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News

On 5-4 Vote, Council Approves Port Payment/Redevelopment Reimburse On Aquarium Debt, Debates Proper Use of Redevelopment Money



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(Sept. 1, 2009) -- Following a Sept. 1 afternoon "budget workshop" (in which the Council couldn't take action on alternatives to FY10 budget cuts proposed by city management and Mayor Bob Foster) the City Council held a closed session on negotiations w/ multiple city employee labor unions and LB Art Museum real property-related item.

The Council emerged shortly after 7 p.m. with no announcement of voted actions...although Mayor Foster said the discussions were important to the budget.

The evening's regular Council meeting, which was supposed to begin at 7:00 p.m. with presentations from citywide LB elected officials, didn't get underway until nearly 7:20 p.m...and was taken up largely with discussion a Redevelopment Agency agreement to reimburse the Port of LB for shouldering the Aquarium bond debt (that the Aquarium was supposed to pay on its own but was previously paid by City Hall).

The Council session was marked by extended discussion of Redevelopment...with Councilwoman Gabelich presenting sophisticated graphics as she enumerated projects promised but not completed in NLB. Councilwoman Gabelich cited Redevelopment's purpose to fight blight...and objected to city management's continued use of Redevelopment monies to provide what should be city-funded services.

Vice Mayor Lerch said that although he supports the Aquarium portion of the transaction (effectively taking the debt off City Hall's books), he would not support the Convention Center part of the deal (opposed by the West Industrial Redevelopment PAC). The Convention Center

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portion of the transaction involves \$27 million of city debt owed to Port on a 1990s loan to expand Convention Center...which would now be paid from Westside Redevelopment Project Area tax revenues attributable to the Port's proposed expansion of Pier S.

Vice Mayor Lerch made a motion to separate the Aquarium and Convention Center portions of the two issues. The motion failed 4-5 (Yes: Schipske, Uranga, Gabelich, Lerch; No: Garcia, Lowenthal, DeLong, O'Donnell, Andrews) after Andrews initially voted "abstain" [not allowed], then indicated his vote was "no."

A motion to approve the entire RDA/Port/Aquarium + Convention Center/Westside transaction the passed 5-4 (Yes: Garcia, Lowenthal, DeLong, O'Donnell, Andrews; No: Schipske, Reyes, Uranga, Gabelich, Lerch).

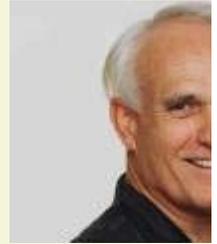
The Budget hearing, which was scheduled to begin at 7 p.m., began 10:09 p.m...with presentations by elected officials on their budgets.

Councilmembers Gabelich, Reyes, Uranga and Schipske objected to some management raises, scheduled for FY08 but instead reflected in the FY10 budget. City Management's Director of Financial Management, Lori Ann Farrell, said the raises reflected in the FY10 budget reflect a matter of timing, not substance.

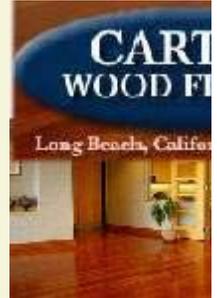
City Prosecutor Tom Reeves sought restoration of a portion of his budget that had been proposed for cuts.

There was no Council discussion of alternatives to the city management/Mayor proposed budget.

The Council adjourned at 11:09 p.m...without scheduling Council meetings prior to the Sept. 8 session (or "continuing" the City's Mt. Wilson presence. For now, it appears to be the only scheduled Council session for action.



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