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133rd KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

By Tom Wiknich

Did the city council vote to keep the water fountain on, the right vote?

Last night, at the request of the mayor, the city council took up the issue of the water fountain at city hall. After an analysis presentation by staff, they voted to leave it on. Right up front, I agree with that decision.

Here are the details. There are a few people in the community that believe that since there is water problem in the valley, that it is not appropriate for the city to waste water running a water fountain. They believe that using water for a frivolous use is hurting the state mandated reduction in use.

Let’s take the quantitative issues. First, the fountain water use was analyzed by staff. They determined the actual use of water equated to about 21,000 gallons per year. This compares with the average use of an adult person for a year, we use about 50,000 gallons per year. The fountain only uses about 40% of what one person uses in a year--insignificant at best.

Next, it hurts the state-mandated water reduction the water district customers have to reduce, or get fined by the state. This fountain has no effect on that reduction rate. This is because the city hall complex is on their own well. It is not supplied water by the water district. Water use at the complex does nothing to the mandated reduction rate. We do need to talk about the actual use. The water does come from the aquifer, and yes it has some impact to the water level, but only at the rate of one half a person per year.

Now, the issue of principle. Some feel that the city running it kind of mocks that the rest of us have to conserve, but they don’t. Turning it off would be symbolic in that it shows the city is serious about saving every drop of water they can. That would be true; however, I heard of one of these symbolic principle complainers that lives out on the county and has their own well. They are under no mandate to conserve like city residents. This complainer also has an abundance of decorative vegetation and even a small yard pond with a little waterfall running. This complainer complains about the city running a water fountain, as they almost do the same thing.

Now, let’s address aesthetics of the fountain. It’s a quality of life issue. Staff reported the fountain offers many uses that help our quality of life. While it may be a small contribution, it is still a positive contribution. Staff reported that many weddings and other events are done there, due to the fountain running. Many times per year, people rent the complex facilities, and the fountain sometimes helps in that decision. People like it as a back drop to pictures, etc. Now let’s talk about our hot summer days and evenings. Staff reported that often times people are seen sitting around the fountain on hot evenings enjoying the cool air it puts off. At times, you can even see a kid or two sitting on the edge of the fountain dangling their legs into it. Of course, it is not a swimming pond for people to get into, but, what’s the harm of simple enjoyment of it on a hot evening? Then, there is the classy appearance of it. Often, potential new residents, new business prospects, and base customers get tours of the city. Often, one of the stops is the city hall complex. While it is minor in the whole picture, more than one visitor will notice and comment on the appearance of the fountain.

Now, the dry part of the analysis. Cost to operate vs. shutting it down. There is the lighting and the pump running it; however, since the city hall complex is solar powered, there is no SCE bill to be paid to operate it. Then, consider the cost of shutting it down. If it was just turned off, the equipment and the piping would start to decay. If the fountain was shut down for a lengthy period of time, and then a decision was made to start it up again, it could cost a few thousand dollars to bring it back to operational condition. How attractive is an empty decaying fountain? Someone might suggest just take it out, but that would cost a few thousand dollars, as well. While water conservation is important, and we all need to do our share, turning off the fountain would not have been the right decision. Sure, turning it off would have shown support by the city to water conservation, but it would have been little more than a symbolic gesture.

The positives to leaving it on are significant. It uses very little water. There is little cost to maintain. It adds to our quality of life in more than one way. Oh, one more thing. It is the center of the cities dedication to veterans. This is the area of freedom parks where tribute is paid to our veterans. It is also a plus to renting out the complex facilities to weddings and events. For those of you that have never visited the freedom park at city hall. Take a little break this weekend, or some weekend soon. Visit it. You just might be surprised at what you see there.

In conclusion, the council voting to leave the fountain running was a good thing. It was the right decision.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.