

The Manhattan Beach Observer

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Manhattan Bch, CA
PERMIT NO. 7

A Publication of
MANHATTAN BEACH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
An All-Volunteer Organization
P.O.Box 1149 Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
(310) 379-3277

March 2016

Volume 16 No. 1

CITY COUNCIL COVETS PARK LAND

By Janet Murphy

If the City Council should be successful in taking dedicated park land for a hotel or commercial use, what is to stop them from taking more parks to develop uses like another hotel, commercial use, condominiums, or perhaps even senior housing? What park lands do the Mayor and Council lust after for future development? Veterans Parkway is a lot of land that could be covered with concrete and buildings. How about sports fields used for soccer or baseball and other sports?

The city already has ten hotels and there are discussions about having one built at Rosecrans and Highland. Also, another hotel in the city is looking to enlarge its facilities. For the size of our city and the fact that we are primarily a residential city, do we need more hotels?

December 1, 2015 agenda item addressed to Council from City Manager Mark Danaj, and a memo dated November 24, 2015 from Bruce Moe, Finance Director, outlined policy alternatives for use of the Parkview property by consultants Keyser Marston Associates and PFK Consulting. There were three alternatives: #1 Hotel, #2 Apartments, and #3 Office. There was no consideration to leave the land for park use open space.

In that same staff report, Mr. Moe stated: "... Staff has researched this issue, and conclude that no Quimby funds from the Senior Housing Project were used in the modification of the then existing City owned parking lot..." This totally ignored the fact it was Chevron, after building the Manhattan Beach Village housing, which donated the property for park use. This type of donation of land or funds is required under the Quimby Act.

Further, in that staff report, other sites for hotels were studied by PFK and KMA consulting firms. Those sites were not on dedicated park land.

City Hall Goes Dark on Fridays; Also with Engaging Residents

By Gary Osterhout

How quickly campaign promises are forgotten. For instance, the following Beach Reporter comments were reflected for the 2013 council race:

Tony D'errico: "Most important, we should be continually informing the public and seeking their input throughout the process. And, yes, that can be done properly without compromising the integrity of the negotiations."

Mark Burton: "It is unfortunate that the ongoing negotiations have been done without any input from the community whatsoever. In future negotiations, the city council should place on every meeting agenda "status report on *MOU negotiations." The city council should keep the residents informed about meeting dates and general issues to be discussed. More importantly, such a regular, bi-monthly agenda item allows the community to give public comment to the city council, so the city council will understand the "will of the people." **Memorandum Of Understanding*.

The decision to close City Hall on alternate Fridays did not come through a direct decision on the topic. Instead, the change was authorized as a small, easily overlooked feature of a negotiated compensation contract with the Teamster's union.

However, in the run-up to the decision to close City Hall on alternative Fridays, the following was the extent of City Manager Mark Danaj's report:

"The following meetings have occurred to negotiate successor MOUs. On November 12, we met with the Police Officers Association. On November 18th, via separate meetings we met with the Teamsters, Police Officers Association and November 20th and November 30th we met with our Fire association."

That's it. No mention at all of the Friday closures—a feature most in the employment field recognize as an

On "Good Fences"

By Joseph Ungoco

The old proverb – good fences make good neighbors – comes to mind with the recent appearance of a low picket fence around a small patch of land just west of the Strand in El Porto. As a dog owner, I am on the Strand 3 to 4 times a day and never cease to be amazed at how bits of neighborhood news spread like wildfire. The reaction to this recent private improvement of public land seems to range from mild annoyance to righteous indignation. To hear some people speak of it, you might think it was a land grab on the scale of the Louisiana Purchase or a revolutionary act of inverse eminent domain in which private citizens seize public land for their personal use. Others debate the relative merits of the “mixed” landscaping design which puts formal rose beds next to drought tolerant plantings. Regardless of one’s opinions of the “improvements”, there is no denying that the act of raising a fence raises one’s neighbors’ hackles.

I, for one, think that both the City Council and the Coastal Commission should be called upon to enforce the current regulations which prohibit such acts. I am not against private investment in the improvement of public land, as long as that land remains accessible to the public and some governmental body sanctions the improvement. Personally, I think that fences between the Strand and the ocean are unsightly and should be removed. Furthermore, I think that these fences send the wrong message to both our residents and our visitors. Manhattan Beach is not some gated bedroom community in Orange County nor are we the Hamptons with 12 foot tall privet hedges. We enjoy some of the most beautiful views of the Santa Monica Bay and, as a city, we should be working to open them up – to everyone.

Now, on to the fence that many El Porto residents wish we could raise – between us and our neighbor to the north, El Segundo, or, more specifically, West Basin Municipal Water District. For some time now, the public relations machine at West Basin has been engaged in a concerted effort to promote what they have branded as “Responsible Desal”. They have hosted a series of community input meetings regarding their proposed plans to build an ocean water desalinization plant in El Segundo, or possibly in Redondo Beach, depending on which reports you choose to believe. The general feeling is that the plans to build in El Segundo just north of 45th Street are much further along than the West Basin people let on.

