

PVP Watch Newsletter – April 12, 2013

To Our Friends and Supporters

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PVP Watch had the pleasure of hosting Lomita Sheriff Captain Blaine Bolin at a recent PVP Watch meeting. Captain Bolin shared some of the Lomita Sheriff Station accomplishments over the past year as well as some of the issues confronted by Peninsula policing and resident safety situations.

Captain Bolin reported that about 30% of crimes committed on the Peninsula are identity theft and vandalism / thefts from auto / homes that are **unlocked**. Many, probably most of these occurrences could be avoided by residents practicing some self-discipline. Do Not Leave valuables, cell phones, laptops etc. in plain view in either locked or unlocked vehicles. Certainly unlocked vehicles provide easier opportunities but thieves do break windows. Homes with newspapers on the front lawn / driveway usually indicate no one is at home. Thieves also check neighborhoods to determine where people seem to be frequently away or where dogs may reside.

Residents should be careful who they let into their homes and who they employ for maintenance and repairs. All of us are constantly plagued with phone calls from those “working in the neighborhood” and can they stop by to provide a “quote.” Many of these callers, but NOT ALL, are legitimate and attempting to provide legitimate services. But... how do you tell the difference? Best to check with a friend or neighbor for vendor satisfaction and referrals.

Captain Bolin encourages residents to be aware of strangers in their neighborhood and when there is something unusual, promptly report such incidents to the Lomita Sheriff's office. Sheriff Deputies cannot be everywhere and we, the residents, are the first line of defense for our friends and neighbors.

Identity Theft is ongoing problem that is difficult to control as thieves have increasing technology capabilities. One should shred all documents that have an account number, credit card or other similar identification. It seems almost endless as to the extent thieves can obtain personal data and manipulate banking and other accounts.

Per Captain Bolin; the general criteria for when 9-1-1 should be called:

- There is the potential of a life or death emergency
- There is a crime in progress or one that has just occurred.
- Any situation that needs to be immediately dispatched so that the public safety, officer safety or apprehension of the offender is accomplished without delay.
- The caller perceives that the incident may endanger his or her life.
- The call involves Domestic Violence.

For non-emergency incidents, such as a suspicious person, loud music complaint, parking complaint, etc., the general business line should be used: (310) 539-1661.

PVE - 100 PVE Residents File Letters in Opposition to Sale of PVE Parkland

Citizen efforts have slowed the rezoning of 1.7 acres of OS (Open Space) to R-1 (Single-Family Residential) at 900 Via Panorama. One hundred letters in opposition were sent to the PVE City Council prior to the March 12th, 2013 PVE Council session; 70% of those were from residents outside the immediate neighborhood, suggesting the concern goes well beyond the loss of views and parkland affecting homeowners nearby. At issue is the sale of public parkland adjacent to property located at 900 Via Panorama.

Some concerned residents are claiming that the sale of parkland to a private owner is explicitly prohibited in the deeds and restrictive covenants that go back to the founding of PVE in 1923. In that the concerned PVE residents believe the sale was illegal, as it was not completed as specified in the Deeds and Restrictive Provisions, they believe that the transaction should be voided and the property returned to the Trustee under the original Trust Indenture Agreement.

A complex arrangement was developed between PVP Unified Schools, Palos Verdes Homes Association, City of PVE and the owner of 900 Via Panorama, who had allegedly encroached on the parkland by building several structures without permits. The result was that the property owner was given the opportunity to purchase adjacent parkland in return for a donation of \$1.5 million to PVP Unified Schools which was contingent on the owner's ability to acquire the parkland for \$0.5 million. The PVHA and City of PVE received concessions from PVP Unified Schools as part of this transaction.

PVP Watch has inquired to see if these matters were discussed on public agendas and have been told that such legal matters were in compliance.

