

We Get Letters

- Apr 20, 2006

Week of April 20

Teaching the wrong lessons

In his letter published April 6, Lance Widman states that the CRSE forced a “six-month delay,” due to its suit regarding Valley School's construction. Widman said, “This caused construction costs to increase more than \$100,000 for each month it was delayed.”

Now let me get this straight.

Does he really expect us to believe that this construction cost increase, which by his calculation totals \$600,000, would never have occurred had construction simply continued? This contract was apparently open-ended enough to allow such increases during the delay. Widman expects us to believe that, magically, all construction costs would have been stable had there been no delays caused by that nasty evildoer CRSE group? Something tells me the monthly construction increases would have happened anyway. Who the heck is doing the cost control on this?

Widman then finishes up his letter stating that “Measure ‘A’ provides \$13.1 million to finish Measure ‘J’ projects. It also makes significant additional improvements in our schools.” To think I thought I was getting that with Measure “J.”

This is a great lesson to teach our children. Budgets don't really matter and if you use up all your money, just charge up some more on the taxpayer dime. Sheesh.

Tom Graner, Hermosa Beach

It's all about the gym

“Measure ‘A’ passage will enhance the quality of our children's education, add value to our homes and continue Hermosa's distinguished reputation of excellence in education.” This is a Lance Widman quote. Since when does a bond extension enhance education? This extension is for enough money to pay for the gym. It's teachers who enhance education and programs that are taught by teachers. Teachers are responsible for the distinguished excellence awards the district has received, not the buildings in which they teach.

The gym has become the almighty sacrifice. The attitude to build the gym come hell or high water is quite apparent. Blame the neighbors for the cost increase instead of admitting that one board member constantly antagonized the negotiations - shame on you.

The laundry list was very impressive for passage of “A” and yet in Widman's letter, modernization was successfully completed under budget. Why is the new list a mile long?

Classrooms at both Valley and Hermosa View will be needed. Yet you justify building a gym and dropping classrooms. Physical education is definitely necessary but with the weather we have here, outside P.E. works fine. I realize that you consider the gym two classrooms but could a social studies class and an English class be held in the gym?

Had new space been found for the gym instead of taking playground space and the handball courts, I would have supported it. As the situation is now, I cannot support it or the extension of the bond "A."

Mary Lou Weiss, Hermosa Beach

Editor's note: Weiss is a former School Board member.

Can't get the Community Center back

I must admit that I'm perplexed by the comments in Miyo Prassas' letter April 6. I do not know where she gets her misinformation. Aesop, perhaps.

Among her most glaring mistakes are her comments about the Community Center. Unnamed city officials and unreferenced documents say the Hermosa Beach City School District can get back the Community Center simply by asking for it? These provisions are not in any document I've seen, nor have I spoken with any city official who thinks this. I do not know the source of this oft-repeated yet entirely and absolutely untrue urban legend about the city simply giving the Community Center back to the School District. It is disappointing and somewhat surprising that people actually spout this folklore, and I hope folks will take the few minutes to read the documents before swallowing this pabulum.

Even if the district could get the Pier Avenue site back, the whole notion that we should move the middle school out of a recently refurbished facility and to a site that has not been updated in 30 years seems a bit retrograde, to say the least. Prassas correctly states that new construction is expensive, but maybe I missed the part about how cheap it would be to acquire, refurbish and update a 70-year-old facility.

Greg Breen, Hermosa Beach School Board member

Defending Measure 'A'

Unlike the court of law where "the whole truth" is the gold standard, half-truth and arguments of convenience frequently become the standards of public discourse in the court of public opinion. Contrary to Jackie Tagliaferro's misinformation, the new construction at Hermosa Valley School includes a new library/ media center, two new science labs and a multipurpose gymnasium facility that provides new teaching stations to meet state-required standards for student physical education. It's not just "the gym."

Escalating costs due to construction delays caused by CRSE's frivolous lawsuits directly resulted in two additional classrooms being eliminated from the proposed project that should have been built. As of Jan. 31, the district has had to spend more than \$60,000 successfully fighting these legal extortions, money that could have been better spent on teachers and classroom needs.

Selling education assets (North School), as Fred Huebscher suggests, is shortsighted at best. Like his opposition to Measure "J" in 2002, he simply doesn't get it that quality education for our children depends on quality teachers, curriculum and facilities to meet student needs. North School may be needed to accommodate future enrollment growth.

Measure "A" will finish modernization projects at Valley and View Schools, build new classrooms, improve technology access, upgrade student support areas, improve student health and safety, and make major repairs at North School with no change in the tax rate approved by 65 percent of the voters in 2002. A "yes" vote on Measure "A" is our investment in our children, their future and our community.

Lance Widman, Hermosa Beach School Board member

Sending the wrong message

Regarding the decision to merge lots on Prospect sends the wrong message. I wonder how much is this one going to cost us, the citizens of Hermosa Beach, from a lawsuit, in what appears to me to be a loser for the city. I live in Hermosa Beach and I have not received a notice from the city that they're causing a change in the zoning ordinance again. I have sold tall-and-skinny properties to good people on Prospect who love their homes and are grateful to have that choice at a price they can afford. If one or two council members want nothing but castles to be built on these lots, then let's put it up to vote on in the next election. I am shocked that the council members ignored the staff report and make this decision based on two members. Let's be fair. Chuck Heidman followed all of the rules, let his project go through and tackled the bigger issue properly. I suggest that all the residents be notified before the council in acts another "zone change"

Mike Watson, Hermosa Beach

Contingency plan

How to control structure and population density has been a political football for decades. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the political trend was to provide multiple unit buildings to attract population growth. The hope was that these new citizen residents would shop locally, thus providing needed local sales tax revenue. As the population grew and density became an issue, councils amended zoning standards to preclude lot division and reduce future density. Councilman J.R. Reviczky suggested at the recent council meeting that the action of past councils has worked. He pointed out that as a result of the council's enactment of low-density zoning, Hermosa's population has remained at a fairly constant level over the last several decades.

One such zoning change oversees that many multiple unit structures are being replaced by single family dwellings. I agree with the council majority that this parcel should remain as a single lot. The contractor has claimed that this council action will cause financial hardship. I disagree; this designation will allow the developer to build a nice single-family residence on this site. To preclude this type of situation, the contractor and his representative should have stipulated on the agreement to purchase this property that the offer was made contingent on the ultimate granting of permits to construct the structure as they had planned.

Gary Brutsch, Hermosa Beach