

# The Manhattan Beach Observer

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## **Concerts-in-the Park Sponsorship Sought**

For more than 30 years, Concerts in the Park has always been synonymous with the words: 'exciting; families and friends; live music; a festival setting'; and always and perhaps most importantly: Free.

This community event has always been a part of the city's budget, but in 1992 it initiated a program to offset the operational costs of the concert with the help of some voluntary sponsorship. It was only during the summer of 2011 that a shadow was cast on the bucolic, joyful event: "Free" added some conditions and limits.

It was at the time of planning for Manhattan Beach's 2012 Centennial celebration that Concerts-in-the-Park was added to an opportunity to raise funds for the event by innovating a reserved seating fundraiser. Stage front spaces (the spaces many residents arrived early to set up in order to reserve an advantageous seating area) were now offered at unprecedented fees: \$100.00 guaranteed VIP seating and VIP parking.

Billed as a "once in a lifetime" (or every 100 years) opportunity to support the Centennial events, with increased fees for gazebo rentals to accommodate 20 people and with reserved parking, the community backlash was immediate. There were many who were eager to participate in this offer, but countless others saw this as elitist, a VIP exclusionary approach which reflected poorly on a community's 100-year celebration.

It has not been firmly established that that summer's concert seating enterprise was a

## **New Information Technology Director Position Short on Info**

**By Gary Osterhout**

In February 2015 at the regular Mid-Year Budget Report meeting, the Manhattan Beach City Council directed the City Manager to hire an Information Technology Director. This is one of the four positions residents vehemently complained about in October/November 2014 to the point where the City Manager said, according to the Easy Reader, he would not fill the positions at that time (the February 2015 Staff Report said that this really meant that the City Manager postponed recruitment). At the November meeting, the Council passed a formal motion "to direct the City Manager to report at the mid-year review how to fund the 4 new positions, and right size the full time employee work force."

Of course, the City Manager did not report at the mid-year review how to fund all four positions as directed, nor did he even report how to fund the IT Director that was approved. Nor was there any discussion of how to "right size" the full time employee work force. Nor did the Council formally excuse or hold the City Manager, or themselves, accountable for the lack of attention to their prior direction.

The sole vote against the proposal was David Lesser, with the minutes reflecting that "he is in favor and agrees with the IT Director position, but not now. He further added that City Council should wait until the new budget process is started and study it in the context of the whole budget."

*(Ed. note: The following written by Mira Costa Senior High School student Jacob Hands reflects the thoughtful, concise, maturity demonstrated in each of his submitted articles. We appreciate his time, energy and commitment.)*

## Public or Private?

By Jacob Hands

The end of the 2015 academic year will mark the single most competitive and selective collegiate admissions cycle to date. As parents scramble—tending to their progeny’s wounded ego’s—the question persists: “What could have been done differently?”

For some, the path towards self-assurance involves taking a closer look at their child’s educational background. During such an inspection, it becomes apparent that public schools experienced the greatest drop in some of the country’s most envied acceptances, while private schools experienced merely a marginal decline. Does correlation indicate causation in this case?

In many areas, the answer involves a quick swipe of the card or flick of the wrist, as the nation’s public education system is tossed aside like any other inferior good. Yet, this trend is not solely apparent among the top 1%. A recent report conducted by the Brookings Institute found that 1/4 parents were considering sending their children to private schools. The main reason was this: public schools do not see as many children matriculate into the world’s leading universities. As a result, private schools are enabled to charge exorbitant amounts for a ‘superior’ academic experience. Children as young as five enter parochial and catholic day-cares bearing annual price tags of up to \$11,000. The older these ‘privileged’ souls become, the steeper their tuition. New York City’s own Horace Mann Preparatory School charges its parents a \$42,000 sum ironically dubbed a ‘standard’ fee. Even locally, private institutions like Harvard Westlake and the Loyola/Marymount duo features \$35,000 and \$20,000 in respective tuitions. When all is said and done, most families opting for private school spend nearly \$75,000 during the course of each child’s K-12 education.

Is all of this justifiable? To answer that, one must entertain both the positives and negatives of the given practice. According to national averages,

## No Fit with Fit On

By Steve Yi

Oak Ave residents living south of Marine Ave heard that the Public and Parking Improvements Commission approved a motion to recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution. The resolution is to install stop signs in all directions at the intersection of Valley Drive/Oak Ave/35th St. While they applauded any action which would alleviate neighborhood traffic problems, nevertheless they wondered what had happened to their yearlong request that attention be paid to the ongoing safety and traffic congestion on Oak Ave.

