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News | San Diego

Mayor trying to step out of Sunroad's long shadow

Another official leaves; Sanders vows changes

By Jeff McDonald and Jennifer Vigil

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITERS

August 24, 2007

Two months after Mayor Jerry Sanders declared that the top of the Sunroad Enterprises building must come down, he is still scrambling to explain his administration's handling of the controversy.



HOWARD LIPIN / Union-Tribune
"My first mistake was not stepping up sooner," Mayor Jerry Sanders said.

Yesterday Sanders invited a parade of reporters to his 11th-floor City Hall suite to try to tamp down debate over the Kearny Mesa tower his staff permitted even though the Federal Aviation Administration said it was a danger to pilots landing at Montgomery Field in bad weather.

He announced another departure among his senior staff – Development Services Director Marcela Escobar-Eck, who left Wednesday – and rolled out plans to change procedures so nothing like the Sunroad debacle happens again.

But the mayor refused to clarify discrepancies between statements by himself and former land-use chief James Waring, who resigned last week while on vacation in Iceland.

Waring says Sanders asked him to resign; Sanders insists he learned of the resignation only after the fact.

The mayor also refused to say whether he fired Escobar-Eck, requested her resignation or if she quit on her own.

"I'm telling you it's a personnel issue and I'm not going to talk about it," said Sanders, agitated enough to rise from his seat and briefly leave the interview.

Escobar-Eck declined to discuss her abrupt departure.

With barely nine months until he would face San Diego voters for re-election, the mayor has found himself in the center of a political storm that has raised questions about his leadership, his honesty and his susceptibility to coercion by the city's powerful special interests.

The Sunroad building is not the most pressing concern for San Diego, which is still grappling with a \$1 billion pension deficit, late financial audits, aging streets and sewer pipes and an entrenched bureaucracy.

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But the controversy has resonated with voters because it epitomizes what many residents feel is an uncomfortable level of access enjoyed by builders and other influential groups at City Hall.

Sanders “is the darling of developers,” said Steve Erie, a UCSD political science professor who helped design the strong-mayor structure approved by San Diego voters in 2005.

“He has a staff that believes it needs to please major campaign contributors, and he’s a mayor who’s not really watching the store,” Erie said. “That is a formula for Sunroad and other disasters.”

Even some Sanders supporters worry that the mayor is being haunted by Sunroad because it has become a one-word answer to questions about what’s wrong with City Hall.

“It’s the thing people can grasp ahold of and understand. It’s not complex like the pension or deferred maintenance,” said Glen Sparrow, a San Diego State University professor emeritus who served on Sanders’ mayoral transition team and was appointed by the mayor to the charter review commission.

“The problem is, from a political point of view, the mayor squanders all of his power and goodwill over 20 feet on top of a silly building, when he should be using it to solve all these problems.”

Asked to grade the mayor’s performance on Sunroad, Sparrow gave him a “D.”

'You make a promise'

The Sunroad controversy has forced more than the departure of two prominent officials. Sanders said it also has led him to alter his management style and to become more mindful of politics in San Diego, though he is not wary enough to walk away from City Hall.

He remains committed to winning a second term in June, even though he considers himself the most scrutinized mayor in recent decades.

“I don’t get into anything without thinking I’m going to win, because I’m putting my family through it, I’m putting my staff through it and I’m putting my supporters through it,” Sanders said. “Once you make a promise to them, then you have an obligation on that promise.”

When he bested Councilwoman Donna Frye in the runoff election after former Mayor Dick Murphy’s sudden resignation in 2005, Sanders pledged to reverse the pattern of “delay, deny and deceive” that he said ran through City Hall.

But the former San Diego police chief said the politics surrounding the strong-mayor form of government run much deeper than he knew or expected.

“I don’t like my integrity questioned every single day on every single issue – that bothers me more than anything else,” he said. “I can only tell the truth that I know happened.”

Sanders admitted making key mistakes in handling the Sunroad issue. He said he should have listened to others beyond Waring, whom he blamed again yesterday for working to satisfy both the FAA and the developer at the same time.

“My first mistake was not stepping up sooner,” Sanders said, promising to demand better communication in the future.

“I want to be very clear that when I ask for information on something it isn't, 'You give me what you think I need.' You give me it all.”

Private meetings

Much of the reason the Sunroad building continues to make news is Sanders' own doing.

