



Nancy Gardner

Councilwoman

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Newport Beach, California

City Contacts

City Hall

General Information
644-3309

Departments	644-
Administrative	3127
Building Dept	3275
City Clerk	3005
City Council	3004
City Manager	3000
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Emergency	9-1-1
Fire Dept	633-3104
Police Dept	644-3717

Libraries	
CdM	644-3075
Main	717-3800
Mariners	717-3838
Balboa	644-3076

Oasis Senior Center	
	644-3244

Post Office	
CdM	673-2989
Main	640-4663

COUNCILWOMAN

Nancy Gardner

City of Newport Beach
3300 Newport Blvd
Newport Beach, CA
92663

PHONE
949.644.3004

WEBSITE
www.nancygardner.org

EMAIL
gardnernc@aol.com

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NEWPORT BEACH-COSTA MESA

Kudos to Alan Monsour. The Costa Mesa City Council member took it upon himself to reach out to Newport Beach council members to improve relations between the two cities. Among his ideas—creating a sort of super-committee of the two cities which would coordinate the various airport groups. The two cities will be holding a joint council meeting, tentatively scheduled for April 10.

BANNING RANCH

The first community outreach meeting was held by the owners of Banning Ranch. Attendance was made up of two groups: residents living adjacent to the property and proponents of keeping it all open space. The residents' concerns were primarily about circulation—if the property were to be developed, where would the access nodes be located and how would that affect their neighborhoods. I got the sense that most of them walked away feeling that the owners were trying to be sensitive to their concerns. The open space proponents were eloquent in their passion to preserve the area. They also seemed somewhat naive in their expectations, suggesting that the owners donate some or all of the property, for example. Two appraisals will be done, one by the owners, one by the city. It's a difficult project to appraise since there aren't a lot of comps. It will be interesting to see the parameters given each of the appraisers since that will have a significant impact on their final figures.

SUNSET RIDGE PARK

When I was a kid, we had virtually no organized sports, especially for girls. Today, it's the rare child who isn't involved in at least one organized sport, and as a result, we have a growing need for sports fields. Sunset Ridge Park was designated as an active park in the General Plan, and a conceptual plan for the park was recently presented to the public in a series of meetings. The Newport Terrace residents who front on the property are dismayed, and it's understandable. Instead of open space with occasional visitors they will abut soccer and baseball fields that will see considerable use. Council has asked staff to explore a reconfiguration of the plan to see if a different layout would reduce the impact on the residents.

BUCK GULLY

Because of erosion problems in the gully experts have warned that slopes could fail and houses tumble. The city has proposed seeking a grant for funds to install a series of gabions which would stabilize the area. However, the city doesn't own the property and would need easements from the homeowners on the gully: temporary easements for the installation of the gabions and permanent easements for occasional maintenance. These easements would not affect any building or structure, but at a recent meeting to discuss the proposal, there was concern from some homeowners about granting such easements. It will be interesting to see if their concerns can be assuaged, and if not, whether there is a plan B besides letting things take their course.

EEL GRASS

Like the Scarlet Pimpernel, eel grass comes and goes and why, nobody knows. Unfortunately for boat owners, a federal agency decided to step in, even if the knowledge wasn't there, and impose onerous conditions on anyone seeking to dredge a boat slip where there was eel grass. As a result, many boats are imperiled at low tide. The City recently hired a team of experts to look at the problem. Among their observations: the lack of dredging is counter-productive. Eel grass doesn't thrive in water that's too shallow, so silting in of the harbor reduces habitat. It also means that the plants are more subject to damage by prop wash. Another observation: eel grass springs back rapidly after dredging. We are scheduling a meeting between the agency and our experts in the hopes that this information will persuade the agency to change its policy for Newport Harbor.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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