



MISSION VIEJO BUZZ

Keeping the California Promise

Week of March 25, 2006

The Patriot Post Founders' Quote Daily

"In a society under the forms of which the stronger faction can readily unite and oppress the weaker, anarchy may as truly be said to reign as in a state of nature." -- James Madison (Federalist No. 52, 8 February 1788)

Reference: Madison, Federalist No. 52.

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He's melting ... he's melting

Staff editorial, March 21

"I don't like bullies, and I don't like liars," were Councilman Frank Ury's opening remarks at the Mar. 16 meeting of Saddleback Republican Assembly. During the hour-long session, he took aim at other council members. Two of them were in attendance, taken aback by remarks from Ury, THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE FOR SCHOOLYARD BULLY.

One person in the audience said, "It was like watching the worst council brawl. Ury arrived with a bunch of folks who act like the Mission Viejo mafia."

In an equal-opportunity smear, Ury called the council "junior-high kids" and criticized each one. He said Trish Kelley had asked for his endorsement for her November reelection campaign, and he refused to endorse her. Ury complained that Lance MacLean lacks a sense of direction, micromanages everything and focuses on inappropriate issues. Ury criticized John Paul Ledesma for a vote years ago "enriching" the pension and healthcare plans



of city employees.

Observers noticed Ury's attempt to elevate himself by denigrating everyone else. What

about his own performance?

Instead of promoting responsible, open government during his 16 months on the council,

Ury has sought to increase bureaucracy and cater to special interest. Examples include his votes for a separate traffic commission and favors to developers.

As a humorous note at the SRA meeting, Ury apparently could not round up a respectable number of Republicans to accompany him. The "Mission Viejo mafia" – none of whom are club members – included non-Republicans towed into a Republican meeting about Republican issues. At one point, Chaundra Krout, Ury's Democrat-American Independent-decline-to-state planning commission appointee, said she isn't running for city council. Her motive was apparently to deny such information coming from Ury's own camp two months earlier.

What was Ury's agenda at the SRA meeting? His outbursts during past weeks began when he was shot down at the Feb. 20 council meeting. He and MacLean failed in their attempt to provide a loophole for Steadfast to escape building any affordable units in the housing development the council approved next to Uni-

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sys. After Steadfast used the leverage of affordable housing to wedge its project into the city, Ury and MacLean wanted to dump the affordable requirement and move on to dismantle the next commercial zone. Their activities are attracting developers eying commercial parcels for affordable housing projects.

How much was riding on the escape hatch for Steadfast, which evidently angered Ury when it failed? For months, Ury has been meeting behind the scenes with Anaheim Mayor / lobbyist Curt Pringle, who represented UDR/Pacific in the former Kmart site housing development. If an in-lieu fee could be extracted from Steadfast, it would partially fund Ury's dream complex of low-income apartments. At the Mar. 16 SRA meeting, Ury said such behind-the-scenes meetings (involving developers, lobbyists and council members who have accepted large sums of money as "campaign donations") are nothing to be concerned about. He claimed, "We all do it." Who is "we"?

Who are the bullies and liars Ury complains about? Unable to lead and failing to control other council members, he appears bent on destroying everyone who gets in his way. He is the bully he complains about. As for liars, Ury's whopper of being "an anti-airport fighter from the beginning" is the tip of the iceberg.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CITIZENS INITIATIVE

On Dec. 15, 2005, citizens of Mission Viejo submitted to the ad hoc committee of the Planning Commission – now the ad hoc committee of the City Council – a citizens initiative.



The citizens initiative, if approved by this council and the voters, would permit our citizens to vote on all changes to our zoning where commercial to residential or mixed-use is required. Our city is built out. We have very few commercial properties left.

What better system to reflect democracy at its best and allow our voters the right to choose

for themselves these zone changes?

Recently, our council approved \$20,000 for a consultant to obtain citizen input into what needs our citizens have for Mission Viejo. The citizens initiative is the most accurate and best method to determine just what the sentiment is of our citizens regarding zone changes.

Allow our citizens to decide

Our citizens want and should have an up-or-down vote on the initiative. It should be agenized and voted on by each council member. Do our council members work for the citizens of Mission Viejo or do they work for some other agency or the state?

A resolution to the initiative sitting in committee is needed now, not later.

James Edward Woodin
Mission Viejo

THE DISGUSTINGLY RAMPANT FRENZY

How else can you describe some of the recent actions and decisions of some Mission Viejo City Council members? Visual observations give me this impression after "Monday Night Live" this past year. For instance, the past mayor resembles a "bobble-head dolly," nodding her head in approval even before the speaker resembling the "Town Mac-Clown" has uttered two words of his rambling speeches.