At this point, a draft EIR is set to be released for comment in April. One does wonder how we got so far along in the process, given that the community input meetings were only held last October. At any rate, at the last City Council meeting, Mayor Bark Burton proposed sending West Basin a letter of opposition, not just opposing the location of the proposed desal plant, but also opposing the use of desal technology altogether, proposing instead that West Basin focus its efforts on water recycling. After many vocal residents – including myself – voiced our

Think Globally, Act Locally

By Michelle Murphy

Even though slogans are often too simplistic to contain much deep wisdom, the phrase “Think globally, act locally” has always seemed a useful truth. Globally we are realizing that rapacious growth is no longer healthy. Our planet is demanding that we rethink how and what we consume and what kind of economies are sustainable. But locally our politicians and our city staff have ignored that notion except for some self-congratulatory nods to a few green initiatives. The basic local governing mantra is to grow and expand our town’s businesses for the sake of growth and expansion.

When I looked up the origins of the phrase "Think globally act locally" I was surprised to learn it was old, Scottish and about local city planning. Wikipedia attributes the phrase to Scots biologist, sociologist, philanthropist, pioneering town planner and social activist Patrick Geddes

Geddes had some other words of wisdom that seem very applicable to Manhattan Beach. In his 1915 book *Cities in Evolution*, he wrote: “Local character’ is thus no mere accidental old-world quaintness, as its mimics think and say. It is attained only in course of adequate grasp and treatment of the whole environment, and in active sympathy with the essential and characteristic life of the place concerned.”

City Councils past and present and city staff seem to lack that ‘grasp’ and ‘active sympathy’ with the ‘essential and characteristic life’ of our beautiful town.

Instead MB hires outside consultants who marvel at how special and wonderful our town is and then sell us one-size-fits-all solutions to problems we don’t have.

We live in a wonderful town. It could be ruined. It could be ruined by people with the best intentions who lack active sympathy with the essence of Manhattan Beach. It could be ruined by trying to make it bigger, better, faster, stronger and richer. Some people think it has already been ruined. I think there’s life left in town, but we need to be mindful.

If we decide that we need to leverage the livability of our town in order to make more money for developers and businesses, our great place to live might no longer be quite as great. The crowds, congestion and crime that will be the result of more parking and developing could make living here a good deal less wonderful.

Mayor Mark Burton has proudly told MBRA a story about his youth when he was visiting friends who lived near the beach in Manhattan Beach on July Fourth. Burton was living in crowded Santa Monica at the time



Editor's Column

When Manhattan Beach City Council plans its next retreat, we suggest their agenda include a discussion of issues which continue to trouble many of this city's residents:

Prioritized in our proposed list is the resolution council adopted last July; its purpose was to more effectively manage their meetings and increase efficiency. Public comment was placed at the beginning of council meetings; this, it was felt, encouraged resident participation early in the meeting and thereby accomplished council's desired 10:30 pm Stop time.

Many residents (and some councilmembers) approve the format which allows them to speak early on an array of public policy issues. For the past several months, Manhattan Beach residents have stood before council, presented their two-minute comments and departed happily. On any agendized item, they appeared to understand the issue and believed they had been heard....As they may well have been----

But we question a process in which public comments, particularly those either in favor or opposed to an agendized item, are presented piecemeal and well before the item itself is introduced. When sometimes ten or more residents make their abbreviated comment and depart, missing later from the disclosure when introduced is inclusion of staff report information and in depth council discussion.

Interest in a specific issue requires decisions based on all information presented, and at the time everyone is participating. It is not enough to be reassured by some councilmembers that they take "copious notes" and that when council makes its decision it is based on ALL information presented--even statements made an hour and more earlier.

We feel an item which is agendized is of significant importance to the community and should be discussed so that we hear what others have to say.....residents, staff report, and

City Council Report Card					
For Report Card	Burton	D'Errico	Howorth	Lesser	Powell
Proposed pier area as Commercial free zone					
Approved Sepulveda Blvd. widening project					
Approved alternate Friday Closing.					
Vote: YES			Vote: NO		

councilmembers and not preclude possibly relevant statements by those who speak at the beginning of council meetings and may have had no idea what the staff report will present. Adding confusion to the proceedings is the added factor that frequently residents who speak early introduce two other unrelated subjects during the permitted five minutes, which have no direct bearing on the specific agenda item.

Perhaps there is value in having an option to the meeting management resolution: When people know the issue and just want to be heard, speak early and depart....or for others who may now be permitted to speak at the time of the agendized presentation. We urge council to address this option which will assure a more informed discussion; when council makes its decision we can believe it is based on all of the information presented, which has been heard at the time all information is shared, and nothing has been lost or overlooked during an earlier, unrelated time frame.

Other city wide issues which resonate and need council attention include the "Open City Hall" platform---and to initiate questions about the locked doors at city hall and access possible only when a request is made and addressed to the staff member seated at the front lobby.

More questions generated evolve from talk about a new city hall. We recognize the structure was built about 40 years ago and there are rumblings of leaks and mold. But the resulting question which persists is, if the new construction is on the books, should we not have waited

before spending possibly \$260,173 in restructuring the offices upstairs and the attending cost of new furnishings. A new city hall, with subterranean parking for city employees, library and downtown business employees, has been considered...But passing a bond to cover the cost (and resident approval) is more than problematic.

...Talk of building a pool continues. This has long been discussed....and we continue to remind council that residents are mindful of early Beach Cities Health District promises. We still pay taxes for a hospital which no longer exists; the buildings on Prospect Ave. are now rented to BCHD and to doctors and other medical facilities. We do not know (but are exploring) how much BCHD has accumulated through the years, but their participation in the long discussed pool will be a mandated part of the later discussion.

