

PVP Watch Newsletter – September 24, 2011

To Our Friends & Supporters

In this Newsletter:

- * Election Time on the Peninsula
- * Known RPV Candidate Forums
- * RPV – Pension Reform
- * RPV Sewers
- * RPV Storm Drains
- * RPV – Speeding Tickets
- * Tom Long at the Coordinating Council meeting

November 8th Peninsula Elections

This election is a critical event for RPV as this is the first time a new majority of Council members will be elected without an incumbent in the contest as Term Limits have caught up with Tom Long, Doug Stern & Stefan Wolowicz.

At issue: are RPV residents satisfied with the past eight years or are RPV residents ready for a change?

What's at stake is HUGE! More of the same or a new direction? Below we have posted a comparison of the candidates.

PVP Schools / PVPUSD Board of Education - Two Seats - PVP Watch Suggested Candidates

Larry Vanden Bos / larryvandenbosforschoolboard2011.com

Erin LaMonte / www.electerinlamonte.com

Why these two? We believe that Erin LaMonte and Larry Vanden Bos have by far the greater knowledge and experience needed by the PVPUSD.

* Erin LaMonte is a long time participant in PVPUSD activities while serving as president of PTA's including the Palos Verdes Peninsula Council of PTA's and as a member of the parcel

tax Citizen's Oversight Committee as well as numerous other educational organizations. Erin is supported by many Peninsula educators.

* Larry Vanden Bos is completing his first term as a PVPUSD Trustee and has been a positive factor during the past four years in the management of the parcel tax and construction bond funds. The Board has faced some difficult decisions and has dealt with them in a professional manner.

Other Candidate:

*Dianna Chooljian / www.drdianna4pvpschools.com has an impressive professional medical record but does not appear to have an educational involvement record that matches LaMonte or Vanden Bos.

Rancho Palos Verdes City Council – Three Seats - PVP Watch Suggested Candidates

- * Jerry Duhovic / www.jerryduhovic.com,
- * Dora de la Rosa / www.doradelarosa.com
- * Susan Brooks / www.susanbrooks2011.com

Why these three?

Because they are: **Highly Competent, Extremely Knowledgeable, Diverse Professional Backgrounds, Absence of Special Interest Affiliations, and Most Important, a Common Sense Capability for Ethical Discussions. All are Fiscal Conservatives.**

Jerry, a "local boy" raised in the Eastview section of RPV, is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and served as an officer in the US Air Force. Jerry is now a partner in a major investment and stock brokerage firm in Orange County. Jerry now serves as the Vice Chair on the RPV Finance Advisory Committee and is the only candidate who will bring substantive finance knowledge, an expertise greatly needed, to the RPV Council.

Dora is concluding eight years as a PVPUSD Trustee with four years as president. Dora knows how public bodies and meetings should operate and meetings will NOT go into the wee morning hours as they often to do with the soon to be replaced RPV councilmen. Dora is an experienced attorney although not now in practice. Her knowledge of the law and as an effective PVPUSD

Board Member has made her a no-nonsense leader and tough negotiator. Dora leads with fairness & respect not arrogance, a trait that will be welcomed at RPV.

Susan brings knowledge of past RPV history and served previously on the RPV Council some 15 years or so ago. Susan brings a record of accomplishment during her previous term that changed a \$2,000,000 deficit into a surplus. Susan's experience includes in addition to being a former Council member, having been a Planning Commissioner and an understanding of operations at City Hall.

Together, these three people bring a diversity of skills as well as records of fiscal responsibility and civility. Please go to their websites and attend candidate forums to learn more about these three individuals who are the best candidates for the RPV Council.

The Others

Ken Dyda / www.kendyda.com

We wish to thank Mr. Dyda for his many years of serving RPV but believe his skills can be better utilized as a "senior advisor" to the Council and other projects as they may develop.

Candidates:

Jim Knight / www.palosverdes.com/jimknight

Dave Emenhiser / www.daveemenhiser.com

Eric Alegria / www.ericalegria4rpv.org

Eric Alegria and his wife moved to RPV this past March and almost immediately he declared himself a candidate for the RPV Council. PVP Watch met with Mr. Alegria and found him an intelligent young man but thought he needed more exposure to life in RPV. Perhaps some service on a Commission might make him a more viable candidate in the future.

These candidates are endorsed and supported by Tom Long and one should anticipate that their election would likely continue the past failings and mismanagement of RPV by Tom Long and Doug Stern. Knight and Emenhiser are also supported by Larry Clark and others who were vigorous supporters of the failed Measure "C," the defeated increase in the Terranea Transit Occupancy Tax and the Storm Drain User Fee. Jim Knight is a strong supporter of the Open Space Preserve based on questionable Blue Butterfly and Gnatcatcher arguments; the preserve is now costing the taxpayers of RPV at least \$500,000 per year instead of the originally promised \$100,000.

