

## **You've Got Some 'Splainin' to Do!**

At some point in almost every episode of *I Love Lucy*, Desi would yell, "Lucy, you've got some 'splainin to do." At which point Lucy would cry, pantomime something, run around, hide, or light her nose on fire to keep from having to "splain" what she was up to. None of it made any sense, but it was always, even for the 1000<sup>th</sup> time, funny.

The City Council has been asked a lot of questions lately, about the Zoning Ordinance, the Landscape and Lighting Assessment vote, the Crow Canyon Specific Plan, and reinstating Eminent Domain. While Councilmembers may not pantomime or light anyone's nose on fire, their explanations are just as confusing as Lucy's but not nearly as funny.

If the City isn't deliberately dodging tough questions, or hiding ulterior motives, as some residents have accused them of doing, they are not doing a very good job of explaining what's going on clearly, unambiguously, and to the satisfaction of most residents.

City Attorney Byron Athan knows his job. He's been doing it for something like 50 years. Athan explains things well from a legal perspective, but it helps to know the code he's talking about to understand everything he says. California Code is convoluted and confusing to anyone without a law degree. Even By Athan can't simplify it into a sentence or two at a meeting. When Joe Covello questioned how the vote was taken on the Landscape & Lighting Assessment, Athan used terminology from the State Code that was confusing to anyone who hadn't read it.

Mayor Wilson didn't give an explanation. He simply said Covello had a right to his opinion, but he (Wilson) disagreed. Wilson disagrees with a lot of speakers at Council meetings, and often doesn't give any reasons why. When someone says something he doesn't like, he becomes defensive or condescending. Even Desi never did that to Lucy.

When Gail Waiters was City Manager she wanted to hire an Information Officer for the City. This is a good idea. I brought up that idea at the July 11, 2006 City Council meeting, only to be reprimanded by Wilson. "The City already has a single source of information, which is the City Manager, or the Mayor," he snapped. When I replied, "You are not the best person to explain things for the city." Wilson arched his back, scowled, and drilled me with his eyes.

I watch Wilson on every episode of the Mayor's Report on TV30. He stammers, ums and ahs, gets facts wrong, repeats the same clichés and aphorisms, and does not communicate information as smoothly or clearly as a professional communicator would.

Herb Moniz is too busy running the City to be sending out press releases, going on interviews with newspapers and TV, and answering every resident who has a request or complaint. City staff has other jobs to do. The City needs one central focal point for information to the public. Mayor Wilson isn't it.

That's not to say he should not be on the Mayor's Report. He is the City's first elected Mayor, but being elected doesn't automatically make the Mayor a great communicator. He should be coached on how to present, and he should be given notes on what to say and how to say it. An Information Officer for the City could do that for him, and make him look and sound much better. Then maybe the City wouldn't always be on the defensive about "splainin" things.