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# Your City Council Report for April 22, 2014 -- By Anne Carr

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By  
Anne Carr

4/24/14

Correction  
& More Details  
In

our effort to bring you the VIB News Attack fresh from Council Chambers, Marc and I record our podcast immediately following the City Council meeting. On Tuesday, this made for some late-night boo-boos. Here are corrections:

1)  
The amendment to prohibit self-storage at the South Vallejo Business Park had been made via the Planning Commission in 2005. I had said that the 2005 City Council had made the change, which was incorrect. 2) The council packet was 365 pages long, not 356 pages. Note to self: beware podcasting when sleepy!

Tuesday night's  
City Council went to almost 11:30 pm, after which Marc and I huddled into the wee hours to put together a summary podcast.

In  
a 15-minute or so podcast, it's difficult to summarize everything from a 4.5 hour meeting, so the following are bits that either didn't make it into our podcast, or bear more detail.

Tuesday's biggest  
topics were proposed zoning changes for the South Vallejo Business Park, and a sneak peak at a draft 2014-2015 budget. Council ran so late that they decided to skip doing the public presentation from the 2014 goal-setting workshop, and instead merely approved the

report without comment. While we were all eager for the long meeting to end (were those white flags of surrender waving in the back of Chambers?), I hope Council circles back to doing a public presentation of their goals. Inquiring minds would like to know!

Tuesday was also a big night for proclamations and party announcements -- skip to the end for the fun stuff!

Self-storage  
in the South Vallejo Business Park?

Marc  
and I spent a lot of time in our podcast discussing this topic, but in case you prefer reading, here's the scoop:

The initial 1980 Policy Plan for the South Vallejo Business Park allowed for "warehousing," which usually means storage for a particular business, e.g., inventory for retail, etc. However, the Anthony family purchased a parcel in the Business Park with the plan to build a self-storage facility. In 2005, they received a permit -- but shortly after the permit was granted, the Planning Commission amended the Policy Plan to clarify the zoning, and to prohibit self-storage going forward.

The permit to build self-storage expired in 2008, and the Planning Department notified the Anthony family in writing that they could get no further extensions, and that the new zoning (prohibiting self-storage) was not likely to change.

Fast-forward to this year. The Anthony family renewed their application for a permit, and appealed the 2005 prohibition against self-storage. The City Planning Department proposed a zoning change that would allow the permit, but the Planning Commission voted 6-1 to keep the Business Park zoning in place (which prohibited self-storage).

Enter

a whoops-i-doo loophole, and split between the the Planning Department (city staff), and Planning Commission (citizen policy board).

First, although the Planning Commission had prohibited self-storage in their 2005 amendments to the South Vallejo Business Park Policy Plan, those amendments were not ratified by the 2005 City Council. It's not clear whether that was common practice at that time, or an oversight. At any rate, it created a perceived loophole.

Then came a major kerfuffle between the city staff and the Planning Commission over both policy and process.

Process  
oopsie

The Commission had adopted a resolution to prohibit self-storage at the Business Park, but city staff disagreed -- and neglected to include the Commission's resolution in staff's initial packet for City Council.

Uh-oh, that violated Vallejo City Charter, and got the Planning Commissioners steaming mad. Why have a Commission, they asked, if city staff ignored its resolutions, and buried the Commission findings deep in a dense packet of materials?

Staff argued that they had included minutes from the Planning Commission meeting, but those details were buried amidst pages 199-256 of the 365-page packet. If you have ever gone spelunking through a Council packet, you know how easy it is to get lost.

City Attorney Claudia Quintana brokered a compromise, so that in the end, city staff sent both the staff recommendation, and the Commission resolution to Council.

Policy  
split

The arguments for self-storage mentioned the initial permit; the fact

that the facility is across the street from the Sanitation & Flood facility; and that the parcel has been vacant for decades.

Vallejo old-timers also talked about the Anthony's long-standing businesses in Vallejo.

#### Arguments

to prohibit self-storage talked about the need for a business park to generate jobs & revenue (self-storage offers little); that almost all business parks exclude self-storage; that the South Vallejo Business Park is Vallejo's \*only\* current business park; that the park runs along a major entrance into Vallejo; and the Anthony parcel only 1 of 2 open parcels remaining. (Although North Mare Island offers a tantalizing amount of space, the need for toxic remediation and pier foundations make construction there too costly for a standard business park.)

