

Opinion

Letters

Dear Editor:

It is abundantly clear no one wants to carve up the budget, reduce services and put loyal employees out on the street! Mayor Bruce Delgado and Councilman Frank O'Connell have suffered considerable criticism for recommending the City reduce its spending prior to asking the public to pay more in taxes. A disturbing fact largely ignored by these critics is that even if the proposed tax increases actually make it to the ballot and are voted in by the public (which is highly unlikely), this increase in income will not balance the Marina City Budget! The projected budget spends some \$4- to \$6-million more than it has coming in and the best the City can hope for with passage of these taxes is an increase of approximately \$2-million; hence, cuts to the existing budget MUST be made - like it or not!

It is considered a "normal" business practice, when times get tough requiring cut backs and so-called "belt-tightening", that management would talk to various department heads and work out a reasonable solution; however, the City of Marina doesn't appear to have any sort of clearly defined departments nor persons in charge who are in position to take responsibility for or even "know" what their income and/or expenditures are until the budget is made up at the end of the fiscal year. City Manager Anthony Altfeld commented, during the June 8, 2010 council meeting, the budgetary questions posed by Delgado and O'Connell required tremendous amounts of staff time because of antiquated computer systems such that an abacus might work faster; moreover, the city staff should be handling more pressing problems i.e. the Teen Center is in danger of having its water shut off! One of the questions asked was how much each department head was being paid - including bene-

fits; a question, according to Altfeld, that simply involved overwhelming staff time to answer.

Typically, a "consent agenda" item on the city council docket will call for approval of checks written by staff for various defined periods amounting to \$-several-hundred-thousand. Nowhere in this array of checks is there an allocation - by department - of these expenses. Who is responsible for all these phone expenses (amounting to thousands)? What department is being charged for these consultant fees - thousands more?!

The public can view the budget on the City's web site (www.ci.marina.ca.us) and if you go there, take a look at Gas Tax/Street Fund (budget page 129) with revenues of \$690,600 and expenditures of \$759,700. A mere \$4,000. of these funds went toward street materials; and yet, we know Marina made major street repairs during the year. So why isn't this fund tied into the department making the repairs so that someone is directly accountable for these funds?! Accordingly, \$10,000 was spent on telephone/cell phone, \$17,000. for fuel, \$154,000. for utilities and \$344,700. was "Charges from other departments!" Who can we hold accountable for these expenses?

Incredibly, there is a so-called "Non-Department" (budget page 85) with personnel costs of \$21,500 who get to spend \$607,300. Who is responsible for this? And how is it possible to have a "non-department"?

Other than the City Manager (in a City Manager type government), Finance is the single most important department with respect to accountability! The Finance Department determines everything - they summarize income and they account for all expenses. If properly set up, the Finance Department should be in position to provide each department with an in-

come and expense statement each month - or most certainly by each quarter. How can the City Manager - or anyone for that matter - manage a large organization without being able to hold each department ACCOUNTABLE for the income and expenses of their department?!

Should "our" City make budget cuts? Absolutely! This is, however, more than a mere budget cut and/or tax increase problem. "Our" City appears to be a run-away train with no one at the controls.

Virgil M. Piper

Demand the Right to Vote

On June 22nd the FY 2010/2011 budget is to be reviewed and voted on. On July 7 the second reading of the ordinance to place a 1% sales tax on the November ballot must be passed by 4 votes to allow the citizens of our city the opportunity to decide on our future. To date the Mayor and Mr. O'Connell continue to hold hostage the entire City by withholding that vote in an attempt to gain additional cuts and concessions from our City staff. They have yet to define what they are and how they will effect the general fund. As to saving \$4.1 million, the answer is they cannot and they know it. What they can do is so disrupt the remaining functions performed by the city that it will cripple us for the next year or more.

Now the obvious question is why would they take such a stand. I have heard everything from there is still room for cuts to if we cannot show we have done even more than what has already been done by the City Manager's and staff's initiatives the tax will not pass. Well, perhaps or perhaps not. My question is why are these gentlemen threatening the people to deny them a vote and decide for themselves? Are they smarter than all of us or just like

to think so? Are they simply using their position to get what they want? Are they afraid that the people might actually pass the taxes as proposed?

Whatever their motive one thing is for sure they apparently do not want us to vote. Voting is the ultimate form of citizen participation, openness, and the results completely transparent. Isn't that what they promised us when they were elected?

*Dan Amadeo
Marina*

Dear Editor

I never noticed your newspaper before, but I happened to pick up a copy today at Black Bear Diner in Monterey. I used to write a column for Norm Spaulding's Seaside Sentinel, and I must admit that your paper looks much better than ours ever did. The content is mostly of little interest to people outside Marina, but I did appreciate the feature on the Marina High Class of 2010, because three of the graduates were my former students at Monterey Bay Christian Middle School here in Seaside. Best wishes for the success of your publication!

*Bob Hellam
Seaside*

Marina Point of View

By
Gary Wilmot



This is what happens when the leader of a government uses all of his official resources to silence a dissenting voice.

Thank You for reading the whole article.

Gary

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Amendment Rights , Write.
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to
editor@marina-gazette.com**