



Larry Herrera/CC/CLB

08/08/2012 05:00 PM

To Agenda Supporting Docs, "Dennis Strachota"
<Dennis.Strachota@longbeach.gov>, "Ms. Anne Cramer"
<Anne.Cramer@longbeach.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: Covert Council Budgeting undermines public
trust--whatever happened to "transparency"?

From: diana lejins [dianalejins@yahoo.com]

Sent: 08/08/2012 03:35 PM MST

To: Larry Herrera

Cc: Diana Lejins <dianalejins@yahoo.com>

Subject: Fw: Covert Council Budgeting undermines public trust--whatever happened to "transparency"?

Dear City Clerk

Please include in the 8-15-12 Budget Oversight Committee Agenda #6

Working to make the World a better place,

diana

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: diana lejins <dianalejins@yahoo.com>

To: Bob Foster <mayor@longbeach.gov>; Dee Andrews <district6@longbeach.gov>; Gary DeLong <District3@longbeach.gov>; Gerrie Schipske <District5@longbeach.gov>; James Johnson <district7@longbeach.gov>; Patrick ODonnell <district4@longbeach.gov>; Robert Garcia <District1@longbeach.gov>; Steve Neal <district9@longbeach.gov>; Suja Lowenthal <District2@longbeach.gov>; "District8@longbeach.gov" <District8@longbeach.gov>; "CityManager@longbeach.gov" <CityManager@longbeach.gov>; "JohnGross@longbeach.gov" <JohnGross@longbeach.gov>; "george.chapjian@longbeach.gov" <george.chapjian@longbeach.gov>; Laura Dowd <cityauditor@longbeach.gov>; Parks Commission <valerie.davis@longbeach.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, August 1, 2012 6:06 PM

Subject: Covert Council Budgeting undermines public trust--whatever happened to "transparency"?

LBReport.com

Editorial

Openness, Accountability Overdue After Covert Council Budgeting Collides With Assurances On Privately Funded El Dorado Dog Park

Disclosure: LBReport.com has a dog in the publisher's family. Mrs. LBReport.com adopted him from a local shelter because no one else wanted him. The dog guards our house, adores our children, tolerates two cats who don't like him and takes the publisher for a walk at least once and sometimes twice a day.

(July 23, 2012) -- The issue in this editorial isn't about dogs. It's about how some people want to spend money that doesn't belong to them because it belongs to all of

us.

Recently, *LBReport.com* was first (again) to report on a document that surfaced at a June 18 meeting of the City Council's Budget Oversight Committee (DeLong, O'Donnell, Lowenthal). The document disclosed -- for the first time publicly to our knowledge -- what LB's nine Councilmembers wanted done in their districts with \$4.5 million in Long Beach oil revenue for "City Manager Infrastructure Account - Streets, Sidewalks, Parks and other Public Works Projects."

It stemmed from an October 4, 2011 item, agendized by Councilmembers Garcia, DeLong, O'Donnell and Andrews, on allocating \$18.4 million in FY12 expected oil revenue. As part of that \$18.4 million, \$4.5 million was [agendizing memo text] "divided evenly 9 ways for infrastructure repairs in all Council Districts. Funds to be deposited in City Manager Infrastructure account to make improvements to streets, sidewalks, parks, and other public works projects." The Council vote on the item overall oil revenue item was 6-3 (Schipske, Gabelich, Neal dissenting)

What happens when Councilmembers give themselves \$500,000 in public money without pesky oversight or public discussion of exactly what they want done with it? Among the line items listed in the July 18 memo under 4th district infrastructure projects was an "El Dorado Park Dog Park." It indicated \$31,300 had been budgeted and remained to be spent, with \$0 spent as of May 31, 2012. In addition, under "status as reported by departments," the line item stated "Project is estimated at \$65,000; balance funded by the District's discretionary infrastructure budget."

Yes, Councilman O'Donnell's office directed this and yes, it has created a public brouhaha after what the public was previously led to believe.

On November 10, 2011, LB's Parks & Recreation Commission voted 7-0 to support a Parks/Rec staff recommendation to locate a potential dog park in El Dorado Park at the former "Tree Farm" site (maintenance yard north of access road to the Animal Control facility) that would be [Parks & Rec staff agendizing memo text]"funded by Friends of El Dorado Dog Park."

The memo recommended "a timeline of two years by which Friends must provide into an escrow account, the funds necessary to build the EDDP [El Dorado Dog Park] to specifications created by the City, as well as an amount equal to three years of maintenance costs. Pending approval of a sponsorship policy for PRM [Parks, Rec & Marine], staff recommends affirmation of the Commission's prior approval of Friends soliciting donations and sponsorships on behalf of a City-approved project."

Parks & Rec Commissioner Harry Saltzgaver made the motion to approve staff's recommendation "with the understanding that this continues to be a conceptual approval contingent upon funding and other required approvals."

What's taking place now is eerily similar to what happened in 1999 when a former

Council recklessly accepted verbal assurances from a non-profit group that it would raise money to pay off bonds to upgrade LB's Museum of Art. That Council blind boosterism left LB taxpayers holding the bag.

Once again, the public is hearing verbal assurances from a non-profit group.

Once again, some Councilmembers are failing to protect taxpayers while benefiting a perceived political constituency. This time however, the Council has -- thus far -- avoided a publicly recorded vote that would tie them to what one of their members seeks to enable in El Dorado Park.

In our opinion, letting this matter continue to fly below the radar is wrong. The item is undeniably controversial. It has produced sizable public turnouts, pro and con. It would create the third off-leash dog zone in East Long Beach, which already has a Belmont Shore beach dog zone plus a dog park in Recreation Park. That's in addition to other offleash areas at Scherer Park, K9 Corner (9th/Pacific), Lincoln Park (next to City Hall) and Wrigley Heights (Golden Ave. near Wardlow Rd)...and some of those have stirred opposition.

This isn't about "Councilman O'Donnell's money." It's about citywide oil money. Councilmembers shouldn't automatically defer to a colleague when protecting the interests of taxpayers citywide requires taking action. That's especially true on infrastructure that could create ongoing costs...and when oil revenue could be used right now for other sorely needed park or infrastructure needs.

During the Nixon administration, reporters confronted then-White House spokesman Ron Ziegler with a previous White House statement that had been proven false. Mr. Ziegler replied that what was said previously had become "inoperative."

Long Beach taxpayers deserve to know if some on the City Council are making previous public statements about private funding for the El Dorado dog park "inoperative." We urge at least one Councilmember (we hope there are others) to agendize an item that will require openness about exactly how much private money has been raised to date, followed by a recorded vote, up or down, on whether or not to spend any public money on an El Dorado dog park.

We oppose the surreptitious budgeting of public money for an item that city officials and proponents indicated would be privately funded. We love dogs but we object to letting Councilmembers evade voted accountability for spending public money on items for which the public was told public money wouldn't be spent at all.

Working to make the World a better place,

diana