

The City Council meeting last night included a significant amount of resident participation received in writing and as public comment in reference to the proposed construction at 421 Via Media and 1509 Espinosa Circle. Both applications (appeals of Planning Commission decisions) were continued to the November 27 and December 11 Council meetings, respectively, for the applicants to make modifications. At 421 Via Media, the applicant was generally directed to reduce the height of the proposed home. At 1509 Espinosa Circle, the applicant was requested to address specific landscaping and propose an architectural change in the second story.

In the context of these discussions and the Council's consideration of both appeals, questions were raised at the meeting about the maintaining the intent and the integrity of the City's Neighborhood Compatibility Ordinance (referred to as "NCO"), the rights of property owners to scenic views from their home, and the Planning Commission's view on both these matters in relation to the Council's perspectives. Relevant to this, it was acknowledged that the City Council and Planning Commission will soon meet in a joint session (date to be determined) to address how to reduce neighborhood animosity that evolves through the NCO application process, balance the property interests of the applicant and neighbors, and the policy objectives of the NCO process. In summary, one of the goals of joint session is to address how to minimize City Council decisions in an appeal that differ from a Planning Commission decision. Related to this and as stated at the Council meeting ([here](#) beginning at 3:42), it is important to note that the interpretation and application of the NCO is based on reasonableness on a case by case basis. The NCO is not applied or based on specific numbers, standard criteria, or a formula. Individuals (applicants, appellants, neighbors), may weigh view impacts, for example, differently. Similarly, the Planning Commission, consisting of individuals (volunteer residents), determines the reasonable mitigations to the impacts of a project. Property owners have the right to develop their property and the NCO is applied as a means to maintain neighborhood character.

Prior to the hearings on these cases, the Police Chief Mark Velez provided a very important and significant community update that generated comments from City Council

members acknowledging the Police Department for their work and voters for supporting Measure E. Chief Velez stated the following:

- In the City earlier this year, there were two home invasion robberies.
- In each case, Palos Verdes Estates police officers quickly responded, took statements from the victims, and collected evidence. Palos Verdes Estates police detectives also responded to each scene.
- The detectives determined the two home invasion robberies were likely committed by the same suspects.
- Through an intense analysis of evidence and data, the City's detectives were able to identify 5 suspects who they believed to be associated with a South Los Angeles gang. With the assistance of the Torrance Police Department, hundreds of hours of surveillance was conducted and additional information was collected.
- The Palos Verdes Estates police detectives developed enough evidence to believe this robbery crew was responsible for an additional 6-8 home invasion robberies committed in various cities throughout Los Angeles County in Rancho Palos Verdes, La Habra Heights, La Canada, Playa Del Rey, and Palmdale. The estimated loss of these robberies is in excess of 1 million dollars each.
- Last week, the Palos Verdes Estates Police Department, with assistance from the Torrance Police Department, served several search and arrest warrants in the Los Angeles area related to this investigation. This operation alone went from 5am to 11pm.
- Five suspects were arrested and several items of evidence were recovered including two firearms, masks, gloves, handcuffs, zip ties, police scanners, "walkie talkies", jewelry, cash and items we believe show gang affiliation.
- On Monday, October 22, the case was presented to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office who filed 60 counts against the suspects. The list of charges include false imprisonment, assault with a firearm, conspiracy, and home invasion robbery.
- All of the suspects have prior criminal convictions and are facing prison sentences ranging from 9 to 196 years.

- We know these crimes can be very traumatic to the victims, and hope that they can take some comfort knowing the suspects who did this to them will be held accountable.

He concluded with acknowledging the City Council for their prominent support of the Palos Verdes Estates Police Department and the budgets they have approved for the equipment that was instrumental in solving these crimes. Moreover, Chief Velez concluded with noting that the men and women of the Palos Verdes Estates Police Department are dedicated to keeping Palos Verdes Estates one of the safest cities in California. To echo these words, we are extremely proud of the hard work and determination of our City's detectives and law enforcement partners whose tireless efforts helped put this case together. The arrests speaks volumes of the value, training, and commitment of our Police Department, and we are grateful for their efforts to keep the community safe.

Three other topics were discussed by the City Council at the meeting. In summary, the City Council approved an "unclaimed check policy," "capital asset policy," and agenda for their upcoming meeting with the Parklands Committee. The two policies can be found [here](#). In addition, the "capital asset policy" will be forwarded to the Finance Advisory Committee to consider if the capitalization threshold for capital improvements is appropriate. The joint meeting of the City Council and Parklands Committee is scheduled for October 30 at the Malaga Cove Library Gallery Room beginning at 6:00 p.m. The final agenda for the meeting will be posted [here](#) late on Friday, October 26.

If you have any questions about the meeting, please don't hesitate to call City Hall at 310.378.0383. Thank you.

Tony

