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School Board Approves Market Study for Imperial Site

By Duane Plank

Tuesday night's El Segundo School Board meeting, the only scheduled gathering in November, featured approval of the funding for a market feasibility analysis of El Segundo Unified School District-owned property located at 540 East Imperial Avenue. District Superintendent Geoff Yantz had recommended that the Board approve the funding.

The current evaluation process of the nearly six-acre property started four years ago when it was deemed that the facility infrastructure was failing and that repairs were cost-prohibitive. The Board was asked to decide how to develop the property to generate revenue.

A community advisory committee was formed with two primary objectives in mind: First, to take a look at the Imperial property and determine whether it was needed as a school site or whether it was determined to be "surplus." And if deemed surplus, what would the recommendation to the Board be for the "highest and best use for the property?"

The committee met, held public meetings, and concluded that the property was indeed surplus. The group also recommended that the land be developed with senior-assisted housing, supplemented by either residential or open space.

Allan Mackenzie, President of Mar Ventures, Inc., the development company that will be providing the market feasibility analysis, told the Board members, "Essentially, what we are trying to do with the market study is to understand the highest and best use for the property. And the highest and best use is often defined as the most profitable, likely and permissible use to which the property may be put." Mackenzie added that Mar Ventures had received general ideas on usage from the 7-11 advisory committee that had been reporting to the Board.

The market study will include consults with experts on the different options of land usage. The Board unanimously approved funding for the analysis, not to exceed \$40,000. Mar Ventures will research what the land is worth, based on current market conditions, though it will be not addressing any recreational usage. It will then provide a range of options to the Board. Mackenzie said that his group should be able to report its findings in 60 days, probably at the first scheduled Board meeting in February.

Said Board member Bill Watkins, "It is very beneficial to actually have some numbers and know what we are talking about. I think to decide what is going to happen to a piece of land without having information or data is not right. I think that we are really going in the right direction. I am sure a lot of folks will be listening when you make your presentation."

One of the possible uses mentioned for the Imperial property, land that hasn't been used by District students in more than 30 years, according to Yantz, is as an aquatics facility. The perceived need for such a facility in El Segundo was addressed earlier in the

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Remembering Our Heroes



Photo by Rob Fiore. Flags flying in honor of our veterans and soldiers in active duty.

Water Superhero Kids Hope to Save H2O and Parents' Money

By Brian Simon

Come January, local consumers will see their monthly water bills increase as part of a five-year plan to raise rates. For this privilege, we can "thank" the state's ongoing drought, reductions in available supply from the Colorado River and Sacramento Delta, and continued price hikes imposed on the City of El Segundo's own water rates. Not the best of news for folks already feeling the effects of a difficult economy.

But City officials hope a new conservation effort can ease some of the pain, helping water users reduce their consumption and save a few bucks in the process. Though only in its infancy, the El Segundo Water Superhero program will target local H2O consumers through their kids, explained City Senior Administrative Analyst Lauren Mahakian. "Through this program, schoolchildren can pledge to save 20 gallons of water a day and engage their parents in the process," she said. "We'll send home a pledge form and various tips on how to reach that goal." Participating kids will receive a "Water Superhero Kit" featuring items such as a water superhero t-shirt, badge, stickers and coloring book.

While the goal is to include all of the El Segundo campuses in the effort, the City will launch the program with Richmond Street Elementary, which has already gotten a head start by focusing on conservation projects at each grade level from kindergarten through fifth. Spearheaded by upper grade science teachers Lindsay Sharp and Kirsten Larson, the effort will tie into the school's science and/or social studies curriculum. "The overall theme is water conservation and protecting our water resources," explained Principal Dickie Van Breene. In addition to learning about water conservation, the students will take part in and oversee various recycling, composting and planting projects. For instance, the fifth graders will learn about the water cycle, take trips to the Ballona Wetlands and West Basin [Municipal Water District], teach

all the other classes about water conservation, and hold a contest to create a slogan and poster for the City's 2010 Environmental Expo scheduled for July 8, 2010.

Fourth graders will be in charge of recycling and composting for the entire school, while third graders will plant the school hillside with native plants under the direction of the daughter of one of the fifth grade teachers (who is also an environmental biologist). Second graders will work on a worm bin for composting and will also be in charge of composting kindergarten lunch area scraps. Even the youngest kids will get into the act. First graders will plant a small, edible garden using compost, while the kindergartners will learn about water conservation and composting. "We plan to kick this off in January along with the City program," said Van Breene. "We're very grateful to Lauren Mahakian for helping us."

Meanwhile, West Basin is in the process of creating its own district-wide water hero program. Details were not yet available as of press time, but Mahakian was planning to meet with West Basin officials sometime this week. "In any case, we're reaching out for sponsors to help get our own program to move forward," Mahakian said. "As a sponsor, your company and logo would be on the box or environmentally-friendly bag to hold the contents of the superhero kit, the pledge form, and all media materials such as ads in the *El Segundo Herald*, and will be seen at all the environmental events the City hold and or attends. The amount of sponsorship is \$1,000." Raytheon was the first of hopefully many local firms to jump aboard the sponsorship bandwagon, Mahakian was pleased to report.

At the same time water rates rise, the City's new water conservation ordinance will also go into effect. Provisions include requiring persons to adopt drought water conservation programs; requiring leaks to be repaired within 48 hours; prohibiting water landscap-

ing between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.; assessing a 15-minute watering limit per station during permitted hours; prohibiting wasteful use of water such as watering sidewalks or washing cars without a bucket or shut-off nozzle; requiring car wash facilities to use water recycling equipment; requiring restaurants to serve water only upon request; and allowing the City Council to impose water use reductions in emergency situations. Because the intent of the ordinance is to encourage voluntary conservation, potential violators will receive at least one written warning and likely several verbal warnings prior to that before being officially penalized.

As for how to shave 20 gallons of water usage day, the challenge may not be as difficult as it first seems.

Fixing a leaky faucet alone could do the trick, while taking shorter showers or turning off the tap while rinsing dishes or brushing teeth can save over two gallons per minute. Replacing older, high-volume flushing toilets with the low-flow models can save over three gallons per flush.

The new water ordinance will help matters as well. Watering one's yard before 5 a.m. as outlined reduces evaporation and interference from wind, thereby saving anywhere from 20 to 25 gallons a day. Using a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sidewalks will save up to 18 gallons a minute. "These outreach programs will provide reminders and incentives to help people make small changes that can make a huge difference," said Mahakian. "Getting kids involved with water conservation at an early age is also critical in helping them form good habits from the get-go, learn to take care of our limited resources, and take pride in their accomplishment. It's a win-win for the children, their parents and the environment."

In addition to ongoing water programs, the City of El Segundo is also sponsoring two

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