

Mission Viejo Buzz

Keeping the California Promise

Week of December 23, 2005

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The Federalist Patriot- Founders' Quote Daily

"Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves, therefore, are its only safe depositories."

-- Thomas Jefferson (Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XIV, 1781)

STAFF EDITORIAL

CITY COUNCIL: WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Residents frequently ask while observing the antics of some Mission Viejo City Council members: who are these people – how did they get into office?

Prior to the November 2002 election, incumbent Council Members Sherri Butterfield and Susan Withrow had become arrogant spendthrifts, and the average voter was ready to throw them out of office.

Surprisingly, residents weren't lining up to run against the incumbents in 2002. By mid-year, Lance MacLean appeared to be the only serious challenger. Frank Ury had talked about running, but he abruptly moved to Northern California during the summer (and returned in 2003). A large group of activists first asked each other to run and, failing to find any prospects, asked others in the community. By July, at least 50 people had been solicited without success.

A city staffer later said, "A monkey could have won a council seat in 2002."

Supporters flocked to MacLean without knowing him or his views. The mantra became "ABB" – Anyone But Butterfield. By mid-July, activist Bo Klein said he would persuade a certain person in

his Sierra neighborhood to run: Trish Kelley.



Kelley had taken part in past community efforts, getting signatures on a petition to stop apartment-building in south Mission Viejo. She also participated in the crusade to save the Sierra Rec Center from demolition. Klein asked Kelley to run, and she said no. He asked again ... and again. Eventually, she agreed.

MacLean and Kelley ran on the coattails of Councilman John Paul Ledesma, who was running for reelection in 2002. Ledesma – a long-time opponent of Butterfield and Withrow – would easily be reelected for a second term.

Kelley ran on little more than "bringing harmony to the council." MacLean's promises were more grandiose and unattainable, but he needed only to oppose "the gals" in order to win. Other candidates emerged: John Maginnis made the mistake of aligning with Butterfield and Withrow. Bob Gaebel, Emmy Day and Ryan Cheo each threw a hat into the ring but lacked organization. Joe Chavez put his name on the ballot but didn't campaign.

While several people tried to claim credit for the November 2002 victories, widespread opposition to Butterfield and Withrow was a huge factor. The gals, to a degree, defeated themselves by offending so many people. Two outsider political consultants – Scott Taylor of Newport Beach and John Lewis of Orange – implied to other political outsiders that they had orchestrated brilliant strategic victories for Ledesma, MacLean and Kelley. That's laughable.

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Immediately following the election, MacLean's popularity dropped like a rock when he aligned himself with City Manager Dan Joseph and other cronies of the old regime. Kelley soon began undermining Council Member Gail Reavis, who had tirelessly campaigned for her.

The irony is stunning. MacLean had campaigned against the big-government ideals of two offensive politicians only to bring back the same ideals and offense. Kelley promised to bring peace and became a political street-fighter, determined to overthrow anyone who disagreed with her. Most notably, Kelley removed Klein from the Planning Commission -- first declining to reappoint him and then aligning with



MacLean and Ury in a suspicious vote to remove him.



And where does Kelley get her direction for such behavior? At a prayer breakfast earlier this year, she seized the microphone to give spontaneous testimony to an audience of 500 people, where she wasn't on the program, nor did anyone invite her to speak. Kelley announced that Jesus had told her to run for council. It is difficult, however, to reconcile the apparent ill will and egomania with divine intervention.

Residents might not be following council events closely, but they notice inconsistencies. Almost anyone can distinguish between back-slapping and back-stabbing. "Character words" are spewed constantly from the dais -- frequently with sarcasm -- to accentuate the hypocrisy. Council members refuse to work together, and the Nov. 7, 2006, election is on the horizon.



Viejo Planning and Transportation Commission prior to a hearing on the Steadfast development proposal. The commissioners had promised the residents that they would send the initiative to the city council with a recommendation for approval during a previous planning commission meeting.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful New Year's gift for the city council to recommend such an initiative to the citizens of Mission Viejo? Such an initiative would give our citizens the right to decide for themselves whether development of our commercial areas as high-density housing sites is desirable. Our citizens know what is best for our city, and such a proposal and initiative can only improve our city.

