

Fw: LB Council Budget Oversight Committee - Proposed Study of Street Sweeping
Larry Herrera
to:
Gloria Harper
03/09/2011 10:06 AM
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For the file. Thanks.

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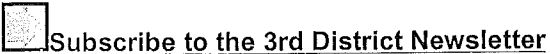
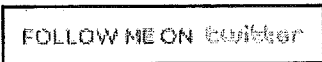
From: Council District3
Sent: 03/09/2011 09:35 AM PST
To: Joe Weinstein <jweins123@hotmail.com>
Cc: cityclerk@longbeach.gov
Subject: Re: LB Council Budget Oversight Committee - Proposed Study of Street Sweeping

Dear Mr. Weinstein,

Thank you for your letter regarding Street Sweeping. I will make sure that Councilmember DeLong receives your comments in preparation for the Budget Oversight Committee meeting.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please contact our office. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Joseph D. Toney
Office of Councilmember Gary DeLong
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From: Joe Weinstein <jweins123@hotmail.com>
To: <district3@longbeach.gov>, <district2@longbeach.gov>, <district4@longbeach.gov>
Date: 03/08/2011 09:52 PM
Subject: LB Council Budget Oversight Committee - Proposed Study of Street Sweeping

March 2011

To: Members, Budget Oversight Committee, Long Beach City Council

Dear Committee Members

You are considering asking for a comparative study between two scenarios for Long Beach's street-sweeping program. One scenario would continue the program in-house, the other would contract it out.

For fact-minded common-sense-minded taxpayers NEITHER scenario makes sense.

NO time-wasting money-wasting study is needed.

Existing available facts make it clear that all but a small fraction of the street sweeping program (the unscheduled fraction that leans up accident sites) is worse than useless, and can and should simply be CANNED!

To aid your decision, please note the following list of 8 street-sweeping myths that are touted constantly in and from City Hall. And please go on to read the 8 simple facts which contradict all these myths - simple facts based on common sense and on data in actual FY 2009 sweeping found in the FY 2011 Budget.

It's time for Long Beach budgeting and budget review to get past the myths, stop ducking behind irrelevant studies, and act on the facts.

Yours,
Joe Weinstein (Joseph M. Weinstein, Ph.D.)
1000 Linden Ave.
Long Beach CA 90807

DOCUMENTED FACTS AND COMMON SENSE
CONTRADICT EIGHT TOUTED MYTHS ABOUT LONG BEACH STREET SWEEPING

Myth 1 - Sweeping is needed for healthy and safe streets
WRONG - see Fact 1

Myth 2 - Sweeping is an important complement to regular trash collection
WRONG - see Fact 2

Myth 3 - Sweeping is an efficient complement to regular trash collection
WRONG - see Fact 3

Myth 4 - Sweeping has positive environmental and civic benefit
WRONG - see Fact 4

Myth 5 - Sweeping is needed in order to enforce lucrative parking bans
WRONG - see Fact 5

Myth 6 - Sweeping costs are negligible
WRONG - see Fact 6

Myth 7 - Sweeping in fact pays for itself and even makes money
WRONG - see Fact 7

Myth 8 - Sweeping is a success because most people seem 'satisfied' with it
WRONG - see Fact 8

Common sense and documented facts together refute each of these myths. Annual data used below are for actual FY 2009, as given in or readily calculated from numbers presented in the city's FY 2011 Budget (Fall 2010) for the Environmental Services Bureau (ESB) of the Public Works Department.

FACT 1 - Scheduled weekly sweeping does about NIL for healthy and safe streets

No one has cited ANY kind of pathogen or safety hazard that can be allowed to sit in the gutter for up to six days but then gets dangerous if not swept up on the seventh day!!

What actually keeps our streets and gutters and even drains clean enough to be safe are the good sense, attention and intervention of responsible residents and property owners. This continuous everyday effort, tailored to the seasons and their impacts, cannot rely on - indeed is scarcely aided by - a few minutes per block of rain-or-shine sweeping on one day of the week.

Of the entire street-sweeping program what is truly useful is not the routine gutter-sweeping but rather the unscheduled accident site cleanups. Everything else, including the removal of usual amounts of potentially and even actually drain-clogging trash, should be in principle - as it is anyhow almost always in fact - the routine responsibility of neighborhood property owners and residents.

FACT 2 - Sweeping does NOT pick up significant trash

The total city-wide annual trash pickup - 10,500 tons - amounts to under 1.3 pounds per week per 50-foot property frontage. By comparison, regular collection from trash bins removes 18.5 times as much debris - 194,100 tons annually. (In addition, regular collection from recycling bins annually removes another 26,700 tons of disposables.)

