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From: Amy Bodek/DV/CLB@CLB
Date: 12/20/2011 09:17AM
Subject: Fw: Tomorrow's LB Council Agenda Item #1: SEA-LEVEL-RISE IMPACTS MUST BE HEEDED
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Date: 12/19/2011 09:57 PM
Subject: Tomorrow's LB Council Agenda Item #1: SEA-LEVEL-RISE IMPACTS MUST BE HEEDED

To: Long Beach City Council, 19 Dec. 2011
Subject: Tomorrow’s Agenda Item#1: SEA-LEVEL-RISE IMPACTS MUST BE HEEDED

Dear Council Members:

Concerning tomorrow’s Council agenda item #1 I write as Long Beach citizen and taxpayer and also from concerns - spurred by many years’ professional involvement as quantitative scientist - for well-informed decisions on coastal and marine projects.

My prime concern is impacts of projected SEA-LEVEL-RISE at and near the project site. I write to ensure that this concern and its implications are ON THE RECORD for your decisions, so that no one will be able correctly to claim before a later court or commission hearing that you were not duly apprised.

BACKGROUND It’s now the 21st century here in the State of California. However, the project and its EIR and the proposed LCP amendment all reek of a former century in a State of Denial. In former days a project design and an EIR and a coastal plan could assume a more-or-less fixed sea level - so that dry land would permanently (for practical purposes) remain so. NO LONGER TRUE. Relative to year 2000, throughout this century the sea is rising ever faster. Conservative low projections call for 1 foot rise by 2050, 2 feet by 2070, 4 feet by 2100.

On top of these baseline levels will come serious impacts from big storms and high tides. And these levels do NOT include potentially fast and far greater rise from what climate scientists are now researching: possibilities of big rapid ice melt or float-off from Greenland and Antarctica.

You can fast learn much more at various California state websites, for instance the California Ocean Protection Council’s climate change page:
http://www.opc.ca.gov/2010/12/climate-adaptation-and-sea-level-rise/

This page has three worthy links: to excellent maps, to the 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy Report, and to Interim Guidelines on sea-level-rise for evaluating proposed coastal projects. The Guidelines are termed ‘interim’ because state and federal agencies (including Army Corps of Engineers) have commissioned a report, due in summer 2012, from the National Research Council. This report will give many local California sea level rise projections: they will incorporate latest science, detail effects of stress events (big storms, high tides), and cover even year 2030 as well as later times.

YOUR DECISIONS Because the proposed project and amendment could have big impact, your decisions must therefore heed some big city responsibilities - legal, moral and fiscal.

One responsibility is to use good information: realistic assumptions and adequate and correct data. This calls for awaiting and using the above-noted report. It also calls for notable changes in the EIR and SEADIP plan amendment:

The EIR and the project design and description, and indeed the SEADIP amendment presume that what is dry land today must remain so long-term. Nature’s long-term SEADIP plan is different: the land will DIP beneath the SEA.

Because the sea IS rising, the project usability lifetime may be short. The intended usage lifetime makes a big difference for evaluating EIR claims: but that datum is missing from the EIR. And if the project is intended to be long viable - for many decades - then the EIR’s claim, that existing levees will surely protect the project from 100-year flood, is dubious.

The EIR also implies tacitly that alleged ‘overriding considerations’ - notably housing - will be of long-term value. No guarantee of that. Elsewhere in the city - for instance my neighborhood - not only has housing been good already for 70 years but with routine maintenance it will be good for another 70 or more. Likely not true for this project on our low vulnerable coast. Nature’s long-term ‘overriding consideration’ is that the TIDE will OVERRIDE.

Another big responsibility - the reason for building codes - is to protect health and safety and security of vulnerable or unsuspecting project users. However, thanks to sea-level-rise and the project’s siting on low vulnerable coastal land, within decades the project users could be at special risk, or find that their properties and activities are no longer tenable.

A final responsibility is fiscal and fiduciary: the city must take care before committing current and future taxpayers’ monies to build and maintain project access and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the maps show that likely within decades the rising sea may well have rendered the area’s roads and pipes and other expensive infrastructure unusable or anyhow degraded beyond hope of break-even-benefit-cost repair.

CONCLUSION Before considering NEW projects in the vulnerable coastal zone, it is the prior obligation of city leadership to confront reality: we are hostage already to far too much EXISTING construction and activity on low vulnerable coast. San Francisco Bay and San Pedro Bay are the state’s prime locales for this. In effect, over many decades we have dug ourselves into a big hole. The first and key step to getting out of the hole is to quit reflexively digging the hole deeper.

Happy Holidays,

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