



MISSION VIEJO BUZZ

Keeping the California Promise

Week of September 02, 2006

The Patriot Post Founders' Quote Daily

"The multiplication of public offices, increase of expense beyond income, growth and entailment of a public debt, are indications soliciting the employment of the pruning knife."

-- Thomas Jefferson (letter to Spencer Roane, 9 March 1821) Reference: The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Memorial Edition, Lipscomb and Bergh, eds., vol. 15 (325)

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CITIZENS LOSE TO BUREAUCRATS' NEED FOR PAY RAISE BY DALE TYLER

At the Aug. 21 City Council meeting, all five council members buckled under to the city bureaucracy and gave our already very well-paid city staff a 2.3 percent raise. The council did this despite uncertain liabilities for retiree medical care and questions about the additional costs for defined benefit retirement plans. While we have a dedicated and generally competent city staff, there is no need to continue giving away taxpayer dollars as if they were pennies.

Recent studies have shown that taking into account the incredibly generous benefits public employees receive – including almost full pay when they retire at 55 – public employees make \$10 more per hour (\$34.72) on average than private-sector workers (\$23.76). Our city staff works in an opulent setting with the very best of everything. We have the equivalent of 135 full-time people now working for the city. Compare this to 15 years ago when the city had less than half the number of employees. Mission Viejo is supposed to be a contract city, with minimum staff, yet we seem to hire more and more employees every year and pay them generous government benefits.

It's time to freeze salaries and benefits and begin to reduce our city staff as people retire or leave for other reasons. The bureaucracy is running the city for their benefit first and only secondarily for the citizens.

*BUT, you can't even get a live person
on the phone when you call City Hall!
How outrageous is that??*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOOD RECORD DEPENDS ON BAD MEMORY

As I read an Aug. 25 letter to the editor in the Saddleback Valley News about redevelopment, I wondered how many people noticed the errors. The letter I'm referring to gave incorrect information about the council's July 2003 decision to provide redevelopment money to a car dealer.

To set the record straight, the dealer was twice

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turned down by the city council. The dealer's proposals were successfully defeated until Councilwoman Trish Kelley brought the item back for a third airing, at which time the dealer received **\$600,000** of our taxpayer funds. Despite information in the Aug. 25 letter saying the giveaway was such a bad deal, the letter writer was at the public microphone in July 2003 advocating for the giveaway.

The letter writer also claims that "we" had to lobby the gift down from \$2.1 million, and that's ridiculous. The council twice said no, and lobbying wasn't involved except for politicians from outside the city pressuring for the giveaway. After the first two votes, the amount given to the dealer was zero, and that's where it should have ended. To say the third vote "saved" the taxpayers money is false – it was a loss of **\$600,000**. Taxpayers should be angry when the council throws money away, and newspaper readers should be angry when a letter writer tries to spin the loss into a savings three years later.



Bo Klein
Mission Viejo

MONEY FOR SCHOOLS FUNDS CUSD's TAJ MAHAL

When we drive about town, a light toot on the horn often politely alerts us of potential danger, whereby a loud, long honk would mean sudden danger. In giving orders in the military, the rule of orders given is "expect then inspect."

How does this apply to Newhart Middle School and Mello-Roos taxes? Where did the funds go that were to be duly apportioned for needed school improvements? When were the funds shifted cleverly to another budget leaving the school and parents holding the empty bag? I am a taxpayer in the Capo school district who takes into account the test scores, need for more space in permanent classrooms and not temporary-forever huts and the unneeded shuffling of local students to remote areas to solve the problem. If finding the legal answer to a legal question is impossible, then I honk!

With reference to the use of our Mello-Roos

taxes (Mission Viejo - Aliso Viejo findings), two purchase orders, No. 3184 for \$1 million and No. 3602 for approximately \$8.5 million, show on requested documents how Mission Viejo's 87-1 Mello-Roos funds were spent -- funds that were supposed to go toward Mission Viejo and Aliso Viejo schools! With money diverted to the new administration center, funds were unavailable for Newhart Middle School!

An investigation is in progress as to where CUSD spent our tax dollars. However, results will be made known in such an untimely manner to be of little use before the Nov. 7 election. A "toot" right now refers to three new candidates for the school board who will be "ins," and so the old board will be OUT. Names to be announced soon!

Bill Cruse
Mission Viejo

LATEST ON THE FOUNDATION

At the 40th birthday celebration for Mission Viejo and the dedication of the Norman P.

Murray Community and Senior Center expansion,

the Mission Viejo Community Foundation gave to the city approximately \$227,000 in contributions. The funds were comprised of approximately \$112,500 in cash and approximately \$115,000 from in-kind donations.



The Mission Viejo "City Outlook" newsletter on page 5 outlines \$811,595 in pledges comprised of cash and in-kind donations. Of this amount, \$400,750 was funded by the city in its two-year grant program as seed money.

At this point in time with the director's salary and expenses, it's quite possible that expenses exceed cash donations to the city. We do not have a current financial statement. The most recent one was provided for Dec. 31, 2005, and it was non-audited. One interesting feature to observe is the reflection of the in-kind donation as listed on Schedule A for July 2006 budget in the reserve category. This is problematic since it's an in-kind donation and listed with estimated reserves.

Let's all hope the Foundation achieves its

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goals and maintains its cash without eating up the contribution totals before they are received by the city.

James Edward Woodin
Mission Viejo

GET INVOLVED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Hailey Biesiada

After your traditional means of creating change in your neighborhood (complaining to friends and neighbors) hits a brick wall, take comfort in your local government. Mayors do much more than wave at cheering crowds in the 4th of July parade. After all, it's important to know how your local government works; it has influence over your city's housing, laws and, unfortunately, taxes. Don't worry though, taking an active stand against a local problem in your community isn't as difficult and time consuming as you'd think. Here are a few easy steps to get involved in your city government.



1) Know your local government. Each city has its own Website, so take a stroll through the many pages until you get an understanding of your city's history and how it's governed. Each city is different, simply because different people live in it, so don't take for granted the ins and outs of the previous city you lived in. Along with statistics and annual events, most cities' Websites have information about the local governing body, including the mayor's annual income. It may seem like useless information, but you'd be surprised how useful local representative information can be.

2) Understand the issue. Before orchestrating a massive raid on city hall because your neighbor's unsightly shrubbery hangs over your property line, understand the issue or community concern from all angles. Talk to people who share your concern or can offer suggestions to ultimately rally support for an improvement. But also talk to people against

your viewpoint. If you understand where they are coming from, it will be much easier for you to strategize your counter-argument in front of city council. Think of it as a debate, and no one wants to lose a debate with one's opponent. So remember, come to a town meeting with factual information and suggestions on your community's problem and, almost as important, support

3) Growing support. One lone soul won't have much sway against city council, so before stepping up to the mic during a public meeting, rally the troops for support (a troop is more than 10 residents. You and your spouse do not count as an influential troop). Develop flyers to put on doorsteps and prepare petitions from people in your neighborhood. Keep in mind that this may be the first time your neighbors have heard of this appalling issue to wreak havoc on your pleasant, suburbanite community, so be passionate and influential to arouse public sentiment in support of your goals. But remember to stay factual and professional, as character bashing and inflammatory rhetoric will make you seem intimidating and tacky. The more people you have on your side the better. Round-up as many people as you can for sentimental testimony at public meetings also. A compelling story will sway votes. Also, contact local media outlets to get your story out to neighboring communities. A sympathetic and articulate story will impress reporters and give you airtime or paper space to voice your concerns. Take into account the short attention spans of compassionate ears and pocket books as well. After exciting public interest, keep people informed with the progress. The more information your community knows, the more likely people will want to facilitate a conclusion.

4) LTA: Learn the acronyms. Before stepping in front of city council, understand the steps to how the decision for your concern will be made. E-mail or contact the representatives concerned with your particular issue and ask them on record how they will resolve the issue. Also, understand the terminology and acronyms the city council and other experts on the issue will be using; EIRs are the Environmental Impact Reports, for example. If you can't follow

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the argument, it's very difficult to take part in it.

Though standing in front of a group of residents, officials and city representatives can be intimidating, it can also result in a better community. Just remember to come organized, prepared and full of support, and you may be surprised at the impact you can make.

COUNCIL CAMPAIGN UPDATE STAFF EDITORIAL

For the third consecutive week, Diane Greenwood's campaign manager is the subject of controversy. Greenwood is one of 10 candidates for city council.

During the first official week of the council race, Greenwood's campaign manager was accused of making racist remarks in his email blasts. A recipient of his emails complained to the city council and city manager. During the second week, Greenwood's manager was firing emails at the County Republican Central Committee. He wrote to Central Committee members, implying he speaks for the Saddleback Republican Assembly. Greenwood's manager is not a member of the SRA and in no way represents its decisions or membership.

In week three, Greenwood's manager had a letter published in the Aug. 25 Saddleback Valley News, misrepresenting a July 2003 council vote to give a business \$600,000 of city redevelopment dollars to open an Audi dealership. He stood at the public microphone in July 2003, advocating for the redevelopment deal. In last week's letter, he condemns the redevelopment deal and then claims to have saved the city money.

When Greenwood was talking about running for city council last fall, she changed her voter registration from **Democrat to Republican**. Now in a race with nine other registered Republicans, she might rue her decision. With only two women among 10 candidates, Greenwood could have had an additional edge by being the only Democrat. Now a **Republicrat**, she appeals to neither party.

Those who were recruited by Greenwood's campaign (and declined to support her) give additional reasons for their distrust. One of them said Greenwood's vision is to put affordable apartments on top of retail stores at La Paz and Marguerite and form a downtown area. Among the problems with razing stores, the shopping center owners are now enjoying full occupancy. If not the use of eminent domain, the basis for such interference with the market often involves tax dollars to enrich developers. Councilman Frank Ury appears to be promoting this scheme. As another red flag, city hall insiders are using the "R" word – redevelopment – when discussing the "problems" of La Paz and Marguerite. Problems for whom?

Property owners might realize they have a "problem" if redevelopment cash is waved in their face. Residents would have real problems if Greenwood gets on the council and pursues her "dream" of affordable housing at La Paz and Marguerite. As affordable apartments were added in the south part of town, neighborhoods declined, school test scores fell and graffiti began appearing along Crown Valley.

What a surprise – Greenwood's ballot statement doesn't mention redevelopment, eminent domain or downgrading a shopping area with affordable housing on top of stores. Instead, she sugar-coats it by saying, "Encourage our business community to upgrade facilities to retain, sustain and gain business." The shopping center at La Paz and Marguerite doesn't need Greenwood's "encouragement," and residents don't want urbanization, crime and decline. At 100 percent occupancy, the area she's targeting is already succeeding without government help or millions of tax dollars for unneeded redevelopment.

Despite the flap about a downtown area, one resident said of Greenwood's candidacy, "She's primarily a one-issue speaker at council meetings. She's mad that she bought a house under the power lines and Southern California Edison added more lines." Greenwood does mention power lines in her ballot statement, claiming "leadership." She and then-candidate Frank Ury were a tag team in 2004 when SCE's new



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lines were going up. Despite Ury's pumping campaign literature into voter mailboxes before the election, the decision had already been made – sealed and delivered by the California Public Utilities Commission – to add the lines overhead. Ury's group even blew the deadline to file an appeal. The CPUC approved the overhead lines, and SCE began the project in July 2004. Naïve voters living near the power lines put Ury signs in their yards and were still carrying him on their shoulders until Election Day in November. The day after the election, Ury's battle cry abruptly ended. Two years later, Greenwood attempts to mimic Ury's technique to get a seat on the council.

"Visionary" Greenwood apparently failed to notice the area's growing need for electricity in 2004. If she wanted to lead the charge against more overhead lines, the time to do it was well before a letter from SCE arrived in mailboxes announcing additional lines going up. Those who circulated a petition regarding the lines may have given a false impression that all lines would be buried if residents raised enough hell. The lattice towers carrying the 220 kV lines were never part of the legitimate question – they weren't coming down, period. Only the three new lines were at stake. Additional misleading information was spread with regard to paying for burying the lines. How many people would have signed the petition if they had known payment would come directly from their wallets? By the time the truth came out and residents were informed, the vote was 84 percent against paying to bury the lines and 16 percent in favor. Greenwood's "leadership" also looped in the city council and cost taxpayers at least \$150,000 to wage a fruitless legal battle. Burying the power lines was not, is not and will not be a city issue unless Mission Viejo residents vote to tax themselves silly.