My December observer article addressed traffic safety problems on Oak Ave and at the intersection of Marine Ave and Oak Ave which the city seemed unwilling to address.

The problems are many. One is speeding, as Oak Ave is used as a cut through street to avoid Sepulveda traffic. But the major concern has been the lack of parking spaces at the strip mall located on the southwest corner of Marine Ave and Sepulveda Blvd. This lack of parking makes safety issues intolerable.

The three fitness studios offer 62 parking spaces for their studios and five other businesses; the parking demands cannot be met. And so customers spill out onto Oak Ave. Because the entrance to the strip mall is on Oak Ave, serious traffic congestion results from cars turning from Sepulveda onto Marine Ave, then left on Oak Ave and then again a left into the parking area. Cars can be backed up to Sepulveda.

Residents who contacted City Traffic Engineer Zandvliet for some redress to what is a dangerous safety issue were told "the residential streets will be part of an upcoming Oak Ave traffic study to be funded by the Manhattan Village Shopping Center Project." Nothing else was offered as a minimal step to address traffic and safety issues.

And then came the fliers addressed to Fit On Studios clients. Stating "Parking lot blues?" it offers these helpful tips: **"Please try and avoid parking lot and park on Oak"**

More welcoming advice suggests, **"Marine also has free parking on the street"**

Finally, on a page showing a suggested parking map are the following words to ensure a warm response from impacted residents:



## Editor's Column

The most recent City Council election will be remembered for several anomalies: the unprecedented limited number of candidates; the minimal number of candidate forums; the number of registered voters who did Not vote; the significance of the voting results. And now, the two incumbents have been sworn in, seated, and it is business as usual.

But...a retrospective appraisal of the significance of the March 3rd 2015 City Council election leads to some notable perspectives...

This had the initial appearance of only two incumbents running for re-election to the two available vacancies; Howorth and Lesser had served the first four years and declared their candidacy for another council term. No other residents submitted their names as candidates. A number of those who were approached and urged to run gave conflicting reasons for "not this time" or "not against this candidate" or "can't afford".

Until virtually the last possible filing date, Manhattan Beach was facing a non-election council election. With two open vacancies and two incumbents expressing a readiness to retain their seats, there would have been NO formal election. A first for Manhattan Beach.

Bill Victor, a long time Manhattan Beach resident, recognized that, with the possibility of no election and an automatic renewal of the two declared candidates, no issues would be discussed, no positions stated, no answers for the 34,000 Manhattan

City Council Report Card					
For Report Card	Burton	D'Errico	Howorth	Lesser	Powell
Appr. South by Magazine alcohol permit application					
Appr. Pier telescope replacement project					
Appr. report for ULI recommendations					
Vote: <b>YES</b>			Vote: <b>NO</b>		

Beach residents to be more fully represented in a traditionally satisfactory campaign. And so he stepped forward. He had no agenda for aspiring to later office; he ran because it forced all candidates to be responsive to community questions. People knew and respected the two incumbents, but they appreciated the opportunity to add to the mix.

Victor stepped forward when no one else demonstrated that kind of leadership. He made a contested election possible. Whether one voted for him or not, he must be recognized, appreciated and applauded for his position that there be discussions of city issues; he ran because he deeply cares for the city and demonstrated this with his courage to enter what would otherwise have been an uncontested election...a first for this city.

As previously mentioned, the Manhattan Beach eligible voters, including both those who signed in at their respective precincts and those who voted absentee, represented 17% of the total community...certainly better than the abysmal Los Angeles 10%---but the number is still significant in what it revealed.

Of some interest is that while Lesser and Howorth received a substantial total of votes more than Victor, in

third place, it has been pointed out his 22% of recorded votes was a greater percentage than those of Burton and D'Errico, second and third place winners in the previous council election. One recognizes this doesn't take into consideration the greater total of votes received by these two previously elected councilmembers, but the 22% number of those who did vote in this election carries some weight.

It is the possible significance of those who did not vote, and of those who chose not to go to the precincts or mail in an absentee ballot, that what narrowly missed being an uncontested election must be considered. In speaking with residents prior to the election, some stated they were not voting because "it made no difference, anyway".

Some felt the two incumbents merited another four years, and that there was little doubt the election would guarantee their return. Some--while fewer in number but nevertheless reflected some voices--admitted they were unaware that an election was scheduled! But the 22%--a relatively noteworthy number---who voted for Victor expressed a voice that should resonate with currently seated councilmembers for what it expressed. An uncontested election can indicate a political

## City Hall Update

A second Street Master Plan Community Meeting was held on March 24 at the Police/Fire Conference room. An overview of the project was given by the consultant who explained what will be defined by the Public Works Department. This Department will be examining public trees, trees in our parks and our public-right-of-way. The goal is to determine the impact of trees in our city's future.

