

Letters to the Editor

A reply to church newsletter

In this land usage debate for Clayton's Town Center, it is important we all work with the truth to be able to form opinions of what should be done. It's important to the church members who've been asked to donate money, and important to all Clayton citizens who are being told they should give up a prime commercial parcel to instead allow the CCC to put in a church.

The recent church newsletter, "Clayton Community Church - the rest of the story," which was mailed citywide, contained, among other claims, (1) that the Town Center Specific Plan (TCSP) allows them to build on this parcel, and they say (2) that they have "never been offered 10 percent above the purchase price for the new property."

The recent Clayton Pioneer article of Dec. 7 states that while they can build elsewhere in Clayton, this parcel is zoned commercial, and that the church has had a verbal offer from the city at price plus 10 percent profit, AND a verbal (then emailed) offer from a local commercial developer to formalize a contract at the \$1.4 million plus a premium to be determined.

It is important to look at these two claims. If the church's claim is correct (it may seem that) they think that would allow them to build upon the parcel. If there have been no offers it would lend credence to their claim that it's an unwanted commercial parcel so letting the church build upon it would be a benefit for Clayton.

There is nothing in the Town Center Specific Plan saying a church is allowed or zoned. In fact this parcel is definitely shown on the zoning map as Town Center Commercial. The language on pages 19 and 125 clearly state the city's objective to "develop Main Street as a shopping street with as few breaks in the shopping frontage as possible."

... It's important that the church members and the citizens of Clayton know the facts in forming their decisions and

the facts are: (1) Usage as a "church" is not stated, recommended or zoned within the TCSP, and (2) if the church weren't the buyers, there is demand for and others who would indeed buy this 1.66 acre parcel and develop it as the prime two-story retail/commercial that it is zoned for. The church spurning and not wanting such offers known to the public, does not mean that the offers weren't indeed made.

Skip Ipsen

Half-truths or lies?

Re: (Pioneer) claims that multiple offers have been made for the church property:

Don't you worry that what you're spreading might in fact be half-truths or indeed, all out lies? Have you forgotten how to check for facts? Or perhaps you never learned - nor care to do so.

I hope that over the holidays you take stock in what you're doing and decide (for the best interest of your business) to become a bona-fide publisher.

Mike Calamusa

Pioneer answers: The two offers referred to in our article in the Dec. 7 issue are properly sourced and documented. Gary Napper told Shawn Robinson at their meeting on Dec. 16, 2006, that the city had Redevelopment Agency funds available to purchase the parcel from the church at a 10 percent premium. We also spoke with Councilwoman Julie Pierce who was at that meeting and corroborated what Mr. Napper had said. Councilman Dave Shuey was also present when the offer was made.

The other offer was an expression of interest in buying the property and was first made verbally by Uzoma Nwakuche at the October CBCA meeting. He followed it up with an email to Shawn Robinson and Larry Easterly dated Nov. 26. Here is Mr. Nwakuche's email:

Dear Dr. Robinson,

Following the announcement I made during October's CBCA meeting of my company's (Komgold, Inc) intention to make an offer on the 1.66 acre property, I have spoken and corresponded with Larry Easterly of Clayton Community Church.

We do not want to upset any pre-existing negotiations and agreements - rather our intent is to position ourselves as a potential buyer in any event.

We understand that the purchase price of the property is \$1.4 million and we are willing to offer a premium on that amount in a formal offer.

I await your response. Thank you for your time.

Uzoma Nwakuche

Reject TCSP amendment

Mayor Walcutt and members of the Council I urge you all to immediately reject the Planning Commission Amendment, send it back to them for reconsideration or preferably an untimely demise; and, at least wait to adjudicate such an important decision until after the Church has had a chance to submit a project and their proposal can have a full and open Public Debate.

Glenn Miller

Parking Study clarified

I read the CCC's "Rest of the Story" newsletter mailing and was aghast at the misrepresentations, the untruths, and not so closely veiled threats to our city...