#### In

the end, Council split along Jumpstart/grassroots lines, with Davis, Malgapo, Dew-Costa & Verder-Aliga voting to to change zoning to allow self-storage, and McConnell, Meissner & Sampayan voting for the traditional business park zoning (prohibiting self-storage).

#### Moving

forward, it's not clear how similar Commission amendments might be handled by the General Plan Update. Will they be dismissed if a Commission amendment to a Policy Plan didn't have City Council approval -- or will they be honored? Who decides? What is the criteria? Stay tuned -- I expect the General Plan team will run into a number of similar murky areas.

#### Sneak

peak, first look at a draft 2014-2015 Budget

#### Marc

and I only had time for budget highlights in our podcast. To fill in some details -- first, the study session was advisory only, and intended to give the Council a working idea of what \*might\* be in the budget for 2014-2015. City Manger Dan Keen was looking for feedback, and not surprisingly, the Council amply obliged! Here are some highlights of an early draft 2014-2015 budget -- with the giant caveat that this is all highly subject to change:

\*

Vallejo is on track to have a structurally balanced budget in 2014-2015 -- its first once since 2004-2005. Following Vallejo's exit from bankruptcy, this is a HUGE milestone.

\*

2014-2015 service levels will be similar to those in 2013-2014 (our current fiscal year).

\*  
Although 2014-2015 looks structurally sound, CALPERS is projecting five years of increasing pension costs that will cost Vallejo more than \$1 million extra each year for five years running, 2015-2020. This will undoubtedly prompt some excruciating budget trade-offs.

\*  
Vallejo has been steadily rebuilding its reserves, and is currently at a reserve level of 12% -- close to its goal of having reserves at 15%.

\*  
Sales tax revenues are up 5.4%, and property tax is up slightly. However, program revenues are dropping, partly because of the expiration of grants such as SAFER.

\*  
Much of the General Fund allocations are fairly fixed, with the greatest discretion being around Measure B monies, hence the budget discussion largely focuses on how to spend the Measure B revenue.

\*  
Some of the draft allocations and staffing levels include the following:

Status  
quo funding (or slight change):

--  
Neighborhood Law Program (NLP), staff of 3, \$250,000

--  
Code Enforcement, staff of 2, \$221,000

--  
North Mare Island Security, private security firm, \$100,000

--  
Street repair, \$2,400,000

--  
Dredging the marina, \$300,000

--  
NLP Building demos, \$60,000

--  
Graffiti abatement, \$50,000

--  
Events partnership, \$15,000 (city waives fees for non-profit events)

--  
Rental inspection program, \$55,000 (will become self-funding after 1st year)

Increased  
funding

- Demolition, North Mare Island, \$690,000 (based on a HUD loan, increase by \$190k)
- General Plan Update, \$840,000 (increasing by \$340k)
- Economic Development, staffing of 3, \$650,000 (increasing by \$250k)
- 105 police officers, \$2,750,000 (Increase by \$250k. 110 officers still the goal, but hard to hire that many in 1 year)
- 10 police cadets, \$100,000
- Repair/refresh the Police Department, \$250,000 (1x expense)
- Technology upgrade, \$200,000
- Code for America, \$220,000 (Vallejo is competing for a matching grant from Code for America)
- Public Information Officer, \$60,000
- Retain SAFER Grant positions \$2,000,000 (Increase by \$1,560,000)

#### Decreased/eliminated funding

- Neighborhood Association (-\$10,000) -- requires state constitutional amendment? Instead they will focus on things that don't require budget.
- Volunteer Co-ordinator (-\$75,000). Keens says he wants a more stable management team before they hire.
- Participatory Budgeting, (-\$1.635 million). Keen proposes to keep city staff to administer current PB grants (\$377k), but to zero out PB grants for 2014-2015, supposedly moving the grant allocations to every 18 months, instead of every 12 months. However, the current draft budget does not include a mid-year allocation for new PB grants.
- Tree maintenance, \$50,000 (cut from \$100,000)

#### Thorny allocations

The city currently allocates \$507k for the golf fund, \$700k for marina dredging. Both the golf course and the marina are part of Vallejo's collateral for the city's bankruptcy loan, and in each instance, debt service represents a big part of the funding.

