



Agenda Item #: 00/1205.13

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Tell and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager *GD*

FROM: Richard Gill, Director of Parks and Recreation *R. G.*

DATE: December 5, 2006

SUBJECT: Discussion Regarding Existing Artistic Memorial Benches on the Strand

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council discuss the issue of existing artistic memorial benches on the Strand and provide direction.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There is no fiscal implication associated with this report.

BACKGROUND:

During the last 15 years, the City has accepted and approved through an agreement the placement of three donated artistic memorial benches on the Strand.

The first bench approved by Council in 1993 and placed at the Strand and 16th Street was donated by Ms. Carol Escobar just prior to her passing (Exhibit A). When this bench was approved by Council, a policy was adopted to allow staff to approve future requests for benches.

The second bench located at the Strand and 17th Street was donated in 1996 by the children of Caroline and Frank Dubose who wanted to memorialize their parents' 70th wedding anniversary (Exhibit B).

The third bench was donated by Mr. Vince Salem in 1998 in memory of his wife's passing. This bench is located at 8th Street and the Strand (Exhibit C).

DISCUSSION:

Since the placement of these benches, staff has received both positive and negative comments from the community regarding different characteristics of the benches.

Staff has received only positive feedback from the public for the DuBose bench at 17th and Strand. The two benches (facing each other) and table are functional, blend aesthetically with the rest of the landscape and commemorate a happy occasion. Staff recommends that the Dubose bench not be part of the discussion because the community has never expressed a concern with it.

The benches placed at 8th and 16th on the Strand by the Escobar and Salem families have been a little more controversial. A concern was recently expressed to staff and Council by a community member after he learned that a portion of Ms. Escobar's ashes were placed in the small black concrete square in the top corner of the bench. Staff contacted a family member of Ms. Escobar and confirmed that a small portion of Mrs. Escobar's ashes were mixed into the concrete, making up the small black square. Staff has not heard any other concerns regarding this bench.

Staff has received a few more concerns from the community regarding the bench placed at 8th and the Strand by the Salem family. The grayish black marble bench, with inscriptions that are prophetic and poetic are also viewed by some as not uplifting, reminding people of their own mortality.

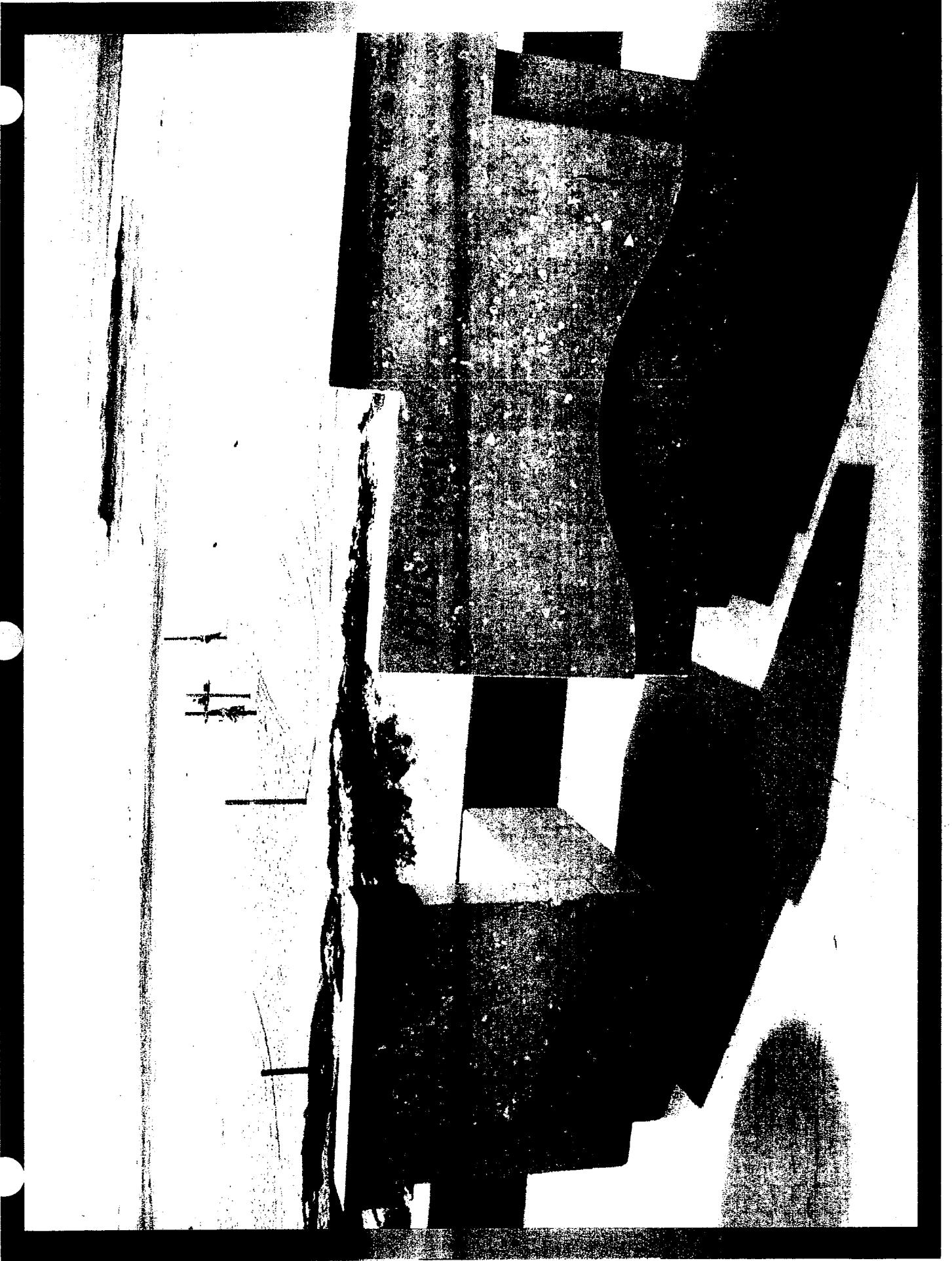
After the installation of this bench, a moratorium was placed for future benches until the Strand renovations were completed and guidelines could be established for the future placement of donated benches.