There have been continuous efforts to convert commercial properties into residential mixed-use areas creating higher density, more traffic and higher infrastructure costs in our city. Our Master Plan has been abrogated in a piecemeal fashion by people who didn't even live here when we purchased our property subject to the conditions and covenants of the Mission Viejo Company. Why do we always go to Santa Margarita, Foothill Ranch, Laguna Hills or Irvine when we want to shop? Our future retail or business tax base has been traded away by shortsighted city leaders. Property tax receipts fall far short of the infrastructure costs of high-density housing. In the long term, our costs go up and our income goes down disproportionately to our city's growth needs.



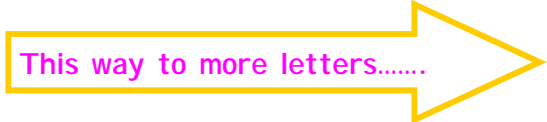
The initiative will give our citizens a clear picture of our council and their individual positions on this important issue. Our citizens should have the right to decide on high-density housing or the conversion of our commercial areas to residential or mixed use. If the council does not go on record as giving the right to our citizens, which would force our citizens to go the signature and petition route, our council's vote will become a tattoo on their record.

James Edward Woodin
Mission Viejo

COMMENTS AND LETTERS

A NEW YEAR'S PRESENT FOR THE CITIZENS OF MISSION VIEJO

On Dec. 12, a group of residents put together an initiative to give the people of Mission Viejo the right to vote on all major development projects in the city. The initiative was presented to the Mission



THE SVN STORY ABOUT THE STEADFAST PROJECT

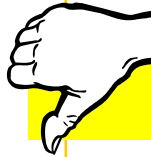
("Steadfast proposal debated," Dec. 16) reads almost like a press release from the developer. I have nothing against real estate developers; I wish I had become one years ago and made a lot of money. The story does illustrate, however, how small cities and their residents get manipulated by an unholy alliance of "public interest law firms" and developers who fund them. I sat in on the project as a member of the Planning Commission and of the Design Review Committee from the beginning. I noticed a few things.

First, Mission Viejo WAS affordable housing when it was built. Inflation has pushed home prices out of reach for many, but state intervention makes things worse. The older planned communities, like Mission Viejo, were laid out to be housing for commuters to Los Angeles. When I moved here in 1972, the traffic flow was south to north in the morning all the way to East LA. In the years following, the flow reversed as Irvine developed industrial parks and high technology made space requirements much less for successful industry. Now the morning traffic is heavier southbound once you pass Irvine. The reverse is true of the afternoon commute. The whole 91 commuting problem is related to the industrial development just north of us.

Later cities benefited from the design change, and Rancho Santa Margarita was planned with room for industrial parks with jobs for local residents. If Mission Viejo had followed the precedent of the Irvine Ranch, RSM and Ladera Ranch and the planned communities still to be built along Route 74 would all be part of Mission Viejo. There would be plenty of room for affordable housing units. That didn't happen. There is still a lot of room to the east for good planning of low-income housing. The only reason Mission Viejo is under siege by these people is politics. Orange County votes Republican, and the state legislature couldn't care less about our quality of life. The "public interest law firms" that accuse us of failing to accommodate low-income housing are, themselves, funded by developers and court awards of legal fees. "Public interest" has little to do with it. They are the club the developers have to punish cities that resist change.

About 10 years ago, when the old city council was

dominated by developer interests (If you doubt that, read their paeans to the Ranch in the Op-ed pages), several huge apartment projects were approved over the objections of thousands of residents. Was there any "affordable housing" included in those projects? No. They were presented as luxury units, as laughable then as the present assurances about the Steadfast project. The need for affordable housing lay undiscovered until later. The reporter, who was probably in grade school when that development was approved, says we "failed" to comply with state standards. Those standards, of course, are elastic and expand at will.



