

Love Laguna Beach!

June 16, 2002

(Volume 2, number 3)

by Cheryl Kinsman



What's inside:

I mportant business will take place at the City Council meeting of Tuesday, June 18. At that meeting, budget items for 2003 will be discussed and finalized. Future City Councils will find that their ability to budget has been seriously hampered by this Council.

In my view, every Laguna Beach citizen should be aware of what is happening in the budget. The future of our city is at stake.

This whole issue is devoted to City finances. I hope you read it. I hope you will attend the Council meeting on June 18 at 7 p.m. to let us know your desires with respect to the budget.

D o you know someone who should be receiving this update? Please e-mail me their name and e-mail address and I'll add them to the list!

My e-mail address is
Cheryl@LoveLagunaBeach.com

Love Laguna Beach! is prepared by Cheryl Kinsman, member of the Laguna Beach City Council, as a service to the people of Laguna Beach. Not prepared, printed or mailed at taxpayer expense.

A man walked into his bank and was told his checking account was overdrawn. He replied, "I can't be overdrawn—I still have checks."

Like that bank customer, Laguna Beach seems committed to spending millions of dollars on non-essential long term projects that will put the city in debt for years to come. As a result, many essential projects have either been underfunded, postponed far into the future, or removed from the budget entirely. Some of these include:

- § **El Toro Reuse Planning Authority (ETRPA).** The fight to keep an airport out of El Toro is not over. For Laguna to continue to have influence over this process, we must remain part of the organization that has carried the fight this far. We have not budgeted our full dues to this organization for next year.
- § **A new fire station for South Laguna.** The one currently in use is too small to hold a modern fire engine.
- § **A modern accounting system for city finances.** The city is currently using a 20 year old mainframe system that is no longer manufactured and whose programs are outdated and inadequate for managing an increasingly complex city.
- § **A lifeguard headquarters at Main Beach.** The one currently in use is in a bad state of disrepair.
- § **South Laguna Village revitalization.** Laguna Beach has two downtowns. The "second" downtown, in South Laguna, has run down and badly needs new sidewalks and additional parking to revitalize it. This southern entrance provides many visitors with their first impression of Laguna Beach.
- § **Move or rebuild the corporate yard.** Arnold Hano, a Village Laguna member who often sees things from a different perspective than I, recently inspected our corporate yard. The corporate yard is the place that our city employees work—maintaining vehicles and doing the other maintenance that a city needs. Arnold told me after his visit that "Our employees are working in tin shacks worse than those in Guatemala!"

Seven years ago, the Village Entrance Task Force recommended moving this facility to the Act V parking lot. Over \$250,000 was spent on this now-abandoned project. I believe this project should be completed. If the council refuses to move forward with a corporate yard at Act V, the corporate yard must be repaired to meet minimum safety standards for our employees.

In addition to the above items, we need a comprehensive parking, traffic and circulation study for downtown. We have engaged in piecemeal planning for parking, traffic and circulation in Laguna for many years. Some of the plans under consideration today are:

- Build a 200 space, two level underground parking structure at the base of the Third Street Hill (this item is already in the budget).
- Close the Third Street hill to vehicle traffic.
- Raise parking meter fees from \$1.00 per hour to \$1.50 per hour.
- Build a three to four level parking structure behind the Laguna Playhouse. (Money to study this structure is in the budget scheduled for adoption Tuesday night.)
- Build a pedestrian underpass under Coast Highway at Broadway.
- Use police officers to direct traffic at busy intersections during the summer.
- Increased downtown parking at the Village Entrance site (next to City Hall). Even though a design competition has been held, all further money for the project has been removed from the budget.
- Turn Forest Avenue into a pedestrian mall.
- Increase parking meter times from 2 hours to 3 hours.
- Provide resident only parking in some areas,
- Provide regular free tram service with peripheral parking at the Act V lot in Laguna Canyon.

It may be that some or many of those items are the solution to our parking, traffic and circulation problems. However, it is not clear what mix of solutions will be the best for Laguna. Therefore, a comprehensive study should be undertaken to provide that mix before adopting any of these projects.

I do not believe that the business of a City is to provide everything for everybody. I would love for Laguna Beach to be able to do that. We just don't have the money. And if the citizens of Laguna Beach want to borrow to do projects, they should be given the opportunity to vote on those projects directly, not when we are out of money and must borrow to do things that everyone agrees are absolutely necessary.

If you believe, as I do, that we should get back to the basics of running city government, make your views known at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 18, 2002, at 7 p.m. Your views can make a difference.