

#2

**Marsha Zents**

---

**From:** Joel Rojas [joelr@rpv.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 22, 2008 12:13 PM  
**To:** 'Leza Mikhail'  
**Cc:** 'Marsha Zents'  
**Subject:** FW: St. John Fisher Parish Church Plans

**Attachments:** Plans for New Church.cwk (WP).pdf



Plans for New  
Church.cwk (WP)....

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Sheridan [mailto:maryvsher@yahoo.com]  
Sent: Tuesday, July 22, 2008 12:00 PM  
To: pc@rpv.com  
Subject: St. John Fisher Parish Church Plans

To Planning Commission:

I support the plans for St. John Fisher's new church. Attached is my letter urging approval.

Mary V. Sheridan  
21 Sweetbay Rd.  
Rancho Palos Verdes

**Mary V. Sheridan  
21 Sweetbay Rd.  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275**

July 22,2008

Leza Mikhail  
Associate Planner  
City of Rancho Palos Verdes  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

Dear Ms. Mikhail,

I am writing regarding the plans for St. John Fisher Parish's new church. I support the plans, and urge the members of the Planning Commission to approve the project.

At the last planning commission meeting the ringing of bells was discussed. My husband and I have lived in Portuguese Bend above the Wayfarer's Chapel for the past 34 years. During this time occasionally, when outside, we have heard the carillon bells of Wayfarer's Chapel ring. Recently, I called the church to inquire what the policy is regarding the carillon. I was told that the "Westminister Chimes" and hours are tolled from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Also, on Christmas Eve "Silent Night" is played, and after a wedding, peals called the "Change Ringing" are rung.

We have always loved hearing the soft musical sound of the bells from Wayfarer's Chapel, and expect the Planning Commission to give equal approval to bells in the new church of St. John Fisher Parish.

Sincerely,

*Mary V. Sheridan*

#2

EduardoS

**From:** Joel Rojas [joelr@rpv.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 21, 2008 5:36 PM  
**To:** 'EduardoS'  
**Cc:** 'Leza Mikhail'  
**Subject:** FW: St. John Fisher Catholic Church issue for Tuesday meeting -Request for continuancw

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Elizabeth Martyn [mailto:martyn@lbbslaw.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 21, 2008 4:14 PM  
**To:** PC@RPV.com  
**Cc:** clynch@rwglaw.com  
**Subject:** St. John Fisher Catholic Church issue for Tuesday meeting -Request for continuancw

Attached is a letter provided to the City last week for distribution to you. It was our understanding that this would be distributed to you when we provided it, but I received a voice mail from Mr. Rojas indicating that it was not, and that I needed to email it to you.

Just to update you, the issues regarding the continuance for surrounding homeowners are: no bells, smaller church and tower, no columbarium, and city controls on noise, traffic etc.

Mr. Weissman only received the documents due on July 25 this afternoon and, therefore, has had no ability to review them.

We understand that the Planning staff is recommending a continuance after additional testimony and your direction. We ask that you grant that and include our issues in those to be reviewed during the continuance period.

Betsy Martyn, Partner  
 Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith  
 (714) 966-3131

#2

**RECEIVED**

JUL 21 2008

PLANNING, BUILDING AND  
CODE ENFORCEMENT

Leza Mikhail  
Associate Planner  
Rancho Palos Verdes Building & Code Enforcement

Re: St . John Fisher Catholic Church Master Plan  
Case No. ZON2007-00492 and the redesign of the project

Leza:

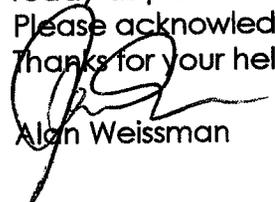
Attached is a formal request for documents pursuant to the California Public Records Act.

Please let me know when the requested documents are completed and I will pay for the copies at the statutory rates.

I will also be at the city hall and the planning and building department with a check ready to pick up the documents that I had previously requested that are ready as per the Assistant City Attorney.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thanks for your help

  
Alan Weissman

Joel Rojas, AICP  
Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
Leza Mikhail, Associate Planner  
City of Rancho Palos Verdes  
3040 Hawthorne Blvd.  
Rancho Palos Verdes, Ca

Re: St. John Fisher Catholic Church Master Plan Project  
Case No. ZON2007-00492 Including the documents and emails relating to the redesign of the building and adjacent properties

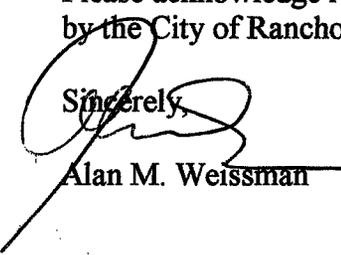
Dear Mr. Rojas & Ms Mikhail:

In regards to the application for case no. ZON2007-00492 (The St. John Fisher Church Master Plan Project and the redesign), I would like to request copies of all emails between staff, emails with the Planning Commissioners, any staff notes taken and emails with/from the applicant, **including all emails from the personal email addresses of the planning commissioners, the building department personnel and the members of the church, their building committee and the Monsignor**. Accordingly, pursuant to the *California Public Records Act*, I formally request a complete copies of all emails and letters and any other form of notes or records within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes file on the St. John Fisher Master Plan, case no. ZON2007-00492. ( This project was agenda item number 5 during the Planning Commission meeting held on June 24, 2008 and continued until July 22, 2008. Pursuant to the *Public Records Act*, the city must respond to this request within ten (10) days and I hereby demand a written response within that time frame. I am prepared to pay any statutory fees (copying costs) set by the Legislature, which does not include search, review or deletion charges. Pursuant to the act, if only partial production is provided, the city must justify the withholding of all records withheld.

I also request a list of documents being withheld from this request and the reason it is being withheld.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email and its attached request for documents to be produced by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes within the statutory time frame.

