

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #111



*Supervisor Jane Parker*

### **SELL THE SIZZLE, NOT THE STEAK!**

#### **Part 2: Government 101: Grassroots City Council Democracy**

**By Wanda Sue Parrott**

**FALLING** rain didn't faze Supervisor Jane Parker's appearance to a damp-but-undaunted throng at the post-election-protest in Monterey last Sunday: "It's going to be a long four years, perhaps longer..." she said.

If the theme of Jane's message to non-violent participants in the March for Equality spreads, much good can bless the peninsula regardless of rough presidential transitioning in Washington, DC.

"Peace begins with a smile," Jane said in what Monterey storyteller Phil Hawthorne calls "selling the sizzle, not the steak."

Basically, Jane's "sizzle" was her joyful love of public service.

Her "steak" was a sales pitch for greater public involvement in the political process right here on the homefront. Right now. By whatever means is right for you.

Why? The greater the public's positive involvement now, the less-tough the national steak might be to chew after Jan. 20, 2017.

### **Perfect Timing For Confronting The Homeless Crisis**

The timing couldn't be better for active participation by constituents—disgruntled or not by the outcome of the 2017 presidential election—in local government.

So, if you're looking for a good cause to which to lend your smiling support, I suggest helping combat homelessness by confronting it because the League of California Cities has just released its list of 2017 Strategic Goals, which include:

- Developing realistic responses to the Homeless Crisis.
- Increasing state and federal funding and support to provide additional shelter and services to California's homeless.
- Advancing the recommendations of the CSAC-League Homelessness Task Force.

What can you do? Start participating in city council meetings where homeless issues requiring public input and opinion are often topics both off and on the agendas.



It's free, easy, fascinating, fulfilling and a wonderful way to break the habit of following political gossip, arguments, flagrant untruths and enervating ennui on Facebook, television, and other mobile devices.

If you've never attended a city council meeting before, or you're simply rusty, this mini-guide should bolster your faith that all is well at the grassroots level in America.

As shown in the symbol on the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States, the pyramid's base supports the apex, not the other way around.

We the People are that base built on nationwide city councils and community-oriented leadership.

### **Understanding Your Local City Council**

The seven cities on the Monterey Peninsula are Carmel by the Sea, Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Sand City, Seaside and Pacific Grove.

They operate on a Council-City Manager, also called Council-City Administrator, form of government and derive their power from the City Charter, the California Constitution, and laws enacted by the State legislature.

All legislative power is held by the five publicly elected city council members, who are the mayor and four councilmembers.

All councilmembers enjoy the same powers and privileges, but the mayor's additional responsibilities include presiding over city council meetings, signing official documents, and officiating at ceremonies and events.

One councilmember holds the title Mayor Pro Tempore or Vice Mayor and stands in for the mayor in the mayor's absence.

Councilmembers serve a four-year term. The mayor serves a two-year term.

City managers/administrators are salaried employees appointed by the mayor/city council who carry out legislative duties determined by the council; average annual salaries throughout California range from low to high six-figure amounts according to "Salary Genius."

Average monthly salary for California mayors, according to "Salary Genius," is \$3,416.

City council members may be volunteers donating their services freely. However, according to the National League of Cities, average city council members in California work about 20 hours per week and earn \$20,000 or less per year in most cities with a population of 25,000 to 70,000.

The city councils all across America truly are public servants practicing Democracy at its best.

### **An Open Invitation**

All Monterey Peninsula cities welcome public participation at their city council meetings.

If you've never visited a city council meeting or need to refresh your memory about protocol and procedure because you've not attended a meeting for a while, you may prepare in advance by watching live cable casts and videotaped replays of meetings.

Seaside, Monterey, and Pacific Grove council meetings are broadcast, along with forums on water, Fort Ord redevelopment, and events in Marina, on Monterey's Government Access Channel 25 by Access Monterey Peninsula (AMP).

Next week's column will feature advocating for peninsula-wide participation by local city councils in the Matching Funds Challenge for 2017 to support homeless service providers.

You might even decide to run for city council. It's never too early to plan your campaign.

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