

March, 2011

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Sue Greenwald, the new city council and the work ahead by Tim Fenton

...wonderful new council..all on the same team facing the same difficulties...

...saving up to 100 million dollars on waste water treatment...

...most cost effective...drew on UCD experts...

...tendency to oversimplify advantages of economic development...net revenue is important...

...understandable desire to look for painless answers..

...safe delightful downtown...appropriate use of opportunity

..[RDA] no other means to ensure investment in our infrastructure...imperfect as it is...

...tension..want houses to be more affordable...want to maintain values...

...very fortunate...during recession...downtown has stayed vibrant, lively..



When we met recently with veteran city council member Sue Greenwald, the first thing she talked about was how pleased she is with the new council. "The chemistry is very good," she said adding that each member has a different circle of support among Davis voters that she says has gotten a lot of new people involved with city government. "We all seem to know how to agree to disagree," when needed she remarked. She thinks this collegial approach will be very important as the City Council deals with difficult issues brought on, as in the past three years, by the continuing state budget crisis.

Greenwald, who has served on the council since 2000, said she believes her hallmark accomplishment during that service has been getting the council to reconsider how to develop a new wastewater management system for the city. The council was considering a plan that would have cost upwards of \$200 million. Alarmed by this

huge number, Greenwald urged the council and Davis city staff to seek independent advice on the project and worked to build public awareness of the potential cost. Expert advice, including that from retired UCD professors with national reputations for their work in water management, has suggested that a suitable plant could be built for half the original estimate and would result in a better plant that would be more flexible and upgradable for meeting future demands.

Still on the subject of water, Greenwald spoke of prospective future projects for waste water and surface water management and for storm drains that could eventually add up to \$.5 billion. At a potential cost of \$15,000 per household, she warns that this is simply way more than a small city like Davis can take on.

Our conversation turned to economic matters and Greenwald noted that the value of economic development was not always positive for the city. "Revenue is not what's important," she says, "it's net revenue." She added that retail sales tax cannot provide much more revenue for the city unless we focus on development that will be revenue positive for Davis. Currently auto dealers and hotels are the biggest contributors, and Greenwald says there are minimal service costs to the city from these two business sectors.

In that vein, Greenwald says she would like to see development of a new hotel and conference center in or near downtown Davis. Such a facility, bringing more rooms and conference space to the center city, would keep paying events in Davis that now must go elsewhere. She pointed out that there is no other place along I-80 from the Bay Area to Sacramento where a first-class hotel/conference complex could be located in a vibrant downtown within blocks of the off-ramp. Greenwald said of the \$1 million the city is lending Hanlee's Automotive Group to refit their former Ford dealership property as a new Volkswagen dealership will more than pay for itself in increased sales tax revenue.

Greenwald commented on Governor Brown's proposal to eliminate California cities' redevelopment agencies, saying she would prefer that the RDAs be reformed, not eliminated. Recalling her recent visit to Korea and others to China, she spoke with awe about Asian nations' dramatic investments in infrastructure, with new high speed rail lines, new airports, new bridges and expansive park and recreational facilities (including bike paths superior to those in Davis!). She says, imperfect as RDAs may be, without them California cities will have no other way to assure such investments here.

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Calendar of Events

Tuesday, March 1, 7:00-9:00 pm DDC Board Meeting. Regularly scheduled Board business meeting members and general public welcomed. **Blanchard Room, Davis Library on 14th St.**

Thursday, March 3, 6:30-8:30 pm Davis College Democrats 4th annual fundraiser honoring Davis Mayor Joe Krovoza and Yolo Public Guardian Cass Sylvia, **Palm Court Hotel, 234 D St. Davis,** contact Sam 510-459-6290 or Amani 530-400-1241

Interview with Sue Greenwald (continued from p1)

We asked Greenwald about her feeling on "infill" development projects around the city. She favors them but says, "the devil is in the details." She favors such development on the city's larger underused properties. She mentioned the PG&E property along L and 2nd Streets as a potential location for condominium housing. She said the site is ideally located walking distance from downtown and transportation while denser, multistory elevator buildings could be built there without impact on existing Davis neighborhoods.

Finishing our talk on development, Greenwald said it is not clear what rate of growth is healthy in California with its water problems and earthquake threats. She noted that the whole world is dealing now with how to achieve sustainable communities. She concluded that we're very fortunate in Davis that our downtown has stayed vital during the recession and expressed hope that better times lie ahead. Amen

Why do you Davis? (& an Editorial)

Following other comments at the "Love your Electeds" party (p.3), on the extraordinary events in Egypt, Steve Souza explained that their nonviolent, revolution was "based upon the law of love" an idea, which he attributes to Ghandi. Building on our Valentine Party theme, he further observed that he saw an Egyptian protestor carrying a picture of a heart, the universal sign of love, inscribed with the word Egypt leading him to ask "Why do you love Davis? Here are some of the answers given in response to Steve's question:

- Don: "...our schools."
- Barbara: "...love having students as friends and neighbors."
- Gale: "...love being in the library."
- Adriene: "I can talk to everyone who represents us."
- Robin: "environmental consciousness."
- Joe: "a great local newspaper. I love the Enterprise."
- Donna: "...safe and secure... can walk at night."
- Jim: "...citizens so committed to public service."

