

Random Lengths – Mar 23 to Apr 5

# Ponte Vista Popular-Or Is It?

*Support Clouded by Conflicting Data, Refusal to Release Question Script*

By Terelle Jerricks, *Editor*

**R**obert Bisno may have intended for the poll revealing support of the Ponte Vista project to be a step in the direction of a compromise with community activists, but it may have only hardened their resolve to fight it—particularly since it may have raised more questions than it answered.

Last week, Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin & Associates (FMM&A), a public Opinion research company commissioned by Bisno, released a report that at first glance showed broad community approval, but in actuality appeared more designed in isolating the activists opposing the project. The report contained contradictory results, and Bisno refused to release the telephone script, which community critics described as a "push poll" designed to persuade, rather than simply register attitudes. Activists were further incensed when they learned that Bisno had fired Victor Griego, a neutral mediator that has been helping to bring the two sides closer to agreement. In a letter to the Ponte Vista Community Advisory Committee (CAC) president, Bisno suggested that the reasoning for the termination was that Griego didn't feel he was "accountable to the party paying the bill."

FMM&A, whose client list includes Council-woman Hahn, conducted a random sample survey of 500 registered voters living close to the proposed 62-acre, 2,300-unit project to assess the level of support for the project. The survey was conducted by telephone from Feb. 9 to Feb. 12 of this year.

The study claimed overwhelming majority support in Lomita and San Pedro, while support in Rancho Palos Verdes, though in the majority, was modest in comparison. Yet, Figure 11 in the presentation showed only 38 percent favoring the full 2,300-unit proposal, and 44 percent favoring 1,900 units. Only the 1,700-unit proposal gained 50 percent support.

Activists wondered why the study didn't go further than 1,700 noting that it would have shown far more community support. However, 1,700 was an alternative figure used in the draft EIR. The survey did not ask about support for that level of development.

Furthermore, the study does not mention the level of support among people that were the most knowledgeable about the project, who happened to live within 1.5 miles of Ponte Vista, saying only that, "Distance from the project—initially important for basic awareness of the project—is not a factor in support or opposition once the project's basic description is provided to survey respondents."

Activists repeatedly asked to see the script that was used for the survey, but Bisno refused, saying that he did not want to reveal proprietary trade secrets to his competition. He attempted to reassure the attendants that the report faithfully reproduced the questions that were asked.

But activist seized upon a mischaracterization of Ponte

Vista as including single-family homes and townhouses when there has been no mention of single family housing whatsoever.

Another issue activists seized on was the number of cars the project would produce. Bisno suggested that the single-family home would bring with it far more cars into the area in comparison to townhouses and condos, defying logic.

The biggest concern in the community is traffic. The LA Department of Transportation (LADOT) approved his traffic study, but "Bisno counted traffic while Western was all torn up with sinkhole repairs. His counts were significantly lower than the year before the construction was going on, when the Western Avenue Task Force determined that ATSAC was needed."

Pat Nave said. "We also found the POLA (Port of Los Angeles) baseline traffic study showed the count before the Bisno counts were much higher. Then a couple of others were done in February that the counts then were also much higher than the year before."

"What's worse is that LADOT was part of the Western Avenue Task Force, but completely missed the undercounts," he added.

"Seems like they just rubber-stamped Bisno's traffic study. Bisno will add a minimum of 24 percent to the average daily traffic to Western Avenue, probably closer to 40 percent. It's a major problem."

Bisno said they may be right, and as a result he and the City are redoing the numbers. However, Bisno said that the preliminary results suggests that the first traffic counts were low and on the second count the numbers were higher, but with the mitigation efforts the numbers didn't make any difference.

Among the other key findings of the report, traffic congestion on local roads ranked number one as an extremely serious problem, followed by affordable housing whether renting or owning. Traffic congestion specifically on Western Avenue ranked below affordable housing concerns. Critics pointed out that according to Bisno's own numbers, families would have to earn over \$100,000 per year, to live in Ponte Vista, well outside of what is considered working class.

Bisno conceded that the language used describe affordable house is not a good one, saying, "The community has told us in a loud voice that they don't want subsidized housing." Bisno explained that workforce housing is probably a more apt word than affordable housing in that the market he is trying to attract consist of teachers, firefighters, police officers, and Longshore workers.