

PVP Watch Newsletter – July 29, 2016

To Our Friends and Supporters

In this Newsletter:

- * Alleged Toxic “Dirt” at Ladera Linda Soccer Fields
- * RPV Finances
- * RPV – Emergency Services
- * RPV - Fire Dept. Costs
- * RPV - Storm Drain User Fee
- * Bicycles on the Peninsula
- * November 8th - General Election

Alleged Toxic “Dirt” at Ladera Linda Soccer Fields

Folks, if this were not such a serious matter it would make a good comedy skit.....

April 27th Agents and investigators with the California Department of Toxic Substances, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office and the Los Angeles County Fire Department's Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) served warrants on the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District (PVPUSD). Reason: **Alleged** toxic dirt at the Ladera Linda Soccer fields. This land is owned by PVPUSD and leased to AYSO for AYSO programs.

Although a comparison to an Elliot Ness booze busting caper might be an overstatement, it was reported that the agents lacked common courtesy as they ransacked school district offices seizing computers and other materials. The PVPUSD computers were not returned until mid-June almost two months later. The **warrants remain sealed** with PVPUSD awaiting an announcement from the lead agency, reportedly the AQMD, as to the complaint and the results of any soil testing. Meanwhile the field is shut down and AYSO had to make other arrangements for their soccer programs.

April 27th, investigative agents had gathered at the Golden Cove Starbucks about 7:30 AM with some agents having a firearm in their waistbands. Shortly thereafter the investigators moved out for the toxic materials raid. This activity got everyone guessing but it was not until several days later, April 30th, that Herb Stark, a Ladera Linda resident, distributed an email message describing what had occurred. Virtually simultaneously Ed Hummel, another Ladera Linda resident, was identified as being involved in this matter and had in fact been the probable instigator of the “Raid” on PVPUSD offices and facilities. Mr. Hummel is a Lieutenant in the LA County Sheriff's assigned to LA County jails.

The facts as we know them. The AYSO "Dirt" was delivered April 2015. There has been controversy as to how many truckloads were delivered but that argument is irrelevant. What "Dirt" is there is what is there and the issue is the land toxic? PVPUSD / AYSO have had two toxicology analyses; Alta Environmental and then Leymaster Environmental Consulting. Initially the Alta report was to have been released in November 2015 but was withheld by Attorney advice. Subsequently the Leymaster report was released on January 5, 2016. Both reports found NO toxic issues. A video <http://www.pvpusd.net/apps/video/watch.jsp?v=116636> reports on the issues.

What is disgusting is that the "agencies" that made the "Raid" have not made their findings known some 3 months after the "Raid." How long must the public wait while inept bureaucrat's undoubtedly not wanting their brazen ineffectiveness known, delay reporting the results of AMQD's toxicology analyses of the "Dirt"?

It is reported that Mr. Hummel and others had been questioning the "Dirt" with the PVPUSD for some time. What occurred between the Hummel group and the AQMD, California Department of Toxic Substances, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office to initiate the April 27th "Raid" is unknown other than Hummel's proclamations that he did not use LASD time or materials to initiate the debacle?

The distribution of Stark's April 30th message was to "undisclosed recipients" thus recipients are unknown. However one recipient was RPV Mayor Pro Tem Brian Campbell who observed that LA County Sheriffs were not mentioned in the "Raid." Campbell asked Lomita Sheriff Captain Beringer if he was aware of the "Raid" incident. As one might anticipate, Captain Beringer was not pleased that there had been a "Raid" in his district and he had not been made aware of the pending incident. Captain Beringer forwarded the Stark message to LASD headquarters which resulted in a *discussion* between Ed (Lieutenant) Hummel and his senior officers. It seems that when messages are forwarded to Sheriff senior staff they are either Commendations or Complaints and this message was not a commendation. Furthermore Campbell's message to Captain Beringer was merely an "FYI" and it was Beringer's decision to forward "downtown."

July 19th Hummel appeared before the RPV Council whining that Mayor Pro Tem Campbell had abused his office by filing an unfounded complaint against Hummel and said complaint was now in his personnel file. Adding to the hubbub was Council member Susan Brooks encouragement of Hummel's diatribe as she sought Council approval to have the City Attorney determine whether or not Campbell had misused his title / office to inform Captain Beringer of the "Raid" on PVPUSD offices. Does the RPV Council not have more important business than listening to worthless dribble by Council member Susan Brooks and RPV resident Ed Hummel?

