

Dear Editor – Anger and Animosity on Public Parking

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At the March 14, 2016 City Council meeting, Weissman, Cooper, O’Leary and Clarke voted to conduct a “parking study” as to whether the 10700 block of Farragut Drive meets the current parking intrusion standards that justify permit-only parking. Farragut has been protected by permit-only-parking restrictions since 1982. The City Engineer and Traffic Engineer repeatedly declined requests by the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (Church) to modify the parking restrictions.

The City Council brushed aside issues of bias and the City Council’s lack of authority to order the “parking study.” The City Council authorized approximately \$35,000 (taxpayer funds) to conduct the “parking study.” At 7:29 PM, during the March 14, 2016 City Council meeting, Weissman received an e-mail from staff

repeating what he had previously been advised—the “parking study” was designed to fail. “What intrusion is discouraged by the 2-hour signs, would not be observed in the field data collection, and therefore, would not be used as support toward qualifying for permit-only. One concern I have for the City about this, is that when the results are presented to the City Council, the residents may cite this 2-hour restriction as a source for decreasing the real parking demand that would have otherwise been observed.” The materials in each Council member’s agenda packet warned them, these parking restrictions “would likely affect parking behavior and the data collected during the study.” Garbage in, garbage out.

Further, the City Council resolved that, unless it brings the matter before the Council again, the results of the “parking study” may be ignored.

The new signs contain extra-large letters warning, “TOW-AWAY.”

Then, there is a scare tactic designed to adversely affect the “parking study.” On March 17, 2016, Dan O’Brien, who appeared at the City Council meeting to advocate on behalf of the Church and who is an active Church member, wrote on his 2,500-member closed “secret society” Facebook page, “I’d be careful. I know someone who parked [on Farragut] with a permit who didn’t live on Farragut and ended up with his tire slashed.” Of course, Farragut residents are not aware of any such occurrence, and O’Brien does not mention a police report concerning the alleged vandalism. Who is the “someone” he knows? When and where did the tire slashing occur? Did O’Brien see the tire? If so, why did he not post a picture of it? Does O’Brien think that anyone spreading rumors on social media has the maturity to serve as a City Council member?

As to maturity, Cooper’s post on O’Brien’s closed “secret society” Facebook page comes to mind. On March 19, 2016, the following posts appeared: “Christie Ingram Ramsey: ... I think we can all honk friendly hellos to the Farragut block as we drive by. ... Jeff Cooper: Could not Have (sic) said it better!”

O’Brien hosted Cooper’s kick-off-campaign-fund raiser. Perhaps, Cooper will reciprocate.

This all began because of Weissman’s unrevealed social, business and political relationships with Ken Smith—a person with substantial influence at the Church—and Weissman’s refusal to recuse himself, even after Farragut residents discovered and publicly revealed the relationships.

Before the March 14, 2016 City Council meeting, the staff and the consultant informed the City Council that the “parking study” is invalid, but Weissman, Cooper, O’Leary and Clarke were on a mission to favor business interests over those of residents.

Hopefully, with the departure of Weissman and O’Leary, the deck may be less stacked and rigged against Farragut residents. We will see.

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