The primary question is what do we want our community trees to look like, how to plan for what trees we want to plant, to assure the right trees in the right location and their sustainability. Public input was encouraged and residents were asked five specific questions relating to what they want to prioritize. There is also an on line survey to which residents can respond. Maintenance Supervisor Juan Price will oversee the project.

This is a preliminary step in defining the importance of trees to the City and to the environment.

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The moratorium which prohibited the conversion of any commercial use downtown to a different type of use, was put in place almost a year ago. Business owners urged a plan for future zoning and commercial development. A major step was the hiring of Urban Land Institute (ULI) consultants and the following discussions centered on land use, parking and design, with focus on a specific or strategic plan.

The freeze was precipitated by store owners' concern with the number of real estate offices and banks taking over ground-floor storefronts. This resulted in rising rental costs and the inability of small, locally owned businesses to pay the increased rental demands.

Extending the moratorium is not the most productive move for the business community. The implementation of a specific plan, when it is discussed and in place, can set the boundaries for what will happen downtown. A comprehensive discussion of the ULI report is anticipated.

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The need to limit the size of new houses built on lots has often been expressed by Manhattan Beach residents. Mansionization, they said, needs controls enacted.

The City of Burbank has called for an emergency measure to draft an interim development control ordinance, an IDCO. The motion calls for a stricter standard for square footage, setbacks, and conformance with neighboring homes (LA Times, 3/16/15). Council members voted unanimously to direct staff to work out the specifics and present a draft moratorium which would freeze development of large, single family homes. Vocal opposition and approval responded to the proposal.

In the City of Los Angeles, when residents were opposed to what they said was a proliferation of outsized McMansions, that

## Permanent Permit Policy Possible...

When Southbay Magazine submitted an application for a special permit to allow alcohol beverages on public property--the proposed site of a "Girls Night Out" gala-----some of the Council's deliberations focused on a related much earlier discussion.

During that former time frame, Council discussed the question of a denial or approval of a similar permit request (the applicant had already withdrawn its initial request) Council recommended consideration of an ordinance which would hereafter be applicable to all future comparable permit applications.

The agenda item March 4, 2015, Southbay Magazine item was presented by staff as recommending approval, noting that many downtown Manhattan Beach retail shops would be featured. During the subsequent discussion, there was reference made to the previous (non-existent) ordinance. Staff did not include it in the background information and City Manager Danaj noted he had not been with the City at that time.

Residents who spoke included several who favored the event as a positive step forward to hold a premier Southbay event and those who spoke against what was proposed felt the process favored the businesses and ignored the residents.

After considerable discussion, a majority of Council, with

## Survey Summary: What is Conclusive?

400 Manhattan Beach residents were (somewhat) randomly selected to participate in the 2015 Community Survey. A summary of the key findings were presented at the March 17, 2015 City Council meeting and residents are now faced with a familiar question: What is the purpose of the survey and what changes will it effect?

Once again, as presented in previous surveys, residents stated they have a very positive opinion of Manhattan Beach as a place to live. Local government is given high marks. There is no outstanding major concern about any issue in the city. ... And while crime is the most salient issue among residents, almost unanimously—95%--of the residents feel safe living here.

As has been stated previously, lack of parking remains a serious issue, and the loss of Manhattan Beach small town feel is still a frequent refrain.

So what, if anything, is different....

What was noted was that the survey presented only one open-ended question; all others required a formatted response to, for example: Not at all Important, or Very Important; or select from degrees of Not at all Satisfied to Very Satisfied. The open-ended question required respondents to state the most serious issue facing Manhattan Beach residents. In a subsequent phone conversation, it was determined that Crime and Development were the issues listed.

While references to crime were phrased in a number of contexts and fully explored, it was apparent that Construction—a long-time particular interest to a number of residents who are concerned with its impacts into city-wide neighborhoods—was not present. This includes the noise, the frequently intolerable pounding, the dirt, the traffic, the congestion, the disruption to homes and lives.

We found it puzzling that this ongoing major concern to residents was virtually lost amongst the varied (and repeated) survey lists, with just one lone reference to “Too much construction activity in Manhattan Beach”, and in one question about services which included “Enforcing laws to prevent nuisances such as from construction, noise and smoking law violations”. There were no other questions relating to this specific issue.