Sincerely,

  
Alan M. Weissman

#2

EduardoS

---

**From:** Joel Rojas [joelr@rpv.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 21, 2008 8:15 AM  
**To:** 'EduardoS'  
**Cc:** 'Leza Mikhail'  
**Subject:** FW: Case No. ZON2007-00492 (St John Fisher)

-----Original Message-----

**From:** R MUCHA [mailto:patnbob1@cox.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 20, 2008 2:50 PM  
**To:** PC@RPV.COM  
**Subject:** Case No. ZON2007-00492 (St John Fisher)

Last month, St John Fisher (SJF) was told to shorten its proposed steeple, first by the City Staff, then by neighbors, and finally by the Planning Commission.

During the June 24 hearing process, neither Staff nor the Commission identified or mentioned a City requirement which supports this action. Doing so could have modified the negative reaction from neighbors.

In the SJF letter dated July 9, 2008 to the RPV Planning Department, the ".absence of a skyline or ridgeline ordinance." was stated.

The SJF concessions numbers 6 thru 11, modifying the church structure, are based on a commendable goal of ".a positive relationship with the surrounding residents."

If there are any City requirements, regulations, or ordinances supporting any reduction in steeple height, City Staff has a responsibility to clarify them at the beginning of the July 22, hearing.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Robert Mucha

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Sjf5448@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 15, 2008 11:40 AM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Subject:** St. John Fisher Church Buliding Committee

Dear Liza,

I am a parishioner of St. John Fisher Church and I am writing you to let the Commisioners of the Building Committee know that I am in favor of building the New Catholic Church of Rancho Palos Verdes.

After attending the June 24th hearing until the wee hours of the morning of June 25th, I was amazed at all the residents who were not in favor of the renovations of St. John Fisher Catholic Church.

All my life, I have been a Catholic and I believe that the Church that was established by Jesus Christ on earth should be a light unto the world. According to St. Matthew, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden and I believe this city to be representative of St. John Fisher Parish. It also means that the Church is a visible organization, clearly identified as such and distinguished from other churches. This was affirmed by one of the commissioners opinion on the subject of Church last June 24th. Jesus also promised, "I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)."

These passages came about while I was in prayer in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. John Fisher Church in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Yours truthfully,

Emma Bulala  
Parishioner

---

Get the scoop on last night's hottest shows and the live music scene in your area - [Check out TourTracker.com!](http://TourTracker.com)

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** golong888@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 15, 2008 4:25 PM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com; golong888@aol.com  
**Subject:** continuance and delay of July 22, 2008 meeting

City of Rancho Palos Verdes  
Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement  
30940 Hawthorne Blvd.  
Rancho Palos Verdes, California 90274  
Attn: Director of Planning and Zoning and Ms Leza Michail

Dear Director of Planning and Ms Leza Michail,

May I ask why there were no new silhouettes put up for the revised plans regarding the propose St John Fisher building? Because of this, please delay and put a "continuance" on your July 22, 2008 meeting regarding the proposed St John Fisher building until all residents in the surrounding area can view and understand the impact and significance of such a massive, towering structure in their neighborhood.

Thanks you,  
Gary Long

---

The Famous, the Infamous, the Lame - in your browser. [Get the TMZ Toolbar Now!](#)

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** M J Riccio [mriccio127@cox.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2008 7:22 PM  
**To:** LezaM@rpv.com  
**Subject:** In favor of St John Fisher building project

Dear Ms Mikhail,

As a planning staff member, please remember there are over 5,000 families at St John Fisher, many of whom are RPV residents. Hundreds of us have committed substantial time to the lengthy design options process to arrive at this point, not to mention substantial monetary pledges.

We hope you understand a house of worship, or any building in which the public gathers, should be substantial and inspiring. The symbolism of spires and bells are endemic to the spiritual nature of a church. Surely this can be understood in a state which values its remaining missions.

Following testimony at the first public hearing last month, the SJF building committee and architect have addressed the Commission's requests as follows:

- \* The height and width of the tower AND the main building have been reduced.
- \* The building is further from the property line and masked by landscaping.
- \* The distance of the carillon speaker from the property line has been doubled.
- \* Parking further explained in a narrative in the revised design package.

The following points were previously communicated by us for your earlier public hearing.

- \* This site is a perfect location for a church building.  
Only a few hundred feet from existing facility.  
Main road with virtually no traffic penetration into residential neighborhoods.
- \* Views are not impacted.  
There is much open space in both directions around the Crest/Crenshaw intersection.  
Most residences are below the line of sight.
- \* No increased traffic.  
This is an existing, very active congregation.  
Minor change in number of seats inside, parking outside.  
Services are spread out through the day (and will not change), reducing peak loads.  
Most of the kids coming to the added pre school are likely to come in the same car with other school children: same family or car-pooling.
- \* This church community is a good neighbor.  
And has been for decades.

We trust you can find a way to make this work for all.

Thanks,  
Michael J. Riccio  
& Family

#2

**EduardoS**

---

**From:** Joel Rojas [joelr@rpv.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2008 3:47 PM  
**To:** 'EduardoS'  
**Subject:** FW: St. John Fisher (SJF) Church Building Proposal: Parking

---

**From:** John Traxler [mailto:j.trax5@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2008 3:46 PM  
**To:** Leze Mikhail; Edward Ruttenberg; Paul Tetreault  
**Subject:** St. John Fisher (SJF) Church Building Proposal: Parking

To: RPV Planning Commission

From the beginning the argument for a new, larger church presented by SJF has been based on postulations, viz.: a reduction of clergy-numbers; a corresponding reduction in number of scheduled weekend liturgies; and a corresponding *increase* in parishioner attendance at scheduled liturgies. Therefore, SJF needs a larger church.

This argument is fallacious because it is *very* unlikely that SJF will ever be without the services of sufficient numbers of assigned and visiting clergy.

In light of its postulations, SJF's estimates of the number of required parking spaces for a new church based on present day Sunday-peak-use statistics is also clearly fallacious.

