



Nancy Gardner

Councilwoman



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Newport Beach, California

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FEBRUARY 2007 – January was probably a pretty typical month for a council member. I attended a lot of meetings. Some were called quickly to deal with a specific problem. Others were standing city committees while still others brought together representatives from other cities, the county and various agencies. The possibilities for action varied, but at the very least there was always some interesting information to be learned. Among the topics:

1. Eelgrass

Eelgrass, which provides habitat for young fish like halibut, comes and goes in the bay, and nobody seems to know exactly why. At one point, alarmed that there was less than a quarter of an acre, three resource agencies declared an emergency and enacted the 1991 Eelgrass Mitigation Policy. Since then, eelgrass has made a huge comeback to approximately 25 acres, but the restrictions remain, making it difficult to dredge in many areas. The new **Bay Issues Committee** met for the first time this month and is recommending that the City consult an environmental law attorney to advise us on possible challenges.

2. Santa Ana River

The **Santa Ana River Trails Advisory Committee** is a new committee funded by a grant from the Wildlands Conservancy whose purpose is to create a vision for our portion of the river. The committee is made up of representatives from the City, County, National Park Service, and local organizations like Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks. We spent the first meeting brainstorming how to make the river more “natural” and attractive, providing recreational opportunities and habitat while maintaining flood control capacity.

3. Newport Coast

An accident at Newport Coast Drive and Pelican Hills Road North has drawn concern from residents that that intersection is unsafe. Councilman Curry and I met with the City Manager and Public Works Director to see what measures can be taken. A sign will go up immediately to warn trucks in particular to slow when making the turn, and staff will be coming back with costs and a time line for improving the intersection.

4. Permit Parking

A number of residents turned out for the study session on permit parking in Corona del Mar and Peninsula Point. The session was in response to complaints that people are coming down after the beach is closed and causing problems for nearby residents. There were a variety of viewpoints expressed as to the level of the problem and whether permit parking was the best solution. A questionnaire will be going out to residents in those areas to get more feedback on the permit issue, and meanwhile methods of better and more visible enforcement of the beach curfew are being developed.

5. Environmental Strategic Plan

An informal committee has been assembled to create a plan using the new General Plan as a foundation. We had our first meeting and laid out areas of focus as a first step. Additional perspectives are always valuable, so if you would like to participate, let me know.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Election Reform

Several people responded to my query about election reform. There was no consensus on what should be done, so we'll continue to talk, but meanwhile staff is going to be proposing some changes for campaign signs because of damage to median vegetation and the amount of staff time taken up in removing signs.

Comments

This is a two-way process, so please don't hesitate to contact me with your ideas and opinions.