

EasyReaderNews

Added on July 30, 2015 Kevin Cody Letters

Letters 07/30/15

Pier into the past

Dear ER:

I am responding to the most recent epistle from Miyo Prassas ("Don't repeat Bond 101," ER Letters July 23, 2015). Once again she trots the Community Center out for a dead dog walk, hoping someone will think it still breathes. For those who have been resting with Rip Van Winkle in the Catskills the last decade, here's (once again) the litany of reasons that repurposing the Community Center (nee Pier Avenue Junior High) into a school is impractical:

The Hermosa Beach School District would have to purchase the property. The school district does not own the property, having sold it to the city in 1978. Contrary to persistent local myth, the school district does not have the right to continued use of the facility, having reserved only the right to use the tennis courts and gym for two hours per day and the auditorium for 10 days each year, with even that limited use subject to a series of renewable three-year leases that expired 30 years ago. And contrary to other myths, the city cannot give the facility back since the California state constitution prohibits "any gift, of any public money or thing of value".

The building itself would have to undergo substantial reconstruction. Most of the existing rooms in the building are smaller than the 960 square foot state standard for classrooms; there is no play space (although there's plenty of parking for all the kids who drive their cars to school). The building does not meet disability access standards. The building, although possibly compliant with general building code standards, probably does not meet the stricter standards set by the Division of the State Architect for schools. Given its age the building is undoubtedly contaminated with asbestos. And the building does not meet current fire/life/safety standards.

These are all surmountable with plenty of money and time, two commodities in short supply. All the school district would have to do is re-purchase the building from the city (anyone looked at the price of real estate recently, compared with values in 1978?), gut the building (or bulldoze it), resize all the classrooms, add American Disabilities Act compliant elevators and bathrooms, add play space (probably by removing parking, since parking is never an issue in our community); and reconstruct the school. Architects have advised the board that it'd be cheaper to bulldoze the Community Center than to rehabilitate it.

None of this is new information. The district has had this information available for anyone to review since I was on the board a decade ago. I think even Prassas would agree that using property the district already owns at North School is more efficient than raising funds to repurchase an old facility, since one of her stated concerns is the prudence of district spending.

As for her most recent nickname for me, I am not Mr. Know It All – I'm just Mr. Know More Than Miyo, which is not a very exclusive club.

Greg Breen

Hermosa Beach