At the March 12th PVE Council session, a packed room of over 200 citizens voiced their opposition to the transfer of parkland to a private party much less rezoning to R-1. The PVE City Council then deferred the matter, which will now be reconsidered at a PVE City Planning Commission meeting on May 21st. Meanwhile, the City Council directed the City Attorney to create a process by which the owner of 900 Via Panorama would be allowed to build certain accessory structures on the parkland as well as retain a 22-foot high retaining wall without having to “rezone” the parkland, since opposition to “rezoning” from the public was high.

It is PVP Watch’s understanding that this matter will be on the PVE Planning Commission meeting agenda on May 21st. As a Public Service, PVP Watch urges ALL interested parties to familiarize themselves with the matter and attend the meeting to make their respective opinions known concerning this matter. The website <http://www.pveopenspace.com> contains references and documents gathered / posted by “concerned residents” regarding this matter.

RPV.....The Continuing Saga

Some months ago RPV retained Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a Citywide Needs and Efficiency Assessment Study. Their report, recently submitted, is now posted on the PVP Watch website – www.pvpwatch.com. Go to the bottom of the Current Issues page. The report will be discussed at possibly the April 16th or possibly the May 7th Council meeting.

We last reported that the “scope” of the Matrix analysis included evaluating each job responsibility, matching the job description for what a person was actually doing, determining how productive the person was occupying each position, reviewing whether each person has the skills and training needed and assessing the volume of work performed and possible duplication performed by this position. Our understanding of this portion was incorrect and the evaluation / comparison of job descriptions vs. actual work performed did not occur.

We urge those interested in how RPV City Hall operates should review this document and make their thoughts known. Comments can be sent to cc@rpv.com.

One of the study segments was an Employee Survey that was distributed anonymously to all employees seeking their input and comments regarding operational practices. Employees were asked

to respond to a series of questions regarding working environment, agencies, departments, efficiency, and effectiveness. The most frequent responses related to customer service or helpful employees of the City towards the residents or to the teamwork and loyalty that existed among the City's employees.

One question was "What do you feel are the three most important changes that should be made in the operations of the City to improve customer service to the Public?"

Interesting is the most commonly expressed changes listed below:

- Develop trust between City Council and City Staff
- Improve interdepartmental communications and also communications between City Manager's office and City Council.
- Increase staffing efficiency
- Increase services offered on City's website such as payment and registration for services
- Develop streamlined policies and procedures.

Also interesting is that while respondents believed that greater trust and communications needs to be developed between the City Council and City Staff along with increased staffing, respondents also stated that staffing should not be indiscriminately increased but should be evaluated to determine where positions can be consolidated as well.

An observation: The perceived lack of trust between the City Council and City Staff is in part due to the previous Council giving overly generous pay treatment to RPV employees. The residents have charged this Council with controlling costs and that makes for a different business operation. All employees should and will be treated fairly. However, the pension costs confronting taxpayers are unsustainable and must be brought into line with reality.

A perennial consultant observation is the need to "go to bid" for "IT" services. There seems to always be a reason why the time is not right. Probably not of any consequence is that RPV Finance Director McLean and PV Net's Ted Vegvari have a "*cozy working relationship*" and "IT" business has long been directed to PV Net. Of particular interest among many issues is RPV's GIS system provided by PV Net. Page 62 of the Matrix report has several "IT" observations:

- RPV states that solutions are NOT developed in-house
- GIS is under development by staff.
- The GIS system under development should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate for RPV needs.
- RPV should undertake a formal bidding process to ensure that the services currently provided are being acquired in a cost-competitive manner.

Editor – The GIS system (Geographical Information System) is an electronic database used for property / infrastructure mapping and other information. GIS is but one example of costly systems development projects handed to PV Net without any competitive project cost analysis and pursued by Staff with questionable Council project approval. Not known is exactly what PV Net has included in the RPV GIS system. Had there been a published project plan those facts would be known. In comparison, RPV pays PV Net \$72,000 annually for GIS while PVE and RHE pay approximately \$10,000 annually with a Service Bureau providing GIS services. Why the \$60,000 difference? We have previously asked, with no response, why the difference? Now the consultants are *suggesting* that an assessment is appropriate.

