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Los Gatos Weekly-Times

Editorial

Weeds in the garden, a pall over City Hall

When Gordon Knight and Joel Gambord campaigned for smaller government, did they have in mind that the council should spend its time fretting about weeds in the flower bed at City Hall?

We doubt that's what the voters had in mind.

One has to wonder, too, when the voters put into office two councilmembers who held views different from those of the council majority, did they intend a moratorium on the expression of diverse opinions?

We seriously doubt that Monte Sereno residents want a "homogeneous" council that will eschew lively debate in favor of a few people's version of "common sense" government.

With a homogeneous council, for instance, the effort initiated by Gambord to procure a special Monte Sereno ZIP code would not have been stopped in its tracks.

It was healthy debate that resulted in a survey to residents who, in turn, let city officials know in no uncertain terms that they did not want time and money spent on such a pursuit.

JOEL GAMBORD'S
Tireless "Attacks"
ON City Manager
GAY STRAAND

9/10/97

Gambord came into office full of energy and conviction for his particular version of how the city should be managed. We applaud his efforts to stay true to his convictions.

Unfortunately, he seems to have adopted a "take no prisoners" attitude in his battle to fulfill his vision.

First there was his budget maneuver-- offering a new version of the budget at the last minute, minus a city manager's salary.

Who would manage the city? Gambord's solution was to simply give the city planner an additional hat.

Now he has a 14-point list of complaints against City Manager Gay Strand, including the charge that she allows weeds in the flower bed.

It's not unusual for those newly elected to office--be it local government or nonprofit organizations--to let their enthusiasm overlap into areas of staff responsibility.

The people, however, are better served when council members stick to policy issues and let trained professionals carry out the day-to-day operations of city government.

There is a time to review the performance of a city manager--and it's not every time she walks around the corner.

Gambord's tireless attacks on Strand are not only making her life miserable, they're having a negative effect on the council. Councilmember Suzanne Jackson says she now must brace herself before going to council meetings. She says Gambord's "continued harassment" of the city manager is giving her a headache.

Gambord clearly believes he is serving his constituency with his tactics, but what he is actually doing is riding roughshod over his colleagues and spreading a pall over City Hall in the process.

JOEL GAMBORD'S
TIRELESS ATTACKS
ON CITY MANAGER
GAY STRAND

Monte Sereno councilman resigns

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western foothills where Steinbeck wrote his Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Grapes of Wrath" and part of "Of Mice and Men."

Unable to make changes to the home because of a then-new historic preservation law, Gambord vowed to work on changing it and was elected to the council in 1996. Soon after, he swayed two other council members to his view and the panel ended up weakening the law, making compliance on historic issues voluntary.

Despite the controversy and the friction that developed on the council and in the small, affluent hamlet during his first months in office, Gambord said his views favoring fewer laws and less government eventually were embraced by many in the town.

"People didn't like to hear a lot of what I said because I came from a certain orientation. Sometimes I felt like I was from Mars," he said. "But I

felt I ended up making more friends than enemies."

Some City Hall observers weren't so sure. One said Gambord's exit "hopefully will make politics a little nicer in this town."

Gambord, a real estate broker and land developer, said he is putting his home, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, on the market today for \$5.6 million. The 4,300-square-foot house on 1.6 acres on Arrow Greenwood Lane was only 85 square feet when Gambord bought it in 1968. Steinbeck had the simple cottage built in 1936 and lived there until 1938.

Gambord had renovated the home several times — all upgrades that took place basically over a handshake at City Hall, which is the way business was done for years in the town. But in 1995, while embarking on another remodel, he found himself caught in a maze of rules set forth by a newly enacted ordinance.

Ale from the flap over Monte Sereno preservation rules, Gambord

further stirred the pot at City Hall by almost single-handedly pressuring former city manager Gay Strand to resign in 1998. He and another councilman accused her of not seeing to it that weeds in front of the tiny City Hall were removed and not seeking a new paint job for city offices or cleaning up the lunchroom.

Some said Gambord was bitterly disappointed when fellow council members failed to elect him mayor last December after three years on the council. But he says he's put past quibbles behind him. "I don't carry grudges," he said.

"I think he was disappointed (after not being elected mayor), but after that we all continued to work together well," said Councilman Jack Lucas. "It did not hamper his work. He was an effective council member. He loved the city and it showed in his performance."

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Council member resigns from post

Joel Gambord led fight to modify Monte Sereno law

BY CONNIE SKIPITARES
Mercury News Staff Writer

Monte Sereno City Councilman Joel Gambord, who shook up City Hall and forced changes in preservation laws after he said they hampered the remodeling of his historic John Steinbeck house, has resigned from the council.

Gambord said this week that he and his wife, Dena, are moving to Pebble Beach after 32 years in Monte Sereno. Eight months remain on his four-year council term.

"It has been a very interesting experience — frustrating, but interesting," Gambord said Friday of his council stint. "The main thing I learned was that one person can make a difference. Monte Sereno is small enough that you can do that."

Gambord tangled bitterly with the city five years ago while attempting to remodel his sprawling home in the

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