

San Pedro's struggles with volatile issues will spark solutions

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Problems? Yep, Pedro has its share.

And there's no shortage of debate over possible, if sometimes unlikely, solutions.

Just take two of the town's recent issues: Where to locate youth sports fields? How do we keep people from venturing too close to the Point Fermin cliffs?

Many of the ideas for how to solve these challenges can -- and will be -- ruled out right away. Others could provide at least a launching point for another solution down the road.

And in the meantime, they give us plenty to talk about.

First, the cliffs.

This is an issue that dates back over a decade and resurfaces whenever tragedy strikes.

The beauty of the cliffs is a magnet for many residents and visitors alike. The view at the southern edge of Point Fermin Park near Sunken City is absolutely breathtaking, with the ocean waves crashing against the rocks below -- way below -- the sheer cliffs.

Sometimes, people decide to climb over or find a way around the walls -- to get just a bit closer. They're courting disaster, of course. But while most survive the calculated risk, a few don't.

The debate over whether more fences/barriers and warnings are needed or not resurfaced again this week when Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn met with friends and family of Megan Maynard, the 19-year-old Long Beach woman who tragically fell to her death in the pre-dawn hours of April 6.

More nighttime patrols in the area, some say, would help keep people on the right side of the fence -- coupled with stiffer fines for trespassing.

But the idea of erecting a bigger fence hasn't gone over too well with many residents. They were swift to e-mail their comments after the story ran Tuesday in the Daily Breeze.

"If I were to put my hand into the whirring blades of a lawn mower and lose my fingers, I have failed to heed the warnings," wrote one. "What more can be done? Will they also insist upon fencing off Yosemite and Yellowstone? This is plainly ridiculous. Is common sense dead and buried in America?"

And this from another reader: "Where is common sense? I feel safety should begin at home and be taught. More signs, fences, helmets (and) knee pads are not going to protect anyone who will not use common sense."

I'm sure we'll be hearing more about this issue in the next couple of months as the councilwoman meets with law enforcement authorities and neighborhood groups to discuss possible short-range and long-range solutions.

Then there's sports fields.

It almost makes you dizzy to listen to the many ideas about what could be moved where to make room for something else.

The immediate issue has to do with Eastview Little League, a youth baseball organization that now has only a little more than two months left at the former DiCarlo bakery site on Gaffey Street and Capitol Drive. For now, Eastview is preparing to dig in for a fight with Target, which purchased the property.

They won't move, they say, unless there's some kind of permanent site nailed down. (This could get interesting in the next several weeks as Target prepares to begin construction.)

There are ongoing efforts to find some kind of solution. Four of the more creative ideas being floated in recent days:

- * Get the city to pursue eminent domain (on either the Target site or Amerigas).
- * In a complex suggestion involving land swaps and mitigation from Bisno Development, move Cooper High School out to Angels Gate school district property, then have the district swap the old Cooper property to the city for youth recreation.
- * Move the Knoll Hill Off-Leash Dog Park to Angels Gate Park and dedicate the top of Knoll Hill to youth sports (although this would again be only a temporary solution since the hill falls under restrictive state tidelands trust guidelines).
- * Find a way to qualify the fields as a permanent use for port property by putting them under the state tidelands "maritime commerce" category (say, by giving the Port of Los Angeles a cut of the snack bar sales or parking fees).

Whatever answers emerge, one resident wryly remarked, this much is probably guaranteed: Someone, somewhere in San Pedro, won't like it.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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