

PVP Watch Newsletter - January 10, 2009

To Our Friends & Supporters:

2009 is here and we trust 2008 was good for all. PVP Watch wishes all a prosperous & healthy 2009 as we continue in our efforts to bring information to PVP Watch subscribers that is not forthcoming from other sources.

Rolling Hills Estates

The Rolling Hills Estates (RHE) Planning Commission met as scheduled on Monday December 15th. The Promenade on the Peninsula Mall's request for a conditional use permit to build 66 condominiums and 16,620 square feet of commercial space in the 500 block of Deep Valley Drive was rejected with recommendation that the proposed project be "reworked."

That projects are being proposed that would add some 400 additional "condo" units for the Sliver Spur / Deep Valley Drive community should be a concern to all Peninsula residents. We recognize these projects are a big ***IF***. However, should most / some of these projects go forward, ***rural*** living could possibly become a forgotten concept on the Peninsula.

Rancho Palos Verdes

Probably most have now heard that Donald Trump has sued RPV for \$100,000,000. While that amount of money should be frightening to all RPV residents, anyone who has watched Council proceedings should not be surprised. RPV Councilmen often seem to forget that they are elected merely to be representatives of the community and that their arrogant actions are disruptive and sometimes very costly.

Mr. Trump purchased a 15 hole golf course (3 holes were in the ocean) from creditors as the developer (Zuckerman Brothers) had defaulted on their loans. Mr. Trump should have been welcomed to our community for his efforts to save the golf course and for providing a new revenue source for RPV. Mr. Trump has put millions of \$\$\$ into the project creating a 1st class venue. One of Trump's early requests was to rename the golf course entrance from Ocean Trails Dr, to Trump Dr. The RPV Council denied this request. Why did they do this? Apparently because they could. There were other instances of the Council as well as the RPV Planning Dept inserting themselves into the design of the golf course.

There were geological issues as well. We are not going to comment either way on these issues as they are complex and we are not geological experts. One wonders however, were RPV's experts the same folks that RPV used for the Monks case, which they lost?

RPV Council

Larry Clark was installed as this years (2009) mayor: Following is what was reported as his goals:

- * "Unfolding" the entitlement process for the Annenberg Center at Lower Point Vicente.
- * Progressing "proactively" on the proposed Civic Center at Upper Point Vicente.
- * Re-addressing how the city utilizes it's parks.
- * Working with PVPUSD to include Eastview in the school district.
- * Being sucessful in RPV's appeal to the California Supreme Court in the Monks case.
- * Reaching out to sister cities "in areas of joint concern and need."

PVP Watch will monitor and comment as appropriate. For those not aware, the California Supreme Court has already ruled against RPV in the Monks case. Unfortunately, Mr. Monks passed away a few days before the Court made it's decision. Wondering what "Unfolding" the entitlement process for the Annenberg Center means? Hopefully this does not mean a give away of public land to the Annenberg's.

More Wasted Funds: During 2008 there were several "team building" sessions for RPV Council & senior staff. An expert was brought in for day long sessions on *how to get along with one another* etc. Don't know what the total costs were. Well... it was reported in a recent Daily Breeze article by Melissa Pamer that Tom Long had filed an FPPC (Fair Political Practice Commission) complaint against Peter Gardiner. So much for team building. Apparently Long perceived he was doing his civic duty in reporting fellow Councilman Gardiner to the FPPC. As reported by Pamer, Gardiner had enrolled in a PV Net course and not paid the \$400 fee. Many will remember that Gardiner was a lone critic of PV Net. It does not seem feasible that Peter Gardiner would enroll in a \$400 class offered by PV Net. However, several concerns. How many sessions were included in the course? How many sessions, if any, did Gardiner attend? How did Long become aware that Gardiner had not paid the alleged \$400 fee? Obviously from Ted Vegvari who states in the Pamer article that he stays away from RPV politics. Oh really! In reality the only evidence we have is that Vegvari states it occurred. Hello everybody. Is anything making sense?

Quoting the Pamer article, PV on the Net President / owner Ted Vegvari, " The last thing a nonprofit wants to do is upset a council member. There is a certain fear factor." Maybe that's why PV Net continues to host Tom Long's e-mail & web site?

As readers will likely recall, PVP Watch has long been reporting on RPV's relationship with PV Net / Vegvari. PV Net is filed as a 501(c)3 not for profit entity. PV Net reportedly conducts classes for a fee. Not reported is the number of students taking classes and / or paying fees. During 2008 RPV paid PV Net almost \$250,000 for services. Of that amount, over \$75,000 was for tech support. It has been previously established that PV Net bills RPV at \$40 an hour. At that hourly rate, this equates to approximately 1,875 hours or eleven months of work. Not included is free space at the City Hall complex and other RPV provided benefits for PV Net. Incidentally, RPV hired a full time IT tech in early 2008. Why do these excessive costs continue if RPV has a qualified IT person? Is anyone besides PVP Watch concerned about these questionable expenses? Comments from IT professionals are particularly welcomed. Send to info@pvpwatch.com.

