

# Open Space Views

Vol. 34 ~ November 2023

## SAN ANSELMO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

### MISSION

The SAOSC is a volunteer committee of the Town of San Anselmo. We exist to identify and preserve valuable open space lands, viewsheds, and trails located in San Anselmo and the greater Ross Valley.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jonathan Braun, Co-Chair  
Stanley Radtke, Co-Chair  
Kathleen Sanders, Treasurer  
Daniel Krebs, Secretary  
Christina Conser  
Brian Crawford  
Karin Ludwig  
Oriana Bleacher Snyder  
René Voss  
Alexander Hamblet  
Claire Palmer

### TO CONTACT THE SAOSC

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saopensespace@yahoo.com  
www.SanAnselmoOpenSpace.org

The Committee meets the third Wednesday of every month. Agendas are posted at [townofsananselmo.org](http://townofsananselmo.org). Please feel free to join us.

Foreground: Hawthorne Canyon. Ross Valley beyond; photo by J. Braun

## BALD HILL ACQUIRED; Hawthorne Canyon Is Next!

**T**he countdown has started! After months of negotiations, all the puzzle pieces needed to preserve the upper portion of Hawthorne Canyon have finally fallen into place. The deadline to raise \$625,000 is now set for January 31, 2024.

Hawthorne Canyon lies on the border between San Anselmo and Fairfax. It is a steep forested canyon running from Oak Springs Drive down toward Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. The lower portion of the canyon was slated for development in 1996, but a coalition of the Town of San Anselmo, the San Anselmo Open Space Committee (SAOSC), and many neighbors raised the \$590,000 to purchase the 22 acres, and in 1999, this parcel became the Town's Hawthorne Canyon Open Space Preserve.

Recently, Upper Hawthorne Canyon, a 9.4-acre parcel between this preserve and Oak Springs Drive, went on the market. Again, many neighbors came together to try to protect this land and preserve it as open space. In August 2022, the Marin Open Space Trust

(MOST) negotiated a reduced-price purchase option on the property. This property is particularly desirable as open space because it serves as a connector between the Hawthorne Canyon Preserve and the neighborhood at the top of the hill. It is also adjacent to two other undeveloped properties already owned by the Town. If it is acquired, it can be merged with these adjoining

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MOST's informational sign, photo by J. Braun



# BALD HILL ACQUIRED; HAWTHORNE CANYON IS NEXT!

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properties to form a large 43-acre park that would protect oak and madrone forests, wildlife corridors, and spectacular views of the Ross Valley and Bald Hill with Mount Tamalpais beyond. It would also allow hiking access from Butterfield Road, continuing through the Town's Kite Hill open space and on to the County's Loma Alta Preserve. If the purchase is completed, MOST will transfer the property to San Anselmo at no cost to the Town. The Town has agreed to accept it. So all that is needed is to raise the necessary funds. A grant application is close to approval. The SAOSC has made a substantial pledge. Generous contributions from neighbors and supporters have already been received. If you would like to see this magnificent new open space preserved, now is the time to make your contribution. 🌱 —*Brian Crawford*



*Enjoying the view from Upper Hawthorne, photo by J. Braun*

## BALD HILL CELEBRATED!

**W**hat better place could there be than Robson Harrington Mansion to celebrate the final preservation of Bald Hill? After over 40 years of dedicated work by hundreds of volunteers and local representatives, the iconic 60 acres overlooking the Ross Valley have been saved from development. On a beautiful late spring day, the SAOSC welcomed its supporters to an afternoon of festivities which included a fantastic spread of food, drink, live guitar music, and proclamations. The Committee could finally thank all those involved: County Supervisor Katie Rice, Ross Councilmember Elizabeth Robbins, Bill Long of Marin Open Space Trust, and finally Jonathan Braun of SAOSC, who could personally trace the long, arduous journey from day one! We also used the event to push for the preservation of Upper Hawthorne Canyon. An especially moving case was made by San Anselmo Councilmember Tarrell Kullaway, who along with her late husband, considered this parcel to be a place of magic and healing.

A few weeks later, a special dedication for Bald Hill was made at Natalie Coffin Green Park with the presentation of a plaque designed by local artist Steve Emery. The plaque commemorates many of the major players who enabled the purchase to go forward. The plaque can be found next to the parking lot. Many of us are still pinching ourselves to be sure this is not just another dream. 🌱

—*Kathleen Sanders*



*Plaque dedication (left to right: Elizabeth Robbins, Steve Emery, Jonathan Braun), photo by Kathy Sanders*

### *Our Youth Members*

#### **ALEXANDER HAMBLET**

My name is Alexander Hamblet, I'm 15 years old and a sophomore at Archie Williams High School. I live in San Anselmo and have for all my life. I love biking around the hills with my friends and walking my dog on trails. I want to preserve the open space of San Anselmo so my kids and younger generations can also experience the beautiful scenery San Anselmo has to offer. 🌱



