

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



Opinions and Letters

TRAVIS ARMSTRONG: Chumash get a deserved victory

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UCSB builds on its campus without needing the OK of local jurisdictions. The county government does what it wants with county property within the city of Santa Barbara. And all these governmental entities can take land off the tax rolls for their own uses without a second thought.

So I don't get it. The Santa Ynez band of the Chumash, a federally recognized Indian tribe, tries to get back a tiny slice of its historical territory, and some people are up in arms.

Thank goodness the federal government, finally, denied an appeal aimed at stopping the tribe's annexation of 6.9 acres. The tribal government wants to use the property for a museum, cultural center and park.

I'm not confident the hypocrisy or the ignorance at the county government will change any time soon.

Of the four candidates for 2nd District supervisor, none has even contacted the Chumash leadership to learn more about the only tribal government in our county.

And candidate Janet Wolf was on Ernie Salomon's cable television program disapproving of "private logos" on county vehicles, in response to a question about stickers put on equipment paid for by fundraising of the nonprofit Sheriff's Council.

The Chumash stickers in question don't advertise the casino. They

depict the emblem of the federally recognized tribal government. That's a big distinction.

Ms. Wolf should take the time to talk to the Chumash before speaking like she has.

I also note that a probable big supporter of Ms. Wolf in the months ahead apparently has been a critic of certain political involvement by the Chumash people, as reported in UCSB Professor Eve Darian-Smith's 2004 book on the tribe.

The professor writes in one passage:

"As Mickey Flacks, a prominent Democratic Party affiliate in the Santa Barbara community, revealed to me excitedly on the phone, 'The Indians have contributed \$30,000 already to the recall effort (against Gail Marshall). They're players in all of this you know ...' My response is why is it so amazing that Native Americans are significant political players, and moreover, why shouldn't they be?"

The professor is correct.

The Chumash can and should be involved, and also ought to continue unabashedly to exercise their rights as a sovereign entity.

Those who want to be county leaders should take time to understand this.

PRESSURE TACTICS: County staffer John McInnes at Wednesday's meeting of the visioning committee looking at the future of eastern Goleta Valley, basically, tried to put a gun to the heads of the panel.

Not literally, of course. But the county has a new ploy to try to get this group to come up with a list of parcels to rezone for dense housing. Many committee members are fighting back, as they see what the county appears to be up to.

Mr. McInnes informed the committee that if it didn't pick sites, the county might look at parcels selected by the 2nd District "neighborhood council." Legally this is suspect because that council technically had a different charge than determining a number of acres for rezoning.

The neighborhood council process also has been thoroughly

discredited, in part by the inadvertent release of e-mails between the facilitator and county staffer Alissa Hummer.

Council participants also included people outside the unincorporated 2nd District.

Council meetings also weren't really publicized to the proper degree.

I went to the offices of the county Board of Supervisors last week to try to review the names of the attendees who signed in at these meetings. The county kept me waiting an hour in the lobby of the supervisors' offices ? and still I never got to see the sign-in sheets.

How's that for open and good government?

BROWN'S ROLE: The executive director of the Santa Barbara County Action Network writes to point out that board member Michael S. Brown ended his term as that group's president late last year. I had relied on the organization's Web site, which continues to identify him as president.

Residents complain that the county redrew the boundaries of the eastern Goleta Valley planning area to include where Mr. Brown lives so he could be on the panel.

ON AM 1290: Please tune in to AM 1290 when I talk with Brian Trautwein of the Environmental Defense Center about the political and physical barriers to the return of steelhead trout to our creeks. We'll be on from 10 to 11 a.m. on Wednesday.

In future programs, I hope to examine the future of creek restoration and water quality programs on the South Coast as the Community Environmental Council ? once again under new leadership ? quietly discusses whether to abandon or reduce its commitments in this area.

This morning at 10 a.m. on AM 1290, you can catch a repeat of our program with David Kreiger of the Santa Barbara-based Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

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