RPV Trash Hauling

The last Newsletter (December 13th) suggested that residents with concerns about the Councils plans for trash hauling apprise City Hall of their concerns. Following are some letters that were sent to the RPV Council by RPV residents. PVP Watch thought many would appreciate reading their neighbors concerns.

"Dear Council Members:

There are two issues that are extremely irritating regarding the present supposed negotiations for trash pick-up. The first is the idea that you will only consider one pick-up per week bids. How did you come to this conclusion that this best suits the needs of RPV? How did you come to the conclusion that the once per week pick-up was the desired service of RPV residents? I have never been polled. No neighborhood meeting or discussion were held to take the pulse of the community unless for some reason my coma was too deep and I missed them.

Why are you calling for a reduction in services? It seems that a seat of the pants decision was made either by use of the Magic 8 Ball or two out of three coin flips. I see no other rationale to support your decision or your process. Granted you folks are elected folks, but you have a legal obligation to serve you community, not order it around. This narrow minded decision is an irritant in the way that you folks have assumed what folks want based on the direction of the wind. This is poor on your parts.

The second decision that is annoying is your immediate action of going to bid where none is required without meeting and conferring with the present hauler to see what kinds of pricing or fees they had in mind. I have heard no complaints other than my own when I forget that it is trash day. The service has been consistently good. The personnel have been diligent, polite, and

thorough. This has been the overall best service that we have had.

Why the rush to bid when you may have the best deal going for you right in front of you. Nothing like alienating a good contractor for some need to feel like you are doing something. My guess, as I have seen happen before, that in end of this we will be paying more for an automated system that sometimes is just a little less than accurate and with only once a week pick-up for more money than we are currently paying or would be paying if the current company requested a raise in fees.

Collectively you have nitpicked some folks to the point of desperation, while at other times you collective act like the Queen of Hearts. Get it right or postpone things until some of you are gone and replaced with folks who are a little more on top of things.

You for sure have a great case of, as they say in baseball, rabbit ears. You show this every time there is a legitimate opposing an opinion. You hear only the part you want to hear, and then again play like the Queen of Hearts.

Put in more time. Talk to the folks instead of yourselves. Re-read the Abilene Paradox so you won't get a bad case of 'yes' for the wrong reasons. Sometimes those opposing views might have a little merit. Serf are not kept to think, but every now and then maybe hear us out before giving the lashing and the "off with their heads' deal. The serfs are in the field, not on a high podium claiming omniscience and waving a wand.

I have read with interest that the RPV city council has decided to seek RFQ for our residential trash pickup. While I believe that sound city management should be based on the best interest of the city's residents, it appears that the city residents base this RFQ on what two city council members want without any request for comments.

While some adjoining cities have automated curbside pickup, the terrain is different than in RPV. I personal object to the large trash containers for once a week pickup. We have a steep driveway that would be difficult for senior citizens, as we are, to get the trash container to the curb.

We currently pay \$75.13 a quarter for our service and have no complaints with Waste Management. Thank goodness no sitting council member will stand for re-election. We deserve better than we have.

We have been extremely satisfied with our current trash pickup. Take consideration of your \$135k consultant recommendations, for Pete's sake!

I've made my concerns known to the council on the trash issue. My concerns landed on deaf ears. Certain members have already made up their minds in my opinion. They say we have to

go with the automated system. Hopefully we'll be allowed as many bins as we want without being charged per individual bin.

We want city council members to know that we are very satisfied with the current service provided by Waste Management! We have lived in the Torrance area before, and had automated service, and it was terrible and expensive. Why does this issue keep reappearing every few years? I haven't met one neighbor that was unhappy with our current service? Why do tax dollars continue to get spent on consultants and RFPs for problems that do not exist?

As a long time, 49 year resident of RPV, I am very satisfied with Waste Management's service. Further, I must strongly disagree with Councilman Long's and Stern's approach to this matter. A change in a system that works where citizens are satisfied needs to be explained. Automated pickup makes no sense and will likely cause significant issues and problems for the residents. Particularly, the matter of the need for special trash containers that may not fit in current storage spaces, the need to get behind locked gates, etc. I have expressed my views to Councilman Stern on this matter the last time the subject came up.

