

Nasal Congestion

Former Councilmember Donna Dickey's nose is bent out of shape from a remark Dave Hudson gave to the press. "This last council didn't know how to blow their nose right," he said. "Nothing got done. It was a rudderless ship." This so blew Dickey away that she didn't even show up for her own proclamation at the January 27, 2004 City Council meeting. Several of Dickey's friends and neighbors took Hudson to task during public comment, or at least chastised his empty chair. Hudson was absent during public comment and for most of the meeting.

Scott Perkins was there and took some tongue lashing from Christa Freihofner for his follow up tomfoolery. Perkins handed out an official-looking document at the City Council Workshop on January 22, 2004, on "Nasal Evacuation Training," along with a packet of tissues. I wasn't at the meeting, and didn't partake of Perkins' hi-jinx, but several spectators told me it was crude and embarrassing.

Melody Lundgren said it was like kicking someone when they were down. Freihofner demanded a public apology from both Hudson and Perkins. Deborah Yeoman expressed shock and dismay at Perkins' behavior.

But I wonder who should be offended. So Hudson says the last Council couldn't blow their noses. Number one, who cares what Dave Hudson says? So Perkins hands out "Nasal Evacuation Training" to current Councilmembers. Who's he implying can't blow their noses? It's not as if he packaged up his document and mailed it to Dickey, Tatarka, and Cambra. It's Hudson, Wilson, Rowley, and Livingstone who should be making the stink.

But really should grown men, elected officials, be playing games on City time and money. The offending "instructions" were passed out at an official meeting, in official-looking City format. Did Perkins really have staff waste time on this juvenile nonsense? According to Melody Lundgren it wasn't on the meeting Agenda and was probably in violation of the Brown Act. Perhaps I should write a letter to the City Council demanding that they not blow their noses until it can be properly agendized. Now that would be a whiff of fresh air.

Letter from Mary Lou Oliver, dated January 28, 2004

Roz,

As usual I enjoyed your personal take on the issue of nasal congestion. As always, I'm impressed with your ability to keep your commentary on the commentary page and not in your analysis of the meetings. Dave Hudson's original comment was in fairly bad taste, even though it is a fair metaphor for the congestion that clogged council meetings for the better part of two years. Tact has never been Dave's long suit. Scott Perkins may have aided and abetted Dave by carrying the comment to a new low with his "prank" as you referred to it. Nonetheless, it is refreshing to have a council that can attempt to inject little humor to an otherwise dry forum during a time when very serious decisions have to be made. Unfortunately, I think this particular attempt at humor was somewhat discourteous and perhaps imprudent.

The previous council members were not the only ones to ever be verbally disparaged by a member of an elected body. At the time of the incorporation movement for San Ramon, the County supported Danville financially in the preparation of their feasibility study, but would not do the same for San Ramon. One Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) member who was also a member of the Board of Supervisors was quoted as saying (about San Ramon) "They don't have enough sense to tie their own shoes." From that day on, the tied shoelace became our symbol and we never attended a negotiating session with the Board of Sups or LAFCO without wearing some sort of tied shoelace, either as part of a name tag or as a pin made with an actual shoelace. It may have been intended as an insult, but it became a symbol of success.

Mary Lou Oliver