

**COASTAL SAN PEDRO  
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL**

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**Governing Board Members**

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President  
Liaison to the City Attorney

**DEAN PENTCHEFF**

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**BRUCE HORTON**

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Chair, Recreation and Parks Committee  
Mayor's Budget Representative

**JOHN STINSON**

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Chair, Communications Committee  
Mayor's Budget Representative

**DOUG EPPERHART**

Chair, Rules and Bylaws  
Liaison to the City Attorney  
Liaison to the City Controller

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**SOLEDAD GARCIA**

Chair, Community  
Infrastructure Committee  
Alternate to the Los Angeles  
Neighborhood Councils Congress  
Representative to the  
LADWP Oversight Committee  
Representative to the  
Planning MOU Task Force

**ROBERT GELFAND**

Editor, Coastal Currents  
Representative to the Los Angeles  
Neighborhood Councils Congress

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**CHUCK HAWLEY**

Chair, Public Safety Committee

**MELANIE JONES**

Chair, Cultural Affairs Committee

**LINDA MARINKOVICH**

Chair, Planning and  
Transportation Committee

**WILLIAM ROBERTS**

**KIM STEVENS**

**PETER WARREN**

Chair, Port and Environment Committee  
Representative to the Port  
Community Advisory Committee

**Governing Board Meetings**

The Governing Board meets on the third Monday of each month (March through December) at 6:30 p.m. at the Cabrillo Marina Community Center, Berth 28, San Pedro. The Board meets on the fourth Monday during the months of January and February.

**Councils Host  
Prop. S Forum**

**By Soledad S. Garcia,**  
Chair, Community  
Infrastructure Committee

On January 27, two of our San Pedro area neighborhood councils joined the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce in hosting a debate about the city's Proposition S.

That proposition, marketed to voters as a tax cut and modernization, has been controversial due to the fact that it may create several new taxes on previously untaxed services, including some communications that combine elements of telephone and internet service.

On what turned out to be a cold, wet Sunday afternoon, dozens of concerned citizens came to listen and to offer comments of their own. Walter Moore, a candidate for mayor and outspoken critic of the current city administration, squared off against former Riordan-era deputy mayor Michael Keeley, now an advisor to Mayor Villaraigosa.

Moore stressed the fact that the current 10-percent tax on cell phone use would likely have disappeared anyway, due to a court decision that the current tax, absent voter approval, goes contrary to state law.

Prop. S was therefore created to put the question to the voters and thereby to make the tax legal. In order to sweeten the deal, the city wrote Prop. S to set the tax rate at nine percent instead of the current 10 percent, thereby giving political leaders an excuse to market the measure as a tax cut.

Taking the other side, Keeley pointed out that absent the revenue from the phone tax, the city would lose a substantial amount of tax revenue. In what is already turning out to be a difficult year financially, the loss of the telephone tax revenue would result in layoffs and cuts in city services.

Ultimately, Prop. S passed handily in the February 5 election, winning by a margin of nearly two to one. This tax measure will not only preserve the revenues that proponents of the measure feared would be lost in the event of the measure's defeat, but because of the expanded taxes on cell phones, pay phones, text messaging, paging and private communications, another \$100 million (or more) could be collected by the city each year.

Los Angeles was not alone in facing the loss of telephone tax revenues. Pasadena, with a similar law on its books, was facing similar problems but chose to take a different approach. Pasadena put a measure on its own city ballot, but instead of marketing it as a tax cut, Pasadena made clear to its voters that the measure was written to preserve taxes that would otherwise disappear.

Pasadena residents did in fact pass this measure on February 5 and, in so doing, sent a message to the cynics in our own city who felt that the only way to pass this new phone tax was to deceive the voters.

Treating the public in this way may have long-term consequences. In the November elections, we may see additional attempts at generating new tax revenues, including Janice Hahn's anti-gang measure and a possible transit measure. Will L.A. taxpayers believe city government the next time we are asked to vote for new taxes?

**The Editor's Page**

**By Bob Gelfand, Board Member / Coastal Currents Editor**

**A Love-Hate Relationship**

It started in the late 1990s: In an attempt to stave off secession movements taking root in the harbor and the valley, dual charter commissions wrote a plan to give us, the Joe and Jane Sixpacks, some say in the way our government is run. A new section was added to the City Charter. Section Nine mandates that the city create a system of neighborhood councils. Your Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council (CSPNC) was one of the very first councils to be established, back in December, 2001.

