

## PVP Watch Newsletter – May 14, 2011

To Our Friends & Supporters

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It is springtime and the annual Kabuki budget dance is in full swing in Sacramento. We continue to hear that taxes need to be increased and the citizenry continues to be threatened with curtailment / reductions of what they care about most; education for their children & grandchildren along with the closing of State Parks. Little or no mention of what is causing the massive fiscal problem; the bloated salary, retirement and benefit programs enjoyed by public workers including schoolteachers.

The May 14th edition of the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) had some interesting commentary.

To report a few;

*"Education spending and student-teacher ratio are about where they were in 2004. The real problem is that tax dollars are being diverted for teacher benefits."*

*"The Los Angeles Unified School District is paying 11% more for teacher health benefits than it did two years ago."*

*The WSJ also reported that Sacramento Republicans have offered to help "save schools" by extending the tax increases for 18 months in return for pension reforms and a hard spending cap. But, according to the WSJ, Democrats have refused to negotiate on these points.*

Back on the Peninsula, much is the same in regards to public pensions & benefits. In spite of current fiscal conditions, teachers and other public employees are seeking salary and benefit increases. Last fall the RPV Council had a discussion concerning pensions and benefits and apparently a consultant was retained but little has been heard on those subjects since then. In so far as PVPUSD schools are concerned, the onerous union contracts leave little room for negotiating true educational improvements.

**RPV - Here we go again.....** Item 11 on the May 3rd RPV Council concerned the Montessori school that has been operating at the Ladera Linda Park center for some 17 or 18 years. The most recent lease dated September 21, 2006 was for a five (5) year period thus terminating this September, 2011. At issue is RPV's decision to not renew the lease thus the dilemma facing the Montessori school by having to find a new location on short notice or worse closing down the preschool.

RPV's position is that the buildings occupied by the Montessori school are unsafe but apparently the other buildings at Ladera Linda (built at the same time) are OK because RPV apparently has not declared them unsafe. It seems that the gas line began to leak some time ago thus gas service for heating the buildings was shut off and electric heaters are now used. Also there are water / plumbing leaks and apparently other maintenance issues as well. RPV also had a building inspector who inspected the property in **2008** make a presentation concerning other building construction matters. One could conclude that if the building discrepancies were observed in **2008** and not brought to anyone's attention until now, they must not be very serious conditions.

There was extended Council discussion with Councilmen Stern & Wolowicz along with this years Mayor Tom Long wanting to terminate the lease because of the alleged safety issues. To their credit, Councilmen Anthony Misteich and Brian Campbell took a position trying to work with the Montessori school to find a reasonable solution. For the record, the lease has a base rental rate of \$6,734.54 per month plus possible CPI increases or a minimum of \$80,814.48 annually. The lease states that the landlord (RPV) shall maintain the roof, structural, electrical, heating, venting and plumbing (our emphasis).

Clearly RPV has failed to perform its lease requirements while collecting rental fees from the Montessori school of some \$350,000 so far this lease period. Now, under the leadership of Tom Long, Doug Stern & Stefan Wolowicz, the residents of RPV have become **slumlords**. And Doug Stern had the audacity to state that any repairs would have to be paid for by the Montessori school. Is this but more Stern bluster or can he not comprehend a lease agreement?

During the May 3rd meeting, Mayor Tom Long remarked that the Council had *privileged information* (attorney-client) information that they could not share with the public. A typical Tom Long legal maneuver – no transparency and hide the facts whenever possible. It would seem that the only *privileged information* that the Council may have had was that RPV had been violating the terms of the lease by failing to properly maintain the property. Subsequently the

RPV Council had a closed session meeting on May 10th reportedly because of potential litigation. What potential litigation? Was this meeting a possible Brown Act violation?

Other than the unseemly manner in which the Montessori school has been treated by RPV City Hall, what is the real reason that Tom Long, Doug Stern & Stefan Wolowicz want to evict the Montessori school from Ladera Linda? Could it be that their friends, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy would like to have the property for Land Conservancy offices? Stay tuned!!

### **RPV – Spotlight on Achievement**

The May 3rd RPV Council meeting opened with a "*Spotlight on Achievement*" show put on by the RPV staff that lasted well over an hour. The essence of the show was staff presenting the *wonderful accomplishments* staff had achieved during the past fiscal year. Some may recall that at last year's budget meeting, staff was challenged to develop cost savings efforts. Reportedly staff accepted a challenge of achieving \$150,000 and stated they delivered \$600,000 in a budget of some \$19,000,000. While all savings are important, it did seem somewhat ostentatious for an hour plus "dog & pony" show with the audience filled with city hall employees. We wonder what this cost to prepare and present? Not to be forgotten is that budget / salary & bonus time is approaching.

### **RPV City Hall**

We wonder what ever happened to the seismic analysis of the City Hall building. As readers will recall, Tom Long opined that the building was unsafe and no engineer would sign off on continued use. Well... lo & behold we identified an RPV resident that was well qualified to make a structural analysis of the City Hall building. Of course the local resident was not selected and another firm was hired at a cost approximating \$23,000. We understand the report was delivered some months ago but to our knowledge has not been publicly discussed. Could it be that the report presented facts that reaffirmed that the RPV City Hall building is not in any danger of immediate collapse?