What was apparent and throughout the listed issues is that the Downtown appeared to be a major focus of this opinion survey. An unverified count found approximately 14 references to the downtown, with emphasis primarily to parking, to shuttle services, revitalization, its stores, appearance, pedestrians. Also, respondents were randomly selected from designated Manhattan Beach sections: Tree Section, Hill, Sand, and East Manhattan Beach....and this would lend relevance to their responses to specific areas of questions.

We recognize the recent emphasis on the Downtown, and the need for change; still, one might find discomfort in the promotion of a survey's agenda which, while capable and professional, leaves some residents with questions about objectivity and direction.

E.B.

## AN ACTIVE ALERT!

When an MBRA member received the phone call, she recognized it as a scam intended to defraud individuals who believed the call came from the Internal Revenue Service. Unfortunately, there have been reports of more than 20,000 contacts among whom are thousands of victims who have collectively paid one million dollars as result of this scam.

Nearly every state in the country has taxpayers who were hit by the scam, considered to be one of the largest of its kind.

A newsletter mailed to USAF retired personnel warned that callers claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service, tells the intended victims that they owe taxes which must be paid via a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. Those refusing to pay are threatened with arrest, deportation, or loss of business or driver's license.

The reference to the IRS frequently frightens the victims who are unaware that the IRS does not...repeat: does not –contact by phone and does not ask for a credit card number over a phone.

Callers resort to using threatening language, often know the last four digits of the victim's Social Security number, and are convincing in conveying information purporting to be an IRS caller.

Particularly at this time, during tax filing season, it must be emphasized that the IRS, as stated in the USAF Afterburner newsletter, will “never request personal or financial information by email, texting or any social media.”

*Ed note: Manhattan Beach historian, former mayor, noted for unparalleled contributions, Jan Dennis adds 'prescient' to her many talents. An article she wrote in 1995, surfaced recently for its relevance to a major local issue. It is printed below:*

## **Subject: Downtown Strategic Plan**

**by Jan Dennis**

There is no question that the "Downtown" area should stay vital, attractive and unique, but for the City to spend more money and time trying to create a "unified plan" is out of the question.

It is not a new idea to focus on a comprehensive plan for the area. Since 1920, when the first Chamber of Commerce was formed, residents and business people have periodically addressed the question.

In 1983 the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce invited Mr. Lee Strong, a founder of the California Downtown Association and president of Downtown Focus (a planning and revitalization consulting service), and asked him to help format a renovation plan for our downtown. He encouraged the use of the California State Legislature Bill AB-1693, "the Parking and Business Improvement Area Law". A Task Force was formed. The merchants were asked about what concerns they might have; however, the inquiries were met with apathy and few questions.

In 1985 we saw the study of the "Streetscape"; when it was over and approved it cost the tax payers \$5 million dollars. Now you see the Council ordering the replacement of some of the 'blue tiles' with cement, something that should have been done in the first place.

Steve Schlesinger questioned the wisdom of spending 5 million dollars on a project to attract people to downtown without including additional parking in the project. (Beach Reporter, Oct. 16, 1986)

At a joint Planning and Parking Commission meeting, "it became apparent Commissioners are not interested in changing parking ordinances or zoning to accommodate parking changes," noted Planning Chairman Jack Cunningham. "The more parking is studied, the bigger the problem appears to be," he said. (Beach Reporter, Sept. 18, 1986)

Today, and over the years, the only things that change are the participants. The City should not spend more money on another study; they need to enforce the ordinances and rules that are now in place. Reacting to special interests does not benefit the majority of the population. Residents and businesses get tired of commenting on how they perceive the community when nothing much changes.

## **The Past is Always Present**

In discussing various city issues, there arise occasional Council comments warning of the negative impacts resulting from the consequences of bringing up past history. Implicit in this approach, it was felt, is that such action would thereby invalidate the process and substance of what is basic and important.

During a prior City Council meeting, one councilmember, referring to an issue discussed in the past (and perhaps troubled that dredging up past history might be detrimental to a current fair discussion), stated..."Notwithstanding what was done in the past" .... "the past is all history...."

We suggest that awareness of the history of past decisions and judgments often results in better informed decisions. It is not enough for Council to defer to staff reports without a comprehensive understanding of the many variables which make up the whole, the complete picture.. To know the Before of what is Now before us...

Perhaps we might take note of author William Faulkner's statement that "The past is not dead. It's not even past".



