

## UCPG finds hand in their honey pot

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City Council President and District 1 Councilman Scott Peters is trying to divert \$15.5 million into a controversial project for which the money is not intended, some members of the University Community Planning Group (UCPG) allege.

UCPG chair Linda Colley said Peters wants to shift funds from North University City's Facilities Benefit Assessment account to build the Regents Road Bridge project in South University City, violating the city's plan for the money. At an Aug. 1, 2006 City Council meeting, Colley allegedly told Peters spending the money in that way is tantamount to a misappropriation of government funds.

Peters was not available for comment, but Madeleine Baudoin, the University City representative from Peters' office, said that "City Council hasn't had an opportunity to review the motion yet." The council will vote on the motion — whether to spend the FBA money on the Regents project — after the UCPG reviews the figures and weighs in. According to Baudoin, although the motion was passed, it hasn't been certified, and "there's some issues that always pop up."

At the August 2006 council meeting, Peters said, "Whatever I do today will upset a large part of my community."

Concerning North University City's community plan, he said, "They are not the Ten Commandments handed down by Moses. They are a starting point."

Peters' proposals came to light Jan. 8 during the UCPG's annual review of FBA funds. Board members were handed the 2009 book and noticed \$5 million in missing Transnet funds intended for the Regents Road Bridge project. Board member George Lattimer explained the \$5 million was transferred to the FBA account along with an additional \$10.5 million for other various projects also related to the Regents Bridge project.

Colley said the motion Peters passed to use a total of \$15.5 million in FBA funds for a bridge project in South University City is against North University City's plan.

"The city is using the FBA as a cookie jar," said Debbie Knight of the Friends of Rose Canyon, also on the FBA subcommittee. "Here's where there's a pot of money, and it's just another example of the city's lack of accountability. It's not appropriate to fund these projects with this money."

The ongoing Regents Road Bridge project has split the community of University City.

Advocates say it will ease traffic congestion, while others say the project, which will extend Regents Road across Rose Canyon via a bridge, will endanger the canyon preserve.

At the UCPG's January planning meeting, members identified the various projects Peters proposed to charge to the FBA account, including \$4 million for open space and bike enhancements, \$1.5 million for right of way acquisition, \$5 million for limited roadway changes at SR52 and \$5 million for road extensions that Lattimer said the city originally promised to fund with state-sponsored Transnet.

According to Knight, Peters' proposal does not comply with the community plan. She said that anything built with FBA money must be in an "area of benefit," and that does not include projects in South University City or Clairemont.

Although Peters' vote caught some group members off guard at the January meeting, Lattimer said North University City has one of the wealthiest accounts and that as a developer he would rather see projects completed than spend time and waste money fighting over who should pay.

"The city said they'd pay for it five or ten years ago out of Transnet," Lattimer said, but he added that isn't the issue. "I think we exposed the opposition to the Regents Road Bridge," he said.

The UC planners will meet Feb. 12 at their regular venue, located at University Towne Centre, to discuss the 2009 FBA, including Peters' proposal. They are also holding elections and have applications for new members.