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SEASIDE INSIDE SEPTEMBER 28, 2023



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Alebrijes are brightly colored Mexican folk art sculptures of fantastical creatures.

Working for Seaside

This is my ninth newsletter since I joined the Seaside City Council. I don't believe in pulling punches, so when something good happens, I praise it, and when something, in my view, is not beneficial, I call it out. So, in this edition of the newsletter, I will talk about our Oaxaca by the Sea event that really brought the residents of Seaside together. Then, I will discuss why I abstained from voting for the new courthouse. I have been working for Seaside in other ways by attending our September 11th Sound of Sirens event, The MLK Sculpture Garden Unveiling & Dedication in Marina, my monthly AMBAG meeting, elected officials Meet and Greet at the American Legion in Carmel, and, of course, all the fantastic Oaxaca events. These events included the Meet and Greet with the Monterey Bay FC Soccer Club and Oaxaca Delegation, lunch at the Other Brother Brewery, the Oaxacan Art Reception and Community Meet and Greet at Avery Gallery, breakfast with the Mayor before the parade, the actual Oaxaca by the Sea event and finally a farewell sendoff to the Oaxacan delegation during lunch at the clubhouse on the golf course.

In the state of Oaxaca, It is estimated that at least a third of the population are speakers of indigenous languages (with 50% not able to speak Spanish).

Oaxaca by the Sea

This past weekend was extraordinary for the City of Seaside as the city hosted the Oaxaca by the Sea event. The Mayor of Oaxaca de Juarez headed a delegation and participated alongside our city council in a weekend full of activities. I usually don't mention other councilmembers names, but in this edition, I feel it is appropriate to commend Council Member Alexis Garcia-Arrazola. The council member started the Oaxaca sister city

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event and has been pivotal in making it work. He did an excellent job making all the moving pieces fit into a streamlined series of events for the delegation from Oaxaca.

My favorite part of the weekend was right before the event started. All the council members were in a parade with the Oaxacan dancers in traditional dress. At one point, they started dancing with the council members. Seeing all five council members dancing in the middle of the street in Seaside was great. It's a moment I will never forget because it made me feel so proud to be on this city council.

On Sunday, the businesses from Oaxaca and our local businesses teamed up for a session that featured the best food, drink, and art from both places. The event was open to the public, and I was told by a trusted source that there was no leftover mescal.

When meeting with the Monterey Bay FC soccer club, we discussed bringing the Oaxacan soccer team to Seaside to play our team. This will help the city to expand the relationship that we have together. In the past, I've talked about having a cultural center on Broadway or establishing a cultural district. Through establishing a cultural center, the Oaxacan lifestyle can be displayed in our city, and it will allow both residents and tourists to learn about this amazing part of Mexico.

Why I Voted to Abstain on The Fort Ord Courthouse

During last Thursday's council meeting (9/21/2023), the city council discussed the proposed Monterey County courthouse to be located on five acres of land on Ft. Ord in the back of the Main Gate parcel. The property is a total of 60 acres. The land needs infrastructure, such as sewers, water, and utilities, and the state

estimates the cost at six million dollars. It will cost an additional 156 million or more to build the 82,000 sq foot facility.

My slogan, which I take very seriously, is "Working for Seaside." Every day, I work to improve Seaside's image and ensure that others aren't taking advantage of our city. When I found out the city was planning to give the property to the state of California, I was shocked. Why would we give away one of our prized assets?

During the discussion on the courthouse, it became clear to me that the value of the land wasn't appraised before offering it to the state. I'm familiar with another land transaction on Ft Ord where the buyer bought 1.8 acres for \$930k. This comparable land sale was near the proposed courthouse. Using a little math, I've concluded the five-acre parcel on the Main Gate to be worth 1.5 – 2 million dollars and we are planning to give that land away for free.

An argument was made that businesses would spring up around the courthouse. Neither the California Judicial Council nor the City of Seaside has a plan to develop that area. Without such a plan, it could be years before businesses opened around this courthouse. Will developers want to create a business complex with a courthouse as the main attraction? Courthouses bring a negative energy to the land in smaller cities such as Seaside.

The California Government Code speaks to this issue of cities giving land away with subsidies, and we planned to give the state a subsidy by awarding them the land for free. Under Cal. Gov. Code §53083, the city must have a subsidy hearing before approving the item. We did not have a subsidy hearing, and I objected to this item being heard. I was overruled by the city attorney, who said, "Our land has a negative value." It's appalling to me that anyone would think that five acres of land on the central coast of California, one mile from the ocean, in one of the most expensive places in the world, would have a negative land

value. She justified that the land needed six million dollars in improvements, so when you subtracted the six million needed, the land had a negative value. That math didn't add up.

Suppose you buy a 5000 sq foot lot, and the seller asks \$500,000. If it costs \$600,000 to build the infrastructure to prepare the lot, that does not mean it is worth -\$100,000. What it means is that it's going to cost 1.1 million to be able to build a house on that lot.

I'm not entirely against the courthouse, but I am against us giving the land away for free. The judicial council should pay us for the property or, at the minimum, provide funds for development around the courthouse. Plopping a massive courthouse here, with nothing around it and no plan, is piecemealing the entire lot. Let's come up with a plan that makes sense and move forward.

Only four council members were present, and the vote to give the land away was 3-1 (I abstained). The State of California now has our land, and if they don't build the courthouse, we can buy the land back at existing rates. I am abstaining from all future courthouse votes until we have a plan.

Seaside first.



Five Star Service This Month Goes To Ramona Olaeta-Reed

This month, I want to give a very special 5-star review to a

member of our community who stands out as a true leader. I met her in 2016 when I joined the Neighborhood Improvement Commission, and she is the only member from that time who is still on the commission today. Not only is she an excellent commissioner on the NIC, but she also serves on FOSPA. She has made many contributions to our fantastic dog park.

Ramona Olaeta-Reed is this month's 5-star review winner. Thank you, Ramona, for making Seaside a better place. We appreciate you.

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