

November 16, 2010

I've been speaking at council meetings for over a year now, so I can't believe that I am still capable of being shocked by the city manager's actions, yet that was my reaction to the last council meeting. After a huge number of residents spoke at Matters from the Audience, Mr. O'Donnell not only dismissed our comments as usual, but then he redefined his role in council meetings. Although the agenda item reads "Response to Public Inquiries," Mr. O'Donnell claimed that his responsibility was not to RESPOND, but instead to only correct any errors that the residents made. He then implied that we are all liars by claiming that there were so many incorrect statements that he couldn't even begin to address them. I do agree that there have been many lies about street sweeping at council meetings this past year, but the lies haven't been coming from the residents! So, his response at that meeting was like his response at most meetings: in a nutshell, "Stop wasting my time. I have nothing more to say." This behavior is a total embarrassment to the City of Brea, and the fact that this council allows the residents to be treated this way, and allows the city manager's disrespectful actions and rude behavior to go unchecked is an embarrassment to this council. I am hoping that Mr. Murdock can come in as a new councilmember and provide leadership to fix some of the things that are so clearly broken in Brea.

Speaking of things that are broken in Brea, I can't believe that the street sweeping ticketing has continued for 13 months with no meaningful changes in all that time. Workers are still getting ticketed, visitors are still getting ticketed and parents are still getting ticketed on streets near schools. I saw it for myself when I had workers at my house this summer. As usual in the city of Brea on street-sweeping day, the workers dropped everything and ran to the street when they heard the sweeper (Clearly, the city hasn't done a very good job communicating with them about their exemption.). The street sweeper had gone up on the other side of the street, and they checked with the enforcement officer to make sure they were okay. She told them they had to move their cars to the side that had just been swept, so apparently the city manager has done a poor job communicating with his own staff about the exemption of workers. And this goes on all day, every day here in Brea, with jobs being disrupted and work going undone so we can all drive around and make way for the sweeper. What a disaster!

Last week, my neighbor had no access to her driveway because tree trimming was blocking the end of the cul-de-sac, so she had to park on the street. Even though the street-sweeper also couldn't get to the end of the street, and it was obvious that there was no place to go, she still

received a ticket. There is no “spirit of the law” attitude in the ticketing agent. Her policy is to issue a ticket and let the resident deal with an appeal if they have a problem with it. When Roy Moore happened to be visiting our house last month on the campaign trail, an AT&T worker told us that he argued with the enforcement officer when he found her writing a ticket for the AT&T van, but she said she had already started writing it so he would just have to appeal it. Roy’s response was “that shouldn’t happen.” But it does. Every day. So these residents who have been wrongly ticketed have to either pay \$38 or spend time and energy appealing the ticket. Yet another stressful inconvenience shoved onto the residents. And it’s not just a matter of wasting our time, since Mr. Moore told us the city wants to start charging \$20 to appeal a ticket! Rather than admit they have implemented a broken, failed plan that is losing money, they dig in their heels and continue to tax the residents at every turn. I know Mr. Murdock shares my concerns so I am excited to have his voice on this council.

Regarding the permanent exemptions for parking on street-sweeping day, I am glad to hear that Chief Hutchinson agrees that those who have a need for daytime street-parking, such as for nannies, elder care providers, daycare customers, etc., should be able to apply for a permanent exemption. Unfortunately, the application doesn’t allow for such cases, so these cars will still be forced to park illegally and will be subject to ticketing. In fact, ONLY vehicles registered to the resident of that property can apply for exemptions, and ONLY if the demand for parking exceeds the number of available parking spaces. In other words, residents have to fill out the exact same application that they already have completed for the overnight parking of their own vehicles. What a complete waste of time for both residents and staff! In these times of limited resources and tight budgets, how can such a total duplication of effort be justified?

Another interesting detail is that only residents with street parking within 100 feet of their property may apply for an exemption, so those who live in a townhome or an apartment complex aren’t even eligible to apply, so they will also be forced to continue parking illegally on street-sweeping day. I liked the chief’s suggestion about not having a lot of strict criteria so the process can be flexible, and so each individual case can be evaluated, but unfortunately that is NOT the process adopted by the city staff. Even with this exemption process in place, the City of Brea still prohibits me from having visitors or maybe a playgroup for my kids on any Monday. Forever. And what justification is there for this curb tax and these hardships? Is it mandated by the NPDES? No. Are the streets cleaner? No. Is the watershed cleaner? No. The data isn’t there. Is it even bringing in

revenue? Possibly, but nowhere near close to the \$1.5 million PER YEAR projected by the City Manager. The residents are waiting for your response and your action.