

Council

from front page

want to come to you and ask you to spend money that wasn't going to have all three of those components," Roy said.

Mike Quagletti of Upper Manhattan Martini Lounge was the dissenting board member, stating that he wanted to see money spent on marketing. "When we started all of the ideas of the [curb extensions] and improvements, I was all for it at the time...but the reality of it is we bumped right square into a recession," Quagletti said. "Right now the main thing for us to do is to hold on the money we have."

Brett Blazicek of Katsu! Argued that the trees, known as New Zealand Christmas Trees, would block signage, and that curb extensions would cause more drivers to have to parallel park, causing traffic problems. He also said he only knew about one meeting.

Meanwhile, Roy informed the Council about an informal survey indicating opposition to curb extensions, calling it "flawed, incomplete and biased." Quagletti told the Council that he helped disseminate the survey, which Bernadette George of Elegance Spa said she wrote. One of the survey's questions was regarded the trees, which Quagletti opposed. The question was written: "40 New Zealand bushy (messy) trees that require trimming twice per year and 'root barriers' (cost?) OR 56 queen palm trees- indigenous to area- little to no maintenance."

Ward, who served as a liaison to the NM-BID, said the Council goes through a lot of surveys, whether they are created by residents or by the City. He told Quagletti the survey was not very fair. "As an official sitting up here and saying 'we put our trust in the board,' and there is one board member sending out a survey of this nature, it causes me to kind of pause a little bit on the results of this survey," Ward said. "Maybe the words were a little dicey," Quagletti admitted.

The curb extensions were needed in order to install trees and landscaping, Roy maintained. She said 45 percent of BID member businesses are located north of Rosecrans Avenue, and that without the extensions, nearly all of the landscaping money would be spent to the south. "We believe we have a fiduciary duty and a moral obligation to all the members of the BID to spend the money in a way that doesn't favor a certain segment of businesses over others," Roy said.

Todd Manix of Krise's said the board asked

business owners to come and had monthly meetings, which the proposal's opponents did not regularly attend. "It's disappointing because we would have loved to have had that feedback and heard alternatives," Manix said. "While we've seen the opposition; we have not seen any alternate ideas and that's a little bit frustrating."

Business owner Sean Struxness said he got discouraged after attending only a few meetings because he felt that there wasn't good communication between business owners and the board. "I felt like when we said something...it almost felt like they were listening but not really, like their mind was already made up," he said. "That's why you go to one board meeting and you say, 'Why am I here?' They're going to do what they want anyway."

Council members Richard Montgomery and Wayne Powell agreed with most of the project, but ultimately voted against it on grounds of resident opposition to the curb extensions evidenced by dozens of signatures. Ward wished the business owners of the NM-BID could have worked out their issues before going to the Council, and called for them to have better communication. "What I'm finding here is the process needs to be more open and that it doesn't need to be dictated from the board down to the members," he said. "I think moving forward if we have a more responsive board and more accountable board to all its members then we'll be much better when we come before the Council."

Sister City Visitors

Students of the Mira Costa Baja Club hosted students from the Manhattan Beach's sister city Santa Rosalia, after previously visiting them on a trip to Mexico in February. The Costa students and members of the Manhattan Beach Sister City Committee hosted the visitors, taking them to Disneyland, Solvang, Venice and the Santa Monica Pier. Mira Costa student Caitlin Sappington was nearly moved to tears as she talked about the bond the students share. "We all went and saw these baby grey whales and it was probably the most amazing experience ever," she said. "We actually got to touch the whales...the whole experience is incredible. I can't say how nice it is...we all understand each other."

Student Amanda Abel translated for one of the Mexican students, stating that their guests were nervous to practice their English

in front of the Chamber. "They're basically very thankful for having this opportunity, and [said] we live in such a beautiful city," Abel said. "They're grateful for all the things we've done with them."

