

NOMA Meeting and Holiday Party  
December 7, 2017

Santa Monica Public Library, Montana Ave. Branch

6:30 - 7:30 PM Holiday Party

7:02 PM Meeting Convened

Minutes approved of the NOMA November 2, 2017 meeting: Danilo Bach motioned for approval. Jeff Gordon seconded the motion.

Board members attending: Danilo Bach, Nancy Coleman, Caryn Marshall, Jane Koehler, Steve Lissik, Phillis Dudick, Jim Williams, Evelyn Lauchenaour, and Jeff Gordon

Report of the Treasurer: In Victor Fresco's absence Nancy Coleman reported that NOMA has approximately \$13000.

Officer Capri Redondo reported on Crime in Santa Monica with attention to NOMA.

Part I: Residential crime and Vehicle crime (beginning on October 1.)

Residential: The few homes that were vandalized were not occupied at the time.

Most homes were entered through the second floor. There are no more than last year when there were 11 burglaries.

Officer Redondo suggested that people arrange for someone to pick up the mail, newspapers, and flyers. Have neighbors watch your home. Arm the security alarms on the second story. Lock all doors and windows when leaving the home.

Burglaries generally happen after 6 pm when the owners might be out of the home.

Vehicle: 10 burglaries happened over the last 2 months, down from 18 the previous two Months. Sunday November 29th, there were 5 burglaries on San Vicente in the 300-1300 blocks. The perpetrators seem to be the same person. Windows were broken in cars. The cars were either parked along San Vicente or in driveways. The same type of break-ins occurred on Adelaide and Ocean Ave. Most hit overnight. They break in because they see items visible through windows.

Keep IDs, titles, and insurance papers elsewhere or block out personal ID information to prevent ID theft.

Part II: Theft and Larceny:

Six events for the period: 3 packages from front door reported, a few bike thefts from subterranean garages. Aggravated assaults 2 this year north of Montana, one last year. One was caused by anger over a car incident and the other involved a knife. Assaults: Necklace was taken off neck by a juvenile.

Some warnings for the Holidays. This is the season for the package thefts and scams over the internet and/or over the phone. Arrange to have a neighbor pick up packages if you are not going to be there or use an alternate delivery address such as an office or a postal center. If you are approached to purchase something over the phone or on the internet, never pay with a prepaid card especially if a caller asks you for a store prepaid card. Most likely this is a scam. Get information and call the company directly to check it out. If you believe it is a "scam" get as much information and call the police. Most likely if you get calls asking for a payment to get a relative or friend out of trouble check to see if it is real – call the person directly to see if they are actually in trouble before giving any information to the caller. Any kidnapping call is most probably a scam.

Don't put a personal check in the mail or your mailbox. Take the payment to the Post Office. Someone

stealing checks and credit card numbers could easily pick up a letter that you think is being left for the USPS to pick up from your mailbox.

Do not leave bags visible in the car and be mindful of leaving valuable articles in the car.

Santa Monica residents may now Text 911 if you feel you are in danger and you are unable to call. Be sure to leave a location so that emergency vehicles can reach you. (This is not yet a method for all emergency calls.

Nominating Committee Chair Evelyn Lauchenaer reported that the Nomination and Annual meeting planning are taking place at the end of January 2018. The Annual Meeting will take place on January 27<sup>th</sup> at the Aero Theatre.

The election for Board members will be held at the Annual Meeting. Only current members can vote so remember to pay your dues. The full slate will be posted 30 days before. We hope All members will attend.

Featured speaker was Rick Cole, current Santa Monica City Manager, who is resident and member of NOMA.

Jim Williams who was a Santa Monica City Manager and a current NOMA Board member initiated questions.

Rick Cole laid out the groundwork for the discussion. Cole pointed out that of 482 cities in California only a dozen have AAA credit ratings; Santa Monica is among the dozen. This is because of Santa Monica's excellent bond ratings. Cole noted that Santa Monica has a large tax diverse base and Strong financial reserves. There is some discussion in the community as to whether Santa Monica's pensions are currently manageable. At the moment the City is paying down some of the outstanding pension liability. Under GASBE -government standards, Santa Monica must accurately report its reserves, assets and expenses. There are only a few cities in the state that are in a similar financial situation as Santa Monica. These include Pasadena, Burbank, and Santa Barbara.