In fact, it is easy to take for granted what approximates an urban paradise for the young, mid-career adults and senior citizens. Amenities for children, include schools, sports, playgrounds and libraries, some among the best in the state. People in mid-career invest with confidence in Davis enjoying excellent shopping, cultural attractions and a clean environment, "a safe and delightful downtown" (p.1). Seniors enjoy walking our greenbelts and volunteer opportunities (see Gale above). Of course, "paradise" does not happen by accident or come for free. Rather Davis voters have been willing to support schools and local government with taxes. We will soon vote on whether to pay for our local schools (Measure A in Davis) and for our state government (proposed June ballot). When voting, we should again carefully consider Steve's question, "Why do you love Davis?"

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Love your Electeds, annual Valentine Party by Carl Schmid

Following a generous buffet dinner at I Housel, which was decorated by the Davis College Democrats, sixty guests were treated to current accounts of state, county and city government. Mike Syvanen, who chaired the program, called first upon State Senator Lois Wolk.



Commenting on Gov. Brown's new Democratic administration, Lois (L.) was clearly upbeat saying that "you feel the difference already. Jerry is everywhere. He actually understands what he proposes." "He knows exactly who I am." She demonstrated this point by repeating his question to her "How about a small canal?" and her response "...we need assurances...." She admitted that the choices will be difficult but that the Governor is leading "an adult conversation about the state." "His whole strategy is full of risk, full of hurt but at the end of the day, the state will have a stable fiscal economy. ...things will be better for California."

Due to a loss in her family, Assembly member Mariko Yamada could not attend the party. Her remarks closely echoed those made by Lois: "...change in Sacramento is truly palpable." Although the budget problems are still significant, "the change is that the messenger speaks with honesty

and integrity."

Referring to the name of the party, "Love your Elected", the neat lesson that Supervisor Jim Provenza (r.) drew from the protests in Egypt is you "Don't really have to love us but you have to love the fact that we have electeds!"



While recognizing that serious problems remain to be solved, Jim also conveyed an optimistic note that the "cuts going forward may be a little less" and that the County is rebuilding, finding "new ways to deliver services."

Supervisor Don Saylor (L.) thanks DDC members for "engaging in the political life of the community" and "taking the time to make it a better place." However he worries that, "a lot of people are not connecting the dots with the school closing down the street and an aunt not getting medical care" with the public's resistance to pay for essential services. Given drastic cuts in County services, we are "flirting with public health disaster." Recognizing the contributions of "dedicated," "passionate" people in health care, the County is working to preserve and expand the safety net with the Health Reform Insurance Act, which Don proudly calls "Obama care."



Davis Mayor, Joe Krovoza told how colleagues from other parts of the state were surprised to learn how closely the Davis City Council was able to interact with local state and county officials. Commenting on volunteer opportunities (see editorial p. 2), Joe describes Davis as "a little caldron of activity." Although the City has managed to have a budget reserve, a major problem that must be solved is the unfunded liability in pension plans. Another issue immediately confronting the city is Union Pacific's plan to wall off Olive Drive from the downtown area. He promises that the City Council will be very aggressive to protect Davis from being Balkanized.

City Council member Sue Greenwald (photo p1.) was struck by events in Egypt, "...our reality can change overnight" and young people can change the world." This led her to consider a provocative "thought experiment", what if McCain and Palin and not Obama were in the White House? Rather



than "belligerent rhetoric" our response has been a "positive message" with the result that the protestors are "not yelling down with America." Sue's additional comments touched upon the issues that are reported in detail in her Newsletter interview (p1.) "We have a great Council. It is fun and exciting even though we are facing great problems." The City budget is already "cut to the bone" and faces "seven million dollars in the next two years of unfunded liabilities." Sue also took the opportunity to defend RDA funds giving specific examples of where the city successfully used RDA funds to build infrastructure and to convert underused property into productive uses. She recognizes that there has been "mission creep" in how RDA funds are now used and that the program should be reformed. However, in her view, this is the single source of revenue available to build infrastructure. "If we don't have money set aside to invest in the future, we will go downhill." "All we have is RDA. The rest will be eaten by unfunded liabilities."

Councilmember Steve Souza, was also enthusiastic about developments in Egypt. "This revolution started from the bottom using the technology of the day, Facebook and Twitter." He hopes that the "whole entire Middle East will become democratic" as long as things are build on "mutual interest" and "trust." These thoughts prompted Steve to eventually reflect upon "Why we love Davis?" What a great question to consider, and one that, most fortunately for us, we are all well positioned to consider (p.2).

(continued p. 2)

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Democratic Newsletter

**Thursday, March 3, 6:30 pm,
College Democrats honor
Mayor Joe Krovoza and
County Public Guardian Cass
Sylvia. (see inside calendar
for details)**

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Mobile: (530) 219-1896
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