It becomes uncannily more obvious week after week that agenda programs are ("well-planned"?), decided-upon-in-private before the citizens of Mission Viejo have a chance to present any sane suggestions.

Two past mayors who are still on the council are consistently being put down for requesting more consideration and time, especially when it comes to projecting cost overruns and foolhardy expenditures. Fortunately, the residents here will have the opportunity to elect new council members, soon to be introduced – without balloons, golden shovels and within the budget (we hope) we can afford.

Bill Cruse
Mission Viejo



I uh want ...I
hummm...think



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CHECK THE RECORD,



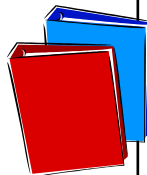
Have some of those commenting in other forums lost their objectivity about the "Pied Piper," Frank Ury? Before following, they should look where he's leading. Mission Viejo's Pied Piper is similar to the ambivalent figure in the original legend. As an abductor of once true activists, Ury has become self-serving. The mirror has two faces – public and political.

As Ury's first act on the council, he placed an item on the agenda to overturn the council's vote to fund \$1.3 million for the Sierra Recreation Center. In an act that threw out the budget and quickly pushed the project over \$2 million, was he fulfilling an I.O.U. to Trish Kelley in exchange for her endorsement for his election campaign?

Next, he submitted a proposal to develop the land under the power lines along Olympiad, which belongs to his homeowners association. This was a misuse of public funds. Was it another payback for the support of his H.O.A.? This one, however, should have drawn the ire of his N.O.P.E. supporters, but it didn't. This so-called public park on private land would be directly under the same power lines he claimed were so dangerous before his election.

Ury's pledges to fight state government mandates quickly turned toward backroom deals with developers. There is no doubt, to objective council watchers, that anything enacted in Anaheim will next appear on the Mission Viejo agenda under Ury's comments.

Of course, Ury comes prepared with reports and letters of support supplied by his political consultant, who long ago spelled out his big plan for Mission Viejo.

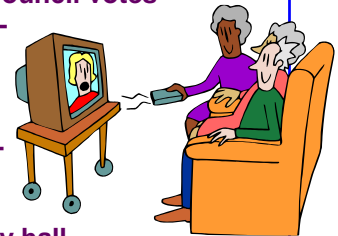


Continue to watch this blog as we reveal what the city will become with these manipulations. In the meantime, ask questions, stay vigilant and, most of all, regain objectivity.

Bo Klein
Mission Viejo

COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY MARCH 20

With few people watching TV coverage of council meetings and even fewer attending, is the city in good hands? Council votes during the March 20 meeting indicate residents should tune in.



One outcome worth mentioning is the 5-0 vote to spend \$268,410 for wireless Internet access at city hall.

It's worth mentioning because three of these council members are up for reelection in November. No need was assessed, no problem was presented and no information was given to the public regarding competitive bids. Information provided by a staff member was nearly impossible to decipher, as maintenance, upgrades and new equipment were combined into one estimate.

The city staffer presented the plea for "getting with the times" regarding Internet access. She argued that wireless access would enable employees to continue using their computers in a power outage. The vision of employees working without lights or air-conditioning when outages most likely occur in the summer is questionable. She also argued that wireless access would enable city employees to take their computers into a conference room. Of the city's 200-plus new computers, only 15 are laptops. To claim employees will haul their desktops from room to room is ridiculous.



Whose brilliant idea was this?

Another vote is worth reporting because the

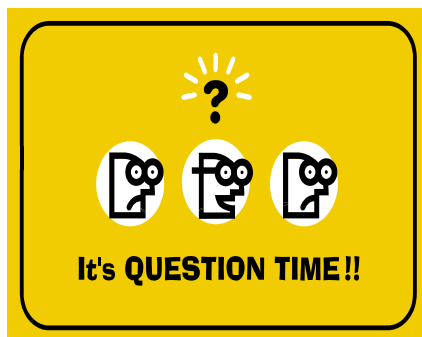
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solution was proposed by Councilman Frank Ury at “no cost to the city.” A “free” pilot program of energy-efficient streetlights is to be provided by ES Lighting System. In the fine print, the savings are projected to surpass costs (of the no-cost program) of actual implementation in two years. Councilwoman Gail Reavis began asking the right questions – who is ES Lighting System, who brought them to the city, what’s going on here – but the vote went 4-1 with Reavis dissenting. The most important question was asked by no one: how is ES Lighting related to Ury’s campaign donors and his political consultant from Orange?

A staff member presented a report about synchronizing traffic signals, which was proclaimed “excellent” by some council members. If the lights were actually synchronized, getting through two consecutive GREEN lights wouldn’t be a rare event. At the end of the staffer’s report, she said the synchronized lights in Mission Viejo save approximately one minute of time per commute. No one questioned the staffer’s conclusion that traffic signals are nearly impossible to coordinate or asked the cost of saving such a negligible amount of time.

Another report of similar nature was about the city’s disaster preparedness. The blog earlier reported there’s no city plan, and residents should focus on individual and home preparedness. A staff member who is making more than \$100,000 annually is responsible for the non-existent plan. Again, no questions were asked.



MEASURE M EXTENSION – MORE MONEY FOR A FAILED BUREAUCRACY

PART 1

BY DALE TYLER

In 1990, after two prior failed attempts by OCTA, the voters of Orange County were asked to pass a temporary half-cent sales tax to improve transportation in Orange County. The measure passed, primarily because traffic on our freeways and roads was so bad that people were willing to try anything. Unfortunately, the OCTA failed to deliver effectively on its promises to voters. Most of more than three billion in 1990 dollars collected was wasted on ineffective projects like Centerline, the flyover carpool lanes at the 55 and 5, the 55 and 405, the 5 and 57, and Disneyland. The OCTA has an unhealthy fixation on light rail and only spends the minimum possible on mundane things like roads that most people use. We should not give more money to a failed bureaucracy.

Erase the Waste

When Measure M was passed, most of the excise tax we pay on gasoline and other items that was supposed to be used only for roads was being taken by the State of California for non-road purposes outside Orange County. To this day, we get back only approximately 20 percent of our gas tax revenue. In fact, the voters passed Proposition 42 in 2002 that would force the state to stop spending gas tax on things other than roads, but it delayed this until 2008 for purely political reasons. However, this means that in two years we will start getting more money from the state, without extending Measure M.

OCTA is planning to put an extension of the half-cent sales tax on the November 2006 ballot. Drafts of the plan are available now and show that they plan to spend more than \$1.2 billion on light rail and other ineffective transit projects (Projects S and V). Also in the proposal is another \$1.2 billion (Projects R, T and W), which give more money to Metrolink instead of making people who use Metrolink ser-

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vice pay the costs themselves. That's more than \$2.4 billion to benefit a very small number of people. There is also \$340 million for senior and disabled transportation, which is arguably the only money that should be funded by taxpayers. Of course, there was a similar proposal for senior transit in the original Measure M. Two days after the voters passed Measure M, the OCTA violated a part of the two-day-old law and raised fares for seniors. Why should we trust them again?

More than 98 percent of the passenger miles traveled on a daily basis in Orange County occurs using freeways and roads. Yet, only about 70 percent of the proposed Measure M extension is allocated for these uses. Even this 70 percent is overstated, as in past years the OCTA has used taxpayer money to fund special freeway interchanges for Disney, a private company that could have easily paid for road improvements to help people get to its amusement park. The OCTA has built very beautiful flyover car pool lanes at three major interchanges (55 & 5, 55 & 405, 57&5) that are barely used, compared to normal freeway lanes. If the OCTA was serious about improving roads for everyone, it could have used that money to widen freeways and improve local streets and roads for the benefit of everyone.

Overall, the extension of the half-cent sales tax is a bad idea – not because we don't need more roads and freeways, but because OCTA has shown it cannot effectively manage the money we give it. Over the coming weeks and months I will discuss in detail the existing Measure M expenditures and what the proposed Measure M extension will and will not do to improve Orange County's traffic problems.

READERS RESPOND
PUBLISHER'S CORNER – MARCH 21, 2006
BY DALE TYLER

This week we received a comment, posted using the "Comment" button on our website from one of our readers:

Allan Pilger writes:

"Although the blog has a lot of useful information, it is overshadowed by personal attacks on Lance MacLean, Trish Kelley and Frank Ury. As

a defunct newspaper editor and publisher, I assure that you will not achieve mainstream readership with attack journalism. If your goal is to get Lance and Trish voted out of office and turn the community against Frank, then you should come right out and say it. I certainly don't agree with any council member on everything, and there is plenty of controversial stuff going on to fill a blog by sticking to the issues. Attacks merely worsen tension and animosity. Also, what Mission Viejo doesn't need is a council campaign marked by smear flyers."