Another RPV low point is City Manager Willmore and his initiation of a Public Records Request to the School Board concerning the Ladera Linda "Dirt." We doubt that this is what the Council was approving when they requested more information on June 6th. Mr. Willmore, RPV residents want harmony, not acrimony between the various entities in this community.

Late / Breaking News

PVPUSD has posted an updated report on the Ladera Linda Soils Caper at -

http://www.pvpusd.net/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=361563&type=d&pREC_ID=973136

The letters to the AQMD are very revealing. Although we understand that the AQMD and other agencies collected soil samples, the AQMD has not released their findings yet are demanding costly soil cleanup. Hmmm wonder what the AQMD found? Probably nothing..... Let's end this nonsense.

RPV Finances

Good Financial Management not More Taxes is the Solution.

The FY 2016 / 2017 budget is now approved and there are ample funds for maintaining taxpayer "NEEDS" although staff "WANTS" must be controlled. Some pertinent facts:

Total revenue income is projected at \$28,739,000 including the Terranea generated TOT (Transit Occupancy Tax) approximating \$5 million. The TOT is customarily transferred to the CIP (Capital Improvement Fund) leaving approximately \$23.5 million in the General Fund (Operations) budget.

The GF (General Fund) budget of ~\$23.5 million for FY 2016 / 2017 is an approximate 17.5% increase over the FY 2013 / 2014 GF budget that approximated \$20 million. Unknown is the impact of increased employee salaries and other critical services.

Taxpayers may be pleased that the Council has generously increased employee salaries and benefits approximately 16%. Much of this was as a result of union negotiations last fall and management employees have been included in the new budget.

Public Safety costs increased approximately \$755,000 and includes increased liability costs (\$177,000), increased Sheriff services (\$141,000) and replacing the Santa Monica Rangers with LA County Sheriff as the policing authority for the Preserve area. Hiring the Sheriff to police the Preserve was, in our view, a good Council decision as the Sheriff is much better equipped to provide needed services.

City Manager Willmore has resurrected the notion that RPV needs a new City Hall / Civic Center complex that includes a fire station and Sheriff's station. We will comment below on LA County Fire Dept. services. There are many obstacles to further build at the current site including unknown earth contaminates (land was once a Nike site), land use regulations (portions of the site were dedicated as public parklands), there is an probable "cloud" on the site as the result of the City's desire in 2009 to adopt the "Annenberg Plan." In view of the obstacles of further developing the Upper Point Vicente / City Hall site, it does seem foolish to pursue negotiations with other governmental bodies. It is reasonable however to make reasonable upgrades (plumbing, electrical etc.) to the City Hall building as RPV residents will not approve a new Taj Mahal when the existing building has been proven to be a safe structure.

RPV - Emergency Services

PVP Watch has previously discussed emergency services in RPV particularly on PV Dr. South from Terranea eastward to PV Dr. East and we will continue to do until City Hall awakens to the public's needs. The ill-conceived City Manager Willmore concept of a new fire station at the *Civic Center* site does not meet the public need for improved Paramedic / rescue / life guard / ambulance services in the Abalone Cove / Portuguese Bend landslide areas. We believe few would disagree that there is need for greater availability of "emergency responders" on the South side (PV Dr. South). Currently Fire Station 53 is housed in an antiqued facility likely built in the WW II era. A new expanded station should be built in the same general area. This could be a LA County facility that included space for Rescue vehicles, Lifeguards and a small Sheriff's office.

RPV - Fire Department Costs

The last Newsletter (5-24-2016) included some statistics on LA County Fire Dept. costs. We have further investigated that issue and have found:

LA County Fire receives 17% of LA County property taxes for properties included in the Fire Services District. The assessed valuation of ALL properties in RPV is about 11.2 Billion. Taxes are on average about 1% thus 17% of 112 Million is ~\$19 Million. With other fees, round to \$20 million for RPV's contribution to LA County fire.

In addition, voters in 1997 approved an additional parcel tax which is \$64.78 per single family residence this fiscal year FY 2015 / 2016. A parcel tax is the same for each residential property in LA County. Multiple housing, businesses each have different rates. This tax is identified under Direct Assessments on property tax bills.

