

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 19, 2010  
**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Kenneth Frank, City Manager

**SUBJECT: FRIDAY UPDATES**

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**Invasive Plants** – We are starting to enforce the Municipal Code regarding invasive plants on private property. Our local landscape architect has donated time to identify key areas which need to be eradicated in Laguna Canyon and Bluebird Canyon. The Fire Department Weed Abatement Coordinator will be contacting these property owners to work with them on eradicating the plants. If the cost is too great, we will allow eradication over several years.

**Hedge Height Process** – The City staff has prepared an agenda bill for the Planning Commission meeting on September 22 to discuss ways in which the hedge height process might be modified. This issue should be to the Council before the end of the calendar year.

**Traffic Light at Emerald Bay** – The Emerald Bay Association has recirculated the Mitigated Negative Declaration for a Caltrans permit to put a stop light at the main entrance to Emerald Bay. The City staff has reviewed the document and believes the project is similar to the Association's proposal more than a year ago. At that time, several concerned members of the Emerald Bay community approached the City Council to express their concerns with the installation of a stop light and the other provisions such as widening Coast Highway slightly, moving the entrance gate, etc. The full Mitigated Negative Declaration is available on a disc in the City Council office. However, the attached materials summarize the project. I have included a letter from one of the neighbors who has concerns so that the Councilmembers can understand that point of view. At this point, the City staff is taking no action on the proposed environmental documentation.

**Street Resurfacing** – Preliminary resurfacing work consisting of asphalt patching, crack sealing and curb repair has been taking place over the last two weeks on streets in the Top of the World neighborhood and the area between Park Avenue and Thalia Street. Beginning next week, streets in these two areas will be resurfaced with slurry seal. Three weeks of resurfacing in these two areas will be followed by two weeks of resurfacing in the area between Downtown and Boat Canyon and three weeks of resurfacing in South Laguna.

**Food Waste Diversion Program** – The Montage has received a second state-of-the-art food dehydrator as part of a regional program designed to divert food from the landfill and reduce the City's carbon footprint. The City, in partnership with Mission Viejo, Irvine and the unincorporated areas of Ladera Ranch and Las Flores, received a \$400,000 grant from the County of Orange OC Waste & Recycling to provide for on-site food waste diversion with the assistance of Waste Management. The Food-dehydration machine reduces food waste by 93 percent by drying the food waste at 180 degrees for about 18 hours. The output resembles coffee grounds and is used as fertilizer by the Montage.

**Creating Parking Places in South Laguna** – On August 26, the DRB will be considering a Public Works plan to add paving along streets in the Coast Royale neighborhood. Nine additional spaces would be created if approved by the Board.

**925 Oriole** – This project is to replace the extremely large, highly visible building at this address which was destroyed during the Bluebird landslide. The property owner is entitled to rebuild the property as it was before. The applicant come in with a 5,800 square foot home and the Board will need to determine whether the proposed residence is more in keeping with the character of the neighborhood than the prior residence which was destroyed by a disaster.



*File  
Culbert*

## NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF RECIRCULATED MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

### EMERALD BAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

This is to inform the general public that the County of Orange proposes to adopt a Recirculated Mitigated Negative Declaration for the following project:

**Project Title:** Emerald Bay Safety Improvement Project

**Project Description:** The project proposes to improve the Emerald Bay Community main entrance at PCH and Shamrock Road. The improvements consist of widening Shamrock Road ranging from 25 to 30 feet, relocating and reconstructing the existing guardhouse, which will be relocated approximately 40 feet north of the existing location, and grading of Shamrock Road and the adjacent slope to accommodate the widening of the road and landscaping. A traffic signal, a raised median at the intersection of PCH and Shamrock Road, and street striping and signage will be constructed within the Caltrans right-of-way. A draft MND was originally circulated for public review on June 3, 2009. A number of refinements to the project have been included related to the proposed construction improvements within the Caltrans right-of-way on PCH. Specifically, the refinements include: widening in area of right-turn pocket, providing an 8-foot sidewalk area for the existing OCTA bus stop on the northwest quadrant to meet ADA standards, revising roadway geometrics on PCH to maintain the existing 7-foot-wide southbound right shoulder, revising the raised median island on PCH from 2 feet in width to 1 foot in width, increasing the northbound right-turn pocket from 14 feet to 16 feet, increasing the southbound left-turn pocket length from 200 feet to 250 feet, and increasing the southbound acceleration lane pocket length from 300 feet to 400 feet.

**Project Location:** Pacific Coast Highway/Shamrock Road, Laguna Beach, California

**Project Number:** Mitigated Negative Declaration/Permit Application #PA080047

**Public Review Period:** July 16, 2010 through August 17, 2010

The Recirculated Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study Environmental Checklist, as well as all referenced documents, are available for public review at the Orange County Public Works Department located at 300 N. Flower Street, Santa Ana, California and the Emerald Bay Community Association office, 600 Emerald Bay, Laguna Beach, California. Please submit any comments on the Recirculated Mitigated Negative Declaration in writing to the County by 5:00 p.m. on August 17, 2010. Please direct your comments to: Ms. Chris Uzo-Diribe, OC Public Works Department, 300 N. Flower Street, Santa Ana, CA 92703 or to the email address below.