*This is the good news.*

The storm cloud is the pension liability in the next 30 years. Santa Monica is with the 58 counties and the state employees in unfunded pension liabilities that could equal 1.5 Billion and leave Santa Monica 376 million dollars in debt in the next 30 years. Over the last 3 years Santa Monica has paid down by over \$76 million extra in what we were required to pay to Calpers. This has resulted in reducing Santa Monica's debt by 10%.

Nonetheless the pension debt is a worry but in everything but pensions we are in good financial Shape as a city. We fixed 476 potholes, far fewer than LA, and our infrastructure is in good shape.

Jim Williams: How many net and part time positions have been added to the city staff since 2015 when you came aboard?

Rick Cole: We converted part time/ to full time employees with benefits and added Library Service Officers to help cope with the homeless. *In all 58 full time positions were added net* and we project adding NO additional employees. The full time employees do not include the Big Blue Bus who receive not a dime of city money because they are state and federally funded.

Communications Office 4 full time and 2 part time were added.

Also 2 people were added to help with key issues, one on the airport to reduce the runway and the

other to work on homeless issues.

6 to 8 attorneys were added to handle the misdemeanor load and consumer fraud.

5 people were added in technology, 2 in cyber security, 1 person for historic preservation, 2 persons for harbor and pier officers, and 10 persons in landscape and street maintenance when Tongva and Ishihara parks were added.

Our total full time employees number 2250 (58 or about 2% are police officers). One out of every 300 police applicants pass Santa Monica background checks and the psychological tests. The police overtime is high because we can't get enough police passing our standards. We are a high service city, higher than the other 10 cities in the comparison that the Audit Committee's sub-committee on Compensation used.

There have been resident complaints that the City has ignored their concerns. Rick Cole stated some comments of citizens have been ignored but examples of success in cooperating with citizen comments are: The zoning codes have downsized the corridors by taking tier 3 off the corridors. The buffer zone along North of Wiltshire, East of Lincoln has been stepped down to lower heights. Sunset Park has had success with measure L3. The Lincoln plan came from local neighborhoods. The Pico plan wants more density to prevent loss of affordable housing. An Ad Hoc coalition of neighborhood set up committee to study situation. 4th and Arizona when the neighborhoods spoke against the staff plan, the project was reduced by 80,000 feet and the park proposal by Ron Goldman has not yet been decided but is being seriously considered. Jim Williams: When code violations are reported to City Staff, can City Staff make a decision to not take action?

Rick Cole: I suggest the person file a complaint, the go system is where you can track a complaint. We want testimony so we can investigate.

Nancy Coleman: Before the recent ADU State law allowed the building of additional units there were a lot of illegal units. Who knows whether they met code or got permits? Does Code Staff ever look at this issue?

Rick Cole: To legalize? Can we? The workload looking for violations is difficult to do and to revoke after years of existence is hard. We can handle more recent cases. ADU rules are new.

Nancy Coleman: Hedge rules are extremely clear. Yet everyone who brings a variance application has been granted under the guise that others have been allowed. Reports says how many have been allowed in a neighborhood. No notices are put up on these properties if resident does not put up one. These are clear violations to code.

Rick Cole: I will get up to speed on these matters.

Jim Williams: In anticipation of normal growth of capital investments of the City, will there be a need for increases in taxes or bonds?

Rick Cole: Tax overrides will provide funding.

Jim Williams: What major capital projects are anticipated? Which ones are funded or not?

Rick Cole: \$8 million are funded, one for a field park in the Bourget area of City services are funded such as the new fire station and the first phase of the City Yards is funded which was built 40 years earlier. The Pier Bridge is funded and the investment in the water system is funded. The Affordable housing tax ran a surplus. \$10 million for pensions and affordable housing is funded.