Another item which might appear on the Retreat agenda is some reference to the Manhattan Village Shopping Mall. This project has a new developer; perhaps a change in the plans which were approved 3-2 (and which many residents opposed) could be considered. Would this be a 'Retreat' topic of interest? It is, for residents.

Other issues: sidewalk repair, the long-delayed City Recovery Cost, and, of course, most significantly, the Downtown Specific Plan are more value-laden topics for ongoing consideration. And always...it must be with consistency, transparency and evidence of real change.

E.B.



City Hall Update

The March 16th scheduled Specific Plan workshop initiated the informational overview of the Plan and was the first of a meeting series to follow. Emphasizing its stated vision to preserve and enhance the city's small town character, the next few months will provide opportunities to residents to comment on the draft plan.

Two-year moratorium of an Ordinance initially established to consider and study legally appropriate and reasonable policies regulating commercial uses in the downtown area, (bounded by Valley Drive/Ardmore Ave. on the east; 15th St. on the north, the high tide line on the west, and 8th St. on the south), ends this July 2016. Under State law, only two years are allowed; in May, 2014, City Council approved a Request for Proposal for a consultant to work with staff, the community, and organizations to develop a Downtown Plan that will identify the needs and future development of this designated area.

Scheduled for future plan information overview, City Council/ Planning Commission joint study sessions, and continued input from residents will provide comments and direction leading to completion and adoption by City Council in July, 2016.

Residents are urged to review draft documents, to reflect and digest all presentations, and to determine what resonates as they define their perception of what plans will transfer to a desired downtown.

.....
The Manhattan Beach Village Mall trial concerned with the environmental validity will be held at the Los Angeles Court, 111 N. Hill St., Dept. 86, Judge O'Donnell presiding, on April 6th at 9:30 am.
.....

The long road to a Historic Preservation Ordinance in Manhattan Beach.

By Jane Guthrie

Almost ten year ago, a group of residents who were concerned about the number of historic homes being demolished in Manhattan Beach - without concern for their significance - formed an organization called the MB/Cultural Heritage Conservancy. The group was headed by Jan Dennis, a former two-term Mayor of MB and the city Historian.

Initially, they focused their attention on honoring homes that were representative of an earlier architectural era in MB and awarding them a landmark plaque. It was a totally voluntary program and carried no restrictions of any kind on the property.

They were also interested in the Mills Act, the single most important incentive program for the restoration of qualified historic buildings by private property owners. It is a property tax reduction abatement program in California.

The Mills Act Program is administered and implemented by the local governments and contracts are between the property owner and the local government. It requires that the local government, in MB's case, City Council, adopt a Historical Preservation Ordinance to spell out the details of how a homeowner can qualify and apply for the Mills Act Program, in conjunction with an over all historic preservation program.

Manhattan Beach City Council initiated preparation of the new ordinance with a unanimous motion on October 7, 2014. The MB Conservancy met regularly with City planning staff, in partnership with the Los Angeles Conservancy, who provided technical assistance on best practices during the drafting of the ordinance.

Following a year and a half of preparation, the City of Manhattan Beach passed a new historic preservation ordinance on February 16. The new ordinance replaces the one that provided honorary recognition of landmarks without protection. The new ordinance, which goes into effect on March 17, marks a major milestone for preservation in our 3.9-square-mile city.

The protections afforded by the new ordinance come at a crucial time for the city. According to Los Angeles County Assessor data, Manhattan Beach contains approximately 12,700 parcels, thirty-seven percent of which have been improved with new construction since 1980. This striking figure indicates that over one-third of the city has been rebuilt during the past thirty-six years.

Key provisions of the ordinance include the ability to designate (with owner consent) and protect individual landmarks and the creation of a stand-alone Historic Preservation Commission.

The ordinance and the protections it affords to historic resources is a landmark event in Manhattan Beach history. We applaud Mayor Burton and Manhattan Beach City Council for their leadership. The new ordinance will become the central fixture of the city's historic preservation program, which includes the Mills Act program. The City is also planning to initiate its first-ever survey of historic resources.

Several of our Founding Members (Jan Dennis, John Scott and Evelyn Frey) have chosen this time of transition to step into an Advisory role for

The City paid these consultants \$55,000 tax dollars to do these studies. It is not even known if the land would support such building. Also, it is not known if the soil is contaminated in lower levels as the Village Mall is. This had eliminated some buildings and parking structures proposed for the mall improvement project.

Isn't paying consultants all that money putting the cart ahead of the horse? A more prudent fiscally responsible approach would be to investigate whether or not the plume contamination coming from north of Manhattan Beach, or the Chevron prior use of the property, would prevent any such development because of contamination.

The Quimby act requires 3 acres of open space for every 1,000 citizens. Manhattan Beach falls short of the required amount, even if you count the beaches.

What the City calls Parkview site contains parking spaces which support the park use of the Village Field and the tennis courts. Where does the city propose those who now use those spaces, park their vehicles when they have a sports activity? Where will mall employees park their vehicles? What about the overflow parking use during holidays? The mall has a long term lease for those spaces which does not have an early out clause for the city to enforce.

