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Dangerous Liaisons

John McLaurin | 5:08PM GMT

During this economic crisis, while port tenants are fighting for survival and the City of Los Angeles is furloughing workers, the Port of Los Angeles continues to operate in a world of its own — a bizarre world where down is up and up is down.

This Thursday, the Port Commission scheduled a vote on Agenda Item 14, funding the creation of a new position — a “liaison” — that would, according to the agenda “(i) bolster and foster communications between the Harbor Department and CD [Council District] 15; (ii) develop and strengthen its business relationship; and (iii) provide up-to-date information to and from CD 15 on various and complex Harbor Department related matters. The term is ... one year plus two one-year renewal options, for a total term of up to three years. The maximum compensation is \$100,000 per year for a total aggregate compensation amount not-to exceed \$300,000.”

My guess is that this new “position” is one that is less functional and practical than it is political — think of it as a personal concierge. It is a position that is solely dedicated to provide “information” to one member of the Los Angeles City Council. Talk about efficiency.

Janice Hahn has represented the 15th Council District since 2001. She will be termed out following the completion of her current (third) term and is currently contemplating a run for lieutenant governor.

Her district office is approximately two blocks away from the Port of Los Angeles administrative offices. But after eight years in office, the port and Councilwoman Hahn believe she needs her own personal “liaison” to keep her up to date on “various and complex” port issues.

The Port, however, is leaving the other 14 members of the Los Angeles City Council, 120 members of the California Legislature, five LA County Supervisors, two members of the United States Senate and 53 members of the California delegation in the House of Representatives to either fend for themselves or to receive information from the dozens of port staff that occupy the government and public affairs departments.

In the midst of the Great Recession, when port customers are on target to lose tens of billions this year, if the Port of Los Angeles can find funding for Councilmember Janice Hahn to have her own personal port concierge/liaison, perhaps elected officials on the Long Beach side should argue for their own personal valet.

McLaurin is president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association