Sign Up Now to Run for the Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council!

By John Stammreich, Chair, Communications Committee

It’s that time of the year again for each reader to decide: do I step up to represent my neighbors, our common interests and our common issues? The Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council (NWSPNC) is looking for your leadership and motivation for the next two years.

Our search started with the election information session on April 9 and continues through the candidate filing period deadline on May 26, 2007. To help with your decision, there will be a candidate information session at 6:30 p.m. on May 14 at Peck Park auditorium, 560 North Western Avenue in San Pedro.

There will be a candidate forum on June 19 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Peck Park Community Center. Candidates will have an opportunity to address local stakeholders about their issues and provide information about why stakeholders should vote for them.

Candidate filing forms are available at our May 14 board meeting and Peck Park, the San Pedro Public Library, and the San Pedro municipal building on Beacon Street.

The forms are also available online from the council’s website, www.nwsanpedro.org or you can e-mail stammiam@hotmail.com and the necessary forms will be sent to you.

The NWSPNC board consists of 17 seats, nine of which are on this year’s ballot. You are eligible to be a candidate for the board if you are over 16 years of age and live, work, or own property or a business in the district, teach at a public or private educational institution serving the area; or are a member of any religious, community, business or non-profit organization within the boundaries of the NWSPNC.

Each census tract and category is represented by two two-year seats, one of which is up for re-election each year. If you live or own property within one of the four census tracts of the NWSPNC, you are eligible to run for that census tract seat. The additional categories of business representative, educational representative, and organizational representative have one seat open this year. Additionally, there is one at-large seat available to anyone who qualifies for one or more of the census tract or category seats mentioned above.

Whether you currently support or oppose issues such as the 2,300 proposed Ponte Vista units or a 2,000-student high school on the Ponte Vista site, have an interest in other local improvements, including the waterfront, or simply want to be a representative of your neighbors, our common interests and our common issues? The Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council, we have analyzed and raised questions about the environmental impact report submitted by the developer. We want to be able to accurately predict:

- The current traffic on Western Avenue at various times, including rush hour, large funerals, etc.
- The population and number of in and out trips that will be added under various models with differing numbers of units and varying size and type of housing and commercial construction proposed for the site.
- The number of people who will reside in the project.
- The number of students added by the development.
- The impact of various mitigation measures proposed for Western Avenue and nearby streets and intersections.
- The plusses and minuses of the current R-1 zoning, the developer’s 2,300 home proposal and other options for the site.

In order to accomplish this, our committee has done the following:

- Spent several sessions listening to the developer and his consultants, learning about his vision for the property.
- Visited other new planned developments in the area to get a better understanding of the feel of various designs that could be implemented at the property.
- Visited the Department of Transportation to learn about their traffic synchronization system that could be implemented in San Pedro and Wilmington.
- Held a public hearing and listened to community comments at each of our meetings.
- Attended a series of workshops conducted by the city planning department to learn how planners evaluate proposals such as this one. It is the planning department that will eventually submit a specific plan for Ponte Vista to the planning commission and then the council.

Unfortunately, we have discovered that even when the developer follows the procedures outlined by the City of Los Angeles, the results may underestimate the impact on traffic and schools.

Within the next two to three months our committee plans to submit recommendations to the councilwoman as to what usage and density makes the most sense for the property, and what mitigation measures should be required in connection with that recommendation.

We also plan to comment on the flawed process currently used to predict the impact of new developments. This process has lead to the gridlock in West Los Angeles that has so often been the subject of complaints. We don’t want that to happen here.

This advisory committee process is an important way to provide accurate information to the community on this controversial project. We welcome your attendance and comments. The schedule of meetings is online at www.nwsanpedro.org.
From the President’s Desk

By Diana Nave, President

This has been a rewarding couple of months for the NWSPNC:
• The Kinder Morgan tanks have been taken down and soil remedia tion is about to begin;
• The city council approved $6 million in Proposition O funds (to be added to the $2 million from state and federal funds) to restore the trails and clean up the stream at Peck Park;
• Most of the changes we requested were agreed to by Target (see article);
• Our comments on the draft environmental impact report for Ponte Vista got the attention of the council office and the departments of planning and transportation. The councilwoman requested that the developer redo the traffic count on Western Avenue, since the one used for the original study had been done while Western was taped off for stormwater construction;
• The Park is under construction and should be completed this summer, the fire station is nearly completed, and the animal shelter and police station should be completed by the end of the year.

