

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

October 14, 2016

Column #105

Part 1 – Whatever Happened to the Matching Funds Challenge?



Rudy Fischer gives checks to Kim Bui-Burton for Homeless Challenge

BEYOND KICK-THE-CAN POLITICS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

DURING the Seaside mayoral debate last Monday, homelessness came up. “If elected, how would you handle homelessness?” was the first question asked by a youth during Q&A at the Press Club in Seaside.

The debate featured the four candidates for Seaside Mayor: Incumbent Ralph Rubio; Felix Bachofner, former planning commission member who held the mayoral post from 2010 through 2012; Kay Cline, Sustainable Seaside activist and political senior; Gertrude Smith, founder of local Black Lives Matter and political freshman.

Q&A answers were mere snippets, but a substantive response about a peninsula-wide Matching Funds Challenge question was addressed by Mayor Rubio during the debate itself.

Kick The Can Politics Revisited

You might remember that I gave the City of Seaside a hypothetical “Boondogglers of the Year” Award on March 27, 2015, in this column headlined “Kick the Can Politics: Homelessness versus diplomacy on Seaside City Council.”

Refresher excerpts include:

Q. “What’s a boondogglers?”

A. “A time waster. A person who delays making decisions. Cities and politicians are boondogglers.”

Also, hearkening back to the March 19, 2015 Seaside City Council meeting: “When new Seaside City Councilman Jason Campbell moved the city contribute \$16,500 to Pacific Grove’s matching challenge fund, an issue that had dragged on for nine months and was expected to be resolved that night, Mayor Ralph Rubio countered Campbell’s action by stating no motion or vote could take place because the issue was listed in the agenda as a business item, not a consent calendar item.”

Rubio’s answer caught Dave Pacheco off guard. “Councilman Dave Pacheco, who served as council’s homeless liaison for more than a year, reacted with such heartfelt passion his voice shook. Pacheco said, “‘We’ve been kicking the can down this road for the last 18 months. . .’”

Pacific Grove's council member Rudy Fischer had first invited Seaside to participate in the challenge grant on June 19, 2014, and, after numerous deferrals, a response to Fischer's invitation was expected to be made at the March 19, 2015, meeting.

By then, Monterey, Carmel, and Sand City had joined PG in contributing approximately \$1 per resident to the fund which, if all cities on the peninsula had participated, should have raised around \$100,000 to be shared jointly in providing homeless services. The \$16,500 proposed by councilmember Campbell amounted to only 50 cents per Seaside resident. The issue was tabled for 90 days, thus inspiring me to nominate Seaside for Boondoggler of the Year Award.

Meanwhile, what happened to the Matching Funds Challenge? Rudy Fischer, "founding father" of the fund, filled me in about the ongoing project now administered by the City of Monterey.

Monterey Is Now Matching Funds Manager

In the above photo, Rudy Fischer, Pacific Grove councilmember, hands two checks to Kim Bui-Burton, City of Monterey's Community Services Director for their Homeless Challenge Grant, which management was assumed by Monterey this year.

Fischer says, "When we originally disbursed the money from the Pacific Grove Challenge Grant, we held about \$8,000 aside for emergencies. Our original grant was during the very cold, wet winter three years ago, and all of the City Managers and Council people who participated feared we might have to pay for emergency shelter or activate our own city's shelters. As a result, we wanted to make sure we had money on hand to quickly do those things.

"Since we didn't have to spend that money then, however, we felt it was time to disburse it for the current Homeless Challenge. The cities of Monterey, Pacific Grove, and Carmel raised \$47,423, and this allocation from the unneeded emergency fund brought the total to \$55,435.

"As a result, I gave Kim two checks; one from the city of Pacific Grove, and a personal check from me (for \$65) to bring the total raised to an even \$55,500."

Fischer says Monterey has now received applications from seven services providers and "will soon gather representatives from all of the contributing cities to evaluate those applications. The city will disburse the funds to the providers selected around the end of October or early in November."

The C-3 zone that abuts the Seaside city limit on NW Del Monte Ave. is expected to be approved by Monterey City Council later this month as location recommended by the Planning Dept for an emergency/warming shelter site.

Will non-contributory Seaside receive participatory benefits from such an eventual shelter regardless of how it is funded by Monterey?

During the Oct. 10 debate sponsored by Monterey County Weekly and moderated by interim editor Sara Rubin, Mayor Rubio said Seaside did not contribute to the original matching-funds challenge grant because "other cities sent their homeless to Seaside" so money was used for helping homeless veterans within the City of Seaside get housing.

Who won the debate? We'll know after the election!

(Next week: Matching Funds Challenge continued.)

###

Photo provided by author; used for educational/illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message with
The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.