

For Long Beach City Council Hearing (Agenda Item #2) 16 May 2017
'Belmont Beach Aquatic Center' project

Statement, in appeal of the Long Beach Planning Commission's project approvals,
by Joe Weinstein, president of CARP (Citizens About Responsible Planning):

Mayor, Council members, and fellow citizens of Long Beach:

CARP is committed to promote responsible planning in Long Beach. Toward this mission, our resources and 501c4 status enable us to participate in local political campaigns and other relevant actions.

CARP supports upgraded swimming and aquatics for our city. Responsible planning can achieve this.

Responsible common-sense planning calls for an open-minded look at what facilities, and where located, can most effectively and affordably upgrade our swimming and aquatics.

We appeal now - and support all arguments by the other appellants – because, compared with available alternatives, the approved project needlessly embodies serious negatives:

Big extra risks: quake, liquefaction; sea-level-rise flooding and wave action;

Huge extra costs;

In e-mail correspondence with another appellant, Mick Nelson, Facilities Development Director, USA Swimming, stated: "If this project was built at almost any other location and the extremely extravagant exterior was more "normal", it would be in the \$35 to \$45 million range. Case in point--the new facility at University of Missouri at Columbia was \$32 million...' Locally, another case in point - the planned facility at Long Beach Community College.

Extra access time, inconvenience and traffic congestion:

Bad news for everyone: Long Beach residents, day visitors, hotel guests, the project neighborhood and beachgoers.

The project needlessly short-changes us all: swimmers and aquatics participants, users of many worthy and needed but now-underfunded Tidelands facilities, and other Long Beach taxpayers.

Project 'planners' put on nostalgia-inspired blinders to pre-select an inferior site and dismiss others, and heeded a stacked deck of 'stakeholders' - stacked against needed basic recreational and instructional swimming. And the Planning Commission breezily rejected considering the impact of costs, even though the Commission's key duty is to protect facility users, the neighborhood, and city taxpayers from eventually being stuck with a dysfunctional white elephant.

Some folks now hope for extra private funding. In effect this hope is that philanthropists will gladly fund the cause of building a needlessly risky, inconvenient and costly facility, all in order to save city planners from having to consider building a safer, more convenient and cheaper facility.

And the project EIR is legally defective

Please bear in mind that approval or disapproval of the EIR does NOT equate to approval or disapproval of the project itself. You can approve the EIR and reject or postpone the project. You can reject the EIR as defective but approve the project – and go on to implement it after the EIR is duly corrected. No matter how many folks clamor for or against the project, the EIR must be judged on legal adequacy of its information.

The California Environmental Quality Act – CEQA – requires that every substantial project proposal come with a reasonably complete and correct analysis and report (EIR) of environmental impacts – including impacts on public health and safety - both for the project as proposed, and for alternatives. The EIR is intended to enable public and decision-makers to have factual basis – not merely whims – for making decisions on projects.

Sincerely,

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