

EDITORIAL: Fresno citizens will benefit if county and city cooperate

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By The Bee Editorial Board

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Can we talk?

Normally, yes. But if you are three Fresno County Supervisors and the people who want to talk with you occupy Fresno City Hall, mum's the word.

Just when you thought things couldn't get weirder in this strained relationship, Supervisors Henry R. Perea, Phil Larson and Debbie Poochigian put the kibosh on fellow Supervisor Andreas Borgeas' attempt to open up communication with the Fresno City Council at Tuesday's board meeting.

Borgeas' motivation was that if the jurisdictions could agree on marijuana cultivation and abandoned shopping cart ordinances, and resolve questions about mandatory sewer connections, citizens would benefit.

Moreover, Borgeas already had made the effort to secure the city council's participation in a three-hour meeting March 11 on neutral ground at the Fresno Council of Government's headquarters.

Considering that the last time the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and the Fresno City Council met jointly was July 20, 2006, you would think that the supervisors would thank Borgeas for his hard work and unanimously agree to sit down with the representatives of Fresno County's largest city.

Borgeas even brought along Fresno City Council President Steve Brandau, a particularly polite and respectful politician, to discuss the joint meeting.

What could it hurt to talk, right? But Fresno County politics can be as complicated, petty and balkanized as anything that goes on at the United Nations.

For starters, Borgeas is methodical, at times professorial — after all he is a law professor — and focused on policy. These qualities don't sit well with some board members.

Borgeas also is in his second year on the board, which in the eyes of his veteran colleagues makes him a rookie — someone who should sit, listen and not lead, even if he is their chairman.

Borgeas, a former Fresno City Council member, also doesn't subscribe to the attitude held by some supervisors that the city of Fresno does what it does, the county does what it does, and never the twain shall meet.

We commend Supervisor Judy Case McNairy for agreeing to talk about Borgeas' excellent proposal.

Most disappointing: Supervisor Perea's vote to delete Borgeas' item from the agenda. Perea previously had been a proponent of better county and city cooperation.

Borgeas said that until the board membership changes next year with McNairy and Larson retiring, "Three members will likely remain unwilling to cooperate with the city."

That is something for voters to think about as they evaluate candidates in the upcoming board elections.

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