The mayor maintains that he never heard about Sunroad until October – six months after the FAA declared the project a hazard and warned that the violation could jeopardize the city's federal airport funds.

Even then, the mayor waited until June to order all construction halted and the top 20 feet of the 180-foot high-rise removed.

Beginning in December, he met privately at least twice with Sunroad owner Aaron Feldman, who held a fundraiser for Sanders' 2005 mayoral campaign. One of those meetings came four days after City Attorney Michael Aguirre sued the company.

Sanders also brought in an expert from the San Diego County Airport Authority to help resolve the Sunroad problem, then denied that the executive – Ted Sexton – was on loan to City Hall to settle the dispute.

An investigation Sanders ordered of his staff's approach to the Sunroad project criticized midlevel staff and conceded serious lapses in communication and judgment. But it failed to address key inconsistencies and it absolved senior officials – including Waring and Escobar-Eck – of any wrongdoing.

Escobar-Eck worked for the city of San Diego for 18 years until 2005, when she was hired away to become the city of Carlsbad's planning director. She returned to San Diego in October, two months after the Sunroad building reached its full height.

Before she left for Carlsbad, Escobar-Eck was a key player in the deal that awarded development rights for the former Naval Training Center to The Corky McMillin Cos. The final agreement had the city losing out on potentially tens of millions of dollars.

In an interview earlier this year, she was unapologetic about the contract terms.

“The whole profit thing, that really wasn't the focus or the point,” she said. “It was to redevelop it from a closed base to a vibrant center, and that's what it has become.”

Sanders said he knew Escobar-Eck from his years as police chief before hiring her as his Development Services director. He said he “appreciated” the work she did on behalf of San Diego apart from Sunroad.

Searching for help

The mayor announced several changes yesterday that he expects will help improve the city's oversight of land-use decisions.

Among other things, he created an in-house committee to improve coordination of development projects; required more stringent monitoring of building permits and other applications; and vowed to establish stronger relations with other government agencies, especially the FAA.

The departures of Waring and Escobar-Eck leave City Hall absent three top officials, including Sanders' chief operating officer, retired Rear Adm.

Ronne Froman, who quit in June.

Late yesterday, Sanders appointed Patti Boekamp as interim Development Services director. Boekamp, who has been the city's director of engineering and capital projects, graduated from San Diego State and has been with the city for 18 years.

The mayor said he is concerned by the growing number of vacancies in his inner circle. Some candidates may be leery of stepping in for Froman because the primary election is this spring.

“You can't guarantee them employment at the end of the process, so you're looking at a smaller subset of people,” Sanders said.

An executive search firm has begun lining up candidates to succeed Froman. An interim replacement for Waring could be named as soon as next week, but finding a permanent successor will take longer.

In the meantime, Sanders said he is pushing ahead with the people's business. He said he's never had a more difficult job and has never worked harder.

“Sunroad is a diversion,” Sanders said. “We've got other city business that has to be carried out every single day.”

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By therock on 08/24/2007

gee, is it difficult to figure out why the public distrusts politicians at ANY level of government. Say what you want about 3rd world countries, politicians can be bought here all day long, everyday. Just fantastic !!!!!

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By pitabread123 on 08/24/2007

This issue will kill Jerry in the upcoming elections. There are still too many crooked politicians available to take his place.

[Report Abuse](#)

By bundas on 08/24/2007

Police chief William Lansdowne ..judge and juror

HE should be fired

Report Abuse

By tangodancer on 08/24/2007

What amazes me is that the 'free' press is killing him over his contradictory answers and unwillingness to be open, and his only response is more of the same. Is he stupid beyond my imagination or has someone told him that eventually we'll learn to live with one more liar in government?

Report Abuse

By theantispanos on 08/24/2007

Hello, Hawaiian Air, yes, this is Jer, can you book me into Maui this afternoon?

And have I missed it, or is Mr. Aguirre being very quiet about Sunroad lately?

Report Abuse

By djrobsd on 08/24/2007

I love it... He apoints someone who has been with the city for 18 years... Why the hell would you appoint anyone who worked for the city when all these problems happened? Why can't we bring in fresh blood to our city, people who have worked for the PRIVATE SECTOR, for LARGE CORPORATIONS, who know how to run a BUSINESS and MANAGE EXPENSES.... What a novel concept. This whole thing disgusts me.....

