

Global Cooling Hits Fairfield City Council

Signs of a changing season are upon us; pompous robins warble for lady loves, frost weary perennials poke up their petals and more than a score of adolescents struggle with the heady fevers of spring.

Al Gore would shiver in the climate at the poles of the political polls in our little burgh. Polluting CO₂, issuing from the heat of human misbehavior in city council chambers, is having a chilling affect on Fairfield's health. At the April 3rd meeting, Jack Batson wisely remarked that a season of paranoia and political posturing has begun.

It is a civic duty for us all to view the public comments portion of the April 3rd city council meeting on channel 26 at www.ci.fairfield.ca.us. Usually circumspect councilmember Farley, in a televised public meeting, asks a citizen to reveal their vote on the failed half cent tax, Proposition H. Uncharacteristically, she then challenges the voter to solve the Cordelia fire house issue. Council chambers are not the venue for a Fairfield version of "The View". This is unsavory and unwise.

Subsequently, another citizen raises the issue of councilman Kardos heeding the Mayors' advice and stepping aside until his legal troubles are resolved. Councilman Mraz, the "valedictorian of the Dirty Harry School of Kick Butt", reacts disturbingly.

Jack Nicholson, as Marine Colonel Jessup in "A Few Good Men", exploded under the needling of a truth seeking defense attorney. Similarly, councilman Mraz inappropriately reacted after a citizen suggested Mraz had anger issues. Mraz called the citizen a "gadfly" and said, "You're damn right I need an anger management course. I always have; when I was a cop, and even now. I can't put up with people like you."

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in *White v. City of Norwalk (1990)* celebrates the "gadfly", emphasizing that free-speech rights receive heightened protection during public comments. This is not Mraz's first unprofessional, intolerant rant from the bully pulpit. It embarrasses our community and the progress and purpose of free speech.

Certainly, angry folks are not one-dimensional and can be passionate, sincere, hardworking and frequently on the right side of many issues. But beware the zealot, the intemperate and intolerant, and the messianic savior that panders to people's fears and is quick to disdain and ridicule those who do not agree. It is a political myth that we must have heroes who solely carry the entire burden of the pursuit of righteousness.

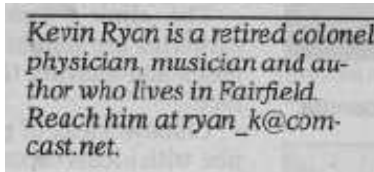
Even our gentle mayor is being sucked in. The Brown Act facilitates public participation in local government by curbing misuse of the democratic process such as by secret legislation or surprise briefings. After the Mraz melt down, an angry councilman Kardos interrupts just such a prepared but unannounced staff briefing regarding the Cordelia firehouse issues which was sanctioned by our typically scrupulous Mayor.

Why?

There is a growing schism in the council chambers and it's having a chilling affect. Councilmen are not guru, saviors or intellectual glitterati in sole possession of the truth. They must be and can be dedicated, albeit flawed, hard working passionate data gatherers, patient people-persons, evidence analyzers, and advice seeking consensus and team builders with integrity who serve and thus may lead. Any behavior to the contrary sows the seeds of its own demise.

There is a treasure trove of talent in Fairfield on and off the public payroll. However, if we don't distinguish between civic craftsmanship and calculated craftiness to forward personal and political agendas, this ship of state is going down.

Voters must view the public comments section of the April 3rd meeting. Perhaps come election season, it will be the season of reason. One more thing; for the council, my own sanity and the citizens, sign me up on the "consigliore" rolls, not candidate. Recruitment season for that sort of 'gadfly' is always open.



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