Although the current Council majority (Brooks, Knight, Misetich) have demonstrated little interest in holding City Manager Lehr accountable for many questionable transactions, perhaps they will now realize that an independent analysis supervised by the Council, not the Staff is necessary.

RPV - Public Records Requests

The continuing saga of Public Records Requests (PRR) goes on. . We have previously written about the angst of current Mayor Brooks and Council member Knight about “PRR’s” and their cost, etc. Here’s the latest incident. On the March 17th Council agenda was the purchase of two Chevrolet Equinox vehicles to replace two Toyota Prius vehicles. The staff report stated that; *“Two of the four Prius vehicles assigned to the Community Development Department are fully depreciated, have rising maintenance costs, and require replacement. It is the Public Works Department’s vehicle maintenance policy to replace fully depreciated vehicles to assure vehicle safety, utility, lower maintenance costs, and to maintain City resource value.*

The staff report and purchase of the two new vehicles was challenged by Ken DeLong (PVP Watch Newsletter editor) who sent a letter to current Mayor Brooks seeking further data concerning the Prius vehicles.

1 – Our understanding is that the Council makes policy decisions, not the Staff. A copy of the council approved vehicle policy was requested.

2 – What should be readily available data (year model, date purchased, current mileage, mileage 1/1/2012, repair costs for 2011 / 2012) was requested. A spreadsheet was provided to assist in the data gathering process. City Hall has been advised to not spend a lot of time on this project and we would cooperate by going to City Hall to review the maintenance records.

It seems that any request directed to City Hall is a PRR and to cooperate with Brooks / Knight cost concerns a *friendly* request was sent to Mayor Brooks and the Council as a whole. This simple request was subsequently determined by City Attorney Lynch to be a PRR and City Hall has now responded that it is a major task to assemble this data and this data may not be delivered until April 19th. Since Staff implied that they had prepared a maintenance costs analysis, one would presume that the requested data would be readily available. Does this sound like a well-organized business operation or does it appear that there is now a frenzy of looking for justifications to support earlier “fully-depreciated and costly” allegations? So much for Transparency and Accountability.

Newsletter comments are welcomed. Please send comments to info@pvpwatch.com

RPV - The Gala Event at Terranea

As previously reported, May 5th (a Sunday evening) is the date for the Grand Gala event at Terranea for celebrating RPV's 40th anniversary. The Grand Gala event will cost \$140 each for a night of dinner and dancing. A concern of some is RPV's financial liability for this event? How many tickets must be sold to cover costs? Councilman Campbell asked these questions at a recent Council meeting but did not get a definite response from City Manager Lehr.

The April 11th edition of the PV News included a ½ page advertisement (Page 10) for the Gala event. It is now being advertised that a “*portion of the proceeds*” will go to the Los Serenos docent program as well as the PVP Land Conservancy. We do not recall any Council discussion approving inclusion of either the docents or land conservancy in the Gala event. Of course advertising that the docents and land conservancy will *get a portion of the proceeds* may attract some folks who likely would not otherwise attend. Back to the question, what are the financials for this event? How many tickets must be sold to cover costs? What is RPV's liability?

We are aware that City Hall has been soliciting “*participation*” from City vendors, EDCO being one, for financial contributions. Is it appropriate to pressure the City's vendors to *participate*? How does this impact the business relationship? How will this play out when a vendor, such as EDCO, requests a resident fee increase? To some this seems highly unethical. What are RPV resident opinions? Send comments to info@pvpwatch.com

Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified Schools

Seniors

Seniors have until the end of May to file PVPUSD Parcel Tax exemption forms for FY 2013 / 2014. A renewal form is posted on the PVP Watch website www.pvpwatch.com. Go to the PVP Schools page. For those who are making their first application, go to www.pvpusd.k12.ca.us and click on the Parcel Tax tab on the left side of the home page.