Your council is also addressing a number of smaller issues and information is provided elsewhere in this newsletter regarding how to deal with problems related to street vending, transients, noise from gas-powered engines, errant shopping carts, graffiti, drag racing, and abandoned vehicles. Special thanks to LAPD, Senior Lead Officer Irmina Dumaplin for her assistance with these matters!

Many challenges remain. Chief among these are the need for replacement fields for Eastview Little League, the proposed high school, the proposed Ponte Vista development, removal or relocation of the AmeriGas tanks, a proposed street from Miraflores to Channel, proposed duplex development along Channel, the waterfront development, and a number of other port projects.

As of this writing the Council office is working with the Port to temporarily locate the Little League fields to 22nd Street. The proposal is for Recreation and Parks to be responsible for the fields which would be accessible to the public when not in use by the Little League. Whether or not this can happen will most likely be determined by the Board of Harbor Commissioners within the next month and at this point it is only a temporary solution. The Little League is also pursuing other avenues to force Target to allow them to remain on the property.

LAUSD update the community on their plans regarding a new high school at a community meeting on April 17, after we go to press. We have no further information on other than the fact that Bismo Development continues to fight LAUSD in court preventing them from even entering the property to do environmental testing.

If you are interested in making a difference with regard to these and other community issues, speak up. Speak up at our meetings, send a message to us at board@nwsanpedro.org, speak up to the Council Office (Janice.Hahn@lacity.org), speak up through letters to the editor, and consider joining one of our committees or becoming a candidate for our Governing Board. Although the election is not until June 25, the candidate filing period ends May 26. See the article in this newsletter for full details.

To keep up to date on these and other issues, check our website, www.nwsanpedro.org, where you can also request to be added to our e-mail list. We also post on our website and distribute by e-mail a calendar of upcoming events of particular interest to Northwest San Pedro.

How time flies! I am nearing the completion of my second term as President. Having been elected while I was out of the country on vacation two years ago I am going to be out of the country again for the end of my term. In my absence, the very capable Dan Dixon, our vice president, will be filling in. I know he can count on your support.

Kinder Morgan Tank Farm Leveled

By Jody James, NWSPNC Board Member

More than four years ago a group of neighbors spoke at a NWSPNC meeting asking for help in resolving a recurring problem. Noxious odors frequently left them dizzy and nauseous. They had identified the problem as coming from the Kinder Morgan tank farm on Gaffey Street. This facility, located behind their homes, mixed petroleum products for use at the port.

Our NC board and our president at that time, John Greenwood, facilitated meetings to investigate the complaints. Kinder Morgan and company and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). Neighbors followed-up their concerns by calling the SCAQMD every time they smelled the offensive fumes. They had spoke at a NWSPNC meeting asking for help in resolving these matters!

The company decided that upgrading their tank farm facility would be too costly and that they would sell their property. The property was sold to a home developer and the tank farm will be rehabilitated to residential standards. This was a wonderful victory for our community.

Many neighbors worked very hard on this issue. Among them are Molly and Chris Abbatello, Cheryl Porter, Sandy and David Gates, Bob and Corinna Lopez, Margaret Hererra, Robert and Corina Ariztia, and Sam Dixon. Not to mention Dan Dixon, our vice president, who was out of the country on vacation two years ago.

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Now you see them, now you don’t! Tanks at the Kinder Morgan site on North Gaffey are gone.

The neighbors organized carpools and drove to the Diamond Bar headquarters of SCAQMD to testify. Their persistence paid off when the Kinder Morgan facility was ordered to bring their operation up to codes that would be protective of public health.

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Gaffey Trees Need TLC
By Jody James, NWSNC Board Member

This spring, Gaffey Street in north San Pedro boasts a half-mile of blooming pink peach trees and green foliage. These 250 trees were planted in the spring of 2000 on the edge of Gaffey Street on the U.S. Navy property by community volunteers.

San Pedro and Peninsula Homeowners United organized the effort and funds, the Navy provided the trees, local merchants donated funds for supplies, and many volunteers donated their time and labor to plan and plant this grove.

In 2005, Chuck Hart, president of SPPHU, accepted a Los Angeles environmental award for Council District 15 because of these lovely trees.

Volunteers are still needed to tend to and water the trees. It’s a labor of love. Contact Jody James if you have a little time to give at (310) 319-0980.

‘Back to the Future’ at Cabrillo Beach

How many of us remember the boathouse and pavilions at Cabrillo Beach when they were beautiful? Well, hold your breath and call it a miracle, but soon they may be back again in all their glory!