To our knowledge, Candidate Cynthia Smith has not made any public appearances and does not appear to be a serious candidate.

Early in the campaign Tom Long requested each of the candidates to respond to a list of questions he had composed. We urge RPV residents to visit Tom Long's website, (www.palosverdes.com/tomlong), provided to him by PV Net, RPV's Information Services provider. A link to his questions is posted there. Knight, Emenhiser and Alegria dutifully responded to Long's questions and it seems clear their perceptions of RPV's future are in concert with Tom Long.

Visitors to Tom Long's website will find that Jerry Duhovic, Dora de la Rosa & Susan Brooks all declined to respond to Tom Long's attempt to influence future Council directions.

Known Candidate Forums

RPV - CHOA (Council of Homeowner Associations) – October 5th 7PM – Hesse Park

RPV - League of Women Voters – October 12th 7PM – Hesse Park

RPV - Marymount College – October 13th 7PM – Main Auditorium.

PVPUSD - League of Women Voters - October 4th 7:00PM - Peninsula Center Library.

RPV – Pension Reform

At the September 20th RPV Council meeting a change in the employee retirement system was made by creating a **new** employee retirement category. Henceforth, new employee pensions will be based on a 2% average of the three best year's earnings at 60 years of age times the number of years employed. This seems to be a prevalent choice for other municipalities as well. This is a significant change as current RPV employees receive 2.5% at 55 years of age using the single highest year's earnings. The alleged savings are based on a six-year projection and an estimate of new employees. Interestingly, the current program was enacted in September 2007 by most of the same Council members who have been talking about pension reform for the past year or so.

While this is a step in the right direction, they increased pensions for some of the RPV staff. How widespread is the increase or "spiking" is yet to be determined. A more comprehensive analysis is needed and that would require employee ages, etc. from city hall. RPV has been

paying the employees' portion of 6.5% contribution (of employee salary) but will no longer pay this portion. Instead, THEY RAISED EMPLOYEE SALARIES BY 5% to compensate for their loss of the city's 6.5%. The bottom line is that the employee portion is increased by ONLY 1.5% and the 5% is now compensation that will INCREASE the employee salary base for computing pension amounts, thus SPIKING the retirement benefits for some (to be determined) employees.

This was approved on a split vote with Council members Misetich and Campbell opposing and Tom Long, Doug Stern and Stefan Wolowicz, the three lame ducks whose terms expire this year, in favor. Fortunately, the 5% salary contribution is a Council action and not part of the retirement program and the next Council can correct this egregious action by the three departing Council members. In typical fashion, Long called a suggestion by Misetich and council candidates he does not support, Duhovic and Brooks, to wait for additional input from the Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Association and others, "demagoguery."

We found the staff protests at the September 20th Council meeting of the proposed pension changes pathetic and over the line. The staff has become accustomed to working in a "gilded cage." Few in the community have received the generous pay and benefits that the RPV staff has received these past few years. Staff is not leaving the taxpayers many choices other than to reduce staff to reduce the ballooning payroll expense.

RPV – Sewers

Tom Long and others at RPV City Hall are now on a crusade for a sewer tax. According to what is being stated, the sewer system is in serious disrepair and we are facing an imminent crisis of monumental magnitude. We wonder what they are talking about as our investigation found that RPV sewers are OWNED and MAINTAINED by LA County. Look at your tax bill – Consolidated Sewer Charge(s) are for inspection, maintenance and repair of the sewer system. Currently residents are responsible for their respective connection to the main sewer pipe usually running down each street. The biggest problem is RPV's trees in the parkway as roots often enter the sewer pipe with residents having to deal with this problem.

RPV – Storm Drains

RPV Storm Drains have been a contentious issue for some time. While there is no doubt that some storm drain repair was needed, the problem is the lack of transparency and publishing CLEAR reports as to what has been accomplished and planning for the future. We welcome the posting of a clear and concise report of what has been accomplished, how funds have been spent and what are the plans going forward on the RPV website. While we have opposed the Storm Drain User Fee from the beginning, with or without the Terranea TOT, their argument included denial of any TOT funds that even now are over \$2M per year. With the City having total reserves of almost \$20M, this \$1.3M fee from only 80% of the property owners is still not needed.

Tom Long's remarks at the Coordinating Council session on September 22nd.

At this event, each of the four Peninsula Mayors gave updates on major city projects and provided a general overview of where cities stand on The Hill at a "Peninsula Priorities: The State of Our Cities" presentation hosted by the Palos Verdes Peninsula Coordinating Council at the Peninsula Center Library.

The following was obtained from "the Patch."

