
Time to Put Divide Behind Us

That the residents of Rancho Palos Verdes are divided over the issue of paying an annual fee for storm-drain repairs is not surprising. That the divide, as evidenced by Wednesday's outcome of a mail ballot, is split almost right down the middle also is not terribly alarming.

What is surprising is that 45 percent of some 12,400 affected property owners cast their ballots, a pretty remarkable number given that previous City Council elections saw turnouts in the 20-percent range.

Both opponents and supporters of the fee — which will effectively cost RPV property owners who use the city's system an average of \$86 annually for 30 years to pay for storm-drain repairs — deserve recognition for their hard work. Surely, the information distributed by both sides during the last few months (much longer for the city, which favored the fee) had something to do with the relatively large turnout. That the user fee directly hits residents' wallets is another reason.

The tiny, 50-vote margin of victory speaks greatly to the divisive nature of this issue; truly of any issue that asks residents to tax themselves for the greater good of the community. Those who voted against the fee stated a number of reasons for doing so, from a general distrust of government spending to the idea that a fee was not the best solution to fix an apparent infrastructure problem. Those who supported it obviously felt that the city staff, consultants and residents who worked for years to devise a solution had come up

with the best in the user fee.

Now those residents who at times fiercely disagreed over this issue need to put aside their differences and prepare to tackle other important items on a unified front.

There is much yet to discuss in the city of RPV. Next Tuesday, council members will get their first public look at perhaps the most controversial development proposal in the city's history: Jim York's Point View project. York's plan to tame a portion of the Portuguese Bend Landslide Complex so that he can build dozens of luxury homes is arguably one that could change the face of the Peninsula as we know it today.

Expansion at Marymount College, a hotel at the Trump National Golf Club and ongoing traffic issues all demand residents' full attention if the decisions governing them are to be considered solvent and secure. And don't forget, there's still hundreds of acres of open space to purchase and preserve, in what will be a monumental undertaking that involves a concerted effort from every resident.

The user fee was a hard-fought battle on both sides, but the outcome, though close, was clear. Residents in the end decided that paying today for better infrastructure was better than waiting around for unrealized funding sources or, even worse, letting the whole system fall into disrepair.

So let's close this chapter and concentrate on the issues that stand before us. All of us.