On the City's parks-and-recreation site, there is a lovely picture of the Manhattan Village Field. Part of the caption states:

"With the development of the Chevron Oil Company property in the northeast quadrant of the city, the City received this park site along with the land on which the Marriott Golf Course was developed. The City leases the golf course property to private operators. The golf course and the Manhattan Village Park are both open to the public."

"Situated on three acres of land, the park consists of a full size soccer field, a children's play area, picnic tables and restrooms. Ample parking is located in front of the park, behind the Manhattan Village Shopping Center. This is a lovely quiet area ..."

The Council boasts their so-called "Sunshine Policy". If they are so transparent, why didn't notices go out to nearby residents of the possibility of a hotel so close to them? Who is behind this apparent stampede to get this special interest project through the process without proper input from city residents? Looks to me like special interests are at work here directing what happens in our city.

I have to wonder if some members of our council have developers, or contractors, or possible investors, who will support their campaign efforts in the future to pursue state or federal office. That would certainly be motivation to help one of these projects become a reality. Transparency?

employee benefit. [However, one could easily see this more as a benefit to management, which would otherwise need to show up for work five days a week and even work a bit longer than 40 hours—like most of us in the private workforce that receive less compensation than the City's Directors. Nor did it seem that any negotiated benefit was lessened due to this added benefit.]

A posting to a related article in the Beach Reporter stated: "Just to let everyone know the closing of city hall was proposed by the city not the Teamsters." So apparently this was all planned out by the City and the issue could easily have been raised with residents before and during contract negotiations.

But further to apparent City Hall obfuscations, the only highlighted "substantive amendments" identified in the January 5, 2016 Staff Report on the contract that were related to the alternative work schedule was the phrase "Memorializing the alternative 9/80 work schedule for City Hall."

The prior alternative 9/80 work schedule, which up until January was in an official trial period, had nothing to do with Friday closures. City Hall hours remained the same as before the implementation.

Mayor Mark Burton has asserted that the prior alternative work schedule was inherently unworkable from inception, that it was difficult for councilmembers to know when employees were working, and that the change was needed because of competitive pressures for employees given other cities have Friday's off. He also said he was not on council when the trial schedule was approved.

All of the above is, of course, anecdotal supposition. Literature supports that any alternative work schedule can work if properly managed. So I would expect any defects are not the fault of the system itself. All through this trial period residents were assured that we were receiving superior results from our city employees, so that does not square with the "unworkable" representation.

That it was difficult for councilmembers to know if an employee is working seems specious. First, councilmembers are supposed to initiate employee conversations with the City Manager—who should know who is available or not. There are Outlook calendar applications that identify who is available and not. Further, given that most of the employees that a councilmember would want to contact receives 35 days of annual leave, the chances are that—especially given 11 holidays—the employee is likely NOT at work.

As for maintaining competition with other cities, one of the biggest canards foisted on residents is that Manhattan Beach has a turnover problem. In fact, we do not. Given that we have huge comparative budgets, well-staffed departments, great pay packages, a wealthy and educated resident population and some of the best weather on earth, an employee would be hard-pressed to find a better situation. And we have never seemed to have a problem when turnover occurs—which is generally at retirement.

support of the Council's opposition to the proposed plant, Council voted unanimously to send the letter. Although I am generally supportive of Open City Hall and, indeed, any efforts by Council to solicit more community input on the issues that affect us all, I cannot help but be slightly amused by the confusion surrounding the desal plant opposition letter. Some online commenters mistakenly "opposed" the letter of opposition; undoubtedly, what they meant was that they opposed the plant and not the Council letter which likewise opposed the plant. Let this serve as a warning to residents to be more careful – and clear – about the input they give to Council. Thankfully, Council was conscientious enough to read the dozens of individual comments and not just look at the raw support/oppose numbers. As residents, let us deliver our message against the proposed plant as clearly – and as loudly – as the West Basin desal propaganda promotes it.



Think Globally...cont' d p. 2

and as the day wore on he asked his MB friends, "Where are the July 4th crowds?" The friends proudly told him there was no parking so there would be no crowds. Mayor Burton tells this story to prove that he gets it. That MB is a special place because it has been protected and less exploited than other places. He tells this story and then he promptly forgets it and tells us how we must build more parking and build a hotel and make more money. We need the money to pay for all the new city employees like the new economic Vitality Manager who is supposedly needed to manage all our future economic vitality. Like building more freeways so we can drive ever more slowly through LA, building more parking in Manhattan Beach will only make MB more crowded and less the town we love. We need smart development of the planet, our state and our little town of

City is in "Holding Pattern" on Gelson's Project

By Tess Rikard-Ruiz,

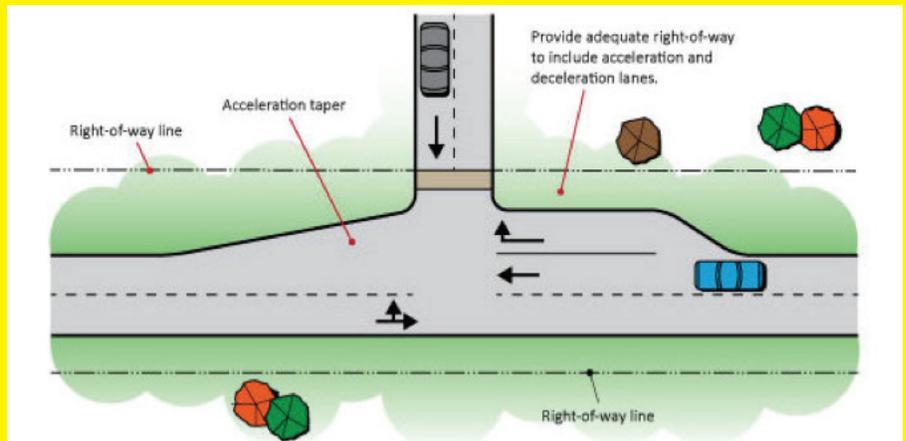
Manhattan Beach Residents for Responsible Development