Greenwood's ballot statement regarding power lines fairly screams contradiction: "Bury the power lines and defend our residents against the oppressive power rate increases we are experiencing." For residents who know burying the power lines would cause the most oppressive special-assessment district or citywide tax in the history of Mission Viejo, Greenwood's final goal in her ballot statement is a real hoot: "Oppose all tax increases."



On Monday the Planning Commission denied, 3-2, the application by Nine Star skateboard shop for an outdoor demonstration area at the Kaleidoscope Center. The denial was based primarily on concerns about security after the Aug. 13 OC Register's exposé about the Center becoming a teen hangout and following complaints expressed by other Kaleidoscope merchants.

Nine Star planned a concert last Saturday by the band Unwritten Law in the common area of the Center, but last-minute security concerns led to a denial of a permit for the concert. Nine Star promoted the grand opening concert on its Website: "Wanna win a chance to meet the dudes from Unwritten Law? We know you're not gay – you're just curious. Or you ARE gay and just like good music. Or you're a chick and you want them guys bad." That's not all – it got worse. <http://www.unwrittenlaw.com/>

The Commission left the door open for Nine Star to reapply if the store and Kaleidoscope management can show security problems have been resolved. The management company for Kaleidoscope plans to install surveillance cameras throughout the Center that can be monitored by its security staff and viewed by the public over the Internet. The city council will review the security issue at its meeting next Monday.



How many ways can YOU spell F-A-K-E?
Greenwood, Greenwood
and Greenwood.

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Blog readers continue to ask about the city budget, particularly after seeing the misleading story in the Aug. 25 Saddleback Valley News. Contrary to the story, the city did not find an extra \$16.6 million. City budget data released Aug. 21 showed the total amount in the General Fund at approximately \$20 million. Nearly all the money is appropriated or otherwise needed to run the city. The balance remaining for discretionary use is less than \$1 million, which is the amount of unappropriated, unencumbered cash left over – not \$16.6 million.



Council candidate Diane Greenwood had another puff-piece letter to the editor in the Sept. 1 Saddleback Valley News. Her advisors have apparently told her not to mention her agenda to put affordable apartments on top of stores at La Paz and Marguerite and to let an independent power company take over the city. When “real” Diane speaks at the public microphone during council meetings, those watching say she comes across as a very angry woman.



She's angry about power lines, she's angry at the council, she's angry at the city – that's us. Voters need to remove – not add – people from the council who want to punish or run over someone else.



Councilwoman Trish Kelley apparently didn't like the blog's editorial last week, comparing her with former CUSD Supt. James Fleming. Fleming's son got a job with a CUSD plumbing contractor, who appeared to charge the district excessive amounts. One of Kelley's sons got a job with the city's ambulance contractor, Medix, and her other son worked for a competitor vying for the city's ambulance contract. The blog reports, voters decide.



Where was the tinfoil hat brigade at the Aug. 21 council meeting when citywide wi-fi was discussed? No one stood at the public microphone to rail about rays. Greenwood lost her credibility as the city's No. 1 concerned citizen regarding Electro-magnet Field issues. Perhaps the tinfoil mad hatters make a distinction between friendly EMF and unfriendly EMF. Councilman Frank Ury is promoting both the citywide wi-fi



and Greenwood's council candidacy (friendly EMF), and Councilman Lance MacLean (frequently attacked by the mad hatters) can be blamed for any unfriendly EMF.



At a break during the Aug. 21 meeting, Ury ran outside to console the Earthlink representative who was pacing in front of city hall while awaiting the council's reaction to his proposal. Earthlink's proposal was highly favorable to Earthlink and highly unfavorable to the city and its residents. The council decided to “receive and file” the report and invite other wi-fi providers to submit proposals. Such proposals are not in response to any request from residents or based on any determination of need.



Incredibly, council candidate Justin McCusker (Ury's hand-picked puppet) has still never attended a city council meeting during his entire city residency (of three years?). According to McCusker's ballot statement, he stopped the El Toro airport. No one in Mission Viejo and none of The Buzz's contacts in other South County cities know of McCusker's participation in the anti-airport fight. McCusker also wasn't in the database of anti-airport volunteers. Ury made the same phony claim in his 2004 campaign, saying he “was on the front lines fighting the airport from the beginning.” Like father, like puppet.



"Bloggers don't get mad, they get even"



The End :-)