

# ManhattanBeachSun



The Weekly Newspaper of Manhattan Beach

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## Weekend Weather Forecast

### Friday

Sunny

76°



### Saturday

Partly Cloudy

73°



### Sunday

Sunny

71°



## Pillars of Strength



Photo by Shelley Kemp, www.kemp.photorelect.com.

## Council Lowers Downtown Meter Rates

By Evan Ortega

On Tuesday night, Manhattan Beach City Council members voted to roll back on-street parking meter rates from \$1.25 to 75 cents an hour for the next six months. The unanimous decision came after dozens of downtown business owners filled Council chambers to lobby for the reprieve.

Michael Zislis, President of the Downtown Business and Professional Association said higher meter rates have made things worse for businesses already suffering in a recession. "The reason we are here today is we have to solve an immediate problem that we feel is damaging our businesses," Zislis said.

Zislis added that customers of his Shade Hotel and Manhattan Beach restaurants have been complaining about the higher rates. That has also been echoed by other business owners. "We are just looking for a quick fix here and we're thinking it could be the fix that we need," Zislis said. "We definitely feel the dollar and a quarter is egregious."

City Finance Director Bruce Moe said the City's parking fund would be unable to pay for itself at 75 cents an hour—an amount that would reduce that fund by hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. He said the City might have to dip into its general fund to pay for things like routine equipment maintenance. "You go back to 75 cents and you are subsidizing the parking fund through the general fund," Moe said. "The downtown businesses would have to increase their sales by 25 percent to make up for the lost revenue."

Mayor Portia Cohen said the City should not expect downtown businesses to replace lower parking meter revenues with increased sales taxes. "I'm willing to pay for a vibrant downtown...I'm not looking to see an equal exchange," Cohen said. "Some things we just have to pay for."

Cohen said downtown businesses are an

important aspect of city life, and that the Council should do everything possible to cultivate what she characterized as Manhattan Beach's vibrant downtown identity. "I'm willing to put money out for that because it's something that people value," Cohen said.

Councilmember Mitch Ward said he wanted more input from the public, considering the large amount of money the City would no longer receive. "My belief is if we are going to subsidize the businesses up to \$400,000, then we have to have a broader dialogue with the public," he said. "I value our downtown businesses, but when it comes to spending the taxpayer dollar, I am cautious there."

Owners of downtown businesses argued that although they might contribute less than other larger companies in the city, they remain

an important part of the community. "We're a vital social, economic retail and entertainment center for the residents and taxpayers here who come to see us," said David Levin, owner of the downtown boutique Lulu's. "We're always told that we don't contribute much sales tax to the City."

Levin said that although some high-volume retail stores contribute more in income tax, there are hundreds of downtown establishments that pay business license fees every year. He also said he worried what kind of new establishments would replace shuttered small businesses. "There is a change in the vibrant downtown experience that we've created when small businesses are replaced

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## Happy Mother's Day!

Check out our Mother's Day Specials Section

Find sticker below in THIS week's issue and win!