*There was an unfortunate and still unexplained delay in the mailing process of February's Observer issue, despite our rush to get to print word of MBRA's sponsorship of a Council Candidates Forum. Many residents did not receive their copy or, for others, the issue arrived three weeks after first brought to bulk mailing. We apologize for this inconvenience--the U.S. Postal Service has not issued a similar apology.*



## **Downtown Specific Plan Proposed**

Manhattan Beach has long been engaged in discussions centered on the Downtown and sought needed improvements. The services of the Urban Land Institute, following a Request for Proposal for a Downtown Specific Plan to recommend and implement changes in the area, led to preliminary recommendations after conducting a 5-day Advisory Service Panel comprised of the Public Sector (City) and the Private Sector (Community) stakeholders. Their final report has not yet been fully presented and discussed, but some initial steps have been taken by Staff to carry out the ULI recommendations.

Through the vision of the more than 100 stakeholders who participated, the Advisory Service Panel recommended a Downtown Specific Plan as the preferred approach towards implementing downtown changes.

Manhattan Beach has long been aware of a gradual change in the downtown environment and its retail mix. At the heart of the proposed Downtown Specific Plan are these objectives:

- . Preserving the small town feel and village atmosphere of the area
- . Developing a clear vision and path to action for the decades to come
- . Defining what economic development means to the community by means of engaging public outreach

A major move forward has been in awarding a Professional Services Agreement to Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC) who will work in the preparation of a Specific Plan to implement the recommended improvements. \$277,000 have been appropriated from the General Fund towards this goal.

PMC will recognize and discuss ULI's suggestions including, amongst a number of others: Prohibiting consolidation of lots and limitations on ground floor uses; working with retailers to prepare a vital strategy; adopt a Parking Management Plan.

The City and the community have addressed the project's issues and its increased awareness had led to better understanding of the vision and what must be addressed in revitalizing the Downtown. Concern about a replay of the former Streetscape saga is expressed by those who recall the problems associated with that downtown renovation.

## **Working to Leave a Historical Legacy for Future Generations!** by Jan Dennis

- Now is the time for the Mills Act and a strong ordinance to support it.
  - The longer Manhattan Beach goes without the ability to protect our historic resources, the more our community character will erode.
- ....The Manhattan Beach City Council is in the process of setting up a two-year trial Mills Act program.
- ....In a nutshell, the Mills Act program is a property tax abatement program made possible by state-enabling legislation.
- A property owner with a Mills Act contract receives a property tax reduction (but receives no actual money) and agrees to perform regular maintenance on their historic property following a prioritized maintenance list set up between them and the city.
  - The idea is that the money saved through the property tax reduction is then reinvested into the historic property, which can be a benefit to a city overall as owners of historic properties invest in the city's historic architecture.
  - The property tax reevaluation is made for Mills Act properties by using an established alternative formula.

financial success, and it is doubtful it was repeated in 2012.

The message was clear. The Free Concerts-in-the-Park was a tradition.

And now, in 2015, we received a notice offering Concerts-in-the Park sponsorship opportunities. The levels begin at \$20,000 for 10 concerts, with a private gazebo and parking spaces. Ten concerts would call for a \$5,000 sponsorship and here, too, there would be name logos on promotional materials and booth space for company promotions. One concert, at \$1,500 still offered some attractive packages.

Aware that some mailers need very specific and accurate explanation, a call was placed to Parks and Recreation Director Mark Leyman. He stated that they had restructured the donations' packages to make it a little more realistic and that what occurred in 2011 "was exactly what we do not want". He gave assurance that this year would be different; even the gazebo would be at the top of the hill, not a prime location spot and less than ideal to watch the concert, but it afforded a place where the sponsors could sit.

Leyman emphasized that public seating would not be impacted. The sponsorship packets were put together with specific marketing and deliverables, but the main goal, he said, was to create "the best experience we can for the community....and if we can generate the revenue from the sponsors...it will help make this a great event". Asked about serving of alcohol, Leyman stated the code allows beer and wine during the concerts, but people bring their own. None may be sold.

The extent of the sponsorship mailer to the business community is not known, nor how immediate and how many the enthusiastic response. But some questions prevail: The advertising, the logos, the promotional materials and the number of company booths and the available food and beverage servers---Will there be considerably more of these than in the years since sponsorship was first sought in past years. Residents fear a circus-like atmosphere, that the push for increased sponsorship would disturb the special park setting and warm family tradition preferred and enjoyed for generations of attendees.

This, then, is what is currently known about

Lesser was quoted in the Easy Reader (2/19) said that the conversation felt like "deja-vu." Because this position was approved in October, as were the other three positions for Economic Development, Communications/Civic Engagement and Assistant Director of Finance, there was really no need for the Council to again direct the City Manager to hire an IT director, but it did allow them to not have to discuss the projected compensation for this position (stated in November 2014 as \$242,000, inclusive of benefits), nor did the Staff Report contain this information.