March 14, 2016

Gelson's Project Update from the City of Manhattan Beach

Is no news really good news? Actually, I think it might be for those of us who are standing up for our rights as property owners in Manhattan Beach. Today, I spoke with one of the key engineers responsible for the Gelson's development and simply asked him for a status update. He was very open and explained in some detail what is going on with the city, CalTrans, and Paragon Development at this time. The following are some key bullet points from our conversation:

- The Paragon plan was resubmitted to Community Development after suggestions were made for improvements to the initial plan.
- The revised plan was deemed INCOMPLETE by the city, and returned to the developer with specific instructions to revise the traffic and environmental studies.
- Paragon only submitted a partial Environmental Impact Report and this did not address all the issues that concern the city.
- There has been no staff report, nor will there be until Paragon resubmits the revised (3rd plan). This is one of the reasons why the Planning Commission meeting has been cancelled for the past two months.
- Cal-Trans has not committed to the project yet, and will not until the revised submittal is given to them. Encroachment permits CANNOT be issued without Cal-Trans involvement and permissions. If the city opts to require / not require a de-acceleration lane, Cal-Trans will have input on that decision.
- Paragon's most recent submittal asked for a Mitigated Negative Declaration which seeks to have traffic, parking, and environmental issues declared as "under the threshold and NOT TO A LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE."
- They are also asking that the parking lot is deemed "multiple uses" (same spaces for banking and Gelson's businesses).
- The extra restaurant that was proposed for the banking site has been taken off the table; instead, the entire building will be used for banking only.
- It will be at least 4 more months before any action is taken by the city in the Gelson's/Paragon matter.



Manhattan Beach. We need changes that will make us greener and will create more community not changes that will create more money for developers and for our city coffers which are full enough. Let's listen to that old Scottish city planner and act only in sympathy with the essence of our town and work to make us better not richer.



City Hall Update...cont' d p. 6

Following a 3-2 vote, hours at city hall will change. City Hall will be closed every other Friday and open for an extra 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the evening. The first Friday it will be closed is April 1st.

Responding to emergencies like utility line breaks and fallen trees, public works and community development staff will continue to be available on Fridays. It is hoped the new schedule will improve efficiency. Perhaps it will also improve resident awareness of which Friday is the designated open Friday.....



The long road to Historic...cont' d p. 6

the organization. We honor their hard work.

The organization's new role is to promote preservation in the community and to educate the public about what we still have. MB Conservancy has taken to using the shortened version of our name keeping with other organizations of its kind. We have a beautiful new website (www.mbconservancy.com) and an active Facebook page.

Additionally, we are working to fill the vacancies on our Board, and looking for new members who are passionate about architecture, history, and preservation. Please visit our website where you can become a member. Or like us on Facebook.

Jane Guthrie, President
MB Conservancy



The Perfection Complex – My Open Letter to High School Seniors

By Erin Ambrose - High School Senior

The month of March is a jack of all trades. It marks the blossoming of spring, the fresh, golden beginning of a season. It represents thirty one days of awareness on everything from women's history and Irish heritage to colon cancer and cerebral palsy. It also happens to be the month in which millions of American teenagers hover anxiously over their mailboxes and laptops, desperately awaiting that single, life-altering letter or email that could either begin with "Congratulations" or "We regret to inform you."

March is the month in which your heart could either swell with happiness or shatter with disappointment, the month in which tears and unforeseen tantrums are no longer regarded as insane, the month in which suddenly you aren't sure you're ready to dedicate your life to medicine, music, law, science or writing, and your entire life is flashing before your eyes and it doesn't look at all like the picture you painted in your mind when you were seven years old, dreaming of going to Harvard. And suddenly, in an all too raw and realistic way, you feel eons older than eighteen.

It's this type of craziness and absurdity that needs to stop.

There is a ridiculous amount of pressure on high school seniors, and whether that pressure is prompted by society, colleges, parents or even ourselves, it doesn't make it any less real or severe. Colleges seem to expect everything from us. They expect us to be learned, academic scholars with vibrant social lives, star athletes who sleep a full eight hours every night, gracious, well-respected listeners who possess strong leadership and public speaking abilities. There's no room for the shy, soft-spoken poet who couldn't put a ball in a basket to save her life. There's no room for the witty, charismatic football player who, try as he may, never could score an A in English as easily as he could score a touchdown. There's no room for singular passion anymore. There's no room for error. It seems we have to do it all, and as a result, most high school seniors are prisoners of the perfection complex*.

