

EDITORIAL

"The Origin of PVPWatch"

One of the reasons PVP Watch was formed was to provide a source of information independent of the local print and TV media. There were / are concerns that not all issues are fully and fairly reported. Stories written by the Daily Breeze (DB) political reporter, Nick Green, often appear to be dictated by special interest groups and individuals. Most, if not all, editorials about RPV and Peninsula issues such as the recent RPV storm drain User Fee favor tax and spend policies while avoiding full disclosure of all the facts. The local public TV media that now includes **RPV City-operated Channel 33** has been used to present one-sided discussions of many of these issues.

There is obviously a counter argument that says these complaints are just sour grapes. Newspapers are free to present editorial opinions and endorse candidates, propositions, etc. but these opinions are theoretically not to be presented as front-page factual reports. The Daily Breeze (DB) provides a range of political editorials on State and National issues and the Palos Verdes Peninsula News (PN) reporting is fairly well balancedbut the editorials always support more spending on special interest "wants" with little concern for higher priority "needs," or for the taxpayer.

Therefore, with important RPV city council, PVPUSD school board and school bond, and State proposition elections on 8 November, the following discussion is presented in an effort to let the reader decide for himself / herself if reports provided by the local media are fair and balanced.

- (1) The DB and PN supported the RPV User Fee without disclosing that the support group calling itself "**Taxpayers for Storm Drain Repairs**" was actually funded by two councilmen and fronted by a third in an effort to scare the voters into passing this measure. The TAX subsequently passed by less than 1% of the total vote. At the same time Nick Green of the DB did his best to undermine PVP Watch's effort to inform the voters using almost the same script used by Councilman Stern. **It should come as no surprise that none of the newspaper hierarchy lives on the Peninsula, much less in RPV, and will not pay the storm drain User Fee.**
- (2) For several years the Renewal and Renaissance Coalition has worked, with little or no public disclosure (in reality, "none"), in support of Councilmen Stern & Long and Mayor Clark and the appointment of committee and commission members. Only PVP Watch has a web-site and e-mail distribution open to everyone including those identified in this editorial.
- (3) The media has consistently supported the Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve (*this is not "open space" as often reported*) without doing an analysis of both the short-term and long-term costs Vs alternative uses of those funds. Do you recall anything being said recently about the fact that **the \$220,000 donated by Rolling Hills to RPV was actually credited to the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC)** pledge of \$4,000,000? If credited to RPV's pledge of \$1,000,000 it would have freed up the \$220,000 for other uses such as girls' softball fields. It should come as no surprise that about half of the PVPLC Board do not live in RPV and will not pay for the long-term maintenance of the "preserve."

It is interesting that the PN did a pro and con feature written by guest writers. It was probably the only time that the concerns were fully expressed. It was also the last time this format was used on any issue. Apparently this approach is too fair and balanced.

- (4) RPV engaged in a long and expensive legal battle with Mark Abrams over his use of an antenna for amateur and commercial purposes. The issue has many facets but Councilman Stern was given extensive TV time to explain why it was prudent to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to pursue victory at the United States Supreme Court. Mayor Clark continued to exceed his RPV-taxpayer-funded travel budget by showing up in Washington to witness this event and to document his participation. What they and the press did not report was that this case was only about the **right** of an individual to sue a government entity for damages because said individual had prevailed in court regarding a conditional use-permit. There were no monetary damages included in this case in which the District Court had ruled in Abrams' favor. The court said he had this right because denial of the permit was **“an act of spite by the community”**. If he had won at the Supreme Court he would have then had to initiate another lawsuit for damages that no one would want him to win. But, remember, this is the same Supreme Court that decided that it is OK for a government entity to take private property for a “better use” (i.e., to generate more tax revenue). Also, remember, there is a similar lawsuit pending in RPV that should concern you because we are currently **spending over \$1,000,000 a year on litigation.**
- (5) While the press supports the spending of money on “wants” and increasing taxes for “needs,” they may or may not be privy to the personal attacks made by Councilmen Stern and Long against those who oppose them including a candidate for Mayor Clark’s & Peter Gardiner’s Council seats. Those that oppose them have been labeled quislings (a Nazi term), fifth-columnists, demagogues, and anarchists, and with being “un-democratic” in messages that are circulated in their private e-mails. Unlike PVP Watch, they choose not to have public access to a web-site but the press says nothing about this tactic. Most recently Mr. Long labeled libertarians as anarchists and likely to oppose the PVPUSD bond measures (R & S). The public berating of Terranea (Long Point) and Trump National representatives at the **October 4th council meeting** is an example of the confrontational and belligerent style of some members of the RPV city council, but you will not see that discussed in the DB.
- (6) The media continues to fawn over RPV’s Palos Verdes Interpretive Center (PVIC) without commenting on the fact that when the **cost went from \$3,500,000 to \$6,000,000** plus an **annual operating budget of \$300,000** that those additional monies could have been spent on infrastructure, public safety and even youth recreational needs. Do you recall anything being said about the cost of RPV’s Channel 33 or the fact that a government entity now owns a media outlet or that it was championed by Councilman Gardiner because his son was interested in broadcasting? Do you recall Councilman Gardiner championing the needs of other youth such as girl’s softball fields?
- (7) Do you recall reading any of the following items in the local papers?
 - Councilman **Stern** was the attorney for the PVPLC and is a **leading advocate *having made the Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve (PBNP) a priority higher than storm drains and youth facilities.***
 - Barbara Dye, PVPLC spokesperson, serves on a number of RPV commissions and committees. **Her role as executive director of the PVPLC (a paying job) puts her**

- clearly in a "conflict of interest" position. Along with Jim Knight and Barbara Sattler, she has had a major influence on most of the council decisions about planning and budgets. The most vocal proponents of the PBNP are people like Bill Ailor, PVPLC President, who **does not even live in RPV** and does not have to pay the bills. The long term financial, liability and legal effects of the PBNP are yet to be revealed.
- Mayor Clark's wife was Chair of the Finance Advisory Committee when decisions were made on the PBNP and the storm drain User Fee. **It is clear that this puts the mayor in a tenuous and questionable ethics position. His "honor" made no mention of his wife's role, nor of any need to recuse himself** when the council discussed and voted on such matters.
 - The appointment of various RPV commissions and committees is done by the city council and not surprisingly **most are supporters of the incumbents** and appear to be nominated by the Renewal and Renaissance Coalition. At the same time two of the most effective Traffic Committee members, Jim Jones and Barry Hildebrand, were not reappointed because they opposed the policies of this council.

There are many more examples of what appears to be a media bias although it takes different forms at each of the two local papers. The message here is basically to be inquisitive about what is printed and televised during this election season. Your comments are of course welcome.

The Editorial Staff