

September 15, 2020

Dear Members of the SCV Water Board and Staff,

I want to acknowledge Matt Stone for answering the questions I posed at your last minute in great detail.

After consideration of his answers , I believe that it is important that the consent and approval of the proposal to place the words “In Memoriam of Gracie Muehlberger and Dominic Blackwell” on the monument sign at the entrance of Central Park come before the Water Board for approval.

As an open government advocate, I believe that this matter should be made by elected officials and not left to staff members. The public should be given the opportunity to attend and participate in a decision of this importance.

The prior approval of the City Council should in no way preempt a public hearing before SCV Water.

Please consider the following issues....

First, the actual motion approved by the City Council is as follows

Motion by Miranda, “we add to the naming of Central Park, “In Memoriam of Gracie Muehlberger and Dominic Blackwell” “. Second by McLean.....vote 5-0.

Clearly the specific language of the adopted motion points to a legal change of name rather than a mere memorial or dedication.

Second and most important to me....the Hart District was not consulted about the dedication and the impact it may have on students and the community. One Hart Trustee that I communicated with indicated that , “experts on school shootings advised there should be no memorials in plain view. It is not healthy”

Before you approve or consent to placing the Memoriam on the very prominent entrance sign to the park, you should consult with the Hart District and mental health experts to be sure that this is a wise decision.

Third, from a practical point of view, assuming the Memoriam language is placed toward the bottom of the monument sign there is limited space available. The display on the south sign may require the trimming or removal of the landscape shrubbery. I do not think you can possibly imagine that the language could be placed there without affecting the aesthetics or symmetry of the signs. Your new sign never contemplated the addition of dedications.

I note that there were no mock up displays of the monument sign with the added language when the city approved the name change.

Fourth, you must consider the precedent this may set when the community suffers the inevitable future tragedies. There is a dedicated area in Central Park for memorialization of young people (the Youth Grove) and the city plans on placing a memorial in the park in addition to the proposed language.

Fifth, I have filed a Cure and Correct letter with the City that provides them thirty days to correct their alleged Brown Act violation and the action that they took on August 25. I cannot file the Brown Act violation with the District Attorney until early October. There is a chance that a judge may invalidate the original action taken.

I believe that you should inform the staff members that you want this issue returned to the City Council for reconsideration and possibly schedule a joint meeting to consider this change. Short of that , I urge you to hold an open meeting that is properly noticed which will allow the public the chance to consider a direct action to place the Memoriam language on the monument signs.

The importance of the issue is one that should be slow, deliberate, and contemplative, not hasty and ill conceived.

With deep regard,

Steve Petzold
Open Government Advocate
661-609-1739