

Letter rattles gym location opponents

by Whitney Youngs

Three different Hermosa Beach residents, all of whom are parents of children attending Hermosa Valley School, last week received an anonymous letter obliquely threatening in nature typed on Hermosa Beach Education Foundation letterhead.

The letters imply a threat against these three residents' children if they continue with what the anonymous writer perceives as an effort to halt the building of a new gym on the school's

campus.

The Education Foundation disavows any knowledge of the drafting and distribution of such letters. The organization contacted the

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F.B.I. and hired a private investigator to look into the matter.

Jennifer Rosenfeld, the foundation's first

vice president, found out about the letters after one of the recipients, who happens to be one of her friends, showed up at her house.

"The Education Foundation had absolutely nothing to do with the issuance of these letters," said Rosenfeld. "As a school community orga-

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Threatening letters

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nization, the Education Foundation is not involved in the debate or discussion related to the building of school facilities. It's in its best interests not to take a public stance on the issue."

Rosenfeld added the letterhead used is an older version of the foundation's stationery, which is stored in a mailbox at school offices for the use of volunteers who wish to write a thank-you letter.

"We had no prior knowledge on the distribution of these letters that were clearly misappropriated and we never thought in a thousand years, these letters would be misappropriated in this manner," said Rosenfeld. "This is a malicious act and we are appalled. We want to find out who did this and prosecute them to the full extent of the law. It's clear the person behind this intended to hurt the Education Foundation with this act."

One of the recipients of the typed letter, Jerry and Suzy Compton, live on Valley Park Avenue. They have voiced their opposition to constructing a gym on the southwest corner of Valley School adjacent to residential areas that share a border with the campus.

Earlier this month, the Hermosa Beach School Board unanimously voted to move forward on a proposal of possibly building a gym and additional classrooms on the southwest corner of Hermosa Valley middle school's campus.

The School Board also agreed to explore the idea of purchasing land from Marineland Mobile Home Park to place a portion of the gym on that land. Compton is one resident who favors adjacent property acquisition such as Marineland or the land currently occupied by Adelphia Communications.

The School Board discussed concerns and comments with the public regarding two possible sites for a major project the district will fund with Measure "J," a \$13.6 million bond. It eventually voted for option "B." This plan would be to place both the gym and the classrooms in the area near the southwest corner of the campus. The classrooms would cut into the hill that lines the western portion of the campus.

Some residents living in the immediate area, like the Comptons, voiced concerns about parking, noise, traffic and congestion that would most likely impact the neighborhood.

Some people living in the neighborhood favored scenario "A" that would have put the gym on the southern half of the school's main parking lot located along Valley Drive. It would require the replacement of lost parking space by building more on the northern portion of the school field. Eight additional classrooms would sit near the southwest corner of campus.

The Comptons received the letter last week. It states, "If you want (child's name)

your lawsuit. You have mislead (sic) everyone."

According to Hermosa Beach Superintendent Duffy Clark, a rumor the School District is facing a lawsuit from a private party is untrue.

"We did receive a letter a few weeks ago from a lawyer reminding the School District of its responsibilities in the spending of the bond money, but to my knowledge, no one has filed a lawsuit against the district in connection to Measure 'J.'"

The second anonymous letter was sent to Jim and Jackie Hausle who received it last Thursday. It states "If you want (child's name) and (child's name) to enjoy middle school, you need to drop your lawsuit. Your selfishness is incredible."

Hausle believes the anonymous writer sent the letter based on his opinions that the School Board's new direction on the construction of the gym is an unfavorable one for both the community and the kids.

"I have no idea about dropping a lawsuit. There is no lawsuit nor have I ever been involved with a lawsuit," said Hausle. "I think both options 'A' and 'B' result in a loss of open space and neither is acceptable. My first reaction to this letter is that individuals have to resort to threats instead of allowing the democratic process to take place. I also don't appreciate people targeting my children. I certainly hope and believe this letter is the extent of it. I'm very confident no one a part of the foundation's board sent this, but rather someone who had access to the organization's old stationery. But there are a lot of people in this category."

Hausle recently attended a meeting coordinated by a group of concerned residents that recently formed an ad hoc committee called the Committee for Responsible Public School Expansion.

"The group wanted poll opinions to make sure the resulting implementation of Measure 'J' is good for both the school and the community," added Hausle. "I attended the last meeting and there were about 20 to 30 people there. It's not some giant financed coalition or anything."

Barbara Ellman, the third recipient of the anonymous letter, had no comment about the letter itself, but did have a comment about a matter related to the gym.

In the letter sent to Ellman, it states, "If you want (child's name) to enjoy middle school you need to drop your lawsuit."

"I just don't think there's enough room on that property for a gym," she said. "I'm not questioning people's integrity. I am questioning whether or not this bond was organized in the most professional manner. I don't live near the school so it won't affect me but it doesn't seem fair to do this to your neighbors. If for some reason the gym is not built on campus, I don't want my child to be labeled as the anti-gym child."