

People, Pinole is no ‘Dogpatch’!

Guest Commentary

Contra Costa Times

August 18, 2007

By Richard Grimes

In recent Times letters, I've seen "Pinole is a mess," "Making Pinole look silly," and "Sleazy-Embarrassing Council." But when a letter compared this beautiful city to "Dogpatch," I was personally insulted.

I've been in Pinole for more than 50 years. I've seen good and bad council members/mayors come and go; sometimes not by choice.

It is bad when a mayor shifts blame to others. Mayor Maria Alegria blames the Pear Street Bistro mess on Betty Boyle, Peter Murray and the city staff. She also blames three local police officers for mistaking her intentions and "selective enforcement," as she attempted to disrupt a traffic stop Jan. 17. This is civil disobedience by not following the directions of a police officer during his duties.

It is appalling that a mayor would dismiss a citizen's comment, under the agenda item "Public Comments" at a public meeting, as "personal politics," and it is a disruption of the meeting. Perhaps she would like this item removed from the agenda?

Councilman David Cole can't file a Form 700 — "Statement of Economic Interests That Affect Actions" — until it's made public that his company was doing business with people who did fall under this type of action. It's also bad governing to leave a closed session meeting that included the subject of hiring an interim city manager to attend a "soccer meeting."

Councilman Stephen Tilton has said he is a "victim of a vendetta." He seems to say a lot, but doesn't seem to get much done. Look at any council/RDA agenda under "Reports" and you will see all other members' names, but not his.

And, there's more blame. It seems that Gary Wong, owner of the bistro, blames Pinole city officials for his "woes." He states that "years of broken promises" are at fault for his failure. He also blames a "rigid style of management from the top down," and that "certain individuals started making harsh demands," (perhaps pay your bills?) but failed to name individuals.

Wong also blames the "loan fiasco" on the Redevelopment Agency Subcommittee, but that committee makes no decisions.

Putting the blame on the city's management, staff and police is very misplaced. Exactly where does the buck stop?

Grimes is a resident of Pinole.