of nitrates in the most recent test for each well on the Hillside.

If this report shows problem areas, then we can take a further step of looking for the cause of the problem. If the report shows trends that worry people, we can look for solutions.

The first report will be written by Jim Munter and Ted and Ian Moore. They bring expertise as a hydrologist, septic system engineer and mapping expert. We decided to maintain the credibility of the report by hiring them as consultants. Along with statistician Pat Hansen, they have been making significant contributions as part of HALO's HDP Implementation committee.

No one has a greater stake in protecting the quality of our well water than those of us who drink it. HALO recognizes the importance of this and has offered to guarantee funding for the project if donations fall short of the \$5,000 needed for the initial report. We expect the report to be completed in August or November.

Our fundraising begins now. If everyone reading this newsletter would contribute \$25 per household, the future of this program would be assured. Your donations can be sent to HALO, P.O. Box 110006, Anchorage, AK , 99511. Add a memo to your check "Water Well Quality Report Donation".

*Submitted by John Weddleton who has sent in his contribution already. If you have any questions about the HDP Implementation Committee or would like to attend a future meeting, contact John at 317-0222.*

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The HALO, Inc. web site at <http://www.anchoragehalo.org/> has current information, history, and links to everything important on Hillside, including the final version of the Hillside District Plan and all the valuable articles from our Newsletter's Education Series. If you have comments, or would like to submit postings on the web site, please contact: Bjarne Holm at [bjarnehholm9@hotmail.com](mailto:bjarnehholm9@hotmail.com)

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## Do you know the LAW ???

### POP QUIZ

1. *Is it legal for your neighbor to let their dog bark all night?*
2. *If you are making a left-hand turn from a two-way street onto a one-way street, is it legal to turn on a red light?*
3. *Is it okay to run your lawnmower at 6 am?*
4. *Can you build a new garage fifteen feet away from your property line? Do you need a building permit to build a new deck for that new spa?*

*The answers are "no", "yes", "no", and "it depends".*

Anchorage was begun under a Charter that contained the rules that would govern this new city. Eventually, the Charter gave way to a set of Municipal Codes. Each of these is separated by chapters, and each chapter given a Title.

The Municipal Code regarding animals is in Title 17. Vehicles and Traffic regulations are in Title 9. Noise standards are found in Title 15. Building Standards are found in Title 21.

The entire Municipal Code, printed, would entail several reams of paper. Individual Titles can be obtained at the individual Municipal Department, and most must be purchased. Unfortunately, the paper versions are not always current.

Thankfully, there is an easier way available in this electronic age. The entirety of our laws are available online. The portal is through the Municipal website, [www.muni.org](http://www.muni.org/). At: <http://www.muni.org/pages/default.aspx>, look for "Your Government" in the center of the page. Click on "Municipal Code Online" and you can enter the entire library of Muni Code Online.

A scroll box at the far left of this page will show the entire Table of Contents. Part I shows the Municipal Charter, and Part II is the current Municipal Code.

Let's say you want to research the laws pertaining to adding a new deck onto your existing home to house your new hot tub. First, you will want to go to Title 21. In the index, you will look for "Land Uses Permitted by Regulation" (21.40.001). Click there, and look for the minimum setback requirements in your underlying Zoning district.

You will also notice that there is a "Search" feature at the top of the page. You can put in your search word and find whatever subject you wish.

Have you ever wondered how an Assembly meeting is run? Are you interested in learning more about the regulations concerning composting? Do you know what the Planning and Zoning Commission does?

Play around on this site and you will learn a lot about the way our government is run!

*Submitted by Katie Nolan, Huffman/O'Malley Community Council*

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## HALO Neighbors Newsletter

If you have an idea for an article, or a question you would like to have discussed with your friends and neighbors, let us know. We also encourage you to forward this newsletter to your neighbors and help them become involved in their community. Or better yet, print a copy and hand it to someone!

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### ***From the President's Desk***

Our April meeting included more lively HALO discussion. Of all the community meetings available to residents, HALO is always the one that provides the most topical information! Those in attendance would certainly agree that this was another worthwhile and informative evening. For those unable to attend, the draft minutes are on the HALO website at <http://www.anchoragehalo.org/>.

The annual meeting on May 5th is likely to be just as lively and informative. Municipal Tax Assessor Marty McGee will be the featured guest speaker and is prepared for our questions. I look forward to seeing you there!

The Water Well monitoring and reporting effort has been instituted, and I trust everyone can easily see the great benefit of this program in protecting our rights. The data already available proves that those who believe we are “drinking our own #\$%@” are wrong!

Additionally, Chris Beck, of HDP fame, will give a brief presentation on AWWU's exploratory water well project on the BLM Campbell tract. It's going to be a great meeting. Plan to attend.

*from Wayne Westberg, HALO President*

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### **Join Your Friends and Neighbors at HALO**

Are you a HALO member? Dues are only \$10 a year. The HALO Board meets on first Thursday of each month, at 7 pm, at the Holy Spirit Retreat, on the southwest corner of Hillside and O'Malley. Our elected representatives often join us and it is the perfect place to learn about what is going on with and in your community. All meetings are open to the public, and every effort is made to announce any change in date, time or location.

HALO is a non-profit, grass roots organization formed in 1969 (before the merger of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Borough) for the purpose of advocating for rural neighborhoods in Southeast Anchorage. Today, HALO's boundaries include all or part of eight Community Councils: Abbott Loop, Basher, Bear Valley, Glen Alps, Hillside East, Huffman/O'Malley, Mid-Hillside and Rabbit Creek. Residents outside of the HALO area also join to support our goals and share in our activities. (One of the “associate members”, from Birchwood, is a member until 2018. She generously contributes to the Legal Fund each year, as she understands all too well how vital this fund can be when our zoning is threatened!!)

Our Legal Funds were created to assist in issues of importance to ALL of the participating Community Councils listed above. These generous folks have contributed to this fund along with their dues since the last issue: Peter & Wanda Katinsky, Helmut & Roberta Fuchs, Timothy Connolly & Jo Ann Bantz, Gene & Sharon Janigo, Craig & Barbara Mishler, Elizabeth M. Puttre, and Brian & Jenny Partch.

While we work closely with Community Councils, HALO is in a unique place that separates us from the Municipal government. Besides our successful Candidate Forums, we address the broad issues that affect residents in SE Anchorage. We encourage membership in both HALO and your area Community Council. It is vital for us to be informed and work together on local issues, especially as we face today's issues.

Name

Phone (home)

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Phone (alternate, optional)

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Mailing Address

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Property Address (to determine your "G" area)

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E-Mail Address (newsletters are sent by email unless specifically requested to be sent by USPS):

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New Member                       Renewal  
 I would be interested in serving as a board member  
 I would be willing to work with a committee  
Dues Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ (\$10 per year)  
Donation to Legal Fund \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Print and send to: HALO, P.O. Box 110096, Anchorage, AK 99511

**(Email addresses are invaluable for timely notification. All information remains confidential!)**