If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please email Ms. Uzo-Diribe at [chris.uzodiribe@ocpw.ocgov.com](mailto:chris.uzodiribe@ocpw.ocgov.com) or call at (714) 667-8845.

## Facts Regarding the Emerald Bay Signal Proposal

### Proposed Signal at Emerald Bay (Shamrock Drive) and Pacific Coast Highway

1. The EBCA and EBSD boards have been disingenuous in presenting the facts regarding their application to Caltrans to the Emerald Bay and wider Laguna Beach Community. In early publications the board stated that "Caltrans is recommending....." and that "Caltrans considers this such a serious safety issue they are putting it on the fast track..." and "Caltrans would pay for this if we waited but we don't want to wait," etc. In fact, Caltrans has never approached Emerald Bay to put in a signal. Caltrans basically does not like the idea of stopping traffic on PCH. In fact Caltrans will not pay for the signal because Caltrans does not consider this intersection to be a safety problem. (Cindy Quon, Director Caltrans District 12) Emerald Bay is required to pay the entire cost for this signal application.

This section of PCH, by the way, is within the City of Laguna Beach. The City of LB should be concerned with stopping traffic on PCH within the City of Laguna Beach. The EB application has been rejected by Caltrans at least 5 times in the last few years and still has not been approved by Caltrans. Caltrans, in one of their most recent evaluations is requiring ***"revising geometrics on Pacific Coast Highway"*** to completely reconfigure the intersection by adding 5 feet to PCH at the right turn lane, extend merge lanes, maintain the right shoulder of 7 feet, a raised median alteration and many very serious alterations to PCH along the Laguna Beach portion of PCH at EB.
2. The proposed signal at EB and PCH is being evaluated by Caltrans for a left turn signal into and a left turn signal out of EB. Caltrans, after performing their own independent evaluation of the intersection, stated in writing that a **"signal is not warranted based on the accident history of this location."** Caltrans found that "Peak Hour" and "Four Hour Vehicular Volume" warrant requirements are met.
3. To stop traffic on PCH for the convenience (ingress/egress) of Emerald Bay is unfair to those travelling through the intersection on PCH. Emerald Bay has six gates other than the Main gate for entering and exiting the community. Additionally, because of the configuration of PCH, EB is requesting "Exceptions to Mandatory Design Standards" of Caltrans requirements. Design standards are what they are for safety and mobility reasons. Exceptions on such a busy stretch of highway should not be considered.
4. Two other private communities handle perceived traffic flow problems with no left turn signs. Smithcliffs has only one exit and the exit has a no left turn posted. Irvine Cove has two exits and both have no left turn signs. Emerald Bay has six exits for residents and guests to use. It is unnecessary for anyone to ever make a left turn out of Emerald Bay! Furthermore, the intersection of Aliso Creek and PCH in Laguna is similar to the EB

intersection (downhill and around curves in both directions). That extremely busy intersection with beach access has no left turn signs in both directions.

5. Plan calls for guardhouse to be pushed back only 40 feet. Our group of residents opposed to the installation of a signal propose that we have no signal, preserve beautiful Swanson Park and have two entering lanes, one exiting lane thereby taking some of the pressure off of vehicles entering the main gate from PCH. This can be done without a signal, without destroying Swanson Park, without stopping traffic on PCH and without reconfiguring PCH!
6. A report from KPC Environmental found in the MND dated June 1, 2009, states that ***“Although there is an increase in queuing for traffic making a left off of south bound PCH and left out of Shamrock onto PCH as a result of signalization,” ..... An increase in queuing!!*** The warrant being evaluated will result in greater, not less congestion at the intersection. I think all of us who live in Laguna are familiar with the left turn signal into Boat Canyon. Drivers frequently have to wait so long that they exit the left turn lane back into southbound traffic and make a left at the next corner. I recently sat at the Boat Canyon left turn signal for over 5 minutes and it never turned green! With the EB signal application foremost in my mind, I have taken note of wait times while making a left turn off of PCH. Going south bound on PCH I stopped at Crystal Cove shopping center to make a left turn. While waiting I counted 35 times I could have made a safe left turn with traffic breaks had there not been a signal for a left turn there.
7. Finally, I want to address a false statement published in the Laguna Beach Independent on July 3, 2009. ***“Between January 1, 2005 and January 30, 2008, there have been 11 accidents at the intersection, including 1 fatality.”*** This was reported in the Willdan Traffic Study prepared for the EB Board. For months our group requested to see a list of the 11 accidents cited by Willdan. When we finally obtained the list and carefully researched using SWITRS and Laguna Beach PD records, we found that only 3 accidents actually occurred during that time period at the Main Gate. The other 8 happened between Smithcliffs and Irvine Cove, but all accidents for the ½ mile stretch along PCH had been attributed to the Main Gate.

I can provide you with written evidence on any of the above points. Research shows that when a signal is installed at an intersection where fewer than five accidents per year have occurred, there is actually an increase in accidents. In summary, a signal at EB and PCH would result in ***“greater queuing,”*** more accidents, destruction of natural beauty, greater noise, air and runoff pollution at the intersection.

Thank you very much for your time! Please call me if you would like further information.

Patty Collisson, 801 Emerald Bay, Cell 949-228-2811; Home 949-497-2523.