

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY NEWS

August 24, 2006

Searching for leadership in the Valley

Before commenting on the baseless allegations made by former VPAC Chairman, Bob Field, I will agree with him on one point:

“If the people who want to preserve this Valley do not speak up now, those who wish to profit from changing it will win.”

On this point, we can certainly agree.

First, VPAC was established as an advisory committee to represent the voice of the *people* who live in this Valley.

Insinuating directors of POLO are somehow economic beneficiaries of a failed Plan is so ridiculous it is laughable. It's no wonder the Community Plan is marred in controversy because Field is so focused on the demise of POLO that he can't *focus* on a sound Plan.

Board members own land in Los Olivos. So what? Portraying these people as self-serving developers every time there is a challenge to *any* aspect of the Plan is ludicrous.

The fact is, outstanding issues on the Plan have no effect on the properties that these board members own. This is nothing more than another smear tactic by Field who attempted the same campaign with the infamous VPAC “trials” of the Montenaro property and Lavinia Campbell Park leaving many community members sitting in the room that night completely baffled as to why VPAC would *create* such a controversy.

The misguided ‘leadership’ of Field and his fixation on POLO is in no way a reflection of other members of VPAC who have shown their complete dedication to this community with their many years of good service.

It's a shame that Field continues to attack POLO's good work when legitimate questions are raised regarding the Plan. Bottom line is there were things in the Plan that were not discussed or finalized in the VPAC meetings and the hearings that will now be held in the Valley will be to finalize these things, not because of misinformation.

A sound Community Plan is what this community deserves. Let's not lose focus of that.

This Plan was not ready to be *initiated* and the idea that it should be voted on to progress to the next stage was challenged. Very simple.

At the July 11 Board of Supervisors meeting, Field and Supervisor Firestone were adamant about the Plan being initiated *that day*. The other four supervisors agreed with the majority of people commenting that it needed tidying up. At a subsequent meeting, it was decided hearings would be held in the Valley to finalize the problematic details of the Plan.

Supervisor Firestone now states in the press "There was no question that the plan was not ready" and "There were just too many unresolved issues." (Santa Maria Sun, 8/16/06)

Well, that's what POLO's been saying too!

"Why bother?" Field asks of finishing this process.

Well, Mr. Field, the community deserves a *sound* Community Plan no matter how difficult the process may be.

The community has: the right to be heard, to disagree, to challenge, to say no and the right to a sound draft *before* initiation.

Where is our leadership going forward with this Plan? 'Leaders' should be guided by policy and productive reasoning and not by petty differences of opinion or the fixation on the demise of a group of volunteers. 'Leaders' don't quit before the job is done.

When *volunteers* are attacked, members of this community must sit-up, take notice, seriously ask why and speak up.

It is one thing to disagree, it is another to *baselessly* discredit.

*Kathryn Bowen is a POLO Member
She lives in Santa Ynez*