Respectfully,

John Traxler  
4172 Rousseau Lane  
PVP, CA 90274

7/17/2008

#2

July 16, 2008

To the members of the Planning Commission of RPV and Joel Rojas:

Following the extended June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting at Hesse Park, I came home at 1:40am in the early morning feeling like there were more parishners given the chance to speak in favor of the proposed Saint John Fisher sanctuary building than to those surrounding residents of the proposed construction opposing the project. Of the 94 speakers on the agenda, many homeowners had to leave before being called up to speak, and were unable to voice their opposition to the SJF building plan.

With little time to react to the silhouette and balloons of SJF, many homeowners were not aware of what is being proposed. SJF parishners, meanwhile, have been donating to this large funded project without ever having the intention to involve any dialogue with its surrounding neighbors.

For those parishners, many who do not even live within walking distance of the church and live in other cities as PVE, who state they "like" the idea of the proposed property on the corner of their nine and more acre property to have the "most impact" and "imposing nature (with bells chiming throughout the day, seven days a week, as well as during an additional two hundred weddings and funerals, and high holy days)"——(1)THEY, unlike us neighbors who live across the street, won't have to listen to the incessant, nonstop ringing of the bells, seven days a week for one minute durations. (Again, I overheard Mon. Sork's sermon at 9am Tuesday of this week from my bedroom! Doesn't the church believe in soundproofing? Or is it an arrogant calling to amplify the sermons into the neighborhood?! I shudder to think about the ramifications that will ensue if this proposed project is approved) (2)These parishners will not have to deal with their skyline of blue being blotted out by a fifty-foot sanctuary and eighty-eight foot bell tower ringing endlessly for one minute durations seven days a week. (3)They will not have their privacy taken away from them with this multi-storied self-centered imposed building. Our backyards without question will be easily looked into from this corner proposed building. (4)The parishners will not have to listen to the traffic and parking annoyances along Crenshaw Blvd. Our family will! Our bedrooms are within five feet of the sidewalk at the corner of Crest and Crenshaw. (5)This corner flag lot property in Island View is unsecured. Because of the proposed SJF stairways opening onto that corner, crime will become more accessible because of constant, additional parking along Crenshaw. At present, parishners enter and park on the SJF property.

The present church sanctuary is behind landscaping, blending into the rural atmosphere of this quiet, tranquil neighborhood. Let SJF build a gym for the children, but please, don't use the children for an excuse to build such a tall, massive in-your-face imposing structure for the community to cope with. Build the sanctuary without a bell tower somewhere inside the nine acre property for its own parishners and without the stairs to the corner. Don't impose on the community!

Commissioners, please consider what we neighbors would have to contend with daily, 365 days a year, if you approve this project. It would be sad to live with the incessant traffic, noise, parking, lack of privacy, and security problems caused by the proposed Saint John Fisher Church building.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Long

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

**From:** gitwon@aol.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2008 12:39 AM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Subject:** letter in opposition to SJF for 7-22-08 agenda

July 16, 2008

To the members of the Planning Commission of RPV and Joel Rojas:

Following the extended June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting at Hesse Park, I came home at 1:40am in the early morning feeling like there were more parishners given the chance to speak in favor of the proposed Saint John Fisher sanctuary building than to those surrounding residents of the proposed construction **opposing** the project. Of the 94 speakers on the agenda, many 20 homeowners had to leave before being called up to speak, and were unable to voice their opposition to the SJF building plan.

With little time to react to the silhouette and balloons of SJF, many homeowners were not aware of what is being proposed. SJF parishners, meanwhile, have been donating to this large funded project without ever having the intention to involve any dialogue with its surrounding neighbors.

For those parishners, many who do not even live within walking distance of the church and live in other cities as PVE, who state they "like" the idea of the proposed property on the corner of their nine and more acre property to have the "most impact" and "imposing nature (with bells chiming throughout the day, seven days a week, as well as during an additional two hundred weddings and funerals, and high holy days)"-----**(1)**THEY, unlike us neighbors who live across the street, **won't** have to listen to the incessant, nonstop ringing of the bells, seven days a week for one minute durations. (Again, I overheard Mon. Sork's sermon at 9am Tuesday of this week from my bedroom! Doesn't the church believe in soundproofing? Or is it an arrogant calling to amplify the sermons into the neighborhood?! I shudder to think about the ramifications that will ensue if this proposed project is approved) **(2)**These parishners will not have to deal with their skyline of blue being blotted out by a fifty-foot sanctuary and eighty-eight foot bell tower ringing endlessly for one minute durations seven days a week. **(3)**They will not have their privacy taken away from them with this multi-storied self-centered imposed building. Our backyards without question will be easily looked into from this corner proposed building. **(4)**The parishners will not have to listen to the traffic and parking annoyances along Crenshaw Blvd. Our family will! Our bedrooms are within five feet of the sidewalk at the corner of Crest and Crenshaw. **(5)**This corner flag lot property in Island View is unsecured. Because of the proposed SJF stairways opening onto that corner, crime will become more accessible because of constant, additional parking along Crenshaw. At present, parishners enter and park on the SJF property.

The church sanctua ry is behind landscaping, blending into the rural atmosphere of this quiet, tranquil neighborhood. Let SJF build a gym for the children, **but please, don't use the children for an excuse to build** such a tall, massive in-your-face imposing structure for the community to cope with. Build the sanctuary without a bell tower somewhere **inside** the nine acre property for its own parishners. Don't impose on the community!

Commissioners, please consider what we neighbors would have to contend with daily, 365 days a year, if you approve this project. It would be sad to live with the incessant traffic, noise, parking, lack of privacy, and security problems caused by the proposed Saint John Fisher Church building.

Sincerel y,

Rhonda Long

7/17/2008

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Anthony Lubega [anthonylubega@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 16, 2008 11:57 PM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Subject:** Saint John Fisher Church

Associate Planner, Rancho Palos Verdes Planning Commission.  
Dear Leza Mikhail,

I should very much like to express my support for the St. John Fisher Master Plan. The new church will look absolutely beautiful. The sanctuary design is exalting and graceful, the structure, forms and spaces are elegant and the architecture is aesthetically pleasing.

