

Pinole recall foes trade jabs

Videos give voters a look at both sides of the debate

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By Tom Lochner

Echoing the lexicon of Councilwoman Maria Alegria in her campaign against her recall, Pinole Fire Capt. Rich Voisey accuses her opponents of intimidation, threats, lies and the “politics of revenge” in a video on the city’s Web site.

Jeff Rubin of Concerned Citizens of Pinole, on a pro-recall video, likens his group to former President Harry Truman.

“He didn’t have a lot of money to spend, and he had few endorsements, but he never stopped speaking to the people about the issues,” Rubin says in an apparent dig at Alegria’s fundraising prowess and backing by powerful unions and the area’s state legislators.

Alegria and fellow council member, Stephen Tilton, face recall elections Feb. 5.

Voisey, a Pinole resident, is a vice president of firefighters local 1230, which will negotiate a new contract with the city this year, and is widely expected to ask for the retirement age to be lowered from 55 to 50. In his video, Voisey blames former City Manager Belinda Espinosa for “massive deficiencies” in the Pinole Redevelopment Agency, citing some of the same things as a recent mailer sponsored by the Central Labor Council of Contra Costa County. The labor council followed up with a news release Monday saying it is “proud to have provided the information about Espinosa to the community.”

Alegria and Tilton voted in a 3-2 council majority to let Espinosa go at the end of her contract in May.

Voisey accuses recall supporters of harassing and trying to intimidate firefighters for their backing of the targeted council pair.

“But the Pinole firefighters are not frightened,” he says.

Echoing language from Tilton, Voisey says the recall group “doctored” a photo showing Alegria, Tilton and Pear Street Bistro owner Gary Wong smiling at a spring awards dinner. Wong, a friend of the two council members, failed to make payments for two years on more than \$400,000 in redevelopment loans. Planning Commissioner Maureen Toms, who was in the Pinole party, was cropped out of the photo; Tilton has said the cropped photo suggests a cozier relationship between the three than existed. Rubin counters that he cropped out Toms to spare her the stigma of being shown with the smiling trio.

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In his video, Rubin accuses Alegria of abuse of power for interfering in a traffic stop of a bistro employee last year during which, police memos say, she threatened to cut the police budget. He chastises Tilton for frequently missing City Council meetings and says Tilton insulted voters when he did not show up for a Jan. 10 televised debate at the Senior Center.

Concerned Citizens has put out a flier titled "Show Me The Money!", which criticizes Alegria for taking money from developer TKG, the city's partner in two shopping centers and for sidestepping a question at the Jan. 10 debate about whether she took campaign money from any developer involved in city projects.

In the debate, which can be viewed on the city's Web site, Alegria answered that her campaign disclosure forms are open to public review.

— Reach Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760 or tlochner@bayareanewsgroup.com.