What is Councilman Stern getting by pushing this approach? What is his connection to those in the waste hauling business? More discussion with the citizens of RPV needs to occur, since the citizens are the real stakeholders in the system and will ultimately pay any cost increase or inconvenience the changes may cause. It is important for the elected councilmen to remember that they are to represent the "public" as a whole, not just a few who pay for their campaigns. A public meeting announced well in advance should be held to explain why, not only the need for an RFP, but also the criteria to be met by a proposal response to the RFP, as well as the reasons and logic for the proposed changes to a once a week automated pickup. I would very much like to see a detailed cost / benefit analysis that supports the proposed changes.

Thank you so much for continuing the PVP Watch emails. I love reading them. It reinforces my delight in "getting the heck out of Dodge" back in 2006. Reading about the California budget crises, the Prop 8 result reactions with protest and violence, and the RPV city council shenanigans, causes me sorrow that so many suffer in such a beautiful state.

The highest wage earners and thus taxpayers continue to flock to Texas and other states where there remains some reason in taxing and spending. I don't have many solutions that many tax and spenders will find acceptable, but worry that even though we left, we will still be on the hook to bail you out!

You must bang your heads against the wall observing such lame government! Keep up the great work trying to bring reason to the attention of the populous.

I think going to once a week automated trash collection as advocated by Doug Stern is not something that should be mandated by the Council. This is a major change in the trash collection methodology. While the automated system has three sizes of containers, when they get loaded with paper and other recyclables or green waste they are heavy and awkward to handle, particularly for us of the older population within the city. A large sample survey should be taken of the residents of RPV to determine the majority preference. The descriptive material for the survey should not be the Doug Stern distorted view, but an unbiased general description of the options.

The only trash that needs to be dealt with at this time is the trash talk from our esteemed City Council. As most of our (not your) residents continue to say: "There is nothing wrong with today's trash pick up program and since it isn't broken, quit wasting money trying to fix it!" We like our twice a week pick up and NO automated program is desired. I'm tired of looking at our gutters cluttered with ugly trashcans which the "automated folks" don't seem to think they need to put away in a timely fashion.

I personally am happy with the current trash service. Our road was once part of the automated trial service, and we voted to not use it much to Mr. Stern's dismay (Mr. Stern is a resident on our road) (we voted 3 times just to make sure). I found the cans, even the small ones, heavy and difficult to store. There are many seniors living on our road and I know that they struggle with the already difficult steep driveways hauling trash cans to the curb. The automated cans, even the small ones are heavy once filled with trash. Our road is privately maintained and is currently serviced by the smaller pup trucks to protect our road from the wear and tear that the larger trucks present, and we are willing to pay the additional cost to conserve and preserve what we have. Waste Management has provided excellent service to our community and I don't believe in changing what is currently excellent service. We get what we pay for! You need to open this matter up to the public and allow their voices to be heard. Open government, transparency in government is critical."

Editor: Both Doug Stern & Tom Long have distributed e-mail messages disagreeing with the PVP Watch Newsletter concerning RPV's proposed trash RFP etc. Stern published some numbers that stating that almost all in the trial area were in favor the proposed plan. As most are aware, numbers can often be arranged to get a desired conclusion. Oh, apparently Stern forgot

to note that a majority of his neighbors (Coral Ridge HOA) are opposed to Stern's (and associates) automated trash hauling plan.

Editor: The message below was distributed by Tom Long. Readers can judge for themselves the veracity of Long's comments.

"I am sorry you have been misled by PVP Watch and I appreciate your sharing your comments with me so I could give you some information on the issue. The city's waste hauling contract is about to expire. We need to obtain a new contract. Waste Management will not extend the existing contract at its current price and has previously indicated that they have no interest in manual pickup. Many other haulers have indicated the same. (Editor: But apparently not all haulers)

Our contract was set to expire three years ago but we did have a 3 year option to extend at that time. We went out to bid to test the market and no one even bid on manual. The bid to replace manual with automated was a 100% increase, negotiated down to 50%. Only one company, Waste Management, bothered to bid at all. (Editor: because of the way the RFP was prepared)

Since that time we have had two test areas with automated pickup. I live in one. The total number is hundreds of households. People in the test areas have been surveyed twice and they prefer the new automated pickup to the manual pickup by 85% to less than 10%. The kind of automated pickup we are proposing will not be like what you had in Torrance. There will be multiple sizes of cans to choose from and they will be designed for easy handling. Bundled green waste will still be picked up and there will be sufficient special pickups.

Tax dollars are being spent on an RFP because we need an RFP to get bids to replace the contract that is expiring. City staff does not have the specialized expertise to do the RFP as efficiently as a company that regularly does RFPs of this type. That company knows the market better as well. Using a consultant to prepare the RFP also saves on likely staff overtime in a situation like this. The city has only a few dozen staff and does not have staff with significant experience in bidding waste hauling contracts.

In sum, the council and the city staff are taking a sensible approach to get residents the best value in trash hauling for our money.

Tom Long

Councilmember, Rancho Palos Verdes

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