What happens to the students who can't do it all? What happens to the late bloomers, the students who find their passion late in life, the students who have just discovered their love for theatre, only to be rejected by their dream school because they weren't savvy enough to discover this passion ten years ago? What happens to the legacies that are rejected from the school their family has attended for generations, the kids who have the passion but not the grades, the students whose lifelong dreams are torn from their grasp when they rip open a letter?

Why are we evaluated at the standard of perfection?

At eighteen, we aren't finished growing. We aren't finished discovering our souls, discovering the world, discovering how and what we want our lives to be. We don't have all the answers and we don't even have all the questions. We're imperfect. We're human. We're a little unsure. And I hope I can speak for most seniors when I say that we don't want to be imprisoned in the perfection complex. We don't want to live our lives based on what will glow and glisten on our resumes. We don't want to be constantly selling ourselves on the false basis that we can do it all. We can't do it all, and more than that, we don't want to. We want to find what we will unapologetically love doing and practicing for the rest of our lives.

And that search takes a little longer than eighteen years.

*Also called "perfectionism", a disposition to regard anything less than perfection as unacceptable and disappointing



In respect to Burton's assertion that "he never voted for the trial," he indeed voted for an extension of the trial period at the April 1, 2014 council meeting, as it was passed via the Consent Agenda. At that time, there were no expressed concerns about the viability of the program, with the only mention in the April 2014 Staff Report that: "Over the past year each department has been evaluating the alternative work schedule in terms of operational efficiency for their departments. Based upon that evaluation, other alternative work schedule models are being reviewed which have the potential to provide increased service hours to residents." Nothing mentioned in respect to problems identified or a move to Friday closures.

Unfortunately, the Council tried to spin the change that it would benefit residents given an extra ½ hour would be added to each day City Hall would be open.

I personally doubt that the Friday closures will have little impact, although no one is likely to monitor how many residents show up at City Hall just to find it closed. But this goes more to the discussion of whether we need a central city hall at all. But clearly residents were not included in a decision that affected them. There were no supporting studies of how many residents actually came to City Hall on Fridays, or even surveys of City Hall-users to determine what would benefit them. Instead, we received the anecdotal support above.

While there exists many opportunities for council to improve on transparency, we trusted Councilmember D'errico and Burton to hold true to their expressed campaign promises at least as transparency applied to employee negotiations. But those seemed to be immediately tossed out like yesterday's jam.



When the Council considered improvements to the Village Mall, parking structures and parking spaces were discussed at length. The additional traffic to the area and its impact were also important concerns. In giving approval of those improvements, the parking spaces next to the Village Field were factored in for the appropriate numbers needed for the shopping mall. Now Council wants to eliminate those spaces!

There is a very serious issue about SAFETY. The traffic on Parkview is getting so much worse. Traffic is very heavy with vehicles avoiding Rosecrans. It is now part of a bus route. No one seems to obey the speed limit. Given the sale of the Towers recently and the increasing numbers of tenants and their vehicles entering and exiting the Towers parking lot, it is not safe to exit from either the Tower or Village Field. The line of site is quite limited by the parked vehicles along Parkview. What will happen if you add a hotel to the mix?

A lot of city effort is being spent on this project. There seems to be a correlation between this construction interest and required need for lots of dollars to support increasing director level city staff. That staff's high salary and benefits package would be just about right for what income is expected from a hotel. First of all, do we really need increased staff? Our new city manager has already hired one new executive level person in his office. What is the justification for adding so many employees at the top? We are not Los Angeles or even our neighbor Torrance, with a much larger population. Is this competition to have larger staff in Manhattan Beach necessary in view of our own population? Isn't present staff competent to do the job they were hired for?

There is still another matter I want to call to your attention. When our mayor was talking about the hotel and its benefits, on two occasions he mentioned how the residents of the Villas could use the hotel as a place to play bingo. That is a denigrating and most condescending attitude toward older adults. Does he think that playing bingo is the most important thing for one to do in later years? It is insulting to have such an attitude toward a viable and important part of our population. It is evident that several other council members (no all) share his view.

The quality of life at any age is important and should be high on the list of consideration of any project. A hotel with all that goes with it, including noise, trash, traffic etc. is not something one would think of as good quality of life. The lives of those living in the Senior Villas and in the Manhattan Village homes are important. The population living East of Sepulveda is every bit as important those West of Sepulveda.

All in all, any use other than the present use of the land is not legal. The City Council needs to stop pursuit of this project on park land.

Council was elected to be good stewards and protect the uniqueness and beauty of Manhattan Beach. We do not live in Los Angeles or any place that resembles the congestion of cities nearby. Keeping Manhattan Beach the best it can be and congestion free should be a priority in their deliberations on any matter that comes before them.



Rethinking a New City Hall

By Gary Osterhaut

“The building will probably be around for another 40-50 years.” City’s Utilities Manager Clarence Van Corbach replied to Council inquiries about the expected continued life of City Hall. January 4, 2005

“Really, [City Hall] is a dump.” Mayor Mark Burton. Council meeting, November 11, 2015.

Most should be already aware that City Council is moving ahead with determining a needs assessment, level of public support and financing alternatives for a new City Hall. The impetus seems primarily driven by a desire to include 3 to 4 levels of underground parking through the process to provide more parking for downtown visitors.

