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No Action Taken In Ruling Of Wetlands-Area Destruction

by Ryan ZumMallen | Long Beach News | 10.12.09 | [f](#) [✉](#) [★](#) [📄](#) [📡](#) | Text Size: +

The City of Long Beach's Zoning Administration today approved permits for 2H Construction to perform weed abatement on a 9.38-acre zone and apply a 6-inch soil cap on the land, nearly seven months after the action had already been performed without proper permits or notification. (The LBPOST.com covered the event [live on Twitter.](#))

Planning Officer Derek Burnham approved the "after-the-fact" permit process that essentially pardons the grading that 2H Construction performed over two days in March without applying for necessary permits or checking for coastal-dependent plantlife or wildlife in the area.



2H Construction owner Sean Hitchcock purchased the land from previous owner Tom Dean on March 9, and began grading his new property on March 19 and March 20 - when the City issued a stop work order that had to be continually enforced before earth-movers finally ceased operations. Hitchcock has come under fire for claiming that he was simply following an order from the Long Beach Fire Department to clear weeds on the property. Some point out that Hitchcock and 2H Construction have handled many large-property projects both in Long Beach and coastal zones and should have been very aware of the need for permits and laws preventing the actions that occurred.

Burnham explained that in such a situation, Hitchcock could only be ordered to pay twice the amount of the permit cost as penalty, and that he had already done so. More than twenty public speakers called for an order to restore the land, but Burnham ruled that no such action could be taken because the land had been so destroyed beyond recognition that there was no way to tell what plants had previously occupied the area.

"We're going to lean to the side that there were never plants on the site," Burnham said, to groans from the audience. "There is no evidence that those plants were coastally-dependent or native. I don't see cause to restore anything on the site because I don't see anything to restore it to."

Two speakers appeared on behalf of Hitchcock and 2H Construction, lawyer Charles R. Hokanson (pictured, *right*) and senior biologist Ty Garrison.

"This site is and always has been, essentially, a dump," said Hokanson, speaking about the land's past use as a landfill for decades, beginning around 1939 and continuing until 1961 according to reports. The statement was immediately contested by Burnham. Hokanson backed off the statement, but it did not help the feeling that 2H Construction knowingly acted in defiance of regulations and did so without regret.



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- LBPOST.com Managing Editor Ryan ZumMallen keeps up with the current and breaking Long Beach news.

Ryan ZumMallen is a graduate of the CSULB School of Journalism campus' Union Weekly news Sports Editor for one year. numerous news and sports as well as television experience ABC Channel 7.

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Garrison, a senior biologist with SWCA Environmental Consultants, presented his report that in his examination of the land - which occurred after it had been razed by earth movers for two days - there was no evidence of vegetation needed to indicate the site could be determined wetlands. These statements were hotly contested by public speakers who appeared after him, who claimed that the land was home to several coastally-dependent plant species and was a possible nesting zone for endangered sparrows.

Twenty-two speakers appeared in stark opposition to Hokanson and Garrison. One speaker said he doubted that the land resembled wetlands, but conceded that there were likely ecological benefits to the land that now sits as a flat plot of dirt. The prevailing feeling among most speakers - which consisted of environmentalists, residents living near the site, a CSULB biologist and a professional botanist - was that Hitchcock was receiving a "Get Out Of Jail Free card," and that harsher penalties should be taken. One speaker suggested his 2H Construction company not be allowed to do business with the City for five years, and then only after he had torn down his own house.

The District Weekly's Dave Wielenga reported this morning that the ruling will be appealed. If and when that does happen, the decision will be brought to the City Planning Commission. If it is appealed again, it will go to the Coastal Commission.



Opponents of the actions of 2H Construction show their disapproval during the hearing.



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Ryan's Community



Dozens wait to address Planning Officer Derek Burnham at the Zoning Administration hearing.



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October, 2009

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562Matt

WEAK! If this had been Joe Citizen, the fines would've been crazy! Thanks for reporting back on this.

tbpb3

I am glad that is over

NA

Idiotic

Mike Kowal

More City Hall BS. This should have been heard at the Planning Commission level, then if necessary appealed to the Council! Why you ask wasn't it? Because DeLong and Foster don't want to hear anything about the wetlands or their 'buddy club' members, Hitchcock and Dean!

JR Salazar

Well! So much for that.

KCinLB

SAD and WEAK! These guys must be laughing themselves silly at how easy it is to get away with habitat murder by just playing dumb.

not crazy

Hello all you crazies. Have you driven by there? Mr. Hitchcock may intend to do something valuable with this land, perhaps benefitting the community at large. This is urban infill property!!!

Living in the area

It was an ugly weed-infested area! It's time to allow people to do something with it. These same opponents probably would have opposed building the green belt that runs along the east side of University Park Estates. It would have been the same situation. And look how great it is now. I applaud

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