I have been actively involved in the master plan and design during the long and countless town hall meetings with our liturgical consultant, urban planners, architect, building experts and fellow parishioners. I was very passionate that the architects design a beautiful structure to make our parish and Rancho Palos Verdes proud. The new church will pave way for a much needed Parish Activity Center that will benefit the SJF parish especially our youth.

In response to the planning commission recommendations, the revised plans have carefully responded to the neighbor's concerns as instructed by the planning commissioners. I was very disappointed at your recommendation to lower the steeple. The steeple is the pivot and culminates at the Blessed Sacrament chapel. It's height provides the proportions that form an elegant structure. It is unfortunate that it has to be lowered.

I was present at the SJF Master Plan public hearing in June and I plan to be present at the public hearing scheduled on July, 22 2008.

Please feel free to contact me for further comments.

Thank you,

Anthony Lubega  
RHE resident.

7/17/2008

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** L. Bilski [ldb910@juno.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 22, 2008 1:54 PM  
**To:** pc@rpv.com  
**Cc:** joelr@rpv.com  
**Subject:** 7/22/08 Agenda item: St. John Fisher building project

Dear RPV Planning Commission Chair Perestam and P.C .Members,

I am writing in support of the proposed St. John Fisher building project.

There have been a lot a false statements about this project in letters submitted to the city and to the local newspaper. This is unfortunate, but I trust the the members of the Planning Commission realize the errors and disregard them.

The church property has been developed since 1963. At that time a structure was erected with plans for an eventual large Church at the corner of the lot. The surrounding residential properties were developed and sold long after the Church and School had been built.

The proposed church building is a beautiful, stately design and meets the city's development codes and regulations. As presented at the June P.C. meeting, the staff report stated that the project met all the requirements, and could be approved. If anything, the building project will enhance the area as well as better serve the needs of St. John Fisher Parish.

As stated in the Staff Report, a Bell Tower was approved in the 1990's by the RPV Planning Commission along with other construction permits for renovation of the property; but the tower was not built due to lack of funds at the time. The proposed Bell Tower will provide occasional musical chimes. " Music" not "noise" as some have mistakenly called it. Aesthetically pleasing sounds, "inspirational", not nuisance noise. I'm sure we would all agree that the sound of emergency vehicles' sirens and the noise of hedge trimmers, leaf blowers and saws is truly a noisy disturbance. Brief musical chiming is not.

Anyway, RPV has no noise ordinance.

Wayfarers' Chapel has a clock chiming the hours and quarter-hours, St. Peter's by the Sea has a bell tower which rises many feet above the church's ridge line. Both churches are surrounded by residential homes. Outside of RPV, other churches in residential neighborhoods have tall bell towers which chime.

The nearby residential properties near the current Church and rectory, have massive hedges and trees which now block the view of their houses and yards from the Church property and vice versa. The views of the church property is obscured from houses across the street on Crenshaw. The claims of invasion of privacy by this project appear unfounded.

While a few people may not like this proposed development, the staff has told us that a property owner has a right to develop their property within the codes and regulations of the City of RPV. Even though the project as proposed in June could have been approved as presented, that project - which serves a parish of 3,000 families - was revised and downsized to answer the concerns of a few people. Therefore,

7/22/2008

in all fairness, since the neighborhood concerns and commissioners' concerns have been addressed by the revision, the development should be permitted to proceed without further changes.

Please vote tonight to approve the St. John Fisher building project.

Thank you for all you do for RPV !

Sincerely,

Lenée Bilski,

RPV resident

[Stuck in a dead end job?? Click to start living your dreams by earning an online degree.](#)

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Tom Coull [coullone@cox.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 20, 2008 1:41 PM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Cc:** docblond@aol.com  
**Subject:** John Fisher Project

July 20, 2008

Rancho Palos Verdes Planning Commission

Subject: Proposed Construction of St. John Fisher Property

To Planning Commission Members:

Over the past several weeks I have been made aware of a new proposed construction program on the site of the St. John Fisher property. This project seems to be well into the final stages of approval while a majority of neighbors, who should have been made aware of this project at its inception, were not notified of such activity. This project, I am sure, went through several design and style iterations before the design that has been presented to date. This means that this project has been in the hands of the planning department for, I guess, over a year, based on my experience with projects that I have been involved with in the past. Failure of the planning department to make proper notification to the affected community is a breakdown of normal procedures and is a reflection on the overall management of Rancho Palos Verdes and a lack of oversight on the planning department activities.

Now to address some of the issues that is of concern:

Ingress and egress of materials and excavation products

Traffic

Parking

Noise

Sun Angle Studies

Neighborhood Compatibility

I do not wish to address all of the items listed above; however, I look forward to seeing all of the issues, and more, being addressed by the planning department.

e.g.

1. on the subject of materials being removed from the excavation site: vehicles of three (3) tons or more cannot use Crenshaw Boulevard if egressing the Palos Verdes Peninsula. They will have to egress on Hawthorne Boulevard (an escape lane available on this street). I would like to see what traffic flow has been addressed on this issue.
2. It is my understanding that one of the reasons given for a new building is to accommodate more people while there is a reduction in the number of parking spaces. Fewer services and more people is a sure way of increasing the number of automobiles on the street and traffic congestion. I am also curious as to why there is a need for a larger facility as the parish administrator indicated so many empty spaces in

7/22/2008

the parking lot during all of the services he observed in the month of May. This information is meaningless as three samples is not a large enough population to have any statistical meaning.

3. The design of this facility is neither compatible and bares any relationship to the neighborhood. A design that is compatible with the buildings that exist on the property today and those of the surrounding neighborhood structures be more neighborhood compatible. A facility that does not extend beyond the height of the existing trees, as now exists, would have little or no impact on the community vistas and have no impact on sun angles that exist today.
4. There seems to be a number of mitigated issues that that are significant that have fallen into the acceptable zone for the planning department that need to be addressed, such as, scenic vista, degrade of the existing visual character and day or nighttime views, all of which are potentially significant and need to be addressed. Other issues are the geological qualities of the site that have not been addressed but appear to have been mitigated.