There has been little public information on why a new city hall is so urgently needed. The needs assessment was authorized as an add-on amendment to a review of Capital Improvement Projects at the November 17, 2015 Council meeting, and thus there was no Staff Report analysis. Mark Burton, who advanced the amendment, commented at that meeting (besides the Trump-ian “dump comment) that the City has a “moral and legal obligation to provide a safe working environment,” inferring that City Hall is a “sick building” because someone found mold after a recent rain.

That is apparently all the evidence City Council needed in order to authorize exploring a new building.

Consider the following additional facts, which have not been brought out by the City Council or Staff:

No prior expert concerns. On December 10, 2013, Council heard the findings of a commissioned study of deferred maintenance requirements for all city facilities by the firm Faithful+Gould. City Hall was estimated to require deferred maintenance expenditures of only \$1.4 million from 2013 through 2022. There was no mention of mold in City Hall, nor any recommended expenditure that appeared related to water except for water-proofing the upper-level deck of the parking structure, as follows:

Extensive water intrusion damage was noted at the upper level deck of the garage. Evidence of water infiltration is indicated by the efflorescence at the underside of the deck, particularly adjacent to the expansion joints. It was reported to Faithful+Gould that a series of urethane injections were performed in an attempt to eliminate the water infiltration which did not eliminate the infiltration issue. The primary source of the water infiltration appears to be the numerous landscape planters along the upper level of the garage. Additionally, the exposed surface of the deck exhibited alligator cracking throughout contributing to the water damages. Prolonged exposure to water can potentially deteriorate the reinforcing steel bars in the concrete and cause long term structural performance and safety concerns. Therefore, we recommend repair of the upper level deck including replacement of the waterproofing membrane.

In contrast to current concerns about mold, this firm recommended immediate interior painting and carpet replacement in 2019.

In January 2005, Council authorized \$175,000 for roof repairs to include a “high quality waterproof material” (the meeting the opening quote was made). [Staff remarks at that meeting also justified the expenditure to conform the roof material to the old Library, which of course had limited return of value.]

The obvious conclusion from the above is that someone should sue Faith+Gould for malpractice, or the current problem is one of Council’s creation.

The current needs assessment will likely come back with the analysis that a new building is needed, because the consultant knows what the City Council wants to hear. In fact, one of the consultant’s proposals (Griffin) already contained the conclusion, prior to any analysis, that “The once, new, City Hall is now an old building, which does not serve the current city needs, as they now have now evolved.” Of course, that assessment will be based on only the facts and parameters provided by City Hall, nor has the consultant been asked to review or recommend any alternatives other than to build a new city hall with additional parking.

Here are a few of my own alternatives.

There is nothing wrong with the current city hall. As identified above, there seems good support that normal repairs could keep the current building functioning well. Even if Mark Burton’s mold assertion is true, we have no information about where that mold is, the extent of such, and why repairs could not remediate the problem. If Burton has real concerns about the health of employees related to this problem, then the employees should not be there now. But this sounds more like buying a new car because the fender is dented.

No doubt the consultant will determine that there are currently more City Hall employees than City Hall can hold. Perhaps the answer is to consider this cost before hiring new employees—especially those recent employee positions created with little to no justification. I am hard-pressed to support a new building when Council has not yet justified the number of new employee positions they have generated, or will soon be looking for ways to cut back.

I expect any architectural rendering will have lots of private office for most of the employees, while the private sector is going to open floor plans with no designated seating to achieve better collaboration and maximum utilization of space.

Yet any analysis would only be based on the current headcount. Frankly, given the run-up in pension costs, a number of

positions will likely have to be eliminated in order to fund police/fire support. With new construction, we could end up with more building than we need.

There is little need for additional parking. One of the ULI recommendations is that if we do not have enough downtown parking, then perhaps we should consider shrinking the downtown footprint. I would expect by the time this article is printed that such an alternative has been ruled out by the adopted Downtown Specific Plan given the council's current development tendencies. But the cost of additional parking will likely not have been explored as part of that analysis. Further, consider that City Hall employees are not there in large number on the weekends, holidays, and now on the alternative closed Fridays. Also, many have 35 vacation days a year. Thus there is a lot of open spaces already.

It is also interesting that this year we will be temporarily shutting down downtown parking structure Lot 2 for repair with a loss of 65 spaces—yet no one seems real concerned about that loss. Perhaps the downtown parking situation is not as bad as represented except for certain days of the week and certain times of the year. In that case, perhaps it is easier to plan around the peaks instead of more parking garage overkill. A posted, available parking availability study would help, but although we have done a number of parking studies none seems to be readily available for analysis. Nor do we know of parking availability if demand pricing is instituted pursuant to the ULI study recommendations. Do we really need so many dedicated spots for electric vehicles, especially in the evenings and weekends? Could we park more City vehicles at a remote location instead of at City Hall?

Note, too, that the Facilities Strategic Plan, still an operative document, proposes underground parking in Live Oak.

There are alternatives. One big rationale to not immediately building an expensive City Hall is that we have not really analyzed whether in the future a City Hall of the past is really necessary. Of course, Council has already inferred that, as usual, the new building should reflect a “hometown City Hall feel,” preferring to pander to a typical Manhattan Beach mythology rather than to cater to the practical (see, for instance, the mock metal archway currently at City Hall, which I believe most ignore, but is supposed to be retro to one that was there long ago).

We should really consider whether it makes sense to continue City Hall at one of the more desired locations in Manhattan Beach. It would make more sense to build a new City Hall by the Manhattan Beach Mall and then build a hotel where City Hall is currently.

