

To Whom It May Concern:

Deborah and I just returned from the 90 minute Study Session on Banning Ranch by the Newport Beach Planning Commission. Even though this was only suppose to be a fact finding session, as I said many times now, this project is so political that the vast majority of the Commissions were falling all over themselves kissing the Developers backside. It was so obvious, it was actually sickening.

On the opposing side was Steve Ray, who is now the Executive Director of the Banning Ranch Conservancy, and whom both Deborah and myself donated our public comment time to him, so he would have the time necessary to make an effective presentation as to why this development, in its present state, should not occur. Incidentally, Steve Ray and I go way back, working together when he was Chair of the Huntington Beach Planning Commission. Steve appointed me to a special committee to develop guidelines about donating time as such meetings, which is still in effect in Huntington Beach today, and was actually the model for other cities as well, including Newport Beach.

A lot was covered at this Study Session by both the Developer and the Conservancy. I won't go into all the details here, but some I have already presented to our Newport Terrace Board of Directors as suggestions or guideline in their statement regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) before the November 8, 2011 deadline. As a reminder, it is important to get all public and private comments in by this date, simply because if any lawsuits are necessary at a later time, this foundation must have been established first. Believe me, anything we say or bring up at this stage, will not receive any serious consideration. It is just paving the road for the future (no pun intended).

Like wise, an interesting point about yesterdays Coastal Commission Hearing in Oceanside on Banning Ranch, when it became obvious the Developer was to lose, they quickly pulled the project for consideration by the Coastal Commission. The reason why was very simple, if they did not withdraw their application, and it was voted down by the Coastal Commission, it could not be heard again for at least a year. I told you this was political.

Just as a brief overview of some of what was talked about tonight, was the costs and procedures to clean up the site from all the oil wells/fields. That will be overseen by the Orange County Health Care Agency and Orange County Water Board. The developer claims they are not involved in this; it will be separate agencies doing the remediation. However, when there are large amounts of money involved, there are always influencing factors. You can bet, this will not be independent.

Banning Ranch is the largest parcel of land (unprotected) in Southern California. A large portion of this is wetlands. Likewise, it contains all the elements to support itself an eco-system. The eco-system will be affected by land development. Likewise, the USFWS has declared Banning Ranch as critical to the survival of 93 species of wildlife and much native plant life. There are 55 wetland pools on site, but no acknowledgement from the developer so far.

As I predicted, the developer was down playing Bluff Road, from 17th to 19th Street, along with the need for a bridge over the Santa Ana River to Huntington Beach. They also claimed that that was not even in their proposal, nor was the need to widen either 17th or 19th Streets. Yet as pointed out by the public, of course it isn't, that will actually become reality under a different agency. But believe me, it will happen.

And that brings us back full circle, for talking to Steve Ray again after the Study Session; he acknowledged private talks are already underway by the developer, for some time in the future, to have the 19th Bridge go through. I have said this all along, that the connection of Bluff Road at 19th Street, and the Bridge, is a major and crucial part of the overall Banning Ranch Project. I had already addressed these key issues and submitted such to our Board to present to their attorney, in order to respond on time to the DEIR. In fact, one of my primary concerns about the 19th Street Bridge, which the developer still claims is not needed, was also address to our Board, and something Steve Ray encourage me to privately peruse. That along could be one of the hottest questions one could ask, with an answer that would possibly reveal far more than any of us are being told.

Incidentally, in previous correspondences, I had mentioned that some years ago, I worked with the City of Huntington Beach to help defeat this 19th Street Bridge. I also mentioned that today the political climate has changed, and those with political aspirations in Huntington Beach may think differently now. In addition, Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach and the County of Orange have all developed a Coastal Waters Collective Effort to share and join forces in this regard. That right there could be another incentive for the 19th Street Bridge, especially from Huntington Beach.

Sincerely,

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