In general, those speakers that come before the commission should be made to identify where they reside and whether they are members of the parish. This is important for the commission to truly evaluate comments and rule out personal unrelated biases that have no impact on their surroundings.

In conclusion, I would hope that all of the issues that I have addressed be revisited and perhaps start with a clean slate so that all affected parties can reach a mutually accepted design that is compatible with the neighborhood. This, I believe, would have happened if all of the affected parties were notified in the proper manner from the start.

Sincerely,

Tom Coull

IVHOA Resident.

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Joel Rojas [joelr@rpv.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 15, 2008 8:08 AM  
**To:** 'Leza Mikhail'  
**Cc:** 'EduardoS'; 'Marsha Zents'  
**Subject:** FW: St. John Fisher Project

-----Original Message-----

From: Lisa Counts [mailto:lhuntcounts@aol.com]  
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2008 2:39 PM  
To: pc@rpv.com  
Subject: St. John Fisher Project

July 13, 2008

Dear Planning Commissioners:

I am writing in support of the St. John Fisher Master Plan and urge your prompt approval of this project.

The revised plan responds directly to the issues of height, massing, and bell noise raised by a few of the neighbors at the June hearing.

At the hearing, a photograph was shown, taken from the front yard of an Island View resident, illustrating this neighbor's concern about the tower height. It is difficult for many of us to understand a building based on several red balloons off in the distance, especially in a photograph. One imagines some monolithic structure.

The revised plan's photographs with the model placed inside explain the project's appearance from Island View in a way that is much easier to understand, even keeping in mind that the photographs show a white cardboard model. One can begin to see the play of light and shadow of walls and windows, the nestling of the structure among the trees, and the sculptural effect of the cross against the sky.

The revised plan lowers the tower height substantially, as well as other church roof lines, and pushes the church further off Crenshaw and the corner intersection. The perception of the building's mass, therefore, is lessened greatly. The added setback also allows for an increased landscaped buffer. The neighbors across the street will mostly see a screen of trees. The building will not block views of any homeowners.

The issue of potential bell noise has been addressed by using carillon bells that enable the church to adjust the bell volume, by the lowering of the speakers to a height 16 feet above the ground, and by the placement of the speakers on a wall face directed towards the church's gathering plaza. This carillon location greatly increases the distance of the source of sound from the neighbors, further reducing any possible noise.

I would also like to respond to comments regarding the building's appearance: "it doesn't fit in to the rural landscape of RPV, it is too modern", etc. The surrounding neighborhoods are a relatively dense mixture of styles, including ranch and colonial styles. These large tract homes most certainly are not rural in nature.

Nevertheless, as stated several times at the last hearing, this building will stand out. It is a church, not a residence. It is meant to be a community landmark. It is not a hard concrete building, but a structure rich and warm with natural materials and softened by lush landscaping. Its design is the result of many months of planning involving hundreds of enthusiastic and committed parishioners.

Lastly, I would like to address parking concerns. The parking narrative and sheet AO.9 of the original plans clearly show that the proposed plan's parking needs are met. The peak time on Sunday centers around the largest mass of the morning, the 10:45 AM mass, and religious education classes that begin at 10:30 AM. Some families attend the earlier 9 AM mass and leave their children for RE class, picking them up an hour later. Other parents attend the 10:45 mass while their children are in class. In either case, children do not drive themselves to religion class. The 290 parking spaces required for the church for mass and the 38 required by code for the teachers of the 19 classrooms plus the 3 rectory spaces equals the 331 provided spaces.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Again, I urge your timely approval for the St. John Fisher project.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hunt Counts, AICP  
4979 Silver Arrow Dr.  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

#2

Chair and Members  
Planning Commission  
Rancho Palos Verdes

Via Facsimile:

Re: Expansion of St John Fisher Catholic Church  
Item No. 2007-00492

Dear Chair and Planning Commission members:

We have been consulted by several groups of homeowners who are very concerned about the aggressive expansion of St. John Fisher Catholic Church ("Church" or the "project"). The purpose of this letter is to request a 45-day continuance of this item to provide for discussion of disputed issues and receipt and review of documents already requested, as well as confirmation of legal representation. We have raised this requested with the City Attorney, who indicated that a continuance must be granted by the Planning Commission but that she did not anticipate a problem with such a continuance.

The concerns here focus mainly on design and environmental issues. For example, the design of the church is not in harmony with the remainder of the neighborhood and while there are alternate designs available, they have not been presented to the Planning Commission. The Church itself has presented another redesign of the silhouette. There also are height issues regarding the tower and noise issues regarding the bells. These serious concerns deserve additional time for study and discussion.

In addition, at least three of the affected property owners (Messrs. Weissman, Butler and Jackson) also have filed Public Records Act requests. One request resulted in the delivery of a number of documents. Another received a letter from the City Attorney providing that the receipt of documents has been delayed.

In addition to our request for a continuance, we also ask that this continuance be considered at the beginning of the agenda so that the residents do not have to wait (or pay their attorney to wait) until after midnight for that continuance. Thank you for your consideration.

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Karen Craig Billnitzer [reader@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 18, 2008 5:07 PM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Subject:** St. John Fisher Master Plan Revisions

Dear Ms. Mikhail,

Thank you for continuing to include my husband and me in the correspondence regarding this development. We looked on the RPV website at the revisions submitted by St. John Fisher. While we were already happy with the plans as they previously stood, we note that the church has been very accommodating to all of the requests made by various neighbors and the planning commissions. We ask that the Planning Commission approve the master plan as submitted.

Kind regards,

Karen Craig  
Mark Billnitzer  
29719 Stonecrest Road  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

# 2

July 16, 2008

To the Planning Commission and City Staff:

The St John Fisher architect did an excellent job in making changes to the new church plans to accommodate the neighbors who have complained about the building. All problems have been addressed. The height is compatible with other churches in the neighborhood. The views certainly do not impact anyone. If anything, the new building will enhance the neighborhood with its beauty and grace. There will be no change or increase in activity at the church site.

