City Committee and Commission Appointments

16th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

Tuesday, January 27, 2015

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For those that don’t know, the city of Ridgecrest has various committees and commissions that are filled with council members and/or members of the community.

The two most important ones that involve public members are the Ridgecrest Planning Commission and the Measure I Committee. Both use unelected members of the community to serve on them.

The Ridgecrest Planning Commission is the second most important part of city government, directly under the supervision of the city council. They review and approve all projects in the city for planning, zoning, building projects, signs, and enforce the general plan of the city which is the guide for all growth within the city. The members of the commission are appointed by the city council. They do receive a small payment for their service of $200 per month. The members can, and usually do, change after every election. Each elected member of the city council gets to nominate a member to this commission. Then, the council affirms the appointment.

At last week’s council meeting they finished filling the open seats. Returning planning commissioners are Matt Baudhuin and Scott Davis. New members will be Warren Cox, Cecil Yates, and Solomon Rajaratnan. They meet the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00PM at city council chambers. At tonight’s meeting, the city will swear in the new members. Then they will elect a new chairman and vice chairman.

The Measure I Committee is virtually as important as the planning commission. However, this committee is different than the planning commission, as this committee was established by an election of the voters of Ridgecrest and is only under the preview of the citizens of Ridgecrest. They are tasked to monitor and report to the citizens how the city council spends funds raised by the Measure l additional sales tax approved by us about 2 years ago. It is an additional 0.75% sales tax on all items purchased in the city. It is estimated that this will raise approximately $2.5 million for the city next fiscal year. They receive no compensation for their work.

They are our eyes and ears in city hall to tell us annually how much funding was raised, and how it was spent.

This is important because while the council can actually legally spend the funds anyway they want, the campaign to get the people to approve the measure included heavy promises from the city council that the funds would only be used for public safety, road repairs, and maintenance.

The committee is tasked by the law to provide an annual report at the beginning of each year to the people of Ridgecrest and the city council. This measure has to be renewed every five years.

Two years ago, there was some conflict between the council and the Measure l members. I’m not going to rehash old news, but it was a learning process for both the council and Measure l members just what each role would be. The Measure l committee does not report, and are not subservient to the council. They have no spending authority, only supervisorial responsibilities to monitor the council spending of those particular funds.

To date, the members have done an excellent job, yet they receive no pay for this work. These positions are filled a little differently than the planning commission.

To get a job on this committee applicants have to be residents of the city and apply to the council. The mayor provides the names of applicants. Then the council discusses the applicants, and, as a group, reach a consensus on who gets appointed. There are no individual council appointments like the planning commissioners. They serve various terms on the committee, and they do not change every election.

The new members to join the existing members at their next meeting are Michael Peterson and Ted Ribulton.

Michael Peterson was previously the chairman on the committee. They join existing members, Scott Garver, Robert Gould, and Andy Anderson. Scott Garver is the new committee chairman and is also our East Kern County assistant district attorney.

In conclusion, I wish the new members good luck in their new appointments. The jobs they take on are very important to the people of Ridgecrest. Quite often they get little attention, unless there is controversy. If you have any interest in these topics, I encourage you to attend their meetings. All of their meetings are open to the public. Get to know these people. They are there for you.

And that’s today editorial. Tell me what you think about this editorial or any other topic you’d like me to discuss!

Whether you agree with me or not, I’d like to read your comments. I encourage your email comments. I may read some email comments on my next editorial. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.

This has been a KZGN Talking Points Editorial seen right here on KZGN TV. Join me Thursday for my next editorial. I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think!