Report Abuse

By 74native on 08/24/2007

What do you expect from a mayor who "won" due to technicalities. Is this the mayor that the true popular vote elected? A resounding "NO!!!" Now we pay the price for not protesting at the time of the mistake...

Report Abuse

By pmaravil on 08/24/2007

Should have elected Frye.

Report Abuse

By jayjay on 08/24/2007

Can we beat a dead horse any longer? I don't need to see this story anymore. IT'S A FREAKIN BUILDING THAT GOT BUILT TO TALL! Someone messed up and they are taking it down now...

I don't need to see this story BIG on the front page of Sign On anymore. Make it small on the side.....

Or hire me to write better/interesting stories so I don't have to read about Sunroad.....

Report Abuse

By kwaping on 08/24/2007

This is a funny story!!

1. "susceptibility to coercion by the city's powerful special interests" = a sugar-coated term for "corruption"
2. "Sanders said it also has led him to ... become more mindful of politics in San Diego." Holy cow, we have a MAYOR who was previously ignorant of POLITICS in his city?!?
3. "he considers himself the most scrutinized mayor in recent decades." For good reason! Duh.
4. Regarding his supporters: "Once you make a promise to them, then you have an obligation on that promise." If that isn't telling, I don't know what is.
5. djrobsd wrote: "Why can't we bring in fresh blood to our city, people who have worked for the PRIVATE SECTOR, for LARGE CORPORATIONS, who know how to run a BUSINESS and MANAGE EXPENSES." Um yeah... that was Jim Waring. Not much improvement there.

Report Abuse

By justliven on 08/24/2007

The biggest problem in San Diego right now is that we can't pay our debts and are in the hole big time. The only way to solve that is to decrease spending and/or increase revenue. Where SD is right now I don't believe that a decrease of spending alone can give us solvency. So unless we really want to hit all SD citizens really hard in the wallet (aka raise taxes) then we have to increase revenue by another means. Unfortunately the quickest way to raise revenue is by increasing property tax and to do that without hitting the taxpayer means we bring in developers so we have more property/structures to tax. As far as I can tell that is what the mayor has been doing to try to do; though I can see where some may not agree with the manner he's done it.

I'd love to hear if anyone else has an idea on how we can bring SD back in the black in a time where lenders aren't giving out a nickle without perfect credit.

Report Abuse

By The Big Churro on 08/24/2007

I used to question whether Sanders was stupid or dishonest. I now know he's both. He was too stupid to deal with Escobar-Eck at the proper time, and now that she has quit, he is not honest enough to admit that she quit on her own accord because that would confirm just how disconnected and weak he is as mayor.

And Jayjay, this is about more than just Sunroad. If you cannot see that, you're no better than Sanders.

Recall Jerry "Sunroad" Sanders.

Report Abuse

By Roaming Gnome on 08/24/2007

Two people have been fired. Unfortunately the responsible party cannot be fired since he was elected. Sanders should step down and let someone who at least can keep their lies straight lead the City.

If someone tells you that you need to step down and resign, that is an effective "firing" anywhere except in Sander's mind.

Report Abuse

By nsg31 on 08/24/2007

What have you done about the pension mess, Jerry. Nothing. Just go away, Jerry.

Report Abuse

By HoyaSaxa on 08/24/2007

I wrote a post yesterday regarding Sanders' insane habit of initially making the wrong decision, dragging his feet for a few months (while his popularity and credibility plummet), and then, finally, changing course and taking the right action many months too late. And the ironic thing is that if he had just made the right decision in the first place, he would actually come across (to most voters) as a strong leader.

Well, here he goes again. He is now refusing to explain the discrepancies between his version of how Waring left, and Waring's version. He even gets dramatic and threatens to walk out of the informal press conference that he called.

Does anyone doubt that the masochistic mayor will will refuse to discuss this issue for several weeks or months (which will further hurt his popularity), and then finally turn 180 degrees and clear up the confusion over Waring's departure?

Sanders: Please, please, please. Learn already. Pull a Costanza and just start doing the opposite of your every instinct, and you'll actually start to see your poll numbers rise!

Report Abuse

By La Playa Heritage on 08/24/2007

This is not just about Sunroad. Mayor Sanders and his Development Services Department in collusion with the Building Industry Association (BIA) are twisting the meaning and intent of mandated state laws enacted to help the poor, to creat giant loopholes in quality of life issues in order to loosen development regulations and limit public participation in the development process.

