



Seaside Inside

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Working for Seaside

Welcome to my April newsletter. Since the last newsletter, I have participated in these activities:

1. Seaside's PAL Basketball Banquet, 2. SNIP's 50,000 pets snipped celebration, 3. My 3rd AMBAG meeting (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments), 4. Seaside's recreation Easter celebration and egg hunt, and 5. The NIC community cleanup.

Before I can continue, I need to address the attempt to censure me. At several council meetings, I asked the members to create a people-oriented vision for our downtown area. In other cities, counties, and legislative bodies that I've witnessed, when a member wants to take on a project, the board, council, or chairman supports that member as long as it benefits the organization. But not here in Seaside. Instead, after I asked to discuss a vision for Seaside, I was confronted by the other members of the council about why having a vision won't work.

After one of our restaurants closed, I wrote the following on my Facebook page. "It's unfortunate the City Council is unwilling to hire a professional or allow one of our city commissions to help

with the revitalization. It appears our council is ok with businesses leaving, vacant buildings sitting, and allowing boarded up buildings to sit untouched. I think we can do better, and I will keep on fighting for a vibrant downtown like what we deserve."

My comment was designed to start a conversation about downtown with my Facebook friends. The response from the City Council was ridiculous. At the April 6 council meeting, instead of spending two hours discussing the downtown, we debated whether I should be censured. Ultimately, I was not censured, but we wasted time on this agenda item. We spent more time on political egos than we spent on improving Seaside.

In the past, council members have been censured for harsh language, misusing their position, financial gain, or other egregious actions. To attempt a censure on this comment is nothing short of restricting my speech and sending a message that I must get in line with the politics of Seaside. That will not work and will not move Seaside in a positive direction.

In response to my comment and the attempted censure, I received 42 emails and 33 phone calls including property owners on Broadway, concerned citizens of Seaside and people who sided with my position. I was contacted by the Weekly, KSBW and KION who published news stories about this. Our residents and community members want to see a great downtown for Seaside, and if we don't have a vision, in ten more years, the downtown will look like it does now. If we continue to make excuses about why we can't develop a vision for our downtown, our businesses will suffer.

"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else." -Benjamin Franklin.

The Case Against a Ten-Year Vision for Seaside

One positive response to April 6 was that a discussion of the downtown was placed on the agenda for the April 20 meeting. I sent each council member a list of questions that I thought we needed to discuss. It's crucial that we visualize what we want the downtown to be like in ten years (government moves slowly). To guide the discussion, I wanted to know if we should emphasize unique shops and restaurants and have a theme that drives our downtown. Also, I asked members to visualize what lower Broadway (Obama Way) should be like and the role of CSUMB. The plan for West Broadway developed in 2010 was presented at the meeting and my written communication was ignored. I read my letter to the council aloud. Instead of addressing the vision, council members reverted to the usual tropes. My comment follows each rationalization.

"Business doesn't want government involved in the downtown." Yet, they accepted \$103,000 to fix the front of their buildings and received Covid money. They haven't protested about the new streetlights, holiday decorations, the parking lots, or any of the fourteen million dollars in improvements. Business and property owners realize that government improvements increase the value of the property and the value of the business.

"Water is the problem." This was brought up, and at the same time, it was suggested that there would be a solution in a couple of years. We must begin our planning for the future.

"The abandoned buildings are the problem." The real issue is how abandoned buildings fit into our vision. These buildings could be rented to non-profits for a nominal fee, or we can partner with organizations to bring the arts to our city.

"The Business community must lead with a business association." This hasn't happened. But the C-Jobs Commission can be the impetus for starting a business association.

As per city regulations, C-JOBS consists of nine voting members selected for their business knowledge and interest in economic development issues. (Ord. 1062 § 2, 2019)

"Everyone wants a vibrant, thriving and sustainable downtown." What does this mean? We must come to a consensus on the meaning of these words.

"We have to wait for an Economic Development Director to be appointed before we can begin the discussion." The City Council, not the staff, develops the vision for Seaside.

My Vision for Downtown Seaside Ten Years from Today

Currently, on Broadway (Obama Way), Seaside has three empty lots, fourteen vacant buildings, fifteen service-related businesses, twenty-one retail businesses, thirteen places that sell food, including a bar, a brewery, and a grocery store, two houses, and one church.

In 2033, ten years from now, I envision Seaside as the multicultural center of the central coast. The C-Jobs Commission will effectively be the downtown association, and their partnerships created in 2023 will come to fruition.

Fremont Blvd to Hillsdale (the first block of the downtown) will be commerce and service-oriented, with new and unique businesses prospering. The area between Hillsdale and Del Monte will become Seaside's cultural district, and it will honor the many different ethnic groups in this city. Vacant lots and buildings will be transformed into museums, restaurants, and shops that reflect the city's cultural groups. The vacant lot next to the house on Broadway will become the Seaside Cultural Plaza. There will be an outdoor stage and a community theater. The lot will be filled with trees, plants, tables, and benches in front of the stage. In addition, there will be a couple of ethnic food booths, a wine bar, and a local produce stand. People can order drinks and food from Maligne, Counterpoint Coffee, Deja Blue, or Mariscos Puerto Nuevo and enjoy the strolling musicians (Mariachi, accordion, guitar) while eating dinner or lunch. People from CSUMB, the Grand Hyatt, and tourists will come to see our attractions.

The key to implementing this plan will be the following partnerships:

We will partner with CSUMB to create a community theater featuring productions from their performing arts department and classic movies. Hopefully a Seaside theater group will emerge and do performances.

We will partner with the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association to develop a wine bar and programs around wine.

We will partner with the Ft Ord Association in Marina to develop the Ft Ord Grunts Museum, which will showcase the training of soldiers at Ft Ord.

We will partner with the Mexican state of Oaxaca to develop the first cochineal museum on the West Coast. Cochineal bugs live on cacti in Oaxaca and, when crushed, produce a bright red color. In the 1500s, Spanish merchants took the bugs from the cochineal farms and sold this dye worldwide. The colorful red coats of the British soldiers during the American Revolution were dyed with cochineal from Oaxaca.

We will partner with a local grower to provide a fruit stand.

We will partner with the farmer's market organization to sponsor a monthly evening event downtown. Multicultural shows, music, a swap meet, and vendors will be included.

We will partner with Rancho Cielo to provide services while training our youth in culinary arts.

This is just my vision; it is the first baby step in a ten-year process. If you have other ideas, please email or comment on my Facebook page. Also, please encourage other council members to present their visions.



Five Star Service This Month goes to the Neighborhood Improvement Commission.

In every newsletter, I recognize a department that has provided five-star service to our citizens. This month it is the Neighborhood Improvement Commission.

The Neighborhood Improvement Commission is comprised of seven volunteers that meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in city hall. All the commissioners serve for 3 years at the city council's pleasure.

This month the NIC hosted the Neighborhood Clean-up, an excellent service for our residents. I visited every dumpster to find areas of need within our city, and I'm happy to say most of the dumpsters were full when I drove by. In conjunction with the fire department and the Red Cross, they will help install fire alarms for residents around our city. On top of these excellent services, they are finding helpful ways to improve our city with approval from the City Council for the use of the short-term rental TOT tax. Kudos to these volunteers. They are making Seaside a better place.