

PVP Watch Newsletter – April 16, 2011

To Our Friends & Supporters

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We received some positive response to the RPV Charter City concept posted in the last Newsletter and there is a desire by some to continue dialogue on this concept. Although it must be acknowledged that a Charter City form of government is not a cure-all for ills at RPV City Hall, or any other City Hall for that matter, the Charter City form of local government does offer greater opportunity for expanded self government if that option is so desired by the electorate.

The manner in which matters considered "Municipal Affairs" will be handled can be expressly written into the Charter City "Constitution" as desired by the electorate instead of leaving it to Council to enact ordinances affecting those Municipal Affairs.

Some questions RPV residents might ask themselves:

- * Am I satisfied that three (3) Council members can change any Ordinance including the General Plan without a vote of the electorate?
- * Or do I prefer that use of Public Lands (think Annenberg at Lower Point Vicente or any other public land) require a vote of the electorate?
- * Should the electorate have better input / control of actions taken by the Council or City Hall?
- * Should there be a procedure for residents to place items on Council agenda's.
- * Should the conduct of Council meetings be changed to allow residents the opportunity to speak and / or ask questions AFTER Council has discussed an item.
- * Should Council discussion time be limited? Now, residents get 3 minutes and Council talks without restraint.

* As it is now, three (3) Council members can decide to spend unlimited funds without resident agreement. Should there be a monetary limit on financial expenditures without approval of the electorate?

* Currently, the City Manager has virtually unlimited authority to hire & fire staff without approval of the Council. During the writing of recent Measure C Initiative, it was stated that there were two forms of local government, "Strong Mayor" where the Mayor is elected to that position rather than rotating between Council members as it is done now and "Council - City Manager" which is what is used currently. Investigation has found another alternative "Council – Administrator" wherein the Council has greater input and control of City Hall and staff duties and performance.

* City Attorney – Presently RPV has engaged the same law firm since incorporating in 1973 and currently legal fees are exceeding \$1,000,000 annually. Should alternatives be considered? One alternative is having an elected City Attorney that would be independent from the Council and another option is writing into the Charter City "Constitution" that the City Attorney function should go to bid every three (3) to five (5) years. Having to compete for this seemingly lucrative contract could potentially reduce costs.

These thoughts are being presented as a discussion starting point and reader input is sought and welcomed. We will continue to report what we learn, what residents say and will likely host some public discussion forums as we go forward. Public input is critical and please send comments to info@pvpwatch.com.

Lower Point Vicente & Annenberg

The proposed Annenberg project at Lower Point Vicente project is apparently moving ahead slowly. As we understand the current situation, RPV Staff and Annenberg have submitted a preliminary draft application to OGALS (Office of Grants and Local Services) and the public cannot obtain a copy per OGALS and the City as they both claim it is exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act because it is only a preliminary draft. According to staff, once a final application is submitted it will be posted on the City's website and people will be able to view it. There will be comment periods when the public will be able to submit letters to OGALS and / or NPS (National Park Service) but that will not be until a final application is submitted. How long this will take is at best speculative.

Undoubtedly most have observed the full-page Annenberg advertisements in the PV News, Daily Breeze, Peninsula People and likely other publications as well. As we previously

commented, it is interesting how the intent of the Annenberg at Lower Point Vicente project has migrated from being a learning center for "*Companion Animals*," to what is now being labeled a "*Discovery Park*".... *designed to help you engage with nature and explore the great outdoors.*

Interesting is that recently PVP Watch received several letters taking us to task on our opposition to the Annenberg at Lower Point Vicente project. We have posted three (3) of those letters at "Subscriber Comments," two being very lengthy, for subscribers to read and form their own conclusions. As is our usual policy, we did not print names of those who submitted comments.

We are not in disagreement that Annenberg has done projects that are of value to their respective communities. However, we do not understand why this project MUST be at Lower Point Vicente when there is other land that could be made available.

RPV – Other Issues

San Ramon Stabilization Project

As we reported in the last PVP Watch Newsletter, City Hall has this critical project in *slow motion*. At the April 5th meeting staff did report that they were pursuing a Storm Water Flood Management Grant which is administered by the California Department of Water Resources.

However, as we understand the present scheduling, it will be early 2012 before design is completed and bid ready documents are completed. Then..... the environmental approval process and how long will that take before actual construction can begin? Why are TOT funds not being used here rather than at questionable projects like Lower Hesse and Grandview Parks?

Lower Hesse / Grandview Parks.