Those wishing to assist PVP Schools, but not wishing to pay the Parcel Tax, might consider a Peninsula Education Foundation (PEF) contribution. These donations are tax deductible and wisely used. The PEF website is - www.pvpef.org

California Issues

Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association Newsletter April 9, 2013

Homeowners Locked Out

By Jon Coupal

Editor, those who may not be on the HJTA Newsletter distribution list may find this commentary interesting.

Readers of this column are fully aware that the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association is the leading voice for California's beleaguered homeowners and citizen taxpayers. For that reason, we have frequently confronted situations where California's political elites attempt to silence our voice or limit the access conferred to others in communicating our message to the public at large.

Just last year, you may recall, Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg intentionally shut off the camera which was airing what was specifically designated as a "public hearing" at the Capitol just as HJTA's representative was about to testify on the horrible impacts of Proposition 30. Agree with us or not, we had an important message to share with all California voters as to why imposing the highest income tax and sales tax rates in America was a bad idea. Pulling the plug on the public access channel was such an unwarranted act of censorship that even the usually liberal media was outraged. Well, here we go again.

Today, April 8, 2013, the Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation is holding a 3 hour hearing on Proposition 13. And yet the organization which is synonymous with Prop 13 and the rights of California homeowners was not invited to participate. Thus, although assorted government analysts, academicians and even those expressing outright hostility to Proposition 13 will be testifying, the voice of homeowners has, once again, been locked out.

Bear in mind, HJTA has a full time lobbyist and we haven't been shut out – not yet anyway – of being able to present testimony on specific bills. This is something our lobbyist, David Wolfe, does several times a day during the legislative session.

The hearing scheduled for today is not on a specific bill but, rather, intended to serve as an “informational” hearing on Proposition 13. But how can you have an “informational” hearing on Proposition 13, intended to “inform” members of the Assembly and Revenue Taxation Committee, without having the organization with the most expertise on the subject matter being asked to testify?

Not only are we named for the man who wrote Proposition 13, but we have authored two subsequent initiatives – Propositions 62 and 218 – which closed loopholes in Prop 13 created by the courts and the Legislature itself. Voters approved both measures. Moreover, our attorneys are litigating Proposition 13 issues every day and the legal journals and casebooks are replete with examples of our unique expertise. Our affiliated foundation has sponsored dozens of studies on the impact of Prop 13, its benefits as well as the efforts to weaken or repeal it.

The failure to include the preeminent Proposition 13 organization in a hearing on Proposition 13 itself is incomprehensible and calls into question whether the hearing is really intended to be helpful or just another Capitol “dog and pony” show.

Perhaps the silver lining here is that Californian's political elites are worried that HJTA is just too effective at what we do. And, at the end of the day, they can talk about weakening Prop 13 all they want; but any changes to this vital homeowner protection will have to go to the voters.

And while they can attempt to limit our voice at the Capitol, the power bosses know that they can't limit the access to our members and all homeowners who wish to preserve Proposition 13. So if they want a fight at the ballot box, we'll be heard loud and clear.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association -- California's largest grass-roots taxpayer organization dedicated to the protection of Proposition 13 and the advancement of taxpayers' rights.

Editor - All should particularly concerned about what is going on in Sacramento, the seat for increasing taxes in order to reward friends, the public employee unions. We encourage those interested in keeping property taxes under control and away from tax grabbing governmental bodies to support HJTA.

PVP Watch – Newsletter List

- A reminder to ALL PVP Watch supporters, should you change your e-mail address don't forget to advise PVP Watch of your new address. We suggest that pvpwatch.com be added to your computer address book to assure delivery of PVP Watch Newsletters.

PVP Watch – Contributions

PVP Watch thanks the many subscribers who have contributed to PVP Watch. Those desiring to make a modest contribution, please send checks to PVP Watch PO Box 7000-22 Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

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The PVP Watch e-mail list continues to grow. For those who wish their addresses removed, please send notice to info@pvpwatch.com. Those who have topics of community interest are encouraged to bring those issues to info@pvpwatch.com as well.

The Editorial Committee