Abel said Santa Rosalia has a big fiesta every October, and the students want to reciprocate the hospitality Manhattan Beach gave them on their trip. "They invited our families and said if anyone else wants to join them as well, they said it's an opportunity to practice both Spanish and English," Abel said.

Mireya Camarena, one of the adults visiting with the students presented Mayor Portia Cohen with a large, inscribed silver plate, and another smaller one to the students. Cohen presented the visitors with a plaque and Councilmember Ward handed out City pins. "We are so thankful for the volunteers and the students that make this important cultural exchange possible, so that you can realize how similar we all are no matter where we live," Cohen said. "We all support that very strongly up here and were so happy you came here and shared that with us. Gracias, and that's the extent of my Spanish."

Incoming president of the Sister City Committee Mark Ledesma said it was a valuable cultural exchange program, and thanked the Council and residents for support. He added that the program is really important to Santa Rosalia. "They are going back with some used fire equipment and police equipment," Ledesma said. "When our students go there as many as 150 of their people show up and greet them, so it lets you know how important it has been."

Ward said when he first was elected to Council, he visited Santa Rosalia on behalf of the City, praising its residents, wildlife and culture. "I can't tell you how warm and inviting the citizens of Santa Rosalia, how so nice they were to me," he said. "It's a wonderful little village, so come on down there in October. I might to try to get down there myself."

Rotary Club Project

President Jan Rhees of the Rotary Club of Manhattan Beach spoke to the Council about the organization's upcoming volunteer work at Joslyn Center on Sunday, and said the group is discussing a second phase. The Rotarians will paint the inside of the auditorium, plant drought-tolerant plants at the entrance. "For 60 years, we have reached out here in Manhattan Beach," Rhees said. "We are proud to sponsor the older adult holiday party and proud to be expanding our service here to the older adult community." Mayor Cohen told Rhees she was thankful the Rotarians were able to find a way to help the seniors who use Joslyn Center, especially since the City can't afford major renovations.



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History

from page 3

he was happy the last time she saw him and suspected he had been seeing an older, wealthy woman. Captain Clyde Plummer, Chief of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation, reopened the case November 13 on the basis of Mrs. Russell's charges. The Captain believed the death to be a love slaying, involving the two women who lived in the house.

However, the Morrisises told detectives that Russell had often talked of suicide and that he indeed had left a note with Mrs. Morris. When asked for the note, she said she had burned it thinking that the case was closed, showing it only to Lila Lee.

But there was another theory that Russell may have met his death because he knew too much about an international smuggling ring. This came out after Los Angeles police detective Lieutenant Harry Hannsen told the Captain of a conversation the former had with Russell at a wild, two-day party just a few days before Russell's death. This led to suspicion that perhaps Russell did not die on the swing, but was carried there after being shot elsewhere. In support of this was the fact that the rusted barrel of the gun held in Russell's hand showed no indication of having been fired.

Headlines changed from calling it suicide to a love slaying, but it ultimately became a mystery and remains so to this day. The case is still open and investigators found no new evidence. Interest gradually died down in the case, although it was reopened twice more. Each time, Mrs. Morris was a significant witness.

The Morrisises went to live with friends in New Mexico in 1938. A few weeks after arriving, Mrs. Morris, who had gone insane, died. Gouverneur Morris lived until 1953. Lila Lee would go on to do a string of "B" movies until her death in 1974. James Kirkwood Jr., while living with his mother and the Morris family in Manhattan Beach, attended Redondo Beach High School. He went on to become an actor and playwright, winning awards for co-writing *A Chorus Line* and receiving credit for *Some Kind of Hero*. His 1960 book *There Must Be a Pony* portrayed the events surrounding the death of Reid Russell. More information on the case can be found in *A Walk Beside the Sea*.

While murder may have occupied the minds of the townspeople for a while, it soon faded from view and the residents once again picked up the forms of recreation they had temporarily put aside.

Fortunately, there was no lack of acceptable beach sports. In the late thirties, thousands of people crowded onto the beach to watch the aquaplane races from Catalina to Manhattan Beach.

To be continued...



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