The parks, the beach, small neighborhood parks (not much in NOMA), the airport park, a regional park are funded but 2 more soccer fields and a community garden are not funded. If we want to add parks; a bond offering will have to be presented so that is a political decision. Not on my watch, will taxes be raised.

Questions from the audience:

Bob Posek: How much capital will need to be raised for the new City Services Building?

Rick Cole: \$3.3 billion is the legal limit of debt allowed. We have \$62 million in debt on the books for the police building and the main library. The City Services Building will take \$77.6 million to finance.

Bob Posek: In development agreements how are water limitations handled?

Rick Cole: It is a tough time to enforce net zero water demand. State improvements are paid for by gas taxes or by local share of taxes coming back.

Harriet Epstein: Will we have resources to provide water for all additional residents we are allowing?

Rick Cole: Piece by piece. But our population has increased to 92,000 plus and now about 1% per year. The Council requires we use water efficiently. In the 1980s we used more water than we use today. Our goal is independence by 2020. We are one of two communities to use less water. Projections for our downtown community plan indicates 3000 people more but if we continue current efforts we will not use more.

Harriet Epstein: In the 80s, our population was steady but today our daytime population expands by 250,000. Our resident population is 90,000 plus but many may leave without sufficient water.

Rick Cole: Water usage includes all of the hotels etc. so again we use less water under new businesses here than before.

Protests from audience: Medical offices do add to water use. We cannot control UCLA development.

Question: City Staff still parks for free?

Rick Cole: We have built an incentive (\$100) if a staffer gives up parking place.

Question: Why not let them pay for parking as everyone else does?

Sue Himmelrich: We cannot offer a carrot and stick approach. We have given them the perk in the past.

Phillis Dudick: The Courtyard Apartment Historic District was granted 2 years ago. 6 months later the City Staff was supposed to have ready an agreement to provide services to the District. When will that be in place?

Rick Cole: Noted the problem.

Margaret Bach: Do you envision a reduction in City services?

Rick Cole: Government will change in the next 10 years. In 10 years we probably will not have 360 buses or 360 cars less or neither. We will have a workshop on buses: will we be in the business of buses in the next 10 years? The City has contracted 6 vehicles to get disabled and older people to doctors. 90% of these riders going to Doctors do not need wheelchairs and they can call Lyft or other services to get to doctors. Just like Amazon we are digitizing our services. Kate's reference to contractors who digitized parking. In any case, Rick Cole is committed to reduction of staff by attrition, reduction of services, much is political, everything is popular with someone. We may have to make trade offs. There is the golf cart option. For increase of crime we need patrols at night.

Crime is up this year. Aggravated assaults increased by 315 this year. Homelessness increased. More criminals on the streets are predatory. Most crimes are misdemeanors not felonies and so the perpetrators are not eligible for drug rehab.

But Downtown Ambassadors improved the public bathroom situations. Palisades Park found ways to keep the area safer. Who do you call when people are in distress (screaming etc.)? By February you can call to get these people help.

Brian O'Neal? Pre-school? Is there a need for preschool and if there is, is it wise to plop it in neighborhoods? Quasi-judicial hearing leaves the City Council to interpret the law. Conditional Use Permit? Variances are easy to get.

Rick Cole suggested Zoë Muntaner, Founder of Compassionate Santa Monica, answer. Zoe: Mission of her office is to create a 21st century that works for everyone. Sustainable well being--why are we in this?

Ann Bowman: Compensation of Staff: Where are we going? Things that can't go on

forever, don't. Our pensions as committed are unsustainable. Over the next generation, we will have to make intelligent decisions to find a sustainable limit.

Rick Cole: We hope to hold the line at the cost of living 1.7%

Evelyn Later: I have lived here 90 years. I now live at 1427 Euclid. I have gone to Santa Monica City Schools and City College. I also lived at 1072 Pearl and 25 Georgina. Now the City is so busy, so commercial, the over development and the train to LA are spoiling everything.

Meeting ended: 8:45