

I want to share my story and observation of a small town, Manhattan Beach, California, blessed with the best of Nature's gifts and how the small town's city council has chosen to demonstrate their commitment and respect for one of their most precious gifts.

As a brief personal background, my family moved to Manhattan Beach in April of 1950. I only reference this as a point which may provide some perspective on my relationship with and my respect for the community where I live.

Our town is blessed with beaches that are the envy of those from around the world. Our beaches have expansive unimpeded stretches of pristine sand. Many residents and visitors use the beach not only as a tanning salon but a facility to play Beach Volleyball in addition to other forms of cardio exercise opportunities like running in the sand, ocean swimming, Surfing, Body Boarding, Body Surfing, paddle boarding, kayaking, and stand up paddling. This beautiful environment provides anyone interested with miles and miles of unlimited exercise opportunity with an abundance of available metered parking in the most beautiful panoramic setting possible.

Over the last 20 years there has been significant controversy in a small neighborhood regarding our majestic Sand Dune. Our Sand Dune is the only Sand Dune left in the South Bay residing in the middle of a quaint tree lined neighborhood. This has been and is ground zero for this expose.

In the late 60's neighbors in this small neighborhood built, with their own hands and money a small park in order to clean up a muddy mess and more importantly provide a place to enjoy the outdoors on weekends with families and friends. After many months of hard work the neighbors finished park.

What changed and made this sleepy neighborhood park controversial? As some within and outside the community found the benefits of exercise and running or walking on the Dune, the nirvana of work outs and Hell for the neighborhood was born.

As the word spread in the late 70's the enthusiast's base began to grow. Books published by professional coaches included the Sand Dune as the best place in the world to get your cardio on. With the advent of the internet the wild fire spread across the seas and the Sand Dune became an international magnet for those wanting to experience Nirvana on the Dune. Over time the uncontrolled generosity and availability to the Sand Dune enabled by city management became the fuse on this powder keg.

The neighborhood adjacent to the Sand Dune was designed in the 1940's and was never designed for today's automobiles, heavy traffic, and today's home size. The original homes were designed to accommodate the blue collar workers that worked at the Standard Oil Refinery and Aerospace manufacturers nearby. I remember the homes being referred as 48 specials, most were about 800 square feet with two bedrooms and one bath. This small neighborhood was not designed to accommodate large crowds. Over the past several years the Dune has brought significant overcrowding of up to over 9000 Dune exercise enthusiasts per month which has added 300 to 500 cars each day circling to find nonexistent parking accommodations. The result of this intrusion has endangered children, parking in resident's driveways, air pollution, litter, loud music, racing cars and heated

exchanges between residents and those that have now been entitled by city management's inaction. A comment worth noting when asked by the city council, in one of the many meetings, our Police chief was asked for his assessment of the situation at the Sand Dune said the situation was "HORRIFIC". That might have been a clue to those awake at the meeting.

Over the last year there has been a focus on how to resolve the overcrowded, out of control battle zone. A personal comment on this reminds me of the days in the Jungles of South East Asia and Central American in the late 60's and early 70's, what a mess.

After a year of working groups, council meetings, a decision was finally made by our city council. A decision I categorize as incomprehensible.

I will share how our elected officials have decided to preserve the environment. Their incontrovertible commitment began 18 months ago when they hired an environmental specialist to help better understand how to best support the protection of our environment.

Just a few highlights of how proactive and committed to preserving the environment the city council is:

- 1.) They join, when able, in panoramic group photo opts on earth day.
- 2.) When the city council decided it was important to reduce the cities carbon footprint they placed a few eco friendly vehicles in the city fleet.
- 3.) The city council assures that all lights in city hall are turned off on the World Wide Lights Out night. Now that's a commitment to environmental preservation, don't you think?
- 4.) I will admit that the city has a great recycling process for medications, paper and plastic through our refuse pick up system.

Sand Dune Decision Time:

In January of 2010 the city council made a commitment to the citizens of my M.B. to repurpose the Sand Dune adjacent to citizen built Park to eliminate exercise and overuse and Dune destruction. Progress is being made.

What happened when the lights went out?

Well it looks like this. I will not identify city council members by name because if you are a resident of the M.B. and you don't know who they are, you are part of the problem. What has happened is the result of 18-20 percent voter turnout. It's called Special interest.

I'm one of those people that take my voting responsibility seriously. I'm a little strange, I vote every election process. I am even so bold as to suggest that if your of voting age and registered it is your responsibility to vote. I will also admit that during the election cycle I have been known to place lawn signs in my yard for those that I believe will make an improvement in and protect my community. In fact

during the last two city elections I have placed lawn signs, in my yard, in support of 4 of the 5 current city council members.

Looking back that was a mistake and I take responsibility for poor judgment but I learn from my mistakes. I probably will not be placing signs in my yard or endorsing any of the current city council members as they run for re election or higher office in another capacity.

After 20 years of neighborhood terrorism I finally asked myself what is a city council member responsible for it not to protect the citizens, promote a good quality of life, assure citizen safety and protect and preserve and the environment. I asked the city council members to consider these basic responsibilities while making their decision on the Sand Dune repurposing. After hearing of their decision I obviously don't know what the city council is responsible for. Maybe one of you might ask what their job description is I certainly don't know. By the way if you find out would you let me know?

You should take note that my wife Linda's name does not appear at the end of this expose as she believes an acceptable compromise was made by the city council. Linda believes that this option deserves a chance to prove out. I believe 20 years of terror is enough?

I respect those that give so much of their time to others and their community and I appreciate my city council but believe that if you talk the talk you should walk the walk. The city council has talked the talk but hasn't learned to walk. On the decision regarding the Dune adjacent to Sand Dune Park I significantly disagree with the city council.

The city council has decided to reopen the Sand Dune to Exercise by reservation with a limit of 20 adults per exercise period. This decision made after only a few months earlier they committed to the neighborhood exercise was not going to be part of the Dune access. This decision is absent any regard to traffic congestion, excessive emissions, continued loud music, litter, expenses that are not sustainable in our anemic economy, continued disregard for the neighborhood quality of life, but most importantly child safety and protecting our precious gift, the Sand Dune.

This decision was made at a special city council meeting at the Jocelyn center. Now if you don't think the fix was in one might consider the established rules of order, each person wishing to speak was limited to 1 minute and the total time for dialogue was limited to 1 hour. Many if not all of the city council members may desire continued political office. You may want to watch for future fund raising activities and potential contributors to these current council members. Who is sponsoring them and what money is being raised on their behalf by those that convinced them that exercise is a right for those that have been entitled by our representatives. You might not be surprised.

I believe that each of us as part timers on the planet is individually responsible to preserve the elements of nature we have been blessed with. I know that is my opinion and not all of us see things in the same light but in today's world the awareness of our stewardship is mandatory. I don't think that any one of us has the right to destroy any natural resource and more importantly I don't think any elected official has the right to enable the destruction or continued destruction of Nature's bounty.

By the way I'm a fan of personal responsibility and that includes exercise at my expense not at the expense of others.

Ask yourself this question; is this decision consistent with protecting the citizens of the neighborhood, protection of the environment, improving quality of life? You decide I have.

Lou Le Roy