

Fresno City Council talks code enforcement, leaves action for later

By George
Hostetter

The Fresno City Council on Thursday showed it can multitask with the people's business.

Council members decided they would think some more on tough issues. Then they vowed to talk some more on complex issues.

Then they went home.

The council hustled through a light agenda, adjourning before noon for a closed session that was to be the day's final task.

The council, among other routine items, approved without discussion a lease that has the Fresno Arts Council managing the city-owned Water Tower. The Arts Council gets the downtown landmark free of charge for an artists gallery/visitors center, but pays operational costs such as electricity.

There was potential for fireworks in a proposal to hand management of downtown's city-owned parking garages and parking lots to Republic Parking Inc. The item was postponed to another day.

There were pointed give-and-take about a proposed three-house infill project in Council Member Clint Olivier's inner-city district. The item was postponed to another day.

For reasons unexplained, City Hall in general and the City Council in particular appear nearly comatose of late.

In the latter's case, it may be due to what Council President Steve Brandau from the dais calls the "Blah-Blah Award." It's an inside joke about the virtues of brevity. The council doesn't have much business, and the little it gets seems to be viewed by council members as a trap for the dreaded "Blah-Blah Award."

City Hall itself remains infatuated with process and the ever-more refined study that is its sibling.

The first public meetings for the new 2035 general plan occurred close to a lifetime ago. The unfinished plan is still harvesting public input.

Everyone has an idea to make City Hall more business-friendly. Fulton Mall remains aging concrete in desperate need of refurbishing or demolition. Floods may come before the water-rate tempest gets settled. On and on goes the dissipation of civic energy.

The council during the public-comment period regularly gets an earful from Fresnans angry about the deplorable state of code enforcement. It happened again on Thursday. The trigger this time was barking dogs. There apparently isn't a single human being at City Hall charged with accepting barking-dog complaints and bringing them to a satisfactory conclusion.

But Brandau on Thursday had an answer for riled-up residents.

Mayor Ashley Swearengin has started the new Mayor-Council Code Enforcement Task Force. Swearengin, Council Members Oliver Baines, Paul Caprioglio and Olivier, city staff and certified experts are on it.

The task force will meet every month until March, if not beyond. All things related to code enforcement will be discussed. Recommendations will be produced and presented for the council's ruminations.

Keep an eye on those task force meetings, Brandau advised sleepless and disenchanted Fresnans. He said it with a smile devoid of irony.

Contact George Hostetter: ghostetter@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6272.

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