

City Council Meeting Recap — 2/23/21

5 G Wireless Update

The City Council voted 4-1 to approve an ordinance that amends "Guidelines for Site Selection and Visual Impact and Screening of Telecommunications Facilities." This will help guide 5g providers who would like to establish service in Laguna Beach.

5g promises extremely high internet speeds in the upper range of 800 megabytes per second. Typical high-end internet cable speeds are in the 200-300 megabyte range. 5g will also allow for cable TV services and eventually mobile voice and much higher speeds for mobile devices.

Some residents are still expressing some concern about 5g radiation exposure and aesthetics.

Antennas on light poles are the main installation sites, but more poles may need to be added by 5g providers. Laguna must insist on a video or simulation that shows where and how many extra poles may need to be installed. I'm working with Verizon to provide this information.

Current plans call for 5g implementation in 2022.

Rivian Theater CEQUA Appeal Withdrawn

The Laguna Beach Historic Preservation Coalition has dropped its appeal to stop the conversion of the Laguna Theater into the Rivian showroom and small theater (see story above). See more

Thanks to Mark Christy, I was able to get the two parties together to discuss their differences. After meetings and several discussions with the City's Planning Manager, Scott Drapkin, the parties agreed to minor changes that would enhance the historicity of the proposed renovation.

The City will approve the changes without going to the Planning Commission or City Council for further approvals. This demonstrates that by getting people with different views to talk and work out their differences, projects like the restoration of the theater can be resolved for the benefit of our beloved town.

Emergency Services Coordination Agreement With The County of Orange Approved

The City Council agreed 5-0 to consider the benefits of improved coordination between City departments that provide public safety police services and the County's departments that provide similar services.

Fuel Modification Amendment Discussed

The City Council discussed an amendment to an existing ordinance that would create major new landscaping standards and restrictions for new homes and major remodels. The amendment takes the restrictions currently on structures in high fire risk areas that abut open space and expands them to cover 87% of the City's area.

There are three distinct components to the amendments. The first allows residents to get a free fire safety review of their site by a fire inspector. The second component covers landscape restrictions on new homes and major remodels – typically 13-24 structures per year.

Over time, these restrictions on placement and types of trees, shrubs and plants could change the look of the town.

After a thorough vetting of the benefits and consequences, the Council voted 5-0 to fund a consultant study that would review 50-100 homes previously approved, and determine what impact the proposed new restrictions would have.

The Council also agreed 5-0 to review State Bill AB38, which will impact 65% of Laguna's area beginning July 31, 2021.

Carmageddon II Coming April 1

Remember when the downhill length of 3rd Street was closed? Expect more of the same as two lanes on Pacific Coast Highway between Broadway and Ocean streets will be closed 24/7 from April 1 until May 15-30.

The City Council will be voted on a proposed agreement with Traffic Management, Inc., to fund traffic management systems that will help with traffic flow during this time

The City has a thorough traffic mitigation plan that will be using a large number of traffic control personnel to direct traffic around the site using surface streets.

This plan, which approves spending well over \$200,000 was approved by the Council 5-0.

Second Budget Update For Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Surprisingly, TOT revenue (hotel taxes) was down by only 17% between last July 2020 and January 2021. Sales tax revenue was down by only 13% during the third quarter of last year.

Wow, Laguna did much better than anyone thought possible! But it appears the the City's revenues won't be back normal until sometime in 2022.