<http://www.laplayaheritage.com/Documents/CITY%20OF%20SAN%20DIEGO/D>

Mayor Sanders plans are doing this by changing Discretionary projects into Ministerial over-the-counter review project through "re-engineering" which would "streamline" the process and give developers "consistency." Ministerial over-the-counter review do not have to notify neighbors within 300 feet, community plans are not applicable, community planning groups are not consulted, and no public hearings are required. Ministerial projects are also exempt from CEQA, therefore mitigation for negative effects will be paid by the taxpayers through the General Fund.

Report Abuse

By gon2tex07 on 08/24/2007

The Sunroad issue will be the "albatross around the mayors' neck" until he can convince the voters that he is a good mayor that has made some bad mistakes. Good luck Jerry, I'll be waiting for you to pull a rabbit out of a hat.

Report Abuse

By Singlefin on 08/24/2007

I love when poeple jump on here and really dont offer any ideas on how to solve the problems, I know get rid of Jerry that is the best that comes out but that will not solve the problems in San Diego

jusliven - I agree with you in that SD needs to find more revenue to offset what has been years of corruption at city hall. I would rather have the developers get breaks bacuse they procude tax revenue from there developepments.

Who else is out there to be mayor??? Donna??? Please - she is bought and paid for by the unions and the last time I checked the unions do not provide tax revenue to the city.

So what ideas does anybody have to fix the problems??? SD would be in 100 percent worse shape if Donna was elected mayor.

Report Abuse

By La Playa Heritage on 08/24/2007

Also watch the video regarding the probable active fault under the Navy Broadway Complex.

<http://www.10news.com/news/13507156/detail.html>

Mayor Sanders is refusing to abide by his own DSD guidelines and technical bulletins. The State Geologist said last year that "San Diego is playing fast and loose with the law."

<http://www.laplayaheritage.com/Documents/CITY%20OF%20SAN%20DIEGO/NI>

Ignoring the glaring public safety issue is insane. A new fault investigation was conducted for Manchester on March 6, 2007, but Manchester refuses to turn the report into the City or the State California Coastal Commission.

The issue could be cleared up in an hour by Mayor Sanders, but instead everyone including the taxpayers, CCDC, the Port, the City are wasting time and money on planning and reviewing documents, writing a Master Plan, without basic information which could change the whole of the waterfront. THIS IS CRAZY.

Report Abuse

By La Playa Heritage on 08/24/2007

To Singlefin: The way to solve the problem is very easy.

Just follow the existing Municipal, State, and Federal laws like every other city in California. Stop trying to create loopholes for developers and make them obey the law.

In the end the general public has to pay for all the developer giveaways through their taxes. Neighborhoods are left with inadequate infrastructure. Then we wonder, how did that happen?

Just follow the law.

Report Abuse

By Sandman on 08/24/2007

Singlefin wrote:

"I love when poeple jump on here and really dont offer any ideas on how to solve the problems."

That's exactly what you've done. I read your post twice, and you offered no ideas on how to solve the problems.

"I would rather have the developers get breaks bacuse they procude tax revenue from there developments."

LOL! Thanks for the laugh. You should love San Diego government just as it is then.

Report Abuse

By P.L. Resident on 08/24/2007

Jusliven, you touch on a logical approach to fixing a financial crisis in local government: find ways to generate economic activity to generate more tax revenue for the city. Unfortunately, cities have very little incentive to encourage development as a property tax revenue source because the state keeps virtually all of the property tax (unless it's a redevelopment district). The real gem is sales tax, because that stays local, and that is why retail centers and car sales are sooooo sooooo popular with cities. What is needed is fiscal reform at the state level to keep property tax local. And all this coverage in the U.T. over the years about the city's predicament, did they once have an article about that (fiscal reform)? No, they're much more interested in selling newspapers rather than facts. The Sunroad debacle is an excellent example of that. Unfortunately, now an honest hardworking director has lost her job.

Report Abuse

By okonkolo on 08/24/2007

one term, Mr. Sanders, one term

Report Abuse

By tadlad on 08/24/2007

"I don't get into anything without thinking I'm going to win, because I'm putting my family through it, I'm putting my staff through it and I'm putting my supporters through it," Sanders said. "Once you make a promise to them, then you have an obligation on that promise."

Hold a second.