In comparison, it seems there is a "Full Court Press" to develop Grandview and Lower Hesse Parks. Although we have observed little public support for the proposed development plans, City Hall is moving forward. On the April 19th agenda is item 6 - *Award of Contract for the Preparation of Mitigated Negative Declarations for the Proposed Improvement Plans for Grandview Park and Lower Hesse Park* with a budget cost of almost \$140,000. Why spend critical funds for *development* when construction funds will not be available for the foreseeable

future? And by the way, the Council is going to consider a skate park at lower Hesse Park. While the consideration of a skate park may be appropriate, locating a skate park at lower Hesse is absolutely the wrong location for what would be undoubtedly become an "attractive nuisance." It will be interesting to observe how the Council deals with this issue.

RPV Council Grants

At the March 29th Meeting the Council approved \$142,500 in cash grants and mostly to worthy causes. We congratulate RPV in contributing \$80,000 to the Peninsula High new Swimming Pool project. This is a worthy cause and too bad the other Peninsula cities are not contributing as well. We do question however why the Los Serenos de Point Vicente Docents were awarded \$7,000? Is not the Los Serenos de Point Vicente Docents a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization and capable of raising their own funding?

PVP Schools

The Superior Court trial concerning "Lots C & D" adjacent to PV High in Palos Verdes Estates was concluded this past week with attorneys presenting their closing arguments. The Courts decision is anticipated in approximately two weeks. At last this long simmering debate will be ended.

The April 15th edition of the Daily Breeze reported (page A3) that PVPUSD / PV High School are considering having a narcotics sniffing dog periodically on campus. WOW... what some of us don't realize what goes on with local teenagers today. Apparently the proposal has parent support but the school board is rightfully concerned about privacy rights and search and seizure laws. Undoubtedly we will hear more on this important issue.

We urge Peninsula residents to contribute to the Peninsula High new Swimming Pool project. The high school pools are used thru out the year for both high school teams and community events. For more information go to <http://www.newpeninsulapool.org/>

Newsletter Responses

Reader comments are welcomed and should be sent to info@pvpwatch.com. Newsletter responses are posted with names removed and no editing other than obvious grammatical changes. These are subscriber thoughts and opinions and PVP Watch does not vouch for those opinions. That so many have sent their comments has made the Newsletter more interesting and we appreciate the input.

We have been reminded that not ALL subscribers are aware of the PVP Watch website; www.pvpwatch.com. Lots of good info posted there.

Subscriber Comments:

PVP Watch should get more realistic about the huge slide in RPV real estate prices that needs to be halted. Annenberg's discovery center should be promoted and not besmirched or misrepresented at this time. The foundation wants to spend tens of millions in a way that is environmentally sensitive and protective of views. It wants to create jobs - hard to come by these days. PVP Watch and those living in the "old days" when real estate could do nothing but appreciate need to wake up and smell the roses. Ask Trump or Terranea or local lenders or appraisers or brokers for steps that could be taken to help keep local real estate prices from dropping another 20%. Let's not kid ourselves about what has happened to local real estate prices during the last 5 years. If RPV, State and Federal authorities do not act promptly in favor of Annenberg, then we end up with an undeveloped wasteland for another 20 years. Inactivity at LPV is not the result RPV should strive for if RPV wants to reasonably protect RPV property values from a "double dip" in RPV property values on the order of another 15-20%.

Feel free to publish this, if you ever decide to publish views that do not agree with the PVP Watch "party line."

Is anything being done or group forming to rebut all this BS we are reading about the wonderfulness of the Annenberg's? Any thought about forcing the situation to a vote in November election? There are people who want to rebut this whole thing.

You asked what your reader's opinion was on Annenberg. The more I see how Annenberg operates, rebranding their project "Discovery Park" the more against it I am. The cost of full color ads is nothing to the Annenberg folks, there is just no way any opposition to Annenberg can match the funds Annenberg has at their disposal to spread misrepresentations, and outright lies by omission, about their project.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

As a publisher of a local Peninsula Publication I try to stay out of local issues by not taking a stand. But I can no longer stay quiet on the Annenberg Project at Lower Point Vicente. I have been a strong support of the project since I first heard a presentation by Leonard Aube, Executive Director of the Annenberg Foundation when first presented to the community. I have heard the presentation several more times and each time I am absolutely in awe of the project and the many wonderful benefits it will add to the Palos Verdes Community.

