

Battle for Last Undeveloped Part of Seal Beach Continues—Advisory Committee Meeting Tomorrow

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The battle to develop, or not, depending on your point of view, the last large beachfront property in Seal Beach is moving into a new phase tomorrow. The City of Seal Beach will hold the initial meeting of the "DWP Specific Plan Advisory Committee" on Wednesday, February 17, 2010, 6:00 pm, in the Council Chambers. The city is labeling this an "organizational kick-off meeting". At stake is the future of approximately 10 acres of prime beachfront land on the West end of Seal Beach.

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Years ago, this land was owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and thus is referred to as the "DWP Property." In a release, the City of Seal Beach indicates the current owner is Bay Cities Partners, LLC. The four partners are Cindy Atkinson, trustee for Atkinson family, Brian Kyle, Bob Griffith, and Rocky Gentner. Ed Selich is the owner's representative.

There are two parts of this property dispute between the owners and the City of Seal Beach. The smaller portion of the property is comprised of two lots containing about 21,000 square feet at the West end of the beachfront. This is where the access road goes down to the parking lot and public restrooms near the River's End restaurant. Even though the owners have offered to donate the land at no cost to the city, back in September of last year, the City Council, in a rather mystifying move, voted to move forward with eminent domain proceedings against the lots. (See Related Article below.)

The other part of the land is the 10 plus acre formerly DWP property where Bay City wants to build a hotel and residents. Although the disputes over these two areas could, in theory, be separated, that does not seem to be what is happening. According to Edward Selich, Seal Beach has been dragging its feet on approval to develop the hotel and the two lots are also waiting the next move by the City.

On January 11, www.OC180NEWS.com asked Mr. Selich if he thought the dispute on the two lots was holding up approval of the hotel project, he said "I believe it is. The application was filed seven months ago, and it isn't even deemed complete, that's pretty bad. Particularly, when they've given us three letters of incompleteness and I've met every one of the things they wanted and they still deemed it incomplete."

According to the statement released by Seal Beach, the application was deemed complete on January 25, 2010 and that is the reason for the Advisory Committee meeting on Wednesday. The central dispute regarding the hotel property is the portion of land which will be open space. The owners are requesting that the plan be modified to set aside 50% for open space, rather than 70% which is currently called for. Selich indicated they need the additional buildable space to fit in the intended 75 room hotel and 55 single homes and stay within the city's height limits.

As for the two lots, Selich said "We're challenging them on the eminent domain." He indicated that there is no need for the city to proceed with taking possession of the property. He said "we're not proposing to prevent them from using the road or keeping people off the beach, or anything like that." And, as he said back in September before the City council, if the city will move ahead with the hotel plan, "We're eventually going to give it to the city at no cost."