Council  
reaction to draft budget

I admit, by the time we got to the budget discussion, my Council members were just about worn out. However, to give you a few highlights, Davis took the lead with a raft of responses: he wants more police now, and he wants to demolish all the buildings on North Mare Island at once, instead of over time. He wants a budget that's realistic about how many people we can hire in a year, and wants to earmark any excess revenues for Calpers (and extra staffing?) He says the golf subsidies are important for quality of life, and he questioned the staffing budget for Participatory Budgeting (\$377k).

Malgapo applauded the balanced budget, and agreed with the Mayor regarding excess revenue. He especially likes that approximately 40% of Measure B would go for public safety.

Sampayan asked about ways to lower the water costs at the golf course -- perhaps by using the drain water from Syar Industries? He suggested the city look at alternatives for the marina, agreed that the PD needs updating, and proposed that the city look into the library as a space for police and fire administration, with patrol operating out of the PD building.

Meissner asked about how the city accounts for salary savings, and was sad to see PB project funds cut. She said the risk is that once cut, PB might not be restored -- and that PB is a way for the City to restore community services that had been eliminated during bankruptcy.

McConnell asked about the terms for the golf and marina debt service. He also wanted starting dates for new employees (affects funding), completion dates for PB projects, PB staff accomplishments, and status of disaster prep.

### Verder-Aliga

asked about coordinating with the county for disaster pro, and potentially using webinars. She's ok with stretching PB to an 18-month cycle, and she was unclear about North Mare Island plans (reviewed at the March study session).

### Dew-Costa

likes the idea of Economic Development, but she didn't see how the city could devote all its Measure B money to North Mare Island this year (estimates say NMI demo will run \$10 million). She likes Code for America, and also saw "immense value" in Participatory Budgeting, saying that it brings together a cross-section of the community. She suggested that the city give an incentive for participation, correlating participation with the grant process.

### Proclamations & Parties

#### Friday,

April 25, 4pm -- Arbor Day celebration & tree planting.  
Hanns Park, Skyline Dr.off of Redwood Parkway.

#### Thursday,

May 1, 6-8pm -- NextDoor potluck. See NextDoor for details.

#### Saturday,

May 3, 5pm -- Light Up Vallejo event.

#### Monday,

May 5, 5-7pm -- Centro Latino grand re-opening, 530 Broadway St.  
Cinco de Mayo party. Refreshments available, all are welcome.

#### Wednesday,

May 7 -- Tourism luncheon, visit from state tourism bureau.  
Contact Vallejo Convention & Visitor's Bureau for details.

### City

Council made 5 Proclamations Tuesday night: honoring Sergio's crosswalk, celebrating "Little Mexico," announcing the reopening of the Centro Latino, declaring April 25th a Arbor Day, and Declaring May as Tourism Month.

### Worth

noting: Sergio Pelayo's family worked with the City of Vallejo to get LEDs and crosswalk safety at the intersection where Sergio was killed in a traffic accident (Tennessee and Halliday streets), along



with a couple intersections on Broadway. Council member Dew-Costa led the charge on this, working with the Pelayo family, and some of the 13 businesses in "Little Mexico" on Broadway St near Nebraska. Also noteworthy is the reopening of the Diaz & Loera Centro Latino, which is on the 2nd floor of Bere's Bridal, 530 Broadway St.

It's especially encouraging to see some of Vallejo's Latino community step into the political arena. Although Latinos represent almost 23% of Vallejo's population (22.9%), their profile has been low in Vallejo's political life. While Sergio's death is a tragedy, and Rancho Square's struggle against an AT&T tower is unfortunate, it IS great to see some of the Latino community come forward. Bienvenidos!

Another City proclamation was for Arbor Day. Who knew, Vallejo is an official Tree City!

One highlight of Tourism Month will be a Tourism luncheon to be held May 7th at Cal Maritime's new dining facility. Among the guests will be a manager from "Visit California," the official state tourism bureau. Hopefully Vallejo's Visitor & Convention Bureau will wow them with a range of Vallejo's attractions -- not just Six Flags, but also our ferry, open waterfront, the historical museums, the Mare Island Preserve, and historic neighborhoods. For information about the luncheon, contact the Visitor's & Convention Bureau.

Ok -- over and out for the Council Report! Remember -- you, too can join the Council fun, 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, Council Chambers. Hope to see you there!