Thanks for sidewalks

EDITOR,

About four years ago, Lisa Di Pasquale and I started a project with the city to get sidewalks in the Mount Oso, C Street and Mount Diablo areas. We were told to talk to the property owners in that area. Which we did and they wanted this done as long as they didn’t have to put any money out.

Throughout this period, we had meetings with the city and property owners. The city finally got the money from Sacramento and bids were put out.

The work finally got started a few months ago, and I am very happy to say we now have sidewalks.

Lisa and I would like to thank the city for finally getting this done.

Josie Lopez, Tracy

Legacy of breaking the bank

EDITOR,

For many years, the city of Tracy enjoyed a reputation of sound fiscal management. That changed a few years ago when Robert Rickman and Veronica Vargas successfully pushed to add a “minimum of $5 million” to the $11.6 million the city had spent on Legacy Fields under agreements with local youth sports leagues. That financial commitment of taxpayer funds grew incrementally, again driven by Rickman and Vargas, to the current amount of around $19 million, with another $11 or so million needed to complete just Phase I.

At the Oct. 30 Measure V workshop, city staff identified the cost of finishing Legacy Fields Phase I, Phase II and other potential features at over $74 million. Staff predicts $40 million in “grants” will cover most of the Phase II costs. Those grants are actually predicted revenue from a private sector “partner,” a regional youth soccer group. To expect such an organization to live up to that large of a financial commitment is unrealistic.

The reason the city was driven deeper into the Legacy Fields money-pit was because two of the local sports leagues could not meet their financial obligations. Rickman and Vargas determined that taxpayers would make up the difference. Over a few short years, this facility, that everyone agrees is a badly needed amenity for Tracy, has spiraled out of financial control.

With the availability of Measure V funds, the council needs to take a hard look at how to most effectively use this money. The voters of Tracy (in spite of Rickman’s desire to deny them the opportunity) have generously made available. It is encouraging that funding bonds to facilitate building sooner rather than later seems to be a favored option.

The “we can build it all” attitude expressed by some council members is cause for concern. Tracy will be living with the Measure V decisions this council makes for decades to come. There needs to be better fiscal prudence when dealing with Measure V funds going forward than we have witnessed for the past three years with the Legacy Fields Experience.

Michael Maciel, Tracy

Site 300 community meeting

EDITOR,

Did you know the city of Tracy borders an 11-square-mile experimental test site used for nuclear weapons development? This place is known as Site 300 and it is operated by Livermore National Laboratory.

Site 300 conducts high-explosive tests out in the open air that threaten human health and the environment because of the toxic materials involved. For instance, the explosions cause micro-particles of chemicals used in nuclear weapons to get carried away with the wind. Some of these airborne particles then get deposited within the community.

Now the Lab is proposing to increase the limit for high-explosive compounds in open-air tests from 100 pounds per day up to 7,500 pounds, a tenfold increase daily!

It doesn’t stop there. The Lab also wants to increase the annual limit from 1,000 pounds of high explosives detonated in the open air to 7,500 pounds, a more than sevenfold increase yearly!

I urge you to attend an informational community meeting on this alarming proposal. It will be held Monday at 6:30 p.m. at the Tracy Community Center, 2089 W. Tracy Blvd.

I will be there. I hope you will join me. If you have any questions, please contact me at 601-8489.

Valeria Salamanca, Tracy

Comics creator talks turtles and a 33-year legacy

Late one night, I had an idea. I was a fan of humorist Bruce Lee and wondered what he would be if he were an animal, the silliest animal — fast-moving martial arts, slow-moving turtle. So I did this little sketch of Michelangelo and said, “This is a ninja turtle.” Peter and I both laughed and thought it was the silliest thing we had ever seen. We really loved this idea and thought we should come up with a story on how these characters got to be these teenage mutant ninja turtles. That was back in 1983 that we did the first drawing. In 1984, we self-published the very first comic book.

Did you originally plan to have four different ninja turtles?

The original drawing was just one, but both Peter and I liked superhero groups. Growing up, we would read about the Fantastic Four or the Avengers. They would be like brothers and sisters would, but whenever they needed to join together, they were strongest together because they had individual strengths. One might be the leader type, one might be the comedian or one technical guy. We liked the idea that even though they might have spats, they would still join together as a team where they were strongest and could defeat anything. That was really the foundation of having four individual turtles. It was the dynamic of having a group.

How did the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles change your life?

The biggest and most significant thing is the fact that I get to draw comic books for a living. That was always the dream from the very beginning. Growing up, as a child, I had a dream to write and draw comic books. Through the success of the turtles, I was able to do that. Here we are years later and the turtles are still popular. Young children are discovering the turtles for the first time.

A new generation enjoying them.

Q

A

Where did the inspiration for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles come from?

I grew up in a very small town and discovered comic books at an early age. I loved the idea that whatever I could imagine, if I could write it and draw it, I could go on these wonderful adventures. So I always drew and created characters with my own storylines. From that, I came up with the idea and named Peter Laird that had the same appreciation for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. That was back in 1983 that we did the first drawing. In 1984, we self-published the very first comic book.

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