Steve Zuckerman, Rolling Hill's Estates *shared news of a \$1 million grant for renovation to community equestrian center, where construction is expected to begin in early- to mid-2012.*

B. Allen Lay, Rolling Hills *is in good financial shape, with economic downturns having little impact on the city as it offers no retail services.*

John Rea, Palos Verdes Estates, *which recently hired Judy Smith as city manager, will not be hiring an assistant city manager and will reduce the number of employees on administrative staff by 1.5 full-time positions.*

Tom Long, Rancho Palos Verdes, *cited recent success in Rancho Palos Verdes regarding infrastructure repairs, balancing budgets and maintaining general fund reserves, but said he wouldn't only "talk about the good."*

Frustrated by failing city infrastructure, public resistance to projects and a "culture of mediocrity" in Rancho Palos Verdes, Mayor Tom Long painted a bleak picture of the state of the city during a Thursday address.

"In many respects, Rancho Palos Verdes has fallen short of its potential," Long said on Thursday.

Much of the city's infrastructure remains "dilapidated," he said, and city parks are underutilized. Grandview Park is a "field of weeds," he said, and many parks have inadequate parking facilities and restrooms.

An "irrational" fear of change by residents on The Hill has prevented the city from moving forward, Long said, using the Annenberg project which would have created a community center with a focus on animals at Lower Point Vicente in Rancho Palos Verdes, as an example. He pointed to residents who spread "inaccurate information" about the project as one of the major hurdles to its success.

"Unless and until our community overcomes an irrational fear of change ... prospects for positive change that will allow our community to improve will remain small," he said. "Positive change is and always will be contentious."

He expressed his disappointment with current Council candidates proposals he said "are tantamount to turning the clock back to when the city was originally founded."

Editor: Another negative and disgraceful performance by Tom Long. Most know what the problem is ...

During this seven-year period, the tenure of Tom Long, Doug Stern and Stefan Wolowicz:

- Added 13 Full Time Employees, an increase of 29%
- Increased Salaries by \$2,409,700 or approximately 85%
- Increased Benefits by \$1,143, 576 or approximately 130%.

And while the employee costs were increasing, City Hall failed to maintain the Ladera Linda property, drove out the Montessori school that was widely used & desired by RPV residents, losing an \$80,000 annual revenue stream, and now plans to spend \$100,000 to determine how the Ladera Linda property should be used. And Tom Long is frustrated..... How about RPV residents....

RPV – Traffic Speed Control

RPV's speeding tickets continue to be a concern for many RPV residents and others as well. Although the current RPV Council believes in aggressive traffic control, the question is whether RPV residents would be better served by increasing some speed limits and thus diverting the traffic control deputies to residential crime deterrence? Comments are welcome and please send to info@pvpwatch.com.

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.

Responses to August 27, 2011 Newsletter

I am so confused by the political language and labels, albeit this confusion is intended by the design of the speaker and user of the label.

This was driven home last Thursday, when I read on the front page of the Peninsula News "Sculpture dedicated to local pair". The article seemed to me, and rightly so, to praise the Ginsburgs' generosity and the great (my editorializing) work of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy to preserve our precious coastline. Apparently, absent the RPV General Plan and the work of those groups similarly motivated as the PVPLC, the allowed density would have been 78 units per acre or 558 sq. ft. each. Can you imagine our coastline? Our current mayor, Tom Long's response (I assume to this fact) was, "What we ended up with was something very different."

Of course, it is different. But in light his goals for RPV, what does our mayor mean? Different good, different bad, what? I have frequently been at odds with what the mayor felt was "best" for RPV; modifying the General Plan, Annenberg and Valero for instance. Is it too much to ask for clear speak? I want our new candidates for the RPV City Counsel to go on the record and say

what they mean. That way, if they get into office and do something “different” without a compelling reason, they can be held accountable.

Let me say unequivocally, my politics are “different”. From what, I won’t disclose. As to RPV, I am a hard-core conservative in the sense that I want to conserve, retain and preserve our General Plan for a residential community plus natural areas with guarded and limited commercial interweaving; generally, quality of life over merely being commercially productive.

I would like to challenge our new candidates to state in some detail, what their positions were at the time on the following issues: 1. The RPV General Plan; 2. The Valero gas station property; 3. Litigation and building (new and or remodeling) within the landslide zone; 4. The Marymount Initiative; and 5. the Annenberg proposal

The Murder at Abalone Cove

Surprised- no mention of the murder in abalone cove- the city did not put this on the web either...no neighborhood watch notification...seems like a pretty big issue and awareness is important.

It'll be a great day for RPV when Long and Stern can no longer force their anti-resident agenda on us all. They are typical of the government by and for government sake and forget the people mentality that is being challenged across the country. RPV has a big problem with residential and vehicle burglaries that is not being adequately addressed by law enforcement, while unnecessarily punishing well-meaning and responsible residents with excessive traffic citations.

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

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