I have known Wallis Annenberg since our college days on the east coast. She inherited her generous community and worldwide spirit of giving from her parents. How fortunate so many projects have benefited from her foundation. For those that write that Wallis is just funding the Point Vicente project for her own glory, that is the further from her mind. To the people that think she is building an executive suite for her own use that is absolutely untrue, as are all the untruths being sent to Letters to the Editors of our local newspapers, including such misinformation as the project will include a dog and cat "pound", in the main building when in fact it is planned to be a hands on workshop offering classes on pet care and local wildlife. The main building on the 11 acres will only occupy 4% of the site with surrounding areas for native plants and outdoor educational exhibits. For the many that enjoy walking the trails, the trails will be expanding by adding another 2 miles of walking trails. Best of all our Interpretive Center will benefit greatly from the Annenberg Project as they will finally get their Whalers house and the Tonga Indian village that has been in their expansion plans for a number of years, but due to lack of funds has not been realized. Thanks to the generosity of the Annenberg Project these two projects will come to life.

In response to Mr. George Neuner's Letter to the Editor in the Daily Breeze on March 20, 2011, I suggest his opening paragraph is totally wrong. Many of us residents feel very strongly that the Point Vicente Project is absolutely APPROPRIATE and WANTED. How wonderful there will be classrooms with many classes for children and adults. The auditorium and the second floor terrace are much need additions to our community lacking now in good meeting space for our many local groups which could make good use of these spaces in evening hours.

All the times I have been down to Point Vicente I have NEVER seen any families playing and picnicking on the open land above the Interpretive Center. It is ugly and useless now, and more important it is unsafe to walk and play on.

I have been a resident of the Palos Verdes Peninsula for over 44 years. My children enjoyed many trips to Marineland. I look forward to bringing my grandsons to the Annenberg Project at

Lower Point Vicente, and enjoying the wonderful projects planned in this beautiful space that will become alive with people and activities including enjoying spectacular ocean views. How lucky we are that Wallis Annenberg and her foundation has offered to fund this wonderful added jewel to our beloved Palos Verdes Peninsula.

For those of you who are reading all the negative letters regarding the proposed project I suggest you log onto www.annenbergfoundation.org and read the REAL TRUTH.

Ladies and Gentlemen of PVP Watch:

I have the utmost respect for freedom of speech. It is one of the fundamental principles on which our great country was founded. But with freedom comes responsibility. In the context of the press (including newsletters) that responsibility includes making some effort to verify the truthfulness of information to be published as opposed to simply perpetuating rumors or gossip. All too often, that responsibility is abdicated by the press. I hope that PVP Watch will live up to its responsibility in this regard.

Significant misinformation about the Annenberg Project was published in your recent newsletter. The proposed Project represents a gift to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes for uses that are perfectly consistent with those of a park – recreation and education (like Griffith Park but on a *much* smaller scale). The Annenberg Foundation will not acquire an interest in the land nor does it intend to provide a cozy place for the Annenberg family to hold meetings. The Foundation has lovely offices in Century City and elsewhere and, trust me, members of the Annenberg family already have beautiful environments in which to hold meetings.

The Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica was not erected by the Foundation so that the Annenberg family would have a place to go to the beach; the Space for Photography in Century City did not open because the Annenberg family wanted to learn more about photography; and the tree house in a local Torrance Park was not built because the Annenberg children have no place to play. I urge you to visit these places so that you can see for yourselves what great gifts they are to the community.

Furthermore, the Annenberg Foundation would be a wonderful ally in preserving open space in our community. It was the Foundation's matching grant in 2003 that enabled the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy to meet its goal of saving many acres from development in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes.

In summary, I urge you to think before publishing. Are the facts being reported to you truthful or do they represent an attempt by private homeowners to prevent public access to a park? The Annenberg Project will not impair anyone's view of the sea and will grant the public access to the entire Lower Point Vicente site (except administrative offices needed to run the Project itself). To date, that access has been inhibited by rough terrain and commercial farming operations. On the other hand, private homes adjacent to Lower Point Vicente do inhibit public enjoyment of ocean views. Not surprisingly, many complaints about the Annenberg Project appear to be coming from these neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration of my point of view.

Dogs – Off Lease areas:

Understand about C...but I feel strongly about the off leash areas...I just cannot comprehend why no city on the hill will at least do one! It doesn't have to be in a view area...nor on the coast, just put one somewhere...Thanks for the support...I need it.

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 com-puter 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

Subscribers

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 PVP Watch.

The Editorial Committee