That this particular position was approved is really no surprise to those watching close, as the City Manager revealed in an Easy Reader article that "the creation of these jobs had been discussed with him as part of his recruitment process in 2014," and Mark Danaj's interest in I.T. is easily evidenced through Google-searches identifying his presentations at national conferences on Cyber Security and similar topics.

[Note: a Google search also identifies that Danaj considered himself a resource for the concept of "recruiting for each vacancy as soon as the decision is made to fill the position, rather than waiting to recruit for an entire classification."] What was missing from the February presentation was any conscious effort to engage the public in the need for the position, especially given the opposition expressed in October and November.

The "deja-vu" David Lesser was commenting on was the lack of a comprehensive view of the full workforce, and one hopes also that this also meant that again there was a total lack of presentation of a compelling reason that this position needed to be created. Along with this continuing information gap is how staffing would be realigned and what exact savings were to be expected by creating a new position. The only factors offered by City Staff in defense of this position was that certain projects in the city's Information Systems Master Plan ("ISMP", approved in April 2013) are currently progressing, but not at an ideal pace. Thus, "significant and timely progress on a [list of] critical initiatives . . . will be accomplished as



this year's Concerts-in-the-Park. Size and placement of sponsor's company names will differ according to the sponsorship levels. It is hoped that the possible increase in sponsors will have no impact on residents who come early in the day, bring their blankets, define their selected space, and join in this long established community event. It remains a Free Concert.

E.B.

*Public or Private...cont' d p. 2*

students are 18% more likely to be admitted into an Ivy League applying from a private institution. These schools also boast considerably smaller class sizes (12-1 Average; Seres 12) and reduced instances of severe bullying and illicit drug use.

As Mark Twain put it, however, "there are lies, there are god-damned lies, and then there are statistics." National statistics in particular are inherently unseparated by geographic location. Though the public-private disparity may be significant in other areas across the United States, it is certainly not the case with the South Bay public system.

Boasting higher API scores than 98% of it competitors, Mira Costa High School is a great example of a public institution that is at par with, if not exceeding, selectively private brethren. The school not only offers a choice of 30 varsity sports and a medley of nationally ranked extra-curriculars, but carries CAHSEE pass rates 20% above the statewide average. Additionally, 'Costa' sends

capacity provides for it." Also, an I.T. consultant hired by the City recommended a stand-alone I.T. department (and you cannot have a stand-alone I.T. department without an I.T. director).

However, even if the first factor (the slower-than-optimal ISMP progress) was the compelling reason for creation of this position, one would have thought the City Council would have reviewed whether the full menu of IMSP components might be reduced instead of adding to headcount. For instance, some of the initiatives within that package do not seem all that mission-critical, such as developing new social media platforms, or webpage overhaul, or HR recruiting/monitoring systems. One of the initiatives, "Peak Democracy" is a "online civic engagement medium" that has been controversial in cities where it has been implemented, with the City of Encinitas just cancelling their contract in February due to dissatisfaction with the way it was used.

And, in classic City Hall "cherry-picking," the consultant's recommendation for a stand-alone department was just one of a number of I.T. improvement recommendations, while the rest of the recommendations of equal footing—many designed to relieve pressure on the I.T. function—were seemingly ignored.

One of such recommendations was: "In addition to the proposed ISMP Council Subcommittee, the governance includes the creation of an IS Steering Committee comprised of the City's Executive Management Team (Department Heads and City Manager). This group will be responsible for working with the Information Systems Division of Finance to align technology resources, prioritize activities, monitor projects and operations, review and adopt policies and standards, and review and approve IS staff recommendations."

In fact, the ISMP Council Subcommittee was formed, and so was an IS Steering Committee. These committees are significant to this review because the Staff Report cited that part of the justification of the need for the Director position was due to the "need to network across department/disciplines and the direct relationship to the city manager"

However, the ISMP Council Subcommittee (Howorth/Burton/Carmany/Moe), first announced in August 2013, was supposed to have monthly reporting out to the Council—yet no monthly reporting can be found after this announcement. In January 2015, Staff reported that the IS Steering Committee "meets on a regular basis and includes the City Manager, Department Heads and the Information Systems Manager." Yet subsequent to voting in favor of filling this new position a councilmember was unaware when this Steering Committee last met, or why this structure was unable to provide the "network across department disciplines or the direct relationship with the city manager."