I think the promise made to San Diego tax payers (the OATH OF OFFICE) far outweighs any promises he could make to his family, friends, supporters, and staff (all people who directly benefit from his continual power).

This just goes to show where his priorities are--NOT at all considering the people of San Diego as he makes his decisions... and lies in bed with the deep pockets that can make re-election happen for him.

What about the people of San Diego? What do us voters get? What do the people who pay your bills and back up your spending sprees with our hard earned money? Oh wait, you could care less. It's all about you, mister mayor.

San Diego needs to stop electing back-room dealing, special-interest serving politicians.

Report Abuse

By tonyrigatoni on 08/24/2007

The graft and corruption at the city hall level has been going on before mayor pete wilson took office.

"2nd verse same as the first...."

Report Abuse

By Duckman GR on 08/24/2007

Well, jusliven, that quote from Escobar-Eck might be an indicator of why a solution is so hard to come by:

"The whole profit thing, that really wasn't the focus or the point," she said. "It was to redevelop it from a closed base to a vibrant center, and that's what it has become."

The city just gave that property away, if they had marketed it properly they would have had a nice chunk of cash to drop into the budget, and would have still gotten all the property tax money they're getting now. And personally, I am not impressed with that development at all, it still looks and feels like MCRD.

And you wonder why people are so leery of just giving the Spanos the store like the city did with Liberty Station?

Those pensions need to be rolled back, to some degree, and the only person working on that is Aguirre. And the only way that will happen is through PR and pressure, just what aguirre is doing, but yet all he gets from people here is grief and calls of grandstanding. So what if he loses lawsuits, they're just chess moves in the process. If Mike had more support from the people of San Diego, he would have more leverage and could force the City Unions to negotiate a solution that maybe keeps SOME of their gains, but not all.

Report Abuse

By fostermom2 on 08/24/2007

I'm giving the guy a break since all his flip-flopping is just a sure sign of all the turmoil happening behind the scenes but I do think he's honestly trying to do what's best for the city - Get us more revenue to get us back in the black.

As for our alternative - Donna Frye?? Are you kidding me?!!! With her we'd only have happy unions, more taxes, fountains on street corners and pretty music playing in the streets with no money for improvements to what's under the streets - infrastructure!

Report Abuse

By Heavy Machinery on 08/24/2007

The pensions do not need to be rolled back. They were negotiated in good faith by both sides. I say the city needs to quit squandering employees money to help build the ball park or other pet projects.....Now they have to pay the money back and the City, Mike Aguirre and their loser supporters are angry that they could not pull yet another fast one on the employees.....

Too bad you idiots were not throwing your two cents in when the money was being stolen in the first place.....so just pay the bill.....while you enjoy freebies such as free trash service and 750 fewer employees.....heck, the mayor said with the cutback of employees, there was no loss in service.....Do you believe that?

Report Abuse

By manikatt on 08/24/2007

It's not just about a building. It's about people thinking they are above the rules because of their connections. Then we find out that even the Major want to help them break the rules because they are a big contributor. It isn't the building that is the issue. It's the corruption.

Report Abuse

By exmiler on 08/24/2007

BUNDAS, what does Landsdowne have to do with anything in that article? you hate the cops, ok we get it. focus man, focus! who else is gonna run this town at this point in history? I agree with finding an answer and not just finger pointing and name calling. I dont have an answer either. who would be a good candidate? are there any out there? we gotta find one or I'm sticking with sanders. please dont mention frye's name. any mature clear thinking adult in town knows she has absolutely zero qualifications. her idiots are going to vote for obama too. we need to find a legitimate alternative candidate. problem is, who would want to inherit this mess?

Report Abuse

By the people have spoken on 08/24/2007

Jerry, the tighter your lips, the more you appear guilty. The more you open them, the more implicate yourself. What a dilemma! You got yourself into this, now get yourself out.

Just WHAT are you doing for us Mr. Sanders?

Same thing as your predecessors? Selling your soul to the devil (Sunroad and friends) and to hell with the little people?

Just before your election, Frye was near victorious as a write in, with only weeks to spare. That should have showed everyone the frustration of the voters. Too bad a minority didn't know exactly HOW to write in their votes. I knew it was a dark day when you won... (?)

There are other issues in which you've been ineffective, the pension plan, our aging infrastructure, etc...