This new system creates a problem for elected officials. The problem is that we exist. We give advice—sometimes unwelcome and unwanted advice—and there is little they can do to make us disappear. They can, however, insult us, throw impediments in our way, or otherwise try to diminish our voice. It hasn't stopped us, and as we grow, our influence expands. We exist by right of the City Charter and are specifically empowered to advise the mayor and the city council on issues that affect our neighborhoods.

CSPNC represents all the residents in the area—if this newspaper was mailed to your address, then you are entitled to participate in the neighborhood council process, to vote for our governing board, to participate in our committees, and to make use of the whole apparatus in order to be heard.

In our half-decade of existence, we have been called on to fight many battles. Just a month ago, the CSPNC monthly meeting was filled to overflowing by people outraged over the proposed construction of a dense condominium development on the site of the former McCowan's Market.

Previously, we fought off an attempt by the Boy Scouts to turn over a section of priceless beachfront property to another private group. We are currently involved in several other land-use conflicts.

We also deal with the Port of Los Angeles. Our concerns regarding air quality have been heard by the mayor himself and are communicated to the Board of Harbor Commissioners on a monthly basis. We're in it for the long haul.

**The Fly in the Ointment**

That same Charter section Nine which allowed us to come into existence contained a provision that the system be reviewed no later than the seventh year of its existence. Out of this additional mandate came something called the Neighborhood Council Review Commission (NCRC), an ungainly beast which was funded by the city council to the tune of half a million dollars. The mayor and city council members appointed NCRC commissioners. The commission hired expensive staff and talked and talked. The commission seemed like a good idea at the time, but readers may consider the wisdom of the NCRC proposals.

One result of the NCRC recommendations is that you, the CSPNC constituents, no longer will be allowed to vote for (or against) your governing board representatives each year. The job of running our elections was taken away from us and given over to the city clerk's office, at a cost approaching a million dollars a year. The clerk, in taking on this job, was only willing to run elections during even-numbered years. What we used to do for free is now to be turned over to a paid bureaucracy, and for that expenditure, the city has taken away our right to determine our own makeup and procedures.

What was originally envisioned as a grassroots system established and maintained by local residents is now being forced into a "one size fits all" governmental straight-jacket.

CSPNC is being allowed to hold one final election under its traditional rules. That election will be in October of this year. Under the city's new mandates, we will not be allowed to hold an election in 2009. In 2010, the city clerk will run an election for us in late spring. This new system also means that governing board terms will now be two years instead of one.

Observers of the city council feel that about half the currently elected members are favorable towards neighborhood councils and about half are hostile or indifferent. Councilman Greig Smith recently managed to push through a requirement that neighborhood council board members file financial disclosure documents in order to vote on certain items. This was widely recognized to be a hostile move, and as this is written, the city council and the city's ethics commission are battling over whether the requirement is reasonable or not.

In spite of the naysayers at City Hall, we keep slogging along and as we do so, we continue to accomplish what was never even tried before. All over the city, neighborhood councils are engaged in land-use fights that in the past were won easily by developers. Now there is a voice for us regular folks.



**Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council Committees**

**BUDGET and FINANCE:** Responsible for the council's financial matters, including budget and expenditures.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Responsible for informing the community about issues and activities related to the neighborhood council.

**COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE:** Considers matters involving public works.

**CULTURAL AFFAIRS:** Considers all matters related to culture and the arts.

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION:** Considers all city planning and traffic and transportation-related issues.

**PORT and ENVIRONMENT:** Considers all matters relating to the Port of Los Angeles and environmental issues such as air and water pollution.

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Considers all public safety matters, including police, fire, and emergency preparedness.

**RECREATION and PARKS:** Considers all matters related to recreation and parks facilities and policies.

**RULES and BYLAWS:** Considers all matters related to the bylaws and procedural rules of the neighborhood council.

If you are interested in serving on a committee (you don't have to be a board member), please email info@coastalsanpedro.org or call (310) 290-0049 and leave a message.