Yet even more troubling is that the council did not explore whether a temporary assignment would fulfill the need sufficiently

than hiring a permanent director.

More to the November 2014 direction for a greater scope of analysis, the Council did not review this new department in respect to the budget as a whole or in respect to "right-sizing" the employee workforce. Certainly the carve out of a mid-level manager with six direct reports from the Finance Department to create this new department lessens the management needed in the Finance Department, which means that Finance is now over compensated or could take on more work. Certainly a case could be made that a separate I.T. department is needed (like Beverly Hills), but an equal case could be made to then move our separate H.R. Department into Finance (like Beverly Hills).

Clearly the Council in this action does not hold themselves accountable to anything but the one issue in front of their nose and proves again their preference to avoid a wider, comprehensive analysis. So too is the seeming lack of concern to keeping staff salaries and pensions under control or even requiring more substantive analysis and facts for their decision-making. Given today's concerns about city pensions and staffing, the creation of a new position should be the last resort and one made with clear evidence of need.

Recall, though, that there are still three positions that have been approved but where the City Manager has merely "postponed recruitment." One of those positions is an Assistant Director of Finance. In thinking about whether this position is needed, or whether City Hall appropriately deploys personnel, consider that at a two-hour March 19 Finance Subcommittee meeting, where the main topic was a consultant-presented periodic cost allocation and user fee study that was merely "received and filed" by the subcommittee, the following city employees were present:

City Manager, Finance Director, Controller Revenue Services Manager, Financial Analyst Sr. Accountant

So, with this, think how an Assistant Director of Finance might be deployed, and whether we will hear soon how such a position is needed, in the same manner we so desperately needed an I.T. Director.

- The Mills Act legislation was passed in the mid-1970's, and was sponsored by California Senator James R. Mills.
- The state, however, is not involved with the administration of the Mills Act program. It is up to the individual jurisdictions to adopt the program and to set up their procedures for administering the program (including the number of contracts).
- The state legislation establishes the basics for the program, but Manhattan Beach will set up the individual application and review each process on its own.

### How the Mills Act Works in Practice:

- Eligible properties are those that are designated landmarks---and many jurisdictions limit it to locally designated landmarks. Manhattan Beach/Cultural Heritage Conservancy currently handles applications for homeowners who want to be designated as local landmark.
- Typically, there are other eligibility requirements as well that the applicant must meet.
- If successfully approved, the applicant enters into a

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*NO Fit with FIT ON...cont' d p. 2*

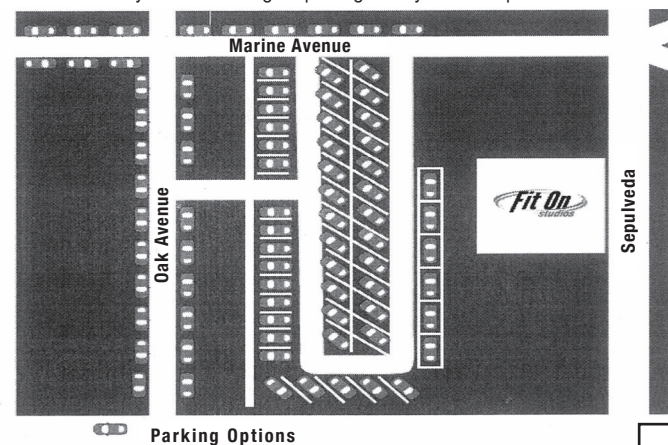
### "Don't waste your time looking for parking. Plenty of other options on the street!"

It is clear that the businesses in the strip mall at the corner of Sepulveda and Marine Ave realize that there is insufficient parking space in their parking lots and suggests their clients park on the residential streets. Is it really possible to park cars on Marine Ave without blocking part of the street? Are they ever concerned about the residents living on Oak Ave couldn't find parking spaces for their cars?

It is past time to agonize over this matter. It is a serious issue. The residents have long expressed their very real concerns. It is time for the city to step up and resolve those problems.

### Please look at map below!

Don't waste your time looking for parking. Plenty of other options on the street!



process which exhibits a symptom of a need for re-examination, of some change. It denoted disinterest and apathy.

There was at one time conjecture that there was an undercurrent of "insiders" controlling who runs, when and who is selected. No facts substantiate this in Manhattan Beach, but residents recall past councils which were not "Open", when residents were intimidated by draconian responses, when there was a real disconnect between council and residents.

The citizens of Manhattan Beach want nothing less than a truly representative government, where ethics and integrity, transparency and open communication prevail. The 22% vote reflected voices which need to be heard, questions which need responses, commitments which need to be honored. There is so much potential. It will take concerted voices and action to accomplish that desired level. It may have started with this last election.