But this is the easiest issue to attack you because you ARE in bed with Satan and we the people of san diego have been sick of the good ol' boy rhetoric for decades, always HOPING for someone different. Do us all a favor and don't seek re-election. It won't matter anyway because you won't win, even if Tinkywinky (of teletubbie fame) was your only opponent.

WE WANT TINKEYWINKY!

WE WANT TINKEYWINKY!

WE WANT TINKEYWINKY!

Report Abuse

By the people have spoken on 08/24/2007

exmiller i'll take frye ANYDAY. how could she screw it up worse?

Report Abuse

By Roaming Gnome on 08/24/2007

Frye could barely find her way out of a paper bag.

And now that she has, she thinks she can be mayor.

Report Abuse

By The Big Churro on 08/24/2007

fostermom2: "I'm giving the guy a break since all his flip-flopping is just a sure sign of all the turmoil happening behind the scenes but I do think he's honestly trying to do what's best for the city - Get us more revenue to get us back in the black. "

absolute nonsense.

"As for our alternative - Donna Frye?? Are you kidding me?!!! With her we'd only have happy unions, more taxes, fountains on street corners and pretty music playing in the streets with no money for improvements to what's under the streets - infrastructure!"

Actually, she's been pretty tough about funding for infrastructure. But don't let the truth get in your way of perpetuating silly stereotypes.

Report Abuse

By Sandman on 08/24/2007

Big Churro wrote:

"As for our alternative - Donna Frye?? Are you kidding me?!!! With her we'd only have happy unions, more taxes, fountains on street corners and pretty music playing in the streets with no money for improvements to what's under the streets - infrastructure!"

An interesting fantasy, but it has no basis in fact.

If you actually spent some time trying to keep up with what's happening in San Diego, as well as Donna Frye's position on the issues, you wouldn't be so uninformed.

Report Abuse

By Sandman on 08/24/2007

Correction: I meant to attribute the Big Churro quote in my prior post to fostermom2.

Report Abuse

By exmiler on 08/24/2007

what a campaign slogan! big banners and ad campaigns, speeches, buttons, debates all proclaiming: "vote for frye, she couldn't screw it up worse!" some qualifications she has!!

Report Abuse

By tangodancer on 08/24/2007

So if you are all saying that in Frye vs Sanders we have a choice between a messed up City with a liar and crook in charge, or a messed up City with an honest but sadly clueless person in charge. I know which one I'd prefer! And I don't enough about Donna to say if that's true or not, but sure seems accurate about Jerry.

Report Abuse

By I Have a Brain on 08/24/2007

I personally think that Mayor Sanders does not know that his actions were corrupt. Corruption can occur over time, gradually.

By holding private meetings with the developer the Mayor demonstrated that he does not know how government is supposed to work. The Mayor just thinks to himself, this developer is a major player in local real estate and a campaign donor, so, I should go ahead and hear him out.

Mayor Sanders is just doing things how they have always been done here: granting concessions and trying to coddle the rich. This is corruption, but, again, Sanders does not see it because it seems "normal" to him.

Report Abuse

By I Have a Brain on 08/24/2007

Someone here made a comment about the Police Chief and I believe that that comment is relevant here.

During the Sunroad saga the City Attorney obtained court approved warrants to search the developer's office regarding a potential city criminal case for inappropriate contacts between the developer and the planning department.

The Police Chief then refused to conduct the search because he did not see that any crime had been committed. Next, Sanders steps in and says, golly gee guys, I know the police chief, and I trust his judgement so that warrant should not be pursued. Sanders could probably have ordered the Chief to execute the warrant, but did not.

Something seems wrong here.

Report Abuse

By sumyunguy on 08/24/2007

I Love It...

"I'm telling you it's a personnel issue and I'm not going to talk about it," said Sanders, agitated enough to rise from his seat and briefly leave the interview.

It's like he is a little kid holding his breath.... MAMA!!!!...

Jerry, if you can't stand the heat, get outta da kitchen....

One term only please. Then go home and tend to your Petunias.

Report Abuse

By nsgh31 on 08/24/2007

I voted for Pat Shea.

Report Abuse

By jaxonb on 08/24/2007

Don't you people get it yet about politics and politicians? Let me educate you:

Anyone who actively seeks to hold a public office, from the president on down to lowly city councilpeople, is by definition the very last person you would ever want in that office. Ask yourselves: who would really want to do that job for that pay? The only reason to seek public office today is for the power and the perks, and we all know it. No one is there for public service--well, maybe one or two, and you have to doubt their sanity.

That is the fatal flaw in our system. I mean, did George Washington actually want the presidency? The answer is 'no.' So he made a decent president, mostly because the presidency then had nowhere near the power it holds today.

Seriously though, what we ought to do is seek nominations for the person with the best combination of integrity and intelligence. Once we find that person, then we ought to beg them to accept the job and pay them whatever it takes.

Of course, we actually had such a person last election in the form of Donna Frye, but look who got elected. I say we got exactly what we deserve, just as we did with Bush and, dare I say it, Nixon. It's really no good complaining about our politicians when the problem is really with the electorate, now is it?

Oh, and tangodancer--anyone who actually listens to Donna Frye knows she's anything but clueless.

Report Abuse

By Christopher Hall on 08/24/2007

Hey Bob Kittle and Fred Sainz -- Just look at these comments! Every day they are hammering away at your coordinated PR establishment. What if the commenters on this site are just the tip of the iceberg of readers? There isn't any data yet that says 95% of commenters are different from a cross section of voters -- these are YOUR readers, Bob and citizens you are supposed to be working for, Fred. What's going on? It seems like you're losing control of power.

Report Abuse

By P.L. Resident on 08/24/2007

U.T. equals Unabridged Trash. How many more character assassinations will the U.T. be allowed to conduct before the readers start to wonder what their true intent is. A single developer out of the literally hundreds that do business in this town fails to get FAA approval for a building before starting construction, an approval the City of San Diego has absolutely no authority to require the developer to get (that's right, you haven't read that in any of these articles yet, have you), and now everyone even associated with the city's permit process is CORRUPT and mayor is corrupt and incompetent. What a huge disservice the U.T. has done to its readers and the City of San Diego. You have set the city's progress back years with this trash.

Report Abuse

By I Have a Brain on 08/24/2007

P.L. Resident:

The Union Tribune has done an excellent job reporting on this matter. It is clear from the lengthy series of articles that Sunroad hired a former top official from city government for the exact purpose of getting its projects approved.

As for corruption by the Mayor, where he failed the citizens of San Diego was in not ordering that the building be reduced in height when he first learned of this problem. It took him 7 or 8 months to reach the point where he ordered the building reduced in height. In the intervening months he held private meetings with the developer to see if a "compromise" could be reached.

I say: bravo to the Union Tribune in this instance, and keep up the good work!

Report Abuse

By Bud_SD on 08/24/2007

Singlefin stated - "bacuse they procude tax revenue from there developments."

'Nuff said on that post. LOL!

Report Abuse

By I Have a Brain on 08/24/2007

P.L. Resident:

One more thing. You mention FAA approvals.

I work in real estate development.

This developer blew it, big time, by not sticking with the FAA guidelines right from the start. Everyone in development knows: you don't build projects near airports unless they are approved by the FAA.

Sunroad undoubtedly has in house and external legal staff. Sunroad also presumably hires competent planners and architects. Any of these "professionals" should have advised Sunroad to not exceed the FAA limit.

The real culprit here is Sunroad and secondarily the minions they duped at the City of San Diego. Sunroad is now attempting to coerce the City into some kind of legal settlement over this matter. It is my opinion that they are bullies, plain and simple, and hopefully the legal process will work out in the City's favor financially.

Report Abuse

By Bud_SD on 08/24/2007

"In an interview earlier this year, she was unapologetic about the contract terms. "The whole profit thing, that really wasn't the focus or the point," she said. "It was to redevelop it from a closed base to a vibrant center, and that's what it has become."

Is Escobar-Eck really this flippin dumb? What the he-ll?! Profit wasn't the focus or the point!? LOL! (I just had to laugh)So, she was instrumental in a 300 acre-prime real estate giveaway simply because she thought the residents just wanted a 'vibrant center'? When she makes idiotic statements like this, I not only question her loyalties, I question her intelligence and mostly her common sense. Why would Sanders even consider hiring such a ni-wit?

Report Abuse

By realist on 08/24/2007

To those of you who called the kettle black, thanks for enlightening us. We would like to put an order in for you to begin on the County of San Diego now. Please start with our "special interest" Code Enforcement Chief. It will be greatly appreciated to see the truth and light with regards to our County officials also.

Again thanks for the eyeopening information. You all really make a great impact.

Report Abuse

By abe on 08/24/2007

I see a bronze statue of him too, in the near future, being ramrodded down the people's throat, by 'those 200 private contributors'.

Report Abuse

By doug on 08/24/2007

FINALLY, San Diegans are getting made at the right people. For the past 30 years I kept hearing the same thing, "those d*nm developers", but come-on, the developers are just doing what developers do...building. They aren't about to police themselves and build responsibly with traffic, infrastructure, open space, environment and such in mind. The BLAME has been squarely on the mayor and city counsel. They are the ones who have weak laws that they losely enforce and seem to turn a blind eye whenever they are bent or broken. Land grabs, land giveaways, and sweetheart deals have been the rule.

Growth does not equal improved quality of life. In fact, at this point the opposite is more likely true. Yes jobs and affordable housing is important, but they are MOST important. Most important is the welfare and quality of life of San Diego's residence.

It's about time the shameful collusion of our own civil servants is brought fully into the spotlight. Heads should roll and San Diegans need to remember this when going into the voting booth.

Report Abuse

By SupremeCourt on 08/24/2007

Before she left for Carlsbad, Escobar-Eck was a key player in the deal that awarded development rights for the former NTC (Naval Training Center) to The Corky McMillin Cos. The final agreement had the city losing out on tens of millions of dollars.

In an interview earlier this year, she was unapologetic about the NTC contract terms.

"The whole profit thing, that really wasn't the focus or the point," she said. "It was to redevelop it from a closed base to a vibrant center, and that's what it has become."

Sanders said he knew Escobar-Eck from his years as police chief before hiring her as his Development Services director. He said he "appreciated" the work she did on behalf of San Diego apart from Sunroad.

Developers take notice:

San Diego does not need any leasehold or rental fees from you. We're flush thank you very much.

"The whole profit thing, that really wasn't the focus or the point for NTC" according to Escobar-Eck.

Puke

Report Abuse

By Bud_SD on 08/24/2007

Yeah, I love that... "The whole profit THING"... Let's take that profit THING out of her paycheck for the next umpteen hundred years. People like this should never be in charge of others' financial interests.

Report Abuse

By Cynical on 08/24/2007

Remember, only us armchair supervisors are perfect and we solve all problems immediately.

Report Abuse

By fansd on 08/24/2007

So right, Cynical.

All those criticizing Ms. Escobar-Eck - WOW - free passes to the elected officials who approved any and all deals she worked on as an employee of the city. Way to blame someone while they are down. If the council/mayor in office when the NTC deal was passed did not vote in a manner that pleased the constituents, that's the problem, not the project manager on the project. So many of you give WAY too much credit (and blame) to employees rather than those voted into office. Complete cop-out. Ms. E-E had no power to push through decisions in her position, and y'all should just get over it. FYI - she no longer works for the city, so why not focus on how things can be improved now and in the future instead of the continued moaning about all that went wrong 10 years ago?

Report Abuse

By NOBULL on 08/24/2007

in the shadow of sunroad mayor? well get out of the darkside of the 20 extra feet

Report Abuse

By BigDog on 08/24/2007

"Sanders said he knew Escobar-Eck from his years as police chief before hiring her as his Development Services director.

Really?

That piques my interest. Why was the Chief of Police familiar with staffers in the Department of Development Services? For what possible reason would he interact with her as Chief of Police? If he did, I am curious as to why. Is the whole city system actually that clubby, or was he told to hire her by his handlers, and is playing a little loose with the truth about knowing her as police chief? Either way, I am curious.

Report Abuse

By Dagobarbz on 08/25/2007

Mayor Sunroad Sanders will join his fellow creeps in San Diego's history of cruddy mayors.

Pete "I won't leave to run for higher office" Wilson. Liar.

Susan "Charger ticket buyback guarantee" Golding.

Roger Hedge. Left office before he could be forcibly removed.

Mayor Judge Waffle. A real winner. I can't even remember his name.

Some legacy these people left. Sanders is in good company.

Report Abuse

By chickenlipsmom on 08/25/2007

Uh, I think his name was Dick Murhpy (?). He had a lot of issues and wasn't too popular. That list of past mayors is thought-provoking.

[Report Abuse](#)

By Sniper on 08/25/2007

They should remove that cookie jar from the mayor's office!

[Report Abuse](#)

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