

Make the Most of Your Opinion

The “Star” must be applauded for printing the opinions of this community. As a public agency, these comments are particularly important to the PSJRA. What is often missing, however, is the in-between step of dialogue—the exchange of ideas or opinions versus the appearance of unilateral decision-making.

Benjamin Disraeli: “As a general rule, the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information.” As a public agency, the PSJRA will be most successful by having the best information, and that includes the ongoing contributions of your opinions. However, they must be timely to include them in the larger processes.

For example, a resident and business owner came to my office during the Reid-Avenue project to express his concerns. He also calls me on a regular basis to note things we may wish to address. He has my respect for engaging in the dialogue, and he indeed has influence on the processes of the PSJRA. Clearly, his motivation is to influence.

As a counter-example (10/4 LTE), a concerned citizen expressed her dismay at the removal of the palm trees at Reid Avenue. We certainly respect her opinion. However, she inferred that this was somehow done in secret with “Do you know—they were removed at night?” In fact, the PSJRA paid a premium to have the work done during non-business hours to reduce the negative impact on the active businesses. She also referenced the “stupidity” of leaving them in the “hot sun to die.” In fact, GCPS, the company who was awarded the contract, had continuous drip irrigation on those roots and changed to sprinklers to make it clearly visible to the public that the trees were being tended. Those trees now grace the landscape of Buck Griffin Lake. How simple would a phone call (in lieu of a printed complaint) have been to ