

# LOCAL NEWS

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12 SEP 94  
PAGE 1 of 1

## Mayor chats with Panetta about acquiring Navy land

**By Natalie Shore**  
Staff writer

LONG BEACH — It isn't every day the mayor of Long Beach has the ear of the White House chief of staff.

But on Friday, Beverly O'Neill had Leon Panetta's for a total of 10 minutes — enough time to lobby the former California congressman to help Long Beach secure surplus Navy property for local use.

For more than a year, the city has been ready to take title to property used for housing Navy families, O'Neill said. That's basically what she told Panetta in three conversations at the Hyatt Regency in Monterey.

"I think he's in a position to do a lot. He can contact the defense secretary or the Navy," said the mayor. "We want to have the logjam broken ... and put the land to good use."

The 135-acre Westside property has been earmarked for four

uses: transitional housing for the homeless, a research center for California State University/Long Beach, two public high schools and a federal job training center.

O'Neill described Panetta as receptive, and said she has furnished him with data he sought on the project.

Both events where they spoke were political fund-raisers for Rep. Sam Farr, D-San Jose, who is seeking re-election. O'Neill seized the opportunity to enlist Farr's help, too.

"He understands base closures and the transfer of land to cities," the mayor said. In Farr's district, the federal government successfully handed over Fort Ord to local jurisdiction.

She also spoke with Farr about the merits of the Monterey Aquarium. An aquarium is a major component of Long Beach's Queensway Bay plan.

For O'Neill, the trip was groundwork before taking her case to Washington in two weeks. With one transfer down, she feels it will be easier to acquire the naval station and hospital.

"You really have to do one at a time."



**O'Neill**