

**Letters to the Editor**

**Thursday, July 12, 2007**

## **Knoll Hill should be preserved**

Over the past decade, several organizations such as the San Pedro Bay Historic Society, the Harbor area task force of the Sierra Club, and the Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council have advocated for the preservation of Knoll Hill.

The last relatively intact landform along the San Pedro waterfront is a remnant of our geographic past, offering grand views of the Los Angeles Harbor and great potential as a tree-shaded urban oasis in park-poor downtown San Pedro (central San Pedro has a tree canopy coverage of less than 10 percent, compared with the city-wide average of 21 percent). According to the office of Janice Hahn and the Port of Los Angeles, Knoll Hill will soon become the new home of the Eastview Little League, a private organization.

By what process has this plan been drafted, and who in the community was consulted on the "temporary" gifting of this piece of publicly-owned land?

Title to Knoll Hill is held almost entirely in the Port of Los Angeles - they are close to purchasing the last remaining privately-held lot on the hill.

Unlike most Port-owned property, this is not tidelands under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission, but San Pedro Community Plan area property. On May 10, 2007, Hahn and the Port suddenly came together to announce that the existing dog park would be relocated off of the hill, Eastview would be given a home, and the Port would build the ballfields for Eastview at no expense to their organization. And that expense would not be trivial - no figure has been announced, but regrading the hill for a two-lane roadway, the removal of mature trees, building parking lots and installing fencing, lighting, and turf irrigation systems for four acres of ballfields can't be cheap.

There are obviously many alternatives to building new ballfields on a relatively inaccessible hilltop. The east side of the Palos Verdes Peninsula has many publicly-owned sports facilities: Leland Park, Daniels Field, Bloch Field, Peck Park, and the Bogdonavich Sports Complex at the Deane Dana Friendship Park, to name a few. The Los Angeles Unified School District owns many more, although progressive notions such as facility sharing seems beyond their ability to grasp for now. And, with just a little effort, there are several large, flat open spaces with existing parking and easy street access that would make sense for temporary or permanent ballfields.

Why not simply integrate Eastview's game schedules with other area groups and share space in the interest of community-building and the efficient use of public resources? John Delgado, member of the Leland Park Advisory Board, says that many of the existing ballparks in town are underutilized, with open time slots available.

Currently the only organized use of the space, the dog park, leaves the hilltop open around the clock, free of charge or membership obligations, to persons of all ages and abilities.

Without neighborhood council review, Harbor Commission vote, or pesky CEQA observances, Port surveyors are already out measuring the hill, and a few palm trees have been removed. The folks who built the dog park on Knoll Hill with their own labor and at their own expense have been notified of their imminent relocation to a smaller space just north of the freeway off-ramp to Harbor Boulevard. The community is assured that this is only a temporary, three-year solution.

The situation looks dire. Our local decision-makers have apparently rationalized the sacrifice of rare potential public parkland in this highly urbanized and industrialized area, but enquiring minds have been asking: How did finding a home for Eastview ever become the responsibility of the city of Los Angeles anyway?

Before any more trees are removed, parking lot paving commences, and the genius loci of the hill is destroyed, let's get Eastview, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the YMCA, the neighborhood council, the Port and our Councilwoman to sit down and come up with a reasonable plan, out in the open for a change.

This is a personal opinion, not the official opinion of the full Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council.

- SUE CASTILLO

Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council

Land Use Planning Committee Chairperson

<http://www.dailybreeze.com/opinion/articles/8446807.html>