Oh, and the City Hall water pipe. Readers may recall the great drama last year as to why we needed a new city hall because the water service pipe had several leaks during 2009 and each time RPV employees were sent home for the day. Interesting is that, at last, item 11 on the May 17th agenda is replacement of the water entrance pipe. The contract award is to Atlas Allied, Inc. an Anaheim firm for \$32,000 for replacing 630 foot section of water pipe. Not clear if the

trenching cost of \$26,000 is included in this cost. Wonder what happened to the business community's "Buy Local" campaign? We wonder if RPV City Hall contacted local contractors for bids? We wonder???

### **Lower Point Vicente & Annenberg**

Other than the usual weekly full page advertisements in the PV News by Annenberg and a few residents touting the benefits of Annenberg's proposed *Discovery Park* at Lower Point Vicente (PVIC) much remains removed from the public's view.

As we last reported, 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.

Our position remains that we are not in disagreement that Annenberg has done projects 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. Other than some who have a vested interest in the Annenberg project at Lower Point Vicente, most RPV residents seem opposed. Of course, it is well recognized that the current RPV Council has little concern for what the taxpayer's desire.

### **Peninsula Water**

California Water Service, the provider of water for the PV Peninsula is proposing to install new backbone pipelines through portions of the Peninsula. As we understand the situation, new pipes are being planned beginning adjacent to the existing reservoir at the intersection of PV Drive East & PV Drive North. Construction will go West going under the horse trails from Dapplegray to Crenshaw Blvd and then up Crenshaw to Silver Spur where a new underground reservoir is proposed at the corner across from the old McDonald's site (with a pump housed in a Spanish style building that will be compatible with neighboring structures). The total project is estimated in the \$43-\$44 million range.

Although the pipes are 55 years old, apparently their condition is not problematic. Cal Water proposes to pay for the improvements with available funds and recoup costs through price increases which are reportedly estimated at around \$22 per month for each household on the Peninsula. Cal Water is giving presentations to engender support for the project, because ultimately the PUC will need to approve the rate hikes.

The concern is whether this project is needed. While Cal Water emphasizes the age of the pipes, current pipes have a significantly longer useful life than 55 years and there is no indication that the pipes need to be replaced because of age or condition. While it would seem be a good idea to add an additional reservoir, it should be noted that the current reservoir at PV Drive East and PV Drive north is empty. Why? because the covering is deteriorating. Should not Cal Water first get a new cover and fill the existing reservoir before constructing a second one? An important question to ask is how long it will take for the costs to be recouped from the increased rates, and will the rates then go back down after the costs have been recovered, or is this merely an opportunity to permanently increase rates and revenue? Is this project, or at least all of it, really necessary?

Our understanding is that in the event of a disaster, natural or otherwise, the entire Hill has about a one-day supply of water. It is important to be prepared and have many gallons of bottled water available at home at all times to be sure you and your family have adequate supplies.

### **PVP Schools**

While there has been recent *hubbub* about teen drugs and the possible use of drug sniffing dogs at PV High, here is a story of accomplishment & success for which many may be unaware. Last Fall the Peninsula High School Cyber Patriot Team was created and soon thereafter entered the Cyber Patriots Competition. This event is conducted by the Air Force Association and is sponsored by Northrop Grumman, SAIC, CIAS, AT&T, Boeing, General Dynamics, Microsoft, Raytheon and other similar firms.

This years contest began last fall with over 180 teams nationwide. Peninsula High team was one of 12 high schools in the USA selected to compete in the final round which was held in Washington DC in early April. The Peninsula team finished sixth in the nation which was significant considering it was their first year of competition.

The final competition required students to intensely compete for eight hours. They secured seven operating systems using five laptops. The object was to maintain all critical services and

network resources while under constant unknown attacks from the "RED" team (SAIC's cyber professionals).

The team is coached by Peninsula High teacher; Hassan Twiet and parent mentor Greg Grenier. Designed to spark an interest in cyber security, these student participants will be carefully observed by some of the nation's most prominent figures in Cyber Security, with an eye to the future, as information security is one of the hottest future career fields.

Congratulations to all, teachers & students for demonstrating their expertise at such a challenging event.

The Superior Court trial concerning "Lots C & D" adjacent to PV High in Palos Verdes Estates was concluded several weeks ago and both party's are now awaiting the Courts decision.

We urge Peninsula residents who have not already done so, to contribute to the Peninsula High new Swimming Pool project. The RPV Council has committed \$80,000 and they are to be congratulated for this effort as the high school pools are used thru out the year for both high school teams and community purposes. One would think that the other Peninsula cities would contribute some of their "Rec & Park" funds as well. For more information go to

<http://www.newpeninsulapool.org/>

Those Seniors who wish to claim the Parcel Tax exemption for 2011 / 2012, the last day to file is May 31st. Go to [www.pvpusd.k12.ca.us](http://www.pvpusd.k12.ca.us) for more information.

### Newsletter Responses

Reader comments are welcomed and should be sent to [info@pvpwatch.com](mailto: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](http://www.pvpwatch.com). Lots of good info posted there.

### 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](http://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

### Subscribers

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

The Editorial Committee