The Town Center Parking Study of May 2006... was totally misrepresented in the newsletter.

(A Parking Study prepared by the city in 2006 looked at the current parking conditions in the Town Center and identified options for stimulating and increasing commercial development. The Study recommended relaxing the parking standards in order to assure that commercial businesses do not incur excessive costs in providing parking spaces.

The CCC Newsletter says that the Parking Study indicates a "shortage of parking spaces (between 264 and 452 spaces)." The newsletter further states that the prime (downtown) property the CCC recently purchased was NOT needed to meet the projected future commercial development. These are false statements.

The Parking Study reflects that with the projected new commercial development of 113,000 sq. ft. under existing 2006 parking standards, 452 parking spaces would be required. The Study, as amend-

ed, would require 264 spaces. These parking spaces are required to serve the projected commercial development. The Study says there is NO shortage of parking spaces! Also the prime property the CCC purchased, by its size and location, is most certainly needed for a vibrant and successful retail district in the Town Center, and was included in the land requirements.

Since preparing the 2006 Parking Study, the City has purchased the... property at the corner of High Street and Diablo Street and will be building more public parking. The Study concluded that with the recommended alternative standards and strategies, there would be adequate parking in the Town Center for commercial development. It really makes me wonder why the 'Alliance for Clayton' and the Church would distort something like this when looking the Study clearly states the facts!

Lynn Hadley

Town Center should remain commercial

I have been a resident of Clayton for over 12 years and have watched the struggles that the city has gone through related to revenue to fund basic services.

I firmly believe that the town center should be left for commercial properties and that we should continue to look for opportunities to bring more growth and business into Clayton like the most recent ventures.

(At the Planning Commission meeting on Nov. 27) One church representative was loosely claiming discrimination and the threat of law suits. I did agree with him on one statement. The only winners will be the attorneys if this is the route this goes. Litigation around an issue like this can be very costly. I work in insurance defense and I know what it can take to pursue and to defend this type of litigation.

Obviously litigation is not in the best interest of the city and obviously the church and its members are looking out for their own interest and not what is best for Clayton if litigation is the fall back position...

Mark Lavezzoli

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10330 Crow Canyon, Castro Valley **\$2,100,000**

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12706 Sierra View Dr., Oakdale **\$1,650,000**

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1105 Prewett Ranch Dr., Antioch possible lease option **\$599,000**

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Council, from page A1

the mayor's seat the following year.

Before stepping aside, Walcutt gave a brief retrospective of his year in office, recalling the passage of the new Landscape Maintenance District as the definite high point. "The whole community should be proud of a tax measure on the ballot that got over 83 percent support."

The city made great strides in its downtown revitalization efforts, he continued, with the opening of Longs Drugs, the groundbreaking of Flora Square, the park which is due to

open Jan. 12, and the long awaited completion of the Village Market.

"I'm looking forward to buying a sandwich at the market and taking it over to the park to eat," said Walcutt. "Unfortunately, I think the park will open before the market."

With that, he thanked the community for their letters and emails and expressed relief that Clayton's 150th anniversary is over and he wouldn't have to struggle with the word "sesquicentennial" anymore.

With that he handed over

the gavel and his "magic pen" to Gregg Manning, explaining "this is the magic pen I used to write 24 columns for the Clayton Pioneer. It's magic because it runs out of ink after 700 words."

This is Manning's fifth time as mayor and the continued economic development of the downtown is at the top of his list of priorities for the coming year. Not far behind that is to implement the recommendations of the Trails and Landscape Maintenance Committee (TLC), the oversight committee mandated by the Landscape Maintenance District regulations. "We need to show the people of

Clayton that they made the right decision when they approved the landscape tax."

He also will encourage all of the council members to complete the Community Emergency Response Team training offered by the police department. Manning completed the training this year.

Finally, he wants to see a review of the city's water usage, especially in the Community Park above the ball fields.

"And I have ecological concerns related to garbage collection...", he said. Expect a review of that issue to be added to the city's 2008 goals and objectives list.

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