

It went until the wee hours, but Pacifica's July 11 City Council meeting was something to see.

Left to the very end were important decisions, including a \$35.5 million borrowing proposal (with interest, that's \$50 million) to build a new library. Polling data presented to council showed that the measure is unlikely to reach the 2/3 vote needed to pass, yet library proponents forged ahead with evidently no thought to modifying the bond to secure voter approval.

Only Council member John Keener inquired about revenue from the sale of the two existing library branches, Sanchez and Sharp Park, both to be shuttered in favor of the splashy new "books on the beach" library. Surprisingly, City Manager Lorie Tinfow said she didn't know what those properties are worth.

The sale of the libraries (albeit one-time monies) could give City Hall what the voters denied them in the prior election: millions in new revenue.

That revenue — all of it — should be used to reduce the cost of the bond itself. A smaller bond obviously means a lower tax and a better chance of passing. A \$50 million bond equals about \$1,250 in higher property taxes for each Pacifica resident. But property taxes are not per-resident. So more than double that amount per-household. (Of course, some would pay more property taxes, some less.)

Nobody talks about the actual cost of the library, but there it is. Borrowing isn't cheap.

Instead, City Hall says the revenue "could" be used to pay down the bond. Don't count on it. Pacifica government thinks short-term, not about long-term debt such as our pension unfunded liability. Apply the proceeds from selling the two library properties to the new library and reduce the borrowing total.

Pacifica has said only that it "might" pay down the bond early with these revenues. Don't count on that. Would selling the libraries fund staff salaries? Most local government revenue goes for staff compensation. We're entitled to know what the plan is for these millions in new anticipated revenue.

Council found \$400,00 to pay a firm for drawings (not blueprints) of the new library — drawings that may make fine fishwrap after the election. That money could have gone to improving the existing libraries instead of underfunding them to get us to abandon them and raise taxes for the new library (which also would include new council chambers).

Staff is remiss in not getting appraisals of the two libraries. That revenue — every penny — should be part of the library funding puzzle if the bond is to have a chance of passage. City Hall dropped the ball on this aspect. The library bond is in trouble as a result.