I hope that the Planning Commission can see that this new church will be an asset to the area, and will grant permission to the St John Fisher Church to continue with their plans without further cutbacks or revisions. Changing anything more would compromise its design, beauty and, more importantly, function.

Joan Barry  
30770 Ganado Drive  
Rancho Palos Verdes

#2

**THE REWINSKIS**  
2648 Via Olivera  
Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274

July 15, 2008

By e-mail

Ms. Leza Mikhail  
Associate Planner  
City of Rancho Palos Verdes, CA

Re: St. John Fisher Project (July 2008 Revised Proposed Design)

Dear Ms. Mikhail,

I write to encourage the Planning Commissioners to vote to approve the revised proposed design submitted by St. John Fisher. I am a member of St. John Fisher Parish and a resident of Palos Verdes. I am also a member of the St. John Fisher's building committee. Because the building committee has worked over the course of many months with parishioners, a professional liturgical design consultant, the Los Angeles Archdiocese, the Planning Department, and the architect, I believe that I can add some useful information. This letter expresses my personal opinions.

The revised plans reflect numerous concessions made in response to concerns expressed by certain neighbors in connection with the Planning Commission hearing last month. The architect has reduced the height and bulk of the new church, set it back further from the streets, and added landscaping at the corner of Crest and Crenshaw. The architect has also relocated the speaker component of the bells to reduce the noise. Although some neighbors continue to express concerns about the project, their concerns have been adequately addressed or simply cannot be addressed (because, in fact, the neighbors oppose any construction). Therefore, I urge the Commissioners to approve the project, pursuant to the revised plans, at the hearing on July 22.

I would like to address some of the specific concerns raised by neighbors. Some have expressed a concern about potential traffic problems. As noted in the traffic study, the change in traffic will be negligible. This makes sense. Although the plan includes the construction of a new church, this will simply replace the existing building currently being used as the church. It is true that the new church will be larger than the building currently being used as a church. This is not because of an anticipated influx of new parishioners. Indeed, the peninsula is already largely developed and other, well-established Catholic churches serve people living beyond Palos Verdes. We designed a slightly larger church at the instruction of the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese, in turn, has made this a requirement because the number of priests has decreased significantly in

recent decades. Because of a shortage of priests, it is anticipated that we will need to reduce the number of masses. Therefore, we have increased the seating capacity.

Some neighbors have expressed concerns about noise caused by the construction. Of course, this is a legitimate concern but not a basis for denying a property owner from building on his or her property. Certainly the City has the power to impose reasonable restrictions on the construction process to minimize inconvenience to neighbors.

A few neighbors continue to express concerns about the noise, particularly the bells. I would be surprised if the City has the authority to prevent a church from having bells in that bells are an integral part of Catholic tradition. In the final analysis the bells should cause minimal inconvenience because, as I understand it, they will be played for short durations during the day. In addition, the revised plans lower the speaker for the bells and add landscaping around the new church, which should further reduce any noise.

On the issue of noise, it is important for the commissioners and neighbors to remember that, once the project is completed, in general the noise from the site should be less than currently experienced. That is, the corner of site, at the intersection of Crest and Crenshaw, is currently used alternatively as a parking lot or a school playground, depending on the day and time. Both activities generate noise. When the project is completed, both the playground and parking lot will be moved to the interior of the lot, thereby reducing any noise from these activities experienced by the neighbors living in Island View and on Mela Lane. Also, people enter the building currently used as a church through doors that are near the Crenshaw boundary of the property across from the Island View development. This also creates noise. Once the construction is completed, people will enter the new church from a single entrance oriented to the center of the site. This change should also reduce noise experienced by neighbors. Lastly, the new church includes a Blessed Sacrament Chapel under the bell tower. In the Catholic tradition, this is a place requiring quiet, individual reflection. For that reason, this chapel is sealed off from the main worship space inside the church. Immediately outside the bell tower is a meditative walk and columbarium. This space, which abuts Crenshaw across from the Island View neighborhood, is also intended to be quiet space. Again, these design elements should reduce the level of noise experienced by neighbors. Thus, although some may hear the sound of bells, neighbors should hear less noise from cars parking, children playing, and people congregating before and after masses.

Some neighbors have asked that the height of the cross on top of the bell tower be lowered. It would be unfair for the Planning Commission to require this. The cross is at the same height as the top of Wayfarers Chapel. It would be wrong for the Planning Commission to impose a more restrictive height requirement on a Catholic church.

Some have suggested that the floor plan for the church should be flipped so that the bell tower is built on the Crest side, as opposed to the Crenshaw side, of the new church. This would create serious problems because the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, columbarium and meditative walk would be adjacent to the pre-school play yard. Given the religious purposes of these spaces, the switch is not feasible. In addition, the curved roofline and buttresses have been designed to play off of the curves in the hills surrounding the site. This important design element would be lost with the switch.

Some neighbors have expressed concerns about the size, shape and look of the proposed new church. Needless to say, no single design will please everyone and were an individual's personal tastes enough to prevent approval of a project, no building would ever be constructed in Palos Verdes. It is simply incorrect to say, however, that the design is "ultra-modern" or incompatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. On the contrary, the exterior of the church intentionally incorporates many traditional elements of church architecture, including a bell tower, elongated arched windows, and buttresses. As noted above, that the buttresses and rooflines curve up and into the bell tower to mirror the sweep of the surrounding hills. Finally, the new church will use materials including stone and woodwork that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods. Thus, whatever one's personal views of the design, it is wrong to claim that the church is incompatible with the area.

