

Peninsula Beacon

Opinion

Camp Nimitz Decision Meets Community Needs

Guest Editorial
By Byron Wear

San Diego faces the land use decision of the decade with the impending closure of the Naval Training Center (NTC). One of the most difficult decisions the NTC Reuse Planning Committee has had to face is the fate of the Camp Nimitz portion of NTC.

There have been two competing proposals for use of this 102-acre parcel of land. The San Diego Fire and Police Departments requested that the majority of the buildings and infrastructure be preserved and used as a Regional Public Safety Institute for training firefighters, police officers, lifeguards, and paramedics. The Port District has requested the land for airport expansion to accommodate aircraft and automobile parking.

On April 3, after reviewing the proposals, the Reuse Steering Committee directed staff to seek a solution which would allow both requests to be partially met. Responding, I hosted a meeting between all concerned parties and unveiled a plan to retain the Institute's viability while allowing the port to build eight additional gates on the west side of the current ter-



minal construction project. The Port District rejected this option, saying their minimum requirement was for the eastern half of Camp Nimitz. Dividing the parcel in half, would gut the Public Safety Institute by removing several key training components.

San Diego and the region desperately need a new training center for law enforcement and public safety personnel. The Port has other options for expansion on its current property. What I continue to advocate is, if the Port (which has no master plan and is awaiting

a new FAA capacity study) must have additional gates, they can be accommodated on a 10.5 acre parcel of Camp Nimitz which will minimally impact the Public Safety Institute and an endangered least tern nesting area.

In fact on April 24, the NTC Reuse Planning Committee adopted my proposal to site the Regional Public Safety Institute at Camp Nimitz while providing the Port acreage to add eight new gates to their Immediate Action Plan terminal expansion. My plan also allows the Metropolitan Wastewater Department to consolidate its water quality analysis labs, in conjunction with San Diego State University's Coastal and Marine Institute research programs, in a new facility on the site. This proposal also maintains a site for a new hotel which will provide tax revenue for paying for infrastructure improvements on NTC.

The Reuse Planning Committee and its consultants have worked hard to provide a concept for NTC which incorporates the needs of the San Diego community for parks, waterfront recreation, museums, cultural activities, and commercial enterprises. The Police and Fire Departments submitted a

thoughtful proposal to meet a pressing need for public safety training and reutilization of existing facilities at minimal cost to the taxpayer. The Port, in contrast, seeks to raze existing buildings and pave over a least tern nesting area in order to park cars and airplanes on this waterfront real estate.

Additional parking for airplanes can be accomplished by creative use of existing land on Lindbergh Field and the soon to be vacated General Dynamics lease on Pacific Highway. International flights and cargo operations could be conducted on the General Dynamics site which will be available in 1997. This would free-up additional gates and parking areas at the current cargo loading area on Harbor Drive. Airport use of the approximately 90 acres on the north side of the runway would provide a better transportation nexus with the Pacific Highway, Interstate 5 and railroad/trolley lines.

I remain dedicated to meeting our community needs for public safety and air transportation, but I will not compromise the integrity of the Regional Public Safety Institute. San Diego deserves no less.