We read City Manager Willmore's earlier comments that he thought LA County fees negotiable. Our observation of the situation finds any reduction of fees unlikely unless RPV were to form an RPV fire dept. and withdraw from LA County fire services. Hopefully the Council will quickly recognize that concept questionable and not waste further taxpayer funds chasing another staff initiated "*exercise in futility.*"

If it is not broken, don't waste time trying to fix it.....

RPV - Storm Drain User Fee:

In case you missed it, the continuing saga of the RPV Storm Drain User fee has ended. Authority for the fee expired on June 30, 2016 and despite the concerted effort by some to renew / place a new / similar tax on RPV residents the council at its meeting on May 3rd voted 5 / 0 to terminate any / all discussions relative to creating a new Storm Drain User Fee. While it is likely that there will always be a need for Storm Drain maintenance, RPV's finances are greatly improved from ten (10) years ago and there is no longer a need for a separate tax for Storm Drains.

Bicycles on the Peninsula

After recently suffering the tragic deaths of 3 experienced bicyclists, PVE City Hall has initiated a project to enhance bicyclist / motor vehicle safety. We congratulate PVE for the creation of the safety program but we merely ask, "should not RPV and RHE participate and make this a Peninsula wide project?" Do not the same traffic concerns prevail on the entire Peninsula community? Should not our Lomita Sheriff be included as well?

RPV residents will recall that *once upon a time* there were traffic safety signs along PV Drive East that are no longer there thanks to former RPV Councilman Doug Stern and Tom Long. Both perceive that the signs were inappropriate and ordered them removed. Whether or not the lack of safety signs has caused any injuries along PV Drive East is unknown but we do have reports of many close misses. It is past time for all Peninsula cities to approach this as a safety process for all; vehicles, pedestrians on the Peninsula.

November 8th - General Election

For those who do not receive HJTA / Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Bulletins

HJTA LAUNCHES NEW INITIATIVE GUIDE

Sacramento — The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association has launched a new website giving California taxpayers objective information on the initiatives that will appear on the November 8 ballot.

The new website, which can be accessed at www.cainitiatives2016.com or through the rotating banner on the HJTA website, www.hjta.org, offers latest news related to the propositions, brief summaries of each proposal and short descriptions of arguments for and against. The site also offers links to the text of the measures themselves and links to the websites of campaigns for both sides.

"Soon, airwaves will be saturated with millions of dollars in deceptive political advertising" said HJTA President Jon Coupal. "Voters need to examine the measures for themselves and then come to their own conclusions. This new website will be a valuable tool to help people make their decisions based on facts and not misleading political ads."

The website will be updated regularly as developing news occurs and as additional campaign organizations are launched.

Those interested in HJTA's Ballot Recommendations for Taxpayers can find these at www.hjta.org, under "Hot Topics."

The Peninsula's current Assembly Member is David Hadley. Assembly Member Hadley, a Republican was elected two years ago and has an outstanding record of accomplishment in the Democratic controlled California State Government. Mr. Hadley is an ardent supporter of Prop 13 and is endorsed by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. PVP Watch supports a vote FOR David Hadley for the 66th AD.

We encourage all to visit Hadley's website - <https://ad66.asmc.org/>. While you are there suggest you sign up for his newsletter for current information from Sacramento.

Vote for David Hadley for 66th Assembly District on November 8th.

PVP Watch Welcomes Subscriber Comments

PVP Watch welcomes reader comments. Please send comments to info@pvpwatch.com

We recognize that many PVP Watch newsletter subscribers use mobile devices to read newsletters. However, mobile devices do not always provide acknowledgement that a newsletter has been opened and read.. We ask that those who do read newsletters from mobile devices also open the newsletter at their primary computer before deleting.

One of the current email issues is overactive “spam” detectors and we urge everyone to enter info@pvpwatch.com and PVP Watch into their computer address book

PVP Watch welcomes all input and awaits subscriber feedback on the new newsletter format and postings.

PVP Watch – Welcomes Contributions

PVP Watch is appreciates the contributions of the many subscribers who have sent checks to PVP Watch and is dependent on the financial support of our many subscribers. Those desiring to make a modest contribution, please send checks to PVP Watch / PO Box 2041 / Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

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 also suggest that info@pvpwatch.com be added to your computer Contacts Directory to assure delivery of PVP Watch Newsletters.

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