With all due respect, a Catholic church cannot be designed by a committee of neighbors or Planning Commissioners. This is a Catholic church, not a home or commercial building. One cannot make a Catholic church look like one of the homes on Mela Lane or in the Island View neighborhood. In designing the space, the architect had to comply with numerous requirements imposed by the Catholic Church. This was no easy feat, particularly because those requirements have changed in recent decades. For that reason, most of the Catholic churches built in the last century look very different from the churches built over the last several centuries. Every part of the St. John Fisher floor plan has meaning. For example, until the second half of the twentieth century, a Catholic Church was typically rectangular or cruciform, with the altar at one end of the building, the tabernacle in, behind or next to the altar, and the choir placed in a loft at the other end of the building. Churches typically had ornate panels behind the altar and intricate stain glass windows surrounding the space. All of these design features were dictated by the then prevailing view of worship that although the faithful gathered together at mass, mass was intended to be an intensely individual experience. The various features of traditional church architecture — windows, light (or lack of light), music emanating from some place in the rear of the space, high ceilings, the fact that one did not face any of the other faithful, etc. — all facilitated the individual's experience.

Under the current rules, which went into effect in the 1960s, mass is expected to be a communal event. Thus, the Catholic Church now requires that the altar be in the

middle of the main worship space; the faithful are supposed to face each other; the choir is supposed to be placed within the assembly; and the tabernacle is placed in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel (for individual mediation), which must be visible upon entering into the main assembly area, but should not interfere with the altar. These are just a few of the new requirements. Thus, many Catholic churches built in recent decades do not look at all like the churches built over the previous centuries. With the new requirements in mind, our architect designed the rounded floor plan for the new St. John Fisher Church. And the floor plan, in turn, drove the rounded exterior design. I mention this background to make the following point. One cannot alter the exterior design without interfering with the floor plan, which is dictated in large part by current Catholic Church rules. And, as noted above, people not versed in the requirements imposed on Catholic churches cannot design a Catholic church.

In the end, the St. John Fisher project is doing nothing other than building on existing church property, and on the very spot where the City has already determined a church may be built, a church that complies with the rules imposed on us.

The Planning Commissioners probably have experience with neighbors objecting to proposed building plans because of anxiety and fears about change. Not long ago I appeared before the Long Beach Planning Commission to speak in favor of a proposed plan by Catholic Charities (on whose board I sit) to operate a shelter for homeless men and women in a mixed commercial, residential area in Long Beach. Catholic Charities was seeking to take over the shelter, which had been opened a few years earlier over vehement neighborhood opposition. In connection with our plan to take over the shelter, forty-three people spoke at the Long Beach Planning Commission hearing. What would you expect people to say? I have to admit I was quite surprised. All but one person spoke in favor of the Catholic Charities plan to operate the shelter. The owners of the adjacent businesses supported the plan. Several nearby homeowners supported the plan. Just think about that — homeowners supporting a plan to operate a homeless shelter in their neighborhood! The reason the project received overwhelming community support was that, notwithstanding the perfectly understandable anxieties that these people had when the shelter was first opened, they realized that the shelter was professionally managed. In fact, its operation in the neighborhood was seamless. I'll bet that no one could have convinced a single one of these good people, who just a few years before had spoken so vehemently against the shelter, that in such a short time they would not only speak in favor of the project, but do so in such glowing terms. I mention this story for two reasons. First, the St. John Fisher community has retained lots of very experienced professionals to assist with this project. The project will be done well. That is half the battle. Second, although I do not doubt the sincerity of the neighbors' anxieties, they too may well speak in glowing terms about the new St. John Fisher Church once it is completed. It is certainly in everyone's interest, especially the St. John Fisher community, that this happens.

Ms. Leza Mikhail

July 16, 2008

page 5

The building committee developed the site plan after many months of meetings with parishioners, professionals and the Planning Department. The St. John Fisher community has pledged many millions of dollars to complete this project, a very real demonstration of the breadth of parishioner support. The Commissioners have listened carefully to the concerns expressed by a handful of neighbors and recommended certain changes. The plans have been revised accordingly. The concerns have been adequately addressed. Further changes cannot be made without negatively impacting the rights of the church and parishioners to create a suitable house of worship. I urge the Commissioners to vote to approve the project on July 22.

Very truly yours,



Jon L. Rewinski

# 2

**LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH LLP**

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

650 TOWN CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 1400, COSTA MESA, CA 92626  
PHONE: 714.545.9200 | FAX: 714.850.1030 | WEBSITE: www.lbbslaw.com

ELIZABETH L. MARTYN  
DIRECT DIAL: 714.966.3131  
E-MAIL: martyn@lbbslaw.com

July 17, 2008

FILE NO.  
F023-01

		Phone Number	Fax Number
<b>To:</b>	Chair and Members, Planning Commission <b>Attn: Marcia Zentz</b> The City of Rancho Palos Verdes		310.544.5293

**From:** Elizabeth L. Martyn

**Pages:** 3 (including cover page)

**Re:** Expansion of St. John Fisher Catholic Church  
Item No. 2007-00492

**Message:** Please see the attached letter with today's date.

4836-5147-0338.1

PLEASE CALL 714.545.9200, EXT. 3469 IMMEDIATELY IF THERE ARE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THIS TRANSMISSION.

The information contained in this facsimile message is intended only for the personal and confidential use of the designated recipients named above. This message may be an attorney-client communication, and as such, is privileged and confidential. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient or an agent responsible for delivering it to the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this document in error, and that any review, dissemination, distribution, or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us immediately by telephone and return the original message to us by mail. Thank you.

ATLANTA | CHICAGO | FORT LAUDERDALE | LAFAYETTE | LAS VEGAS | LOS ANGELES | NEW ORLEANS | NEW YORK  
ORANGE COUNTY | PHOENIX | SACRAMENTO | SAN BERNARDINO | SAN DIEGO | SAN FRANCISCO | TAMPA | TUCSON

**LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH LLP**

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

650 TOWN CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 1400, COSTA MESA, CA 92626  
PHONE: 714.545.9200 | FAX: 714.850.1030 | WEBSITE: www.lbbslaw.com

ELIZABETH L. MARTYN  
DIRECT DIAL: 714.966.3131  
E-MAIL: martyn@lbbslaw.com

July 17, 2008

FILE NO.  
F023-01**VIA FACSIMILE**

Chair and Members, Planning Commission  
The City of Rancho Palos Verdes  
Rancho Palos Verdes City Hall  
30940 Hawthorne Boulevard  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275

Re: Expansion of St. John Fisher Catholic Church  
Item No. 2007-00492

Dear Chair and Planning Commission Members:

We have been consulted by several groups of homeowners who are very concerned about the expansion of St. John Fisher Catholic Church ("Church" or the "project"). The purpose of this letter is to request a 45-day continuance of this item to provide for discussion of disputed issues and receipt and review of documents already requested, as well as confirmation of legal representation. We understand there is a problem with the Church's architect and that a continuance of this matter will be this September. We strongly urge you to grant that.