#### **CLAIRE PALMER**

My name is Claire Palmer, I am a sophomore at Archie Williams High School. I grew up in San Anselmo, and have always loved being outdoors, where I enjoy hiking, running, and spotting wildlife. I joined the Open Space Committee because I am passionate about the preservation of biodiversity and the natural world, and keeping those spaces available to the public. 🌱





# BALD HILL PRESERVED FOREVER!

**T**he San Anselmo Open Space Committee (SAOSC) was born to save Bald Hill. The SAOSC was created in 1981 to acquire and protect open space in and around San Anselmo, but the primary objective was always the beautiful and iconic hill that rises above the Town. The 1,132-foot summit is visible from almost every neighborhood of the Town and forms a backdrop to the lives of all the residents of the Ross Valley. Most people familiar with Bald Hill long believed it to be open space, but the sixty acres on the summit remained in private hands and was zoned for eleven and later five possible estates.

Even five years before the founding of the SAOSC, the Town's 1976 General Plan—essentially its Constitution—specifically named Bald Hill to be protected. The SAOSC had many successes over the intervening decades—acquiring Kite Hill, three parcels on Bald Hill Ridge, Sky Ranch, and Hawthorne Canyon, among others—but Bald Hill has always remained the ultimate goal of our preservation efforts.

In 1988, the Bald Hill Steering Committee was formed, with representatives from San Anselmo, Ross, Fairfax, and Marin County. That same year the SAOSC helped update the Open Space Element of the Town's General Plan, listing Bald Hill first among properties we hoped to preserve.

The next year Ross and San Anselmo formed a Mello-Roos Community Facilities District to raise funds for the purchase of Bald Hill. In 1990, the two towns placed Measure D on the ballot, a bond issue to cover the purchase price. Although the measure received the majority of the votes

cast, it fell just 180 votes shy of the required 2/3 majority.

Throughout the 1990s, SAOSC and the two towns continued to negotiate with the off-shore owners of the property without success. It wasn't until 2000 that the owners expressed any interest in selling. Supervisor Hal Brown worked tirelessly to facilitate the purchase and recruited Senator Barbara Boxer in the cause. In 2007, Ross included Bald Hill in its General Plan. The next year, Marin County Parks included it in its Strategic Plan. Everyone was aligned in the conviction that Bald Hill should be preserved from development, but the property owners remained unresponsive.

After years of negotiations, appraisals, offers, and counteroffers, in 2008 the Marin Open Space Trust (MOST) offered to buy the property. The offer was rejected.

In 2021, MOST and the SAOSC paid for a new appraisal for the property. MOST offered to buy the property at \$1.85M. Adding project costs, \$2.1M needed to be raised. Agreements were negotiated to sell it to the County Open Space District. The SAOSC contributed \$200K, the Town of Ross \$200K, the Tamalpais Conservation Club \$250,000 and many

generous donations made up the rest.

The deal was signed in September 2022, and after more than forty years of effort, the purchase closed in February 2023. MOST bought the land and transferred it immediately to the County. Bald Hill will be protected from development forever. The SAOSC's primary goal when it was founded has been achieved at last.

On June 10th, a celebration was held at Natalie Coffin Greene Park, where a monument stone was unveiled to mark the accomplishment, designed by local artist and open-space supporter Steve Emery. Afterwards some of the celebrants hiked to the top of our new Bald Hill Preserve.

Our co-chair Jonathan Braun, who also serves on the board of MOST, has been involved since the very first day, and he has spent untold thousands of hours to bring about this momentous accomplishment. This purchase would not have happened without his tireless efforts and dedication. The residents of Ross Valley owe him a great debt of gratitude.

Thanks to all who helped in this project, and especially to all our SAOSC supporters who have contributed over the decades to make this possible. 🌱

—*Brian Crawford*



*Bald Hill & Town Hall, photo by J. Braun*

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**SAN ANSELMO OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE**

*Open Space Views*

is produced as an informational service to the residents of San Anselmo and the Ross Valley, and is funded by contributions to the Open Space Committee. Articles and photos are by Committee members.

or Current Resident



*There is something truly special about experiencing the beautiful natural surroundings of San Anselmo and the entire Ross Valley. The vistas, flora, wild animals, scents and fresh air combine to significantly enhance our lives whenever we step outside and take advantage of these open spaces. The Committee and its many supporters savor these areas and recognize the opportunity we all have to continue to preserve and enhance our natural surroundings. The acquisition and preservation of Bald Hill this past spring was the culmination of many years of focus and hard work.*

*There is now a second opportunity for the Committee to help acquire Upper Hawthorne Canyon as described in this newsletter. Please consider that opportunity when you make your annual donation to the Committee's fund. All donations are tax deductible and may be made by check or online at our website below.*

*We would not be able to complete these valuable acquisitions without your generous donations!*



*The San Anselmo Open Space Committee Fund*

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50    \_\_\_\_\_ \$100    \_\_\_\_\_ \$200    \_\_\_\_\_ \$500    \_\_\_\_\_ Other

*If you wish to designate your donation for Upper Hawthorne Canyon please make a note on check.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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