



Santa Monica Daily Press

GETTING SPIRITUAL
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Since 2001: A news odyssey

THE LATE BREAKING ISSUE

FAA demands halt to jet ban

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Editor in Chief

CITY HALL On the day before a ban on larger, faster jet aircraft was to go into effect at the Santa Monica Airport, officials with the FAA filed a cease and desist order calling on City Hall to put the decision on hold until the federal agency can complete an internal investigation.

City officials said Wednesday that they planned to proceed with the ban on Category C and D aircraft at 12:01 a.m. today and will have officers with the Santa Monica Police Department issuing citations to pilots or operators who break the law.

"The City Council has decided that the city must go forward with the implementation of the ordinance to protect public safety, so we are proceeding," said Kate Vernez, assistant to the city manager.

The FAA claims the ban is likely unlawful because it would restrict access to aircraft that currently have the right to land at the airport.

The council enacted the ban in March after roughly six years of negotiations with the FAA failed to generate an agreeable plan that would improve runway safety at the airport.

City Hall and the FAA have been at odds over operations at the airport for years, with

federal officials resorting to legal action to prevent City Hall from enacting a management plan that called for the elimination of larger aircraft. That led to a settlement agreement good through 2015, at which time many residents and city officials hope they will be able to gain more control over flights.

City officials are concerned about the lack of runway safety measures to protect residents against the possibility of jets overrunning the runway. Some homes are located within 300 feet of the ends of the runway, and the number of Category C and D aircraft using the airport has increased by about 30 percent over time.

Combine that with the fact that the airport has no runway protection zones or safety areas to protect against a possible runway overrun, which city officials believe are the makings of a possible disaster in which many lives could be lost.

The FAA has made several offers to install runway safety areas and collapsible concrete at the west end of the runway to protect against overruns. The concrete, called an Emergency Material Arresting System (EMAS), is a precautionary safety measure protecting against aircraft from overshooting the runway and into homes. It is meant

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Talarico asks for more time

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL A meeting between city and school officials regarding special education, which for weeks generated buzz regarding its potential implications on the future of district funding, saw an anticlimactic end Tuesday when Superintendent Dianne Talarico asked the City Council to continue its hold on \$530,000.

The suggestion came more than three weeks after the release of an independent assessment of special education at the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, a department that has come under fire by parents and city officials for a lack of transparency and an alleged culture of fear.

The assessment was among several conditions placed on the district by city officials last summer in order for schools to receive the \$530,000 increase in local aid. Strings were attached to the cash after parents of special education children contacted councilmembers informing them of the district's practice of issuing settlement agreements and confidentiality clauses, dubbed by parents as "secret deals."

Among the conditions was for the district to place a moratorium on confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements unless requested by the parents.

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RIPPING THE PLACE APART

Major progress is being made on a redevelopment project that promises to remake Santa Monica Place into a radically different shopping center than its previous incarnation. Workers removed much of the wall facing Fourth Street on Wednesday afternoon. Work will continue until 2009.

Brandon Wise brandonw@smdp.com

RIFT members drop off John Hancocks at City Hall

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Editor in Chief

CITY HALL An initiative aimed at fighting overdevelopment and traffic congestion in Santa Monica is likely headed for the

November ballot after the resident group sponsoring the measure announced Wednesday that they have collected close to twice the required signatures.

Proponents of the Residents Initiative to Fight Traffic (RIFT), collected 10,295 signa-

tures from Santa Monica voters and submitted those signatures to the City Clerk's Office on Wednesday. By law, RIFT needs the signatures of 10 percent of registered Santa Monica

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Supporters awaiting clerk's count

FROM PETITION PAGE 1

voters, or 5,800 signatures, to qualify the initiative for the local ballot in November.

"We found that residents, in overwhelming numbers, agree with us that development and traffic in our city is 'out of control,'" said Diana Gordon, co-chair of the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City, which is sponsoring RIFT. "Santa Monicans are tired of commercial overdevelopment and ever worsening traffic."

While the number of signatures is important, equally noteworthy is the number of volunteers passionate about the issue who joined SMCLC and spearheaded the petition drive, Gordon said. Volunteers hit grocery stores, post offices, public events, and even went so far as to invite residents into their homes during the final push to help make it easier for them to sign.

"Over 100 residents gathered signatures as part of an historic movement to give residents the right to control and pace future development and related traffic impacts in Santa Monica," Gordon said.

Proponents and traffic experts say that commercial development is a prime source of Santa Monica's growing traffic congestion. RIFT would place an annual limit of 75,000 square-feet on new commercial development for the next 15 years. Schools, hospitals, religious buildings and other community-serving development would be exempt.

The initiative is supported by all five neighborhood groups and is opposed by the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. Officials in City Hall have also expressed some concerns about the initiative, as it would be coming before voters before the City Council has a chance to approve a comprehensive overhaul of development policies and land use.

Tom Larmore, president of the chamber, said previously that the initiative's definition of commercial development is too broad and would hamper efforts to upgrade hotels, movie theaters and medical facilities that sup-

port local hospitals. He also expressed concerns about its affect on building workforce housing through commercial partnerships.

Gordon said the initiative would protect many of the chamber's members, those being the smaller mom-and-pop businesses that are facing competition from larger chains.

"Residents have said time and time again they want to keep independent retailers, the hardware stores, shoe repair stores, in our city and RIFT really helps that to happen," Gordon said.

SMCLC plans to raise money to fund a campaign in support of RIFT. So far the SMCLC political action committee has raised roughly \$50,000, much of which was spent on the signature drive, Gordon said.

Like Santa Monica, a growing number of Southern California communities are putting traffic congestion and overdevelopment limits before local voters. Newport Beach, Thousand Oaks, Oxnard and Redondo Beach are either working on traffic-related initiatives or have enacted them in recent years.

The City Clerk has 30 days, excluding weekends, to verify the validity of the signatures. If the petition qualifies, the City Clerk will present the petition to the council at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

The City Council may do one of the following:

- Adopt the ordinance, without alteration at the regular meeting or within 10 days.
- If petition contains 15 percent of voters' signatures and a request for a special election, order a special election; if petition contains 10 percent of voter's signatures, place the proposed measure on the ballot of the next regularly scheduled municipal election.
- If the council has not yet done so, council may order a report.

Should the council order a report, it will be presented to the council no later than 30 days, at which time the council may adopt the ordinance as presented or call an election as indicated above.

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