



Avalon City Council Weekly Update 1-02-15



*In Memory of Tim Mitchell, City of Avalon Harbor Patrol Assistant
January 30, 1975 – December 30, 2014*

Harbor Dept. / Fire Dept. / Public Works Dept./LASD/LACO Fire and Baywatch – 12/30/14 Storm Response

It is with heavy heart that I send this update out following the passing of Tim Mitchell, City of Avalon Harbor Patrol Assistant, who died defending life and property during the in the midst of the crushing storm that pounded Avalon Harbor on Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning. Tim was attempting to save the *King Neptune*, a boat on which he had served as an Assistant Captain working for Scubaluv, when he was crushed between the rocks and sea wall by waves. He will be forever remembered for his ultimate sacrifice, and we are brutally reminded of the shocking power of the sea and storms to which we are susceptible, living here on an island in the Pacific Ocean.

In addition to the loss of Tim, the Avalon community also mourns the loss of twenty-year plus Avalon resident Bruce Ryder, who lived on his boat within Avalon Harbor. Bruce, also known as “Taz” (short for “Tazmanian Devil”, as he was known for doing everything really fast), was a Divemaster and a boat captain who entertained approximately 1,000 dive boat customers over the years. He owned and operated a headpumping service in Avalon Harbor for several years,

and also worked for the Avalon Mooring Service. Bruce died during the storm within the Harbor; his body was recovered by our Harbor Patrol.

The Avalon Harbor Department, the Avalon Fire Department and the Avalon Public Works Departments worked valiantly within extremely dangerous conditions throughout the storm, alongside the City's Los Angeles County Sheriff Department and Los Angeles County Fire Department/Baywatch partners. It was a joint effort that demonstrated the professionalism, expertise and dedication of our City and County employees. Watching the events from the sideline as the storm raged, I was filled with respect and pride for those responding. I will continue to express my gratitude to all who were involved in the effort. The strength of our municipal organization is the sum of our employees, and during times like these, it is awesome to witness the mettle from which we are made. THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR CITY AND COUNTY EMPLOYEES.

I have received a lot of inquiry from the community regarding the potential for public services for Tim and Bruce. Both Tim and Bruce's families are considering the final wishes of their lost loved ones, and will advise in the near future as to whether they would like a public service. I will keep you posted. At our regularly-scheduled City Council meeting this coming Tuesday, January 6 (yes, we will be having a meeting), our own Ron Eroen, Harbor Patrol Officer II and Pastor of the Community Church, will lead the Invocation with a prayer remembering and honoring Tim and Bruce.

City Manager's Office – Vehicle Noise Testing

Vehicle noise testing is back in full swing. We have received the sound level meter and the calibrator back from the lab for testing and recalibration. We will continue to offer testing for new vehicles and retesting for vehicles which have still not passed. Once a vehicle has passed the paperwork stays with the vehicle for the permit year, meaning if you purchase a used vehicle from town that has already passed noise testing it does not have to run through the test again. However, we are strongly recommending that the purchaser bring the vehicle up for noise testing prior to purchase, as once it is theirs they are responsible for noise compliance. We will continue with rental golf cart testing and will be working out specific dates with the companies, and will be implementing Commercial Autoette testing in February in conjunction with the annual vehicle registration time period (February – March).

Fire Department – New Year Safety

The City of Avalon Fire Department welcomes the New Year by encouraging safe celebrations and reminding residents that fireworks in the City of Avalon are strictly illegal. Additionally, the lighted sky lantern type devices are also prohibited throughout Catalina Island.

New Year's Eve is a cause for celebration, but not at the expense of safety. When most people think of fireworks, they think of large bottle rockets, roman candles, and firecrackers; however the ban includes sparklers. Sparklers can reach 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit. In the United States, approximately half of all fireworks injuries are burns; sparklers, fountains, and novelties account for a large number of emergency room fireworks injuries. Illegal fireworks are also the cause of multiple structure, vehicle, and brush fires annually. Those responsible for the use of fireworks can be held liable for the damage caused, as well as fire suppression costs, and parents are liable for damage caused by their children.

Planning Department – Proposed Vons Project

Two alternate loading bay designs for the proposed Vons project will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at the January 21 meeting.

Planning Department – Conservancy Trailhead Project

A remedial grading permit has been issued to finish clearing the site, and temporarily grade the location for use by the Catalina Island Conservancy for their Summer Naturalist program.

Finance Department – Community Plus Business License & Receipts Module Training

Earlier this month, Aliana Gonzales attended the annual SunGard (SUGA) Community Plus module training in San Diego. Community Plus is the module of our financial management system we task with processing our cash receipts and business licenses. Classes attended pertained to enhancements with the software, end of period processing and the all-important-interfacing between this module and the Finance Plus module, which receives the activity and posts it to our GL. Another course area attended we were very much interested in had to do with the Cognos report writing tool as we wish to be able to start writing reports and pulling information from the module telling us things like how many business licenses we issue, what types, who does not renew, and other revenue category reports showing frequency of payments throughout the year. Additionally, Pat Grady, our IT Consultant, was also at the seminar to speak with vendors showcasing other capabilities of the module and to learn more on how to extract data using the Cognos report writing tool.