FACT 3 - Sweeping is highly INEFFICIENT

In cost per-ton of debris removed, weekly sweeping can be compared with weekly pickup from trash bins. For bin pickup, the budget data give a direct cost-per-ton figure: \$40. For sweeping, neither total sweeping cost nor per-ton cost is given, but a per-curb-mile cost is given, as well as total curb miles swept. When these data are combined, the resulting cost-per-ton is \$401.

In other words, each extra pound of debris adds 10 TIMES as much to collection cost if littered in the gutter rather than deposited in the nearest trash bin.

FACT 4 - Sweeping has NEGATIVE environmental and civic (and fiscal) impact

City Hall verbiage greenwashes the sweeping program as an 'environmental service'. In actual fact the sweeping serves to CONTRADICT the message of responsible citizenship and responsible environmental conduct promoted by Litter Free Long Beach. Sweeping sends the message: litter a gutter, and the city (or its contractors) will pick up after you - gratis.

In effect the sweeping SUBSIDIZES BAD BEHAVIOR (gutter littering). Worse (considering Fact 3) the subsidy of each instance of bad behavior costs the city 10 TIMES as much as to support the corresponding feasible good behavior (use of a nearby trash bin).

FACT 5 - Actual sweeping is NOT needed in order to enforce parking bans

The city uses POTENTIAL sweeping as an excuse for weekly four-hour parking bans which - when enforced - can be lucrative (to the city, not to drivers). Use of that excuse and enforcement of the ban does NOT require the city to undertake costly ACTUAL sweeping - any more than the all-hours parking ban at fire hydrants, to permit POTENTIAL use of the hydrants, requires the city to ACTUALLY run a fire truck every four hours to every hydrant.

FACT 6 - Sweeping is COSTLY, and even has dubiously hidden costs

For street sweeping in FY09, the recorded expenditure (in the FY 2011 Budget) was \$2.6 million from the General Fund. Normally, one would expect that a program's stated expenditure would cover all costs of the program's function - in this case sweeping - plus program overhead (fixed costs).

or this program the contrary seems true. The \$2.6 million does not cover even just the calculated costs of sweeping, let alone any program overhead. Sweeping alone (10,500 tons at \$401 per ton) cost just over \$4.2 million. Evidently FY 2009 sweeping costs were also quietly covered by \$1.6 million from other funds not mentioned in the FY 2011 Budget discussion on sweeping.

The FY 2010 Budget gave a partial if disturbing clue on this situation. In that Budget, a brief sentence (in the 'Results Narrative' or sweeping) hints obliquely that in FY 2010, as in FY 2009, sweeping would continue to use \$1 million of funds which in fact the budget allocates to bin pickup, not to sweeping. For this budgetary obfuscation (or - less politely - falsification), the brief humbo-jumbo justification given was that a study had shown that between sweeping and bin-pickup there is a 'nexus' (Latin impressively legal-sounding word meaning simply 'connection').

ACT 7 - Sweeping does NOT pay for itself

Sweeping in fact COSTS money - as we have seen. What DOES pay (the city) is parking bans and their enforcement. Some folks claim that the actual sweeping - as versus simply enforcing the weekly 4-hour parking bans - in fact helps make money for the city. Such a claim uses an old phony-baloney accounting trick, where a source of expense is brazenly bundled with source of income, and then is misrepresented as being that source or as being required for the income.

According to an old story, a wily drunkard habitually pulled that trick. Every payday he would head to the nearest tavern, drink away most of his pay, bring home the remnant, and then brag to his wife that his drinking binges actually made money - after all, every time he went drinking he brought home extra money!

ACT 8 - A 'satisfactory' sweeping program does NOT make the program a real success

SB claims to measure the 'success' of the sweeping program by the high fraction (75%) of respondents to one survey who were 'satisfied' with the existing program.

The measure is uninformative, as the survey apparently noted no alternative to current sweeping (and parking) that would be considered if respondents weren't 'satisfied'.

The measure is anyhow irrelevant. For the city budget what should count as 'success' is not how 'satisfactory' an existing program may seem in isolation, but whether its benefits are impressive when the program is COMPARED with ALTERNATIVE ways to spend some or all the same funds. For instance, Public Works expends 22 full-time-equivalent staff (FTE) on sweeping but devotes only 55 FTE to the city's entire (and woefully inadequate) street-pavements and street-trees maintenance program, including timely replacement of the now many super-mature street trees. An adequate program likely could readily absorb and far more productively aid property values and life quality by using the entire 22 FTE now expended on sweeping.

END: DOCUMENTED FACTS AND COMMON SENSE

CONTRADICT EIGHT TOUTED MYTHS ABOUT LONG BEACH STREET SWEEPING

(Joe Weinstein, 8 March 2011)

Thanks for your read and heed.