The concerns here focus mainly on design and environmental issues. For example, the design of the church is not in harmony with the remainder of the neighborhood and while there are alternate designs available, they have not been presented to the Planning Commission. The Church itself has presented another redesign of the silhouette. There are height issues regarding the tower and noise issues regarding the bells. These and other serious concerns deserve additional time for study and discussion.

In addition, at least three of the affected property owners (Messrs. Weissman, Butler and Jackson) also have filed Public Records Act requests. Mr. Jackson has received a large number

ATLANTA | CHICAGO | FORT LAUDERDALE | LAFAYETTE | LAS VEGAS | LOS ANGELES | NEW ORLEANS | NEW YORK  
ORANGE COUNTY | PHOENIX | SACRAMENTO | SAN BERNARDINO | SAN DIEGO | SAN FRANCISCO | TAMPA | TUCSON

LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH LLP

Chair and Members, Planning Commission  
July 17, 2008  
Page 2

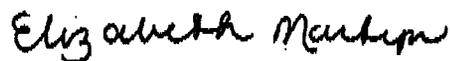
of documents and, according to the City Attorney, Mr. Weissman's request is pending. It is not fair to these residents to go forward without the chance to review relevant documents.

In addition to our request for a continuance, we also ask that this continuance be considered at the beginning of the agenda so that the residents do not have to wait (or pay their attorney to wait) until after midnight for that continuance.

Finally, we respectfully suggest that any Planning Commission members who also are church members obtain an opinion regarding potential conflicts of interest.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Elizabeth L. Martyn of  
LEWIS BRISBOIS BISGAARD & SMITH LLP

ELM:cjr

cc: Alan Weissman  
Phil Jackson  
Doug Butler  
Carol Lynch, City Attorney

#2

**Leza Mikhail**

---

**From:** Ronald Stankey [rhrsrv2@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 16, 2008 9:12 PM  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Cc:** lhuntcounts@aol.com  
**Subject:** Saint John Fisher Revised Building Plan

Ms Leza Mikhail, Associate Planner  
City of Rancho Palos Verdes

Abraham Lincoln once said, "You can please some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all the time" Especially neighbors!.

I'm not so sure this is about pleasing some of the people or all of the people as it is about building a church that is adequate for the needs of its' worshipers and a complex that administratively will serve their community.

Certainly, there must be limitations, safety factors, and facilities including parking of automobiles that will with common sense, logistically meet the needs of those destined to use the facilities. Yes, this must include Carrillon Bells used on a limited basis.

Being a good neighbor to those who have arrived on the adjacent properties after the initial facilities were built in 1962-63 is also part of the overall venture. We fail to see how an appropriate identification sign will affect this relationship. The physical requirements and identifying structures of a church community obviously are not the same as a residential neighborhood planned for one and two story homes. A neighborhood school with all of it's facilities and attedant identification is an example of what a community must have to be all inclusive and respected.

Surely there has now been a demonstration by the St. John Fisher Parish members to help make an adjustment to the proposed facilities that will be more compatible yet serviceable to all concerned, and must be recognized forthwith.

It is now time to set understandable emotions aside and proceed in an acceptable business like manner to complete a project which a large proportion of the community needs, and has accepted as modified.

We trust the analytical members of the Planning Commission will agree, and permit this well planned project to be completed expeditiously.

Sincerely,

Ron Stankey  
6940 Starstone Dr.  
RPV

7/17/2008

#2

**From:** Ronald Stankey (rhsrpv2@verizon.net)  
**To:** lezam@rpv.com  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 16, 2008 9:11:49 PM  
**Cc:** lhuntcounts@aol.com  
**Subject:** Saint John Fisher Revised Building Plan

RECEIVED

JUL 17 2008

PLANNING, BUILDING AND  
CODE ENFORCEMENT

Ms Leza Mikhail, Associate Planner  
City of Rancho Palos Verdes

Abraham Lincoln once said, "You can please some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all the time" Especially neighbors!.

I'm not so sure this is about pleasing some of the people or all of the people as it is about building a church that is adequate for the needs of its' worshipers and a complex that administratively will serve their community.

Certainly, there must be limitations, safety factors, and facilities including parking of automobiles that will with common sense, logistically meet the needs of those destined to use the facilities. Yes, this must include Carrillon Bells used on a limited basis.

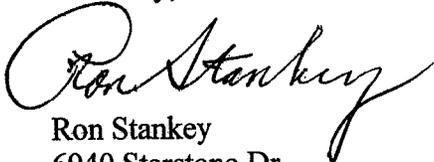
Being a good neighbor to those who have arrived on the adjacent properties after the initial facilities were built in 1962-63 is also part of the overall venture. We fail to see how an appropriate identification sign will affect this relationship. The physical requirements and identifying structures of a church community obviously are not the same as a residential neighborhood planned for one and two story homes. A neighborhood school with all of it's facilities and attedant identification is an example of what a community must have to be all inclusive and respected.

Surely there has now been a demonstration by the St. John Fisher Parish members to help make an adjustment to the proposed facilities that will be more compatible yet serviceable to all concerned, and must be recognized forthwith.

It is now time to set understandable emotions aside and proceed in an acceptable business like manner to complete a project which a large proportion of the community needs, and has accepted as modified.

We trust the analytical members of the Planning Commission will agree, and permit this well planned project to be completed expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Ron Stankey  
6940 Starstone Dr.  
RPV



Mr. Ronald H. Stankey  
6940 Starstone Dr  
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275-2953