Finance Department – Legal Settlement & Proceeds

Last week the City finalized its involvement in a settlement agreement with Los Angeles County over excess property tax administration fees the County withheld from FY 2006–2007 through 2011–2012. Avalon was not the originator of the action, but was one of the many member cities involved in the lawsuit represented by Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC. The legal fees associated with our participation were quite small as they were spread amongst the pool members as well as due to the low amount that was withheld from the City over those years. The City is to receive \$13,500 as our share of the settlement quite soon, we're told.

Finance Department – Business Revenue Reviews 2014

Brunell & Duffey (B&D) has held their first series of meetings with the business selected for review pertaining to TOT, Admission Taxes, Harbor Use Fees and % Rent payers to the City. A second set of meetings will happen early this year for those that could not meet in November/December, as well as for operators that prefer to meet on the mainland. The reviews have been going well, but there are a few who have been nonresponsive to B&D. The Finance Dept. has sent follow up letters to these operators to impress upon them the need for this procedural work as called for as a condition of either their Harbor Waterside permit or the Avalon Municipal Code. We have also notified them that we will be withholding issuing their business license and Waterside permit, as applicable, until they become responsive and we can work out an arraignment on how the reviews can be completed.

Additionally, this past week we completed our internal review of the results from the 2013 review work, which were based on final reports received from B&D between March and May of 2014. We sent invoices to those businesses that showed a balance due with all totaling approximately \$40,000. Once the current reviews are completed for 2015, we plan to have a roundtable with B&D in the hopes of developing and sending out a "How to Avoid Miscalculation of Payment Errors" letter to the businesses as an informative tool they can use, and for others to cite so miscalculations errors are reduced.

Finance Department – Catch Up of Accounting and Invoicing

In November and December we spent a good amount of time on finalizing the accounting and sending out invoices covering utilities usage, developer reimbursement agreements and the older business revenue review results. We feel we've identified most of those using utilities of the City and have begun invoicing them, or will be invoicing them in the near future. Typically these are small amounts we now bill quarterly, but over the course of a year, or many years, they do add up. Additionally, we have some developer agreements in place that permit the City to invoice developers for the City staff time and other direct out of pocket costs we incur benefitting the developer's projects. We have finalized internally how to track these costs and have already sent out an invoice approximating \$12K covering the last nine months of 2014. Going forward we plan to send these invoices quarterly, too. Finally, as mentioned above, we're now caught up on invoices surrounding the business revenue reviews from last year and have even begun invoicing those businesses for the current year review if they've been completed.

Public Works Department – Christmas Lights & Decoration Removals

The PWD started removing the beautiful Christmas light displays, and decorations, early this week. In an attempt to organize and prepare for this next holiday season, we are bagging, tagging, and drawing up plans to better assist with a more beneficial installation. This method will avoid a substantial amount of man-hours, as well as circumvent unnecessary costs of purchasing additional materials in the future.

Public Works/Capital Improvements- Desal Permitting Process

Staff has been reviewing the preliminary permitting process that will allow private parties and some businesses to install RO Units (Desal) at various locations where desired. As we have mentioned in the past, the additional brine that accumulates as a result of reverse osmosis processing creates challenges for our waste water treatment plant, as the salinity inhibits the proper preparation of the discharge waters. Due to this problem, studies and investigations have to be concluded prior to the development of a Conditional Use Permit (CPU). Staff believes that this permit development process should be concluded by the end of February, 2015.

Chief Administrative Officer/City Clerk's Office - Code Enforcement Update #3 Animal Control

Code Enforcement is kept very busy with animal control. Our Code Enforcement Officers deal with injured birds, feral cats, dogs at large, sick seals and deceased deer, just to mention a few animal issues. The City, often via the Sheriff's Department dispatch, receives daily calls regarding an animal issue. Code Enforcement is ultimately responsible to respond to these types of calls. The calls can be about a dog at large, lack of a dog license, violation of the leash law, dogs in restricted areas (such as the beach and/or along Crescent Avenue), dog bites, animal noise violation, vicious dog attack, improper care or treatment of an animal, and reports of non-proper disposal of animal waste. Generally, Code Enforcement is required to respond immediately to a call. Each situation warrants specific procedures and actions for them to follow (i.e., the impounding of a dog that has bitten someone, which requires a quarantine and observation of the animal for 14 days).

Chief Administrative Officer/City Clerk's Office - Christmas Tree Disposal

Just a reminder again that Christmas tree disposal is taking place at the former Horse Stables location. Tree drop-offs may occur thru January 14, 2015. All lights, ornaments, decorations, tinsel, and stands need to be removed prior to tree drop-off.

Chief Administrative Officer/City Clerk's Office - City Leases

City leases went out in the mail last week and went into effect January 1, 2015. Tenants have until January 15, 2015 to return their documents.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Harvey

Ben Harvey
City Manager
City of Avalon