

ManhattanBeachSun

The Weekly Newspaper of Manhattan Beach

Herald Publications - El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Hawthorne, Lawndale, & Inglewood Community Newspapers Since 1911 - Circulation 30,000 - Readership 60,000 (310) 322-1830 Vol. 2, No. 17 • April 23, 2009

Council Approves Dollars to Offset School District Cuts

By Evan Ortega

Local City Council members unanimously voted to give a one-time payment of \$1.3 million to the Manhattan Beach Unified School District Tuesday evening to help offset budget cuts, increasing the City's general fund deficit for the 2009/2010 fiscal year from \$3.6 million to \$4.6 million. Supporters and District employees cheered as the motion was passed. Dozens of District supporters filled the chambers to standing room only capacity, with many of them wearing blue t-shirts. "I commend you for what you are doing--the Dostrict has cut and cut, year after year," said Jennifer Williams, a parent of two children. "The things we are losing now are not fluff."

District officials said the funding would primarily be used to retain teachers and staff members who otherwise would have been laid off. "The bottom fell out," Mayor Portia Cohen said. "What we will do with the money is we will fill programs. And what we mean by programs, frankly, is people. It will be spent restoring teachers in the classroom."

Last year the Council gave the District \$520,000, when the latter faced budget problems. A staff report submitted to the Council states that the City provides nearly \$1 million worth of services to the District annually. This financial support provides water for school fields, school resource officers at Mira Costa High School, and maintenance for Begg Pool. The report also lists more than \$1.5 million worth of "one-time" projects the City has funded since 2003, including a \$6,000 shade structure for Begg Pool.

Councilmember Nick Tell asked why the District needed the money so urgently, noting the City is still crafting its budget for 2009/2010. Councilmember Mitch Ward also expressed concern about the timing of the payment, saying he wished the City could address its own budget first. "Why now? Because right now we are looking at a May 19 election that's not looking food for the state budget," School Board member Nancy Hersman said. "We've got all these students, our teachers, our parents wondering what's going to happen before next year." Hersman said that approving the funds at Tuesday night's evening would allow the District to plan its budget for the next fiscal year, which must be submitted to the state by June 30.

MBUSD Assistant Superintendent Dr. Steve Romines said possible financial support from the federal government would likely be limited to special education funds that would have to be divided among other districts in the state. Romines expressed doubt that voters will pass May's special election propositions to restore education funding. "It sounds like you have no real commitment from any other source," Cohen said.

Councilmember Wayne Powell said that he would rather see the \$1.3 million go into a second special fund, rather than the District's general fund. He also wanted the Council to follow through to see exactly

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Herald Publications: A Dog's Best Friend



WithduerespecttoalltheotherfineweeklynwspapersthatfindtheirwaytomydoorstephereinManhattanBeach,Sammy,our14-montholdGoldenRetrievermostcertainlyhasabias.Onour walks he will pass all the others by until he finds a copy of the Manhattan Beach Sun. Provided by Johnny Shirley.

Neptunians Hear more About the Roundhouse Aquarium

By Karen Russo

Valerie Hill, Administrative Director and Co-Educational Director of the Roundhouse Aquarium, spoke to the Neptunian Women's Club at the latter's April meeting. This was of special significance to the Neptunian members, for the aquarium is one of the services in Manhattan Beach to which they contribute each year.

Hill, who serves as Administrative Director and Co-Director of Education, came to the Aquarium well credentialed with a Bachelors Degree in Marine Sciences from the University of California and a Masters Degree in Biology from Cal State Long Beach. She also worked in Educational Outreach for the Cabrillo Museum as well as volunteering at the Roundhouse while in school. To see her face light up when she talks about her work at the aquarium, it sounds more like play than work--especially when she talks of the children who enjoy the classes they offer.

The mission of the Roundhouse is to educate people, especially children, about sea life and the care of the oceans. One hundred thousand people from all corners of the world visit the aquarium each year. Of those, 10,000 are children. In addition to classes and even sleepovers offered for local kids, many of the kids who come on field trips from their schools just the other side of the 405 have never seen the ocean before. "It's pretty fun," said Hill, "to watch the kids learning something new, or see them kiss a sea cucumber for the promise of seven years of good luck."

Some schools that would like to offer field trips to the aquarium cannot afford the

school buses. Staff and volunteers from the aquarium have done their best to truck in sea specimens, using ice chests and other primitive equipment to transport the specimens to these schools. Then, just this past February 17, the Manhattan Beach Property Owners Association used the proceeds from the sale of a building to donate \$100,000 to the aquarium. The donation was made before the Manhattan Beach City Council. Like all non-profits suffering from lack of funds from

grants and corporate or individual donations this year, the gift is enormously appreciated. It will enable the aquarium to purchase and outfit a vehicle for taking the "sea on the road" across town to disadvantaged schools.

All the fish are native to our area, caught by line or net. Occasionally there is trade with other aquariums as well as sharing advice on care and feeding, particularly with the aquarium in Monterey. Some fish breed

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Spotlight on Seniors: Evelyn Fry 93 Still a Force in the Community

By Karen Russo

It was in 2007 while reading the *New York Times* that Evelyn Fry, a resident of Manhattan Beach since 1938, saw a column about Mobi-Mat, a product of woven plastic, installed along beaches on the East Coast, that enabled handicapped or infirmed people access across the sand to the water. Aha, she thought! A beach person her whole life, she knew that seniors and other people somewhat infirmed here in Manhattan Beach would welcome such a "pathway to the sea."

So this one woman, then 91, spent

the next 14 months with the manufacturer, Deschamps of France, Manhattan Beach Parks and Recreation, and the local City Council in an effort to install a five-foot wide walking path, secured by 15 inch stakes, from The Strand at 6th or 7th Street down to the ocean.

Exhibits of the product were on display at the Parks and Recreation Equipment Convention in Long Beach. Demonstrations were held on our beach to show that trucks and tractors would not destroy the product. "It looked to be a go," she said. "Then the county rejected it." In the meantime, the City

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