



MY BEST SHOT

by Lisa Ross

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LAMEST LAME DUCK CITY COUNCIL

With some relief, I'm happy to report that on Tuesday my trash was collected on time, a couple of cops cruised the street, and the road was cleaned.

Usually, this is not news in a day in the life of a city—unless the city is San Diego. That's because since the March primary election, the San Diego City Council looks like a farm for the lamest of lame ducks.

Observing San Diego's leadership jumping ship, running for higher office or simply skipping meetings, is like watching the TV show, *Survivor*. We can only guess who, if anyone, will be turning out the lights at years end, when an almost entirely new San Diego City Council will be taking office.

I suspect there won't be many in Carmel Valley an Del Mar dressed in widow's weeds over the passing of Barbara Warden into the beckoning arms of private industry four months before her term was finished. As a cheerleader for basing helicopters at Miramar. she is widely credited with transforming our beach paradise into Apocalypse Now, and although she shepherded SR56 into existence, she did very little to achieve funding for the still-missing northbound connectors to I-5.

Some say it was better for Warden to leave now than mope about the office until December after failing in her bid to face Ron Roberts in the November Mayoral election, ending-up behind the tepid Dick Murphy and political unknown Peter Q. Davis.

But, Councilman Byron Wear, who faired far worse in that race, is staying around—at least until November when City Hall gossip says he hopes to split early for an appointment to Roberts' seat on the County Board of Supervisors should he become Mayor.

While Warden caught flack for taking the reigns of a cable company that previously needed her vote, the

move was perfectly legal.

Which leads us to the embattled Valerie Stallings, who is fighting conflict-of-interest charges over an IPO deal with Padres owner John Moores.

The unfortunately preoccupied Stallings is sorely missed in these parts—she has been a reliable vote for open space protection, clean beaches and livable neighborhoods in our communities, and the longer the investigation goes on, the more corrosive the impact on her psyche and on the public trust.

Adding to the body count, Councilman Juan Vargas likely will depart for Sacramento and the State Assembly after the November election, two years before he finishes his term. Meanwhile, his young heir apparent is piling up campaign contributions for a special election that hasn't yet been called.

Even the Mayor is looking for work, having announced that she has accepted a directorship of SureBeam, a Titan Corp. spin-off company, before she leaves office. At least she's here for the duration—duking it out over San Diego's energy gouge, although people tell me that the mayoral suite is looking as empty as London's streets during the blitz.

With the bosses distracted, despairing or disembarking, San Diego City Hall has been transformed into a hiring hall, with the City Council and Mayoral staffs scrambling for next year's meal ticket and diving at the first opportunity card. Who can blame them?

But, conducting business down there is surreal—you never know who is going to pick up the telephone. At least two chiefs of staff have already roamed to greener pastures.

The San Diego City Council fatigue factor is getting on all of our nerves and its time for this council to go—but not this early and certainly not this often.