Hello, I’m Tom Wiknich

Welcome to the 5thKZGN news talking points editorial for Tuesday, December 9th, 2014.

Today’s topic will be:

“Democracy in action”--Old council steps down and the new council takes the dias.

Last Wednesday, the new mayor and council were sworn in:Peggy Breeden as mayor, and Eddie Thomas and Mike Mower as new council members, joining Acton and Sanders.

At the end of the meeting, the mayor said she wanted to get feedback from the people on council issues.Thanks mayor.Here we go.

Right at the beginning, the mayor started by changing the seating of the council, moving the mayor seat to the middle of the dias. This was good. Good job mayor. Next there was the appointment of the mayor pro tem and vice mayor. Jim sanders asked if they had to appoint both, as he saw no reason for both. He thought it was confusing as to which position was supposed to be 2nd and 3rd in line.

Mike Mower mentioned that the recently passed voter initiative, requiring the direct election of the mayor, included those 2 positions in the initiative. He felt they should be appointed.

After comments by the city attorney to follow the municipal code and appoint them, the council did just that.This 3 position system is used by many cities in California. We’ve used it here since the 1980’s and no one has been confused by it before.Well Jim, there are many reasons for the 3 positions.

1. In the event the mayor cannot perform the duties of mayor, by using the 2 appointed positions, there is never any doubt who is next in line.
2. In the event of an emergency, i.e., earthquake or flood, the mayor has certain duties to perform.

One of those duties is to help coordinate both in-town support, and potential support from out of town.

1. Also, often there are documents that need to be signed by the mayor within a certain time. In the event the mayor is not available, then the chain is already established for this task. I remember a few years ago that there was a mayor that refused to sign a document that the majority of the council approved, but he didn’t agree with. In the event of that situation arising again, the next in line available must go and sign the document.
2. The main reason they need to appoint the 2 positions is because those positions were established on the voter approved elected mayor initiative a few years ago.

With a voter approved initiative, the council has no authority to change it. The California election code 9217 is specific. It states:

No ordinance proposed by initiative and adopted by voters, shall be repealed or amended except by a vote of the people.

The previous council and now again with the start of this council, again there is someone that wants to ignore the 65% of the people that approved the initiative, and they want to try and change it.But as it happens often, people in power, don’t like their power taken away and the people seizing the power.They need to accept the will of the people and move on.

Following the discussion, Jim Sanders was appointed to the 2nd in line position of mayor pro tem, and Lori Acton was appointed to the 3rd in line position of vice mayor.

Then, at the end of the meeting Mayor Breeden brought up 5 things for council consideration.

1. Bring back committee meetings
2. Bring back town hall meetings.
3. Change council meetings to one per month.
4. Review all staff contracts.
5. Asked for public feedback.

She asked that these items be considered by the council and to possibly them bring back for later action by the council.

Well Mayor, I agree with 4 of the 5 suggestions.

1st committees: I have objected since the last council did away with committees. You suggest bringing them back, and I agree. These meetings were very valuable to receiving and discussing people ideas and comments in an informal environment. Many times people provided inputs that we had not thought of. And it provides a thorough back and forth with the people--something not accomplished during most council meetings.

2nd. I am also happy to see her suggesting bringing back the town hall meetings I started when Iwas on the council 8 years ago, but the last council stopped as soon as I left office in 2010.Again, this helps improve communication with the people.

4th. She also wants to review all staff contracts with the city.This is a good thing.

5th. She wants to hear from the people their comments on issues facing the council.Of course, I’m sure she’ll hear them anyway, but it is good to encourage participation in local government.

Finally the 3rd suggestion:

The mayor recommended reducing the council meetings from 2 per month to 1 per month. I strongly object.There are many reasons for my objection:

1. Council transparency. There would likely be an effort to speed meetings along to fit everything in to one meeting. A lack of thorough information provided to the people could result.
2. Many issues require action by the council within a short time period.
3. They are paid for 2 meetings a month. If they reduce the meetings by half, will they cut their pay in half?
4. It was also discussed a few times by people that the mayor has a business that is very demanding of her time on Wednesdays. Former Mayor Clark even mentioned this from the dias during a regular meeting. Is this an attempt to try and reduce a business conflict with city business? When a person runs for office, they are expected to adjust their schedule to meet the needs of their new office, not the other way around.
5. Finally, this cuts in half the opportunity for the people to meet with and have discussions with their elected officials.

In conclusion, I agree with 4 of the mayors 5 suggestions.

But I’m strongly opposed to the suggestion of only one council meeting per month.

In other KZGN news, we have just launched a new Facebook forum to get your opinions and comments on the station, or any news items you’d like to discuss with KZGN staff or other members of the public.Just search on Facebook by typing in: KZGN news discussion group. Or find links to it via our web site: [www.kzgn.net](http://WWW.KZGN.NET). Join us today.

In closing, tell me what you think! I encourage your email comments. Whether you agree with me or not, I’d like to read your comments. I may read some email comments on my next editorial.Or, if you have a suggestion of an issue you’d like me to discuss, email that to me as well.

Please email them to info@kzgn.net.

This has been a KZGN talking points editorial, seen right here on KZGN TV Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Until next time, I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what i think!

Slides:

Ca election code 9217:

In part….no ordinace that is proposed by initiative petition…and adopted by the voters, shall be repealed or amended except by a vote of the people.

Mayor breedens suggestions for change:

1. Bring back committee meetings
2. Bring back town hall meetings.
3. Change council meetings to one per month
4. Review all staff contracts.
5. Asked for public feedback.

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