

Introduction

This was written by me, John Sisker, on the Newport Terrace and Banning Ranch Conservancy Board of Directors. (This is just for your general information only; may or may not reflect my personal opinions, and not necessarily that of any other Board and/or Affiliations.)

At a previous Newport Terrace Board meeting the subject of the Newport Banning Ranch Development vs. the Banning Ranch Conservancy was brought up at a public comments session. Since I am also on the Banning Ranch Conservancy Board of Directors, Monica Kerr asked me to write an article on this subject for the Terrace Topics.

I had this done and complete in two days, but it never did see the light of day for some reason. That is, until now. Time has a way of changing perspective, so with all the emphasis currently focused in the Renovation Rollout information, things such as Banning Ranch naturally took a back seat, that is until now.

The Newport Beach City Council just voted 6-0 for full and total approval of the entire Newport Banning Ranch Development, so this very subject is now backing in the public eye. However, as a Banning Ranch Conservancy Board Member, this was expected. For, the real decision will actually come from the California Coastal Commission.

Banning Ranch From Our Perspective

By John Sisker

We can easily break this entire development down into two (2) main camps; do you want and like the concept, or want nothing at all? The Newport Banning Ranch Development is the whole enchilada, everything Newport Beach and the developer want. The Banning Ranch Conservancy (and other similar organizations) on the other hand, is at the total opposite end of the spectrum. That is, no development at all, just open space.

Naturally, it's not quite that black and white or simple, with many people choosing somewhere in the middle, and for a variety of reasons. But, that's their right. And just as there are degrees of developments, there are naturally various aspects of what we term as open space.

We all need to remember; even so-called open space in this case can be a sort of a semi development in a way. Just for a park for example, there will still need to be roads, parking, restrooms, utilities and sewer lines, lights and numerous other infrastructure, and yet this all has to be maintained. So, open space in this particular sense may not be what some think as basically nothing at all, or in other words, the way things looks now. Of course, personally, I would rather see it that way with simple and/or passive parks, than a mass building of residential houses, apartments, condos, townhouses, large commercial areas and resort hotels, and of course the traffic and congestion that would bring. That is probably why I was asked by Steve Ray, Executive Director and Terry Welsh, President, to be on the Board of Directors for the Banning

Ranch Conservancy. I am very much aware, yet open minded. Plus, I am also not locked into any one or limited position.

Yet, the closer we, or any other association, is to this proposed development itself, that naturally influences our perspective. When Deborah and I first moved here to Newport Terrace, because of my related background, I (along with a few others) was asked by our Board to assist them in catching up in their response to the just released Draft Environment Impact Report (DEIR), in helping to format their letter to their attorney for review before submitting it to the City of Newport Beach. Time was a major and key factor in this case, and the Board in trying to represent the community as a whole, felt some development could in essence increase our overall property values in the long run, plus it would also help clean up the blighted areas of Costa Mesa that we all have to drive through now just to get here.

On the other hand though, along with this development, did come with some major negatives, so the Board itself had to weigh the pros with the cons. Therefore, and in spite of opting for slightly less overall residential development, our board was emphasizing no 19th Street Bridge and Bluff Road to officially end at 17th Street, instead of connecting up to 19th Street. Likewise, the Board did not include or endorse any of the commercial and/or resort/hotel aspects of this overall development.

It should also be noted, however, that the Board was speaking mainly on behalf of the Board itself, not necessarily each and every resident, who has always been free and actually encouraged to submit their own views on this proposed development. Yet, the Board did need to speak up at this particular time, for not matter how they presented their findings, if any of these issues were not brought up now, they would miss any opportunity to bring them up later if necessary from a legal standpoint. That's why their attorney was involved.

Unfortunately, and in all likelihood and in even spite of what any of us want, say, print or do, The Newport Beach City Council, will be voting for this entire development anyway. Remember, this is big money politics at work here. And as I just said in this introduction, the Newport Beach City Council did indeed vote for this entire project anyway, just as I and many others said they would.

Now what? That would be the next step, which the city and developer are actually expecting. And that's why some need to expand their mindset that what limited things are said now, are somehow etched in stone. Actually, far from it. For the real fight has yet to begin.