E.B.



*Permanent Permit...cont' d p. 4*

Lesser opposed, decided to approve the permit application and included direction to City Manager and Staff to develop a policy for limited alcohol beverage served on public property.

Perhaps a policy which reflects the earlier discussed ordinance will now be implemented---possibly even before another comparable permit request surfaces.



"10-year renewable" contract with the city.

- The "10-year renewable" aspect of the contract is essentially in perpetuity unless the contract is terminated either by the applicant (who would then face a fee to opt out, making it a disincentive), or by the city (in the case that the applicant has made a breach of contract.
- After each year passes, another year is automatically added to the contract period, making it perpetually 10 years.
- The contract runs with the property, so an owner selling a property can list the Mills Act as a selling point, and the new owners get the benefit of not having their property taxes reassessed.
- The contact is essentially a prioritized maintenance list of repair projects that the applicant proposes in the contract
- The repairs typically involve historic fabric that needs repair and is prioritized from most urgent on down, such as roof replacement, repair original wood windows, repair wood porch, repaint house, etc.
- Over 20 jurisdictions throughout Los Angeles County currently offer the Mills Act program.

### How Manhattan Beach Will be Different:

- Now, here's the part where Manhattan Beach is different from most other jurisdictions with a historic preservation program, and this is an important point to understand.
- Currently, Manhattan Beach's historic preservation program provides for honorary designation of local landmarks.
- The city currently has no authority to protect historic landmarks---despite landmark designation, they can still be demolished or inappropriately altered.
- Typically, a city that adopts the Mills Act program will have a strong historic preservation ordinance in place---the reason is that the Mills Act program itself does not provide protections.
- But it does require that repair work to contract properties follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation (nationally recognized preservation guidelines) to aid in the restoration and repair work.
- If Manhattan Beach were to adopt the Mills Act without amending the historic preservation ordinance to provide local design review for landmarks and offer protections, such as denial for inappropriate alterations and demolitions, the city is put in the awkward position of having to administer the Mills Act

*Continue page 12*

*Public or Private...cont' d p. 9*

more students to the top 20 Universities than all of its private competitors.

The bottom line? Location, location, location! If you are a resident of the South Bay currently facing this predicament, take a deep breath, keep the \$50k, and rest assured--public education is not a scary word!



# City Hall Calendar

<b>April 21</b>	<b>City Council</b>	<b>Peck House update (tentative)</b>
<b>April 29</b>	<b>Joint City Council/ Plan. Commiss.</b>	<b>Historic Preservation Ordinance Mills Act Disc. (tentative)</b>
<b>May 5</b>	<b>City Council</b>	<b>Appointment of Boardmembers</b>

*City Hall Update....cont' d p. 4*

City's Council passed a Baseline Mansionization Ordinance to limit the size of new houses built on lots. However, the loophole in the Ordinance allowed for continued oversized homes to be built; this led to a temporary fix with a variety of different restrictions in different neighborhoods. The purpose of these interim ordinances is "to preserve the character of neighborhoods".

Manhattan Beach residents who affirm they want to preserve the character of their respective neighborhoods may be interested in what has been effected in both of these cities with similar McMansion Maladies.

*Working to Leave a Historical...cont' d p. 11*

program properly, but having a historic preservation ordinance and program that doesn't require design review for landmarks otherwise.

- This doesn't necessitate having planning staff trained in preservation standards.
- When Beverly Hills adopted their earlier historic preservation ordinance in 1975, it was a purely honorary ordinance, just like Manhattan Beach. In January 2012, Beverly Hills amended their historic preservation ordinance and adopted the Mills Act program.

The Los Angeles Conservancy provided technical assistance to Beverly Hills staff. They are a great resource for more information and details on the Mills Act.

---In addition to the two-year trial Mills Act, an amended ordinance is being drafted to present to MB Council for approval. Keep your eyes peeled for the next step.



**Manhattan Beach Residents Association**  
**P.O.Box 1149**  
**Manhattan Beach, CA 90267-1149**  
**(310) 379-3277 Email: yourmbra@gmail.com**

( ) Enclosed is \$30.00 annual (2015-2016) Membership Fee.

( ) Yes, I (we) would like to assist.

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| ( ) City Hall Watch | ( ) Computer Assistance |
| ( ) Fund Raising    | ( ) Membership          |
| ( ) Communications  | ( ) Telephoning         |

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ (Zip) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Phone(H) \_\_\_\_\_ B) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_