



Nancy Gardner

Council Member

Newsletter: June 2011

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
Economic Dev	3225
General Services	3055
Graffiti Hotline	3333
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Mayor	3004
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Emergency Services

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

COUNCIL MEMBER

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LIFEGUARDS

I don't know if the people in Dubai know about our lifeguards' compensation, but it seems everyone else does and has an opinion about it. We need the best guards we can get. Not only do they save lives but they are the face of the city to many of our visitors, so they need to be just as good on the beach as they are in the water. With that said, the sustainability of their pensions like that of all our other employees is a concern that needs to be addressed. To that end, the council will soon be enunciating a philosophy of compensation that will be used as a foundation for future negotiations with our employees to begin to redress the imbalance.

There has been a second issue concerning the lifeguards. In preparing this year's budget, City Manager Kiff took a hard look at all departments, and when it came to the lifeguards, he proposed reducing the number of full-time guards. There was an instant outcry that we were endangering any number of lives if we took such a step. However, staffing statistics suggest that we can probably do with less coverage than we currently have. During the off season on some days we have as many as seven guards in rotation on a weekday and as few as three on a weekend. Since the guards do the scheduling, one might conclude that we and our visitors can survive with a lower complement. At the same time, we don't want to cut to the level that vital training and other things don't take place. The lifeguards have come back with a variant on the model proposed by the city manager, and we will be considering that as we finalize the budget.

THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER

Don't ask a question unless you're prepared to get an answer you don't like. While the city gets generally high marks for our services, the planning/building area has been one that has received a lot of criticism over the years. Businesses and builders alike have complained about what they felt was a lack of coordination and communication between the departments, resulting in unnecessary and often costly delays. Over the past year there has been a complete the reorganization of the two areas into one Community Development department, but the proof is in the pudding. I was recently in Vin Goat, a new cheese store in CdM, and while I was waiting for my order to be wrapped, I asked what their experience had been in dealing with the city and braced myself.

"Great," said the owner. Now lest you think that he said that to protect my feelings, I can assure you that he, like 98% of our residents, didn't have a clue as to my identity. I was just someone buying cheese and making conversation. Besides, I have heard the same thing from others, so it seems we're on the right track. The cheese selection, by the way, was terrific.

MY SCARLETT O'HARA MOMENT

Picture Little Corona as Atlanta and the city as Sherman. Granted, the city didn't burn the beach, but through its actions it has nearly destroyed it. It began when the city constructed a concrete weir at the mouth of Buck Gully in the late sixties or early seventies. Nobody could find out why at the time, and anyone involved is retired if not dead, so the purpose will remain a mystery, but the result is not. The weir screwed up the natural process that brought sand to the beach. Further damage—the city ignored warnings about the impact the development of Newport Coast and its resulting runoff would have. Now, a permanent stream of water cuts across the beach and often creates a stagnant pool in front of the weir. The runoff also creates greater erosion in the gully, necessitating a project to buttress the sides to protect homes, further diminishing sand transport. In essence, we've done a good job of really mucking up what was once a very pretty beach. Can't undo Newport Coast. Can't let houses slide into the gully, and I don't know if we can ever get the water out of Buck Gully, but there is one thing we can do. Now here's the money shot: Me kneeling on the sand, fist clenched, looking up at the sky: "As God is my witness, I'll get the water off this beach!" I'm going to do my very best to make that happen—maybe not during my tenure but hopefully before I join my father in the big surf spot in the sky because I can assure you, this was a passion of his as well, and I will be quite embarrassed if my first words to him aren't, "How's the surf," but "I failed."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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