My response:

Thank you for taking the time to share your opinion. Over the years, we have worked together on a number of issues and, as sometimes happens, we disagree, in this case on the nature of the comments made in our NewsBlog. First, let me be clear on this point: none of the articles are intended to be personal attacks on anyone. Personal attacks, in my view, concern the non-official conduct of an individual. For example, it would be inappropriate to write about a person's hygiene, family or job unless the family or job was part of a larger public issue. We do point out the professional failings of members of the city council, planning commission and other public figures. When I criticize Frank Ury, it is because I believe his actions are not in the best interest of the city. Likewise, this is the case with Trish Kelly and Lance MacLean and anyone else who is mentioned by name or inference in the NewsBlog. I feel it is appropriate to bring notice to the individual who has done something wrong or ill-advised as a part of his or her duties. On the other hand, a cold and dispassionate statement of the problems in our city, as you seem to prefer, would not be nearly as entertaining or informative, in my opinion.

You once told me that people read local newspapers because of the letters. Those letters are irreverent and sometimes caustic in their presentation. Yet, people enjoy reading the unvarnished opinions of others more than they want to read the dull prose of local newspapers. The NewsBlog is like those letters, sometimes a little raw, but always with the best of intentions and with a genuine desire to change the city for the better.

Finally, you are concerned about worsening

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animosity and a smear campaign for the next city council race in November. It is never fun to have one's hero criticized in a public forum. Some of the loudest critics of the NewsBlog are hardly shy about their own criticism of council members they disagree with. Unfortunately, local politics is a dirty game, and I suspect that the only way the NewsBlog would satisfy some of those critics would be to mindlessly praise the good works of their favorites. Fortunately, that won't happen, at least on my watch. We will continue to point out the foibles and failings of those who seek to lead us.

Notwithstanding the desire to have our feelings heard, all of the writers for the NewsBlog are held to a high standard of truthfulness. Where facts and not opinions are being presented, we strive for complete accuracy in our presentation. Occasionally, I hear people affiliated with certain city officials claiming that there are errors in the NewsBlog. Yet, when asked to document those errors, we receive no information. While there surely must be some errors in the tens of thousands of words we have published, no one has seen fit to correct any statements of fact.

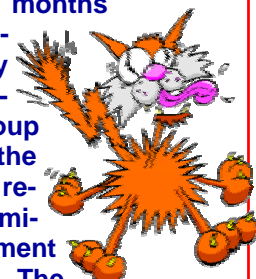
I would like to invite more reader responses and, especially, correction of facts in the NewsBlog. It's pretty easy to send in a comment or correction. Just fill in your name and comment on the form found either on the front page of each issue or on the text-only version of the NewsBlog. Just like the Orange County Register or any other newspaper, we will print comments that are ☒ cogent, to the point and that do not ☐ contain errors of fact. Comments dealing with issues not related to city or county issues will not be considered. Be sure and check the Contact Me box if you wish to have your comment printed and, of course, give us a phone number or email address so that we may contact you.



The Buzz

March 21

The Buzz reported several months ago that the Pacific Law Center's lawsuit against the city was imminent. It's still imminent. The advocacy group threatened to sue following the council's decision not to require affordable units for families in the housing development on the former Kmart site. The group says the one-bedroom affordable units don't meet its demands. While no one knows what brought Mission Viejo into the crosshairs of the advocacy group, chances are it was Steadfast, a former city manager or someone on the city council.



A city staffer in another city said he received a call from Mission Viejo City Hall. The caller had a question about making Mission Viejo "tsunami ready." Given the region's geological nature, emergency services experts say an inundation might be up to 12 meters at the beach. However, no one should lose sleep about a 12-meter wave rolling over the bluffs and continuing uphill for miles.

Councilman Frank Ury and his entourage made a grand entrance into the Mar. 16 Saddleback Republican Assembly meeting. One person in the audience dubbed Ury's followers the Mission Viejo mafia. The image fits, but it tends to denigrate the "other" mafia.



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The Mission Viejo library boasts 124,000 cardholders in a city with a population of less than 100,000. How did that happen? When the taxpayers of Mission Viejo paid for their own library, they didn't expect to provide free services for outsiders. Despite the high number of users, the collection of books is well below expectations.

It's official: Jim Woodin is the first to announce his candidacy for Mission Viejo City Council in the November city election. Woodin said he decided to run after attending council meetings and getting involved in city issues. Zone changes may have pushed him over the edge, but he frequently speaks at council meetings about the city's financial strategy.

**Jim Wooden
Announces FIRST!!**

Perhaps Councilwoman Trish Kelley intended to be the first to announce her candidacy for city council. She filed her intention to become a candidate as soon as Jim Woodin had talked with City Clerk Karen Hamman about filing.

Since traffic congestion is a way of life, why not consider the benefits? Injuries are less serious when cars collide while going 5 MPH. With the city's traffic problems, isn't it ironic so many motorists get speeding tickets in Mission Viejo?



The End