

## REPORT OF MEETING

### Re PROPOSED RENAMING OF THE ALMADEN COMMUNITY CENTER

January 17, 2018 at 4:30PM at the Almaden Community Center

Councilmember Johnny Khamis convened an invitation-only meeting this evening to discuss the proposed renaming of the Almaden Community Center (“the Center”). The proposal is to rename the Center as: “The Pat Dando Almaden Community Center and Library”. Among other things, it would necessitate adding former Councilmember Dando’s (Ms. Dando’s) name both to the building itself as well as the two large exterior signs out near the street.

Meeting attendees were:

- Councilmember Khamis and his Chief of Staff Shane Patrick Connolly
- Apparent advocates and supporters of the proposal
  - Rich Crowley (Mr. Crowley is the originator of and has been principal advocate for the proposal)
  - Bill Baron
  - Kittie Monahan
- People from among the volunteer group at the Center
  - Bill Hubka
  - Jack Campbell
  - Nadine Ambrose
  - Vince Tarpey
- Apparent neutral party Peter Groot, who is maintaining an opinion poll on NextDoor in the Almaden area.

As introductions were made it became clear who supported the proposal and who did not. However, everyone who had known Ms. Dando praised her good works and legacy. I believe all parties understood that it is possible to agree on a person’s legacy and worthiness of being honored but to disagree on the details. The method and degree of memorialization is the issue under discussion.

Councilmember Khamis kicked off by explaining that he is holding multiple meetings such as this in order to gather the opinions of the public and understand more fully the pros, cons and impacts of the proposal. He stated he believes Ms. Dando deserves some type of memorialization in the Almaden community but has not decided what he prefers it to be. He also reminded us that there is a City policy (Policy #7-5 entitled *Naming of City-Owned Land and Facilities*) which establishes the procedure being followed, and that the entire City Council will vote on the matter if it is brought before them. A copy of the policy was handed out at the meeting.

Mr. Crowley was asked to review a few details of his proposal, especially the request that the City waive the 5-year period required after a person’s death before City property can be named for that person. (This requirement is set forth in Para. I.3.a. & b. of Policy 7-5). Mr. Crowley replied that he wants to move forward quickly before public sentiment for and memory of former Councilmember Dando

diminishes. He did not claim any adverse effects would result if the 5-year requirement were followed. He was reminded that the 5-year requirement has been in the Policy since it was first written in 1972 and is there for valid, time-tested reasons.

Thereafter, all parties participated in a lively discussion. An early agreement was reached on petitions being circulated by both Mr. Crowley and Ms. Ambrose. All parties concurred that the petitions will be disregarded.

The invited volunteers, Bill, Jack, Nadine, and Vince, provided the following inputs, thoughts, and comments:

**1. No disagreement as to providing a memorialization for Ms. Dando.**

We agree that her contributions to the City, the Almaden community, and in establishing the Community Center itself were outstanding and meritorious.

**2. We believe that the “voice of the people” is being clearly heard via the on-line poll.**

There is an Opinion Poll being circulated on the website NextDoor, covering a large section of Almaden, District 10, and other adjacent areas, which has been in operation for several weeks and is providing consistent results. This poll is maintained by Mr. Peter Groot. He stated that for the period of time the poll has been active it consistently shows that the voters are AGAINST the renaming proposal by approximately 5-to-1. This information was provided to Councilmember Khamis prior to this meeting.

Councilmember stated that he is going to disregard Mr. Groot’s poll because he is unsure of how Mr. Groot framed the question, and has concerns about the accuracy and quality of the reported results. We believe this is a mistake. Mr. Groot presented the wording of his poll and most in attendance believe it to be straightforward. Subsequently it was confirmed that the comment section of the poll could not be seen by the viewer until that person had voted. This eliminated the concern of undue influence on the vote. Therefore we believe the poll to be a valuable barometer of Councilmember Khamis’ constituents.

**3. The Five-Year Rule must not be waived.**

As stated above, we believe Mr. Crowley is planning to either ignore or to seek a waiver of the 5-year rule required by City policy. We feel that this is an outrageous request and should be rejected.

Mr. Crowley has aroused a controversy and divisiveness of extraordinary magnitude in the Almaden community and it would be wholly inappropriate for the Councilmember to green-light an express-train vote on the proposal. Mr. Crowley has not shown any adverse effects of staying with the 5-year rule. The writers of Policy 7-5 put 5 years in there for a legitimate and time-tested reason, and we believe that the stakes here are high and that it should not be disregarded.

#### 4. Precedent: Proposed renaming of Library for Doris Dillon in 2004

In 2004 a proposal was made to rename the Library for Doris Dillon, a well-known and widely respected educator in the Almaden area. After review, the Library retained its original name, but there is a classroom in the building that received the honor. We have a report from that time written by Mr. Bob Boydston, Past President of the Almaden Valley Community Association. A copy was provided the Councilmember Khamis and is worth reading.

The AVCA voted to oppose the renaming on grounds that a) it would diminish the identity and historical significance of the Almaden name, and b) there are many people in the Almaden Valley doing work of benefit to the community, and to single out one individual for an honor is to make a distinction that ignores the good work for the community done by others. We agree with this recommendation and with Mr. Boydston's words.

#### 5. Community Identity

Other than the Community Center, the Almaden Valley has no particular geographical or architectural feature to anchor community identity. The Center confirms community identity through its name. To raise one individual's name above the community's name presents the absurdity of that individual being more important than, and above, the community as a whole. Almaden's vitality derives from the efforts of the entire community, not any one individual.

#### 6. Discussion of Alternatives

In this meeting, and in previous discussions with Mr. Crowley, we raised the possibility of alternate means of honoring Ms. Dando. There are opportunities available at the Center and I want to mention just a few.

- First, there is the Wall of Fame, located to the left side of the lobby along the hallway. There are already some plaques honoring early donors and supporters of the Center. The Almaden Senior Association is already considering expanding and upgrading this area in content and style. An attractive plaque, perhaps in bronze, could be made containing Ms. Dando's photograph and some content memorializing her accomplishments.
- Second, we could propose naming the Community Room on the first floor to honor Ms. Dando. The Community Room is the focus of activity at the Center, and naming this room for her would be consistent with her involvement with the community as a whole.
- Third, there is a rather large outdoor patio area between buildings which could be upgraded and named for her. A handsome bronze plaque could be installed, perhaps embedded in a stone monument.
- Fourth, there could be installed on the outside front of the building, near the door, a memorial plaque together with a declaration that the building is dedicated to her memory.

The Senior Association has expressed interest to Mr. Crowley in supporting these options. There are certainly variations to these suggestions, or other alternatives, and the decision would probably depend on cost. However, none of the above options would require action by Council.

**Summary and Conclusion**

We believe we have stated good, solid reasons to rule out renaming the Center. We believe there is room and opportunity to negotiate a solution agreeable to everyone, and we have presented several possible alternatives. We believe the level of divisiveness and controversy currently in play mandates absolutely no waiver or exception to the 5-year rule. We believe the Almaden community at large supports retaining the status quo name for the Center.

Respectfully submitted,

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January 21, 2018