In my 25 years in Manhattan Beach I have gone to City Hall other than for council meetings maybe twice. And I do not much go to council meetings, particularly due to the current shortened comment period and the predominance of foregone conclusions. There certainly has been no hue and cry by residents over the every-other-Friday closure. I submit that City Hall could be closed even more days of the week without any resident being inconvenienced.

If people don't need to go to City Hall, then it is primarily an office that could be located anywhere—and certainly not on such prime real estate. In this Internet day and age, most would prefer to communicate via e-mail, which does not require any special location. Employees in the private sector use e-mail or instant messaging even to communicate with the person in the office next to them.

Staff and council will likely argue that it is essential that all city departments be located close together. There is no significance to that comment. Besides the availability of cellphone/internet instant contact, our city is only two miles square. Person to person contact can be done quickly if needed. Many offices have management remote from staff, or management from management.

Evict the Chamber. As the City is now funding the new Economics Development Manager to do what the Chamber of Commerce was supposed to do, there is no reason why the Chamber should continue with free rent of the Post Office/City Hall Annex space (evenmoreso given that the Chamber expresses positions like favoring Gelson's while knowing a significant resident population is opposed to the project). If the Chamber is going to choose sides, it should be asked to find and fund their own offices, and City Hall can use the opened space.

Especially given the new rules for commenting at City Council meetings, there is no longer need for a large City Hall Council Chambers auditorium, as few residents remain longer than the first half hour. The Council meetings could be moved to Joslyn, Police/Fire, or the Library community room without any loss to the public. The existing space could be converted to an office floor plan.

In respect to parking, we have not explored using shuttles for Library/City Hall employees or downtown visitors. This would be a minor inconvenience compared to how well those employees are compensated, as well as provide the impetus for a city-wide shuttle system. [Note: Skechers has said they will be providing a downtown lunch hour shuttle from their headquarters for their employees.]

I am guessing that a new building with underground parking will be in excess of \$60 million. That allows for a whole lot of shuttle subsidies. It is curious how concerned Council is about environmental impacts, yet is willing to demolish a serviceable building just to use more materials and petrochemicals to build a new one—even though I'm sure it will be LEED-certified.

Burton suggests a “low-profile City Hall, not a Taj Mahal.” But given that he thinks our current viable building is a “dump,” it is difficult to think what his “low-profile” City Hall would look like.

The City of MB just hired an Economic Vitality Manager who will "lead Manhattan Beach in strategic and innovative approaches to economic development and coordinate and support planned development of the Sepulveda Corridor. This position will also coordinate with the Community Development Department and support planned redevelopment of key focus areas; assist in implanting key ULI initiatives for the downtown area." The above map shows how de-acceleration / acceleration lanes might help support the increased traffic.

As a member of Manhattan Beach Residents' Association, as well as Manhattan Beach Residents for Responsible Development (facebook), I understand the vital importance of insisting that our voices be heard. Recently, MBRRD, hired a lawyer to oversee the progression of the Gelson's project and advise us of its legal ramifications. Please go to our Facebook page (type in Manhattan Beach Residents for Responsible Development in search), and find out how you can help support our efforts to keep this project within code. Paragon is certainly stepping up their efforts to affect residents' positive support by hiring a media public relations firm and sending out mailers to residents praising the "positives" of having a Gelson's market in the neighborhood.

So... Is no news, good news?



Special congratulations to Mira Costa Rugby Team, undefeated 2016 Southern conference champions rank 7th in the nation, who have been invited to play for the US National Rugby Game in North Carolina, May 19-22.

Anyone interested in adding their best wishes and participation may go to our website mbxfoundation.org/shop/product/95-us-rugby-nationals or costarugby.com

Mira Costa Rugby team wins second championship.



**2016 Southern conference champions • 2015 Southern conference semi- finalist
2014 Southern conference champions**

Welcome new members!

The Manhattan Beach Residents Association welcomes its new members. We take pride in our work and accomplishments over the past 25 years, and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for joining other residents throughout the city who are working toward preserving the qualities of life that make our city special. Residents working on behalf of residents is a major reason for our success!

City Hall Calendar

City Council **March 28, 6pm:** **Information overview of Downtown Specific Plan**

Police/Fire **April 12, 6pm:** **Joint City Council/Planning Commission study session Station--- receive specific direction on draft plan...**

MBRA BOARD MEMBERS

President	Michelle Murphy
Treasurers:	Karol Wahlberg
	Donna Scholtz
City Watch	Gary Osterhout
Membership	Evelyn Fry
Ways and Means	Neil Boyer
I.T. Administrators	Julie Profet, Roark Sandberg
Observer Asso. Ed	Josephn Ungoco
Observer Ed	Esther Besbris
Members-at-large:	John Scott,
	Alita Rethmeyer, Ed.D., RD.

Ed. Note: Observer articles reflect the views of the writer and do not speak for those members with differing opinions. The Observer provides a voice to those who wish to express personal comments on local Manhattan Beach issues.



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 (2016-2017) Membership Fee.

Yes, I (we) would like to assist.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Hall Watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephoning |

Name(s) _____

Address _____ (Zip) _____

City _____ Phone(H) _____ B) _____

E-mail _____ Fax _____