The Steadfast project was interesting for several reasons. First, I noticed that there were separate entrances for the "senior units" that were in the original version. Why two entrances for a small area? Then I noticed a high fence separating the two zones, fencing in the children of the low-income residents. Then I noticed the lack of a play area of any size. That probably has something to do with the one-bedroom design now in the plans. The buyers of the high-priced homes wanted to be fenced off from the children of the low income neighbors, or at least the developer seemed to assume so. The local residents are concerned about a confluence of low-income housing in that area; Lake Forest has an apartment zone across the street. There is also a "day worker" pick-up site nearby suggesting a developing ghetto in the making.

The project might work as a residential development without the affordable component, but the money to be made from government subsidy is tempting. The affordable development alone might be worthwhile, but the site is zoned commercial and we need commercial space for future industry, lacking in our small city. It is also an area with other factors that worry local residents, such as the high concentration of rental units across the street in Lake Forest. There are thousands of acres being developed right now to our east. It would be a small matter to set aside some of that for affordable housing. We would like to be left alone, but that probably won't happen. There is too much money to be made by people who don't live here and care nothing for our lives.

MICHAEL T KENNEDY, M.D.
FORMER MEMBER, PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION
MISSION VIEJO

The Buzz

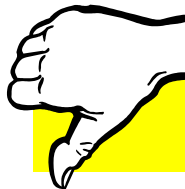
The Potocki Center is showing signs of life. A group of artists approached City Hall some time ago, wanting to turn the mothballed facility into an arts center. Classes are currently being offered. Those interested can register online at <http://econnect.cityofmissionviejo.org>. Call (949) 470-3061 to get information about art classes for adults, teens, drop-in and after-school programs.



Behind-the-scenes wrangling is apparently continuing between the city and UDR/Pacific, whose housing project on the former Kmart site was approved by a 4-1 council vote (Reavis dissenting). The council changed the site's zoning from commercial to R-30 residential and approved 250 condos. As part of the project's so-called appeal to the council, the developer is supposed to build 38 affordable units. When voting for the project, Council Members Trish Kelley and Lance MacLean appeared to be salivating over fees the developer would pay the city so they could fund their "other projects." Will the developer now try to wriggle out of the affordable units and at least a portion of the fees? With council members running for reelection and accepting "campaign donations," anything can happen.



Confusion prevails among some residents over which housing project on Los Alisos Blvd. received council approval. Residents reading stories in the Saddleback paper may have mistakenly believed that Steadfast's housing project next to Unisys had been approved. Because UDR/Pacific's project is also on Los Alisos (east of Marguerite Parkway), readers might not realize two developers had proposed high-density housing on two separate sites. Residents still have the opportunity to voice their opposition to the Steadfast proposal at the Jan. 9 Planning Commission meeting. The commission began the hearing on Dec. 11 and continued it to Jan. 9.



When is Hanukkah? It will be celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 2. Anyone who thinks Christmas is getting short shrift should consider that Hanukkah is barely getting a mention. For example, has anyone seen a notice about Mission Viejo's menorah lighting ceremony? Will the politically correct media refer to it as lighting of the "winter candlestick"?



A story circulated months ago that a mortuary wanted to open a facility in Mission Viejo. The mortuary has since been identified as Fairhaven. A Fairhaven employee recently said that the mortuary, indeed, did approach the city but calls were never returned.



Capistrano USD trustees have installed a new banner on the construction site of their \$35 million administration center to announce that an "Education Center" is coming soon. It's an administration center. At least they're no longer trying to mis-

"... a campaign dedicated to restoring honesty, integrity and accountability in public education."

represent the building as a credit union center. <http://www.cusdrecall.com>



The Orange County Register's "update" this week regarding the recall only reiterated the deadline of Fri., Dec. 23, for Registrar of Voters Steven Rodermund to announce results of verifying approximately 177,000 signatures. The results will likely not be released in time to be published in this issue of **The Buzz**, but check such sources as the Register's online discussion board, <http://talk.ocregister.com> which will probably light up as soon as Rodermund makes an announcement.



THE END