Thanks to the efforts of the Cabrillo Beach Boosters and lots of supporters, including your neighborhood council, plans are underway for a project to rebuild them using old photos of the buildings as a guide. Although they will not be identical to the originals, they will certainly be appreciated by all the visitors to the beach.

Also included in the plan is an on-site park ranger facility which will assist in addressing security issues and a permanent lifeguard building. That’s right, permanent! Not like the old one that was mobile. Well, kind of mobile, if you had four people pulling on the ropes.

And most exciting is a teaching facility where young and old alike can go to learn to kayak and windsurf and much more.

If you would like more information, contact the Cabrillo Beach Bathhouse at (310) 548-7555.

NEW STREET, NEW HOUSES?—The city is proposing to build a connecting road through the bottom of these lots to connect Miraflores to Gaffey. In addition, a developer wants to build seven duplexes on the remaining lots. NWSPNC is in the process of obtaining more information about the proposed plans. If you want to know more about these plans or want to express your concerns e-mail us at Board@NWSPNC.org and ask to be notified when these items are on our agenda.

Who is Planning for Ponte Vista’s Impact on Schools?

By Pat Nave

How many students will live in Ponte Vista? How much room is there for those students in our local schools? These are important issues that so far have not been addressed by either Ponte Vista or the city.

The Ponte Vista developer claims that only 199 students will live in its 2,300 units. That is about one student for every 12 units (0.086 student per household). This is far less than the average for the harbor area which has more than three students for every five households (0.64 student per household). This is almost eight times as many students per household as what Mr. Bisno is estimating.

If Ponte Vista has the same number of students per household as the rest of the harbor area, it will have 1,472 students, enough to fill 60 classrooms. That doesn’t count the students of the families that will move into the houses in San Pedro sold by “empty nesters” moving into Ponte Vista.

There isn’t much room in Taper Elementary, Dodson Middle School, and Narbonne High School, the three schools that will serve Ponte Vista. According to the latest statistics, and based on expected future capacity, without any additional students Taper will have room for 61 more students. Dodson will be over capacity by 13 students, and Narbonne will be over capacity by 438 students. Nowhere is the developer addressing how to accommodate an additional 1,472 students from Ponte Vista.

Your Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council is seeking the answers. At its meeting on April 9, the Governing Board passed a motion asking the Ponte Vista Community Advisory Committee and the City of Los Angeles Planning Department to take a look at the issue and include the impact of the additional students in their deliberations.

In our comments on the Ponte Vista draft EIR, the NWSPNC pointed out that all significant impacts of the project must be considered, so the city cannot avoid its responsibility by handing it off to the school district.

Your neighborhood council will be making sure that we all know the true impact of the various proposals that will be suggested for the site. We need an accurate picture of what will happen—and particularly the impact of added traffic and added students.

DEALING WITH STREET VENDORS:
- Leticia Reed is a street use inspector. They are responsible is the vending is occurring on the sidewalk or street. Call 223-7224 from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- For vending on park property, call General Services Officer Donald Taylor, (213) 978-4670.
- Call LAPD, 877-ASK-LAPD; LAPD may respond. They may bring health department officials with them. The health department has authority to confiscate food items and document vendor information.
- One of the most effective ways to deal with street vendors is to not buy anything from them.
Illustration of the Target Store which is planned for the corner of North Gaffey Street and Westmont Drive. The single-story building will contain 131,000 square feet of retail space.

The Truth About That Ponte Vista Survey ...

By now you probably have heard about the survey conducted by Bisno Development LLC. Although they would not share all of the questions asked in the survey, the information they did share was very interesting. Among other things:  
• 64 percent of people surveyed said that traffic congestion on local roads is an extremely serious or very serious problem. This was by far the highest rating for any of the issues asked about and is consistent with the survey conducted last year by our neighborhood council.

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The much anticipated, dreaded, admired, re-invented retail store has passed its last hurdle in the city approval process, and Minneapolis-based Target has won its appeal of the city’s decision. The project is historic in the sense that Target is the first national “big box” retailer to have the confidence to locate in San Pedro since the departure of J. J. Newberry and the Sears outlet store.

A conditional use permit was issued on March 14 by the associate zoning administrator for the city of Los Angeles. Based on this approval, Target can now pull required permits. In the process, Target agreed to incorporate many of the design and traffic changes recommended by your neighborhood council.

Some of the highlights of the CUP include:
• A 131,000-square-foot single-story building. This is not a “super-size” Target, as the company’s demographic work did not indicate that a larger or two-story building would be profitable at this location. The layout of the new store will be familiar to most Target shoppers, but will include two fast-food eateries inside (perhaps a Starbucks and a burger place), a pharmacy, and a grocery section. The grocery portion is not a full market, as it will not feature fresh meat and produce, but will have a giant frozen-food section, and the usual“dry” grocery goods.

• A 5,000-square-foot “pad” at the corner of Gaffey and Capitol will be built-out by Target, but will be leased to other retailers. Target has specifically agreed that no drive-through windows will be allowed, and Target will solicit the input of the San Pedro community on the retail use of the additional building.

• Target will be permitted to sell beer and wine within the store, for off-site consumption only. They will need to get normal permits from the state. The alcohol permit will be for a period of 10 years, after which the retailer will need to apply for new permits.

• Hours of operation for the store will be 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and will allow traffic during peak hours and throughout the day.

• All graffiti on the site must be removed or painted over in color to match the affected surface within 24 hours. Target will be accountable for litter control on its property.

• The store’s trash compactor will be screened from view, and trash pickup and the location of the compactor will be subject to the same entry and exit restrictions as the delivery trucks.

• No banners or temporary signs will be permitted on the property.

• An electronic cart control system will be installed to prevent the removal of carts from the property.

The newly-formed Youth and Education Committee will also be reviewing the applications for services that take place at each site. The committee will also be reviewing the applications for service award for an outstanding high school student. This is a new committee and we are seeking additional members. The agenda is posted at Arista, Albion’s Market, Peck Park and Top Vals Market. The meetings are held at Coco’s Restaurant at Westmont and Western Avenues at 6:30 p.m. The next meeting will be on April 18, 2007.

Target is Coming, San Pedro! 

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• The store may open at 7:00 a.m. on December 26. In addition, Target agreed to requested landscape enhancements (larger boxed trees in the parking lot—there will be one shade tree for each four parking spaces—a 15-foot “berm” buffer between the street and the parking lot), light standards in the parking lot that are lower than proposed, and providing curbs and gutters on the east side of Gaffey Street. The installation of curbs and gutters will assist the Northwest Council in its efforts to beautify North Gaffey.

• The schedule for construction has not been determined, but a reasonable assumption is that work will begin following the end of the Eastview Little League season. Eastview organizers intend to continue pursuing retention of the ballfields on the property. If construction does proceed as planned, they anticipate an opening “target” of July or October, 2008.

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• 64 percent of people surveyed said that traffic congestion on local roads is an extremely serious or very serious problem. As a side note, Mr. Bisno has stated that the average price of the condo will be $75,000, with an annual housing cost (mortgage and homeowner association fees) of $50,885. Hardly what anyone would call “affordable.” Further, he has stated that the average household income of his buyers will be $145,217, over $100,000 more than the 2000 average household income for San Pedro ($44,476).

• 27 percent of people surveyed said “the need for senior citizen housing in the area” is an extremely serious or very serious issue.

When asked “what are the one or two features you would most want the project to have?”, 27 percent said they didn’t know, followed by 16 percent who stated that they would not want a new residential development project in their area, 15 percent who wanted it to be affordable, and 15 percent who want to replace trailer parks with single family homes; three percent replied with either senior center or senior housing.

41 percent had not heard about the Ponte Vista project, 28 percent indicated they had heard a little, and 31 percent had heard a lot about it; familiarity with the project was significantly greater among those living within 1.5 miles of the proposed project.

When asked if they favored or opposed the project, the largest proportion—40 percent—indicated they needed more information or did not have an opinion, 30 percent favored, and 30 percent opposed.

The polls then described the project as “…2,300 new homes with a mix of single-family housing, condominiums, and town homes affordable for middle-income families and first-time buyers.” Mr. Bisno has repeatedly stated that he will not build any single family homes and claims the description used in the survey was “an error.” Many people support the current (R-1) zoning for the project.

Following the misleading project description, it was no surprise that the proportion favoring the project increased to 45 percent. Yet, in a later question, only 38 percent indicated they would favor the project if it included 2,300 residential units.

In the survey previously conducted by NWSFNC, fewer than four percent of respondents indicated they supported 2,300 units. Despite these errors and contradictions, the developer has taken out ads in local papers to tout this survey as being strongly supportive of his 2,300 condo proposal.

What do you think? Speak up now!