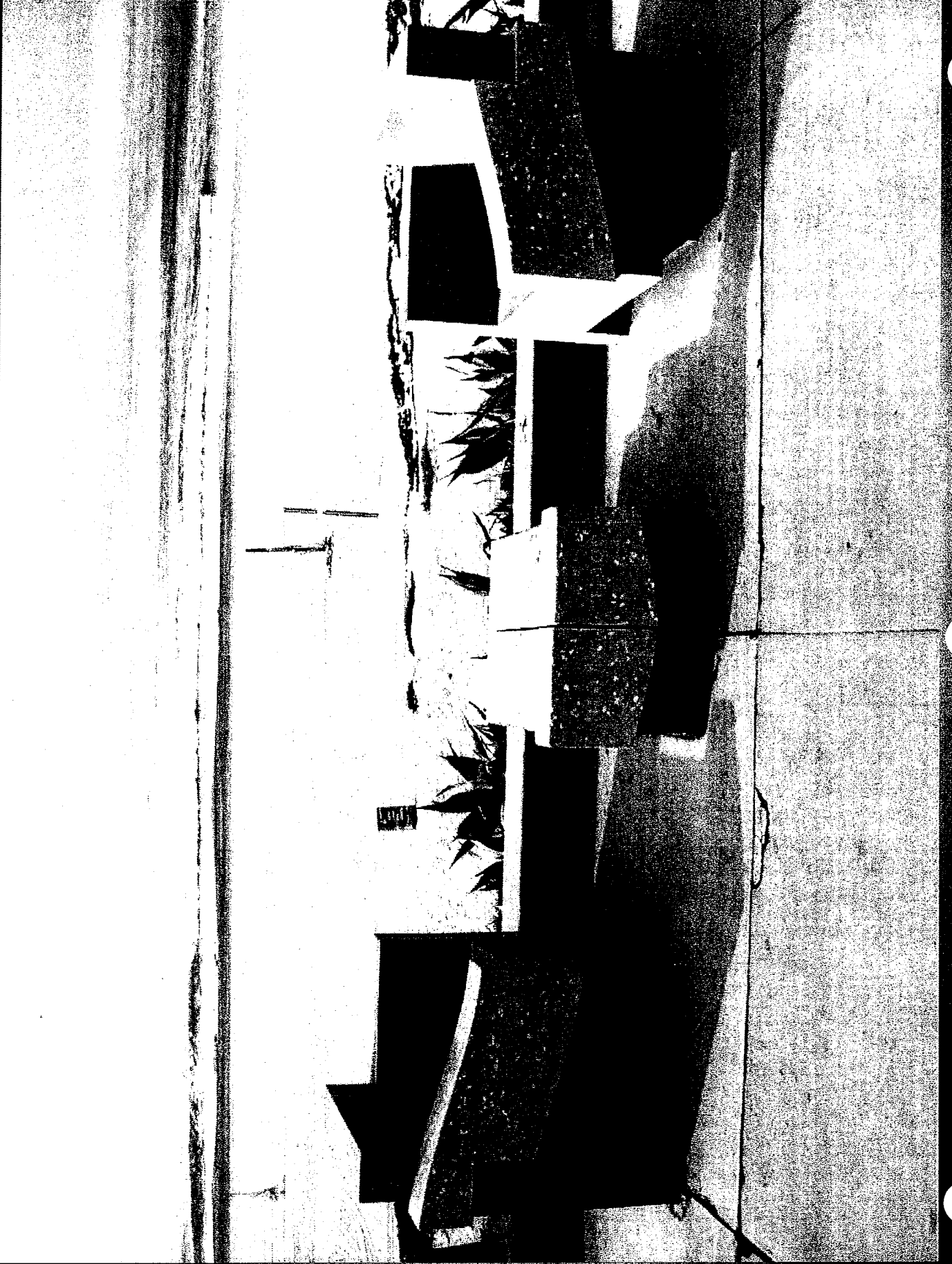
As stated earlier, the City has contractual agreements for all three benches. The agreements state that the City has the right to do as it wishes, including removal of the benches, as long as it informs the donors.

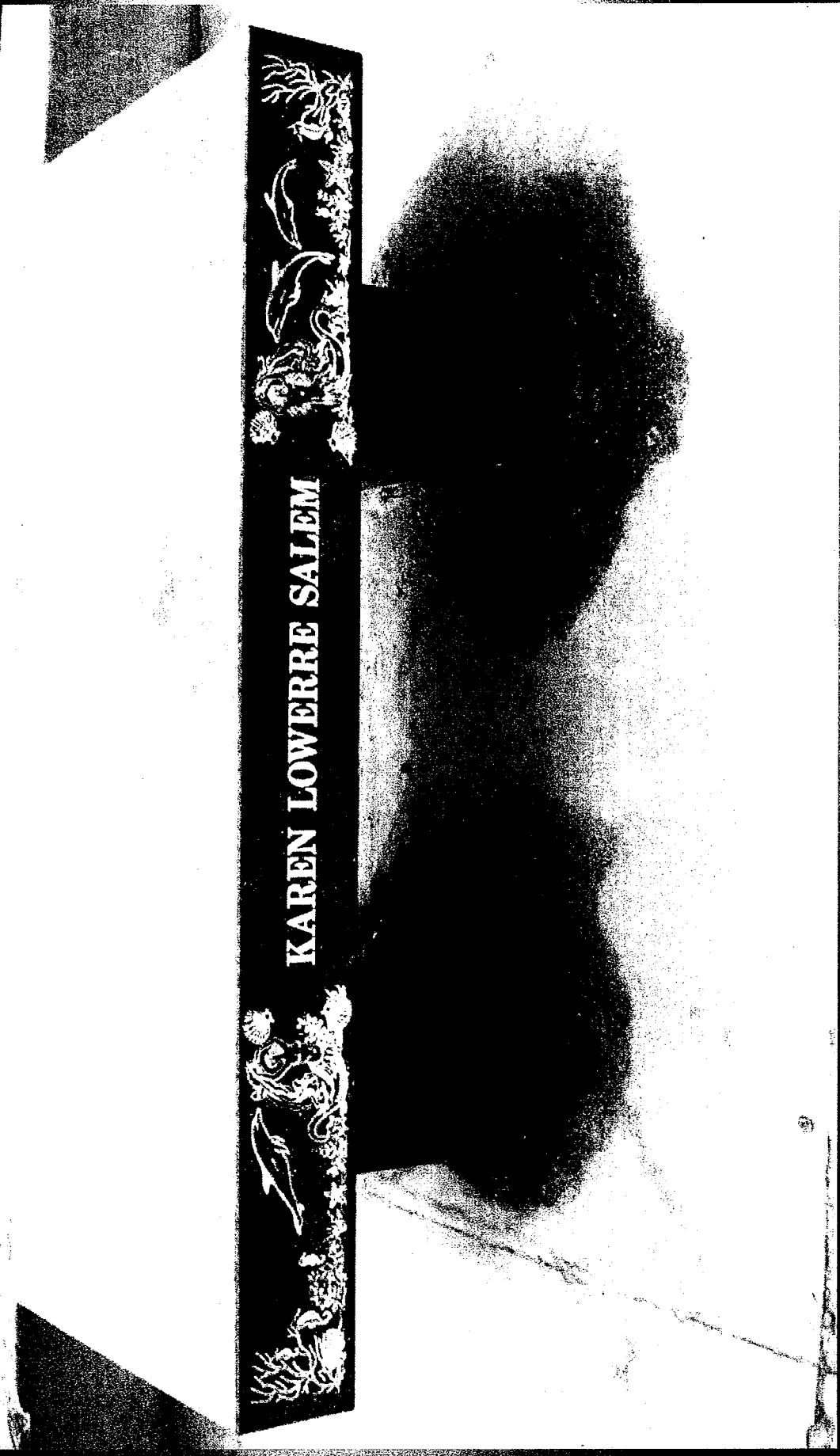
Staff has notified the donors of the benches, as well as several of the citizens that have lodged complaints regarding tonight's Council meeting.

Staff recommends that the City Council review and discuss the information regarding the two memorial benches located at 8th and 16th Streets on the Strand and provide direction to staff.

Attachments: A. Carol Escobar Bench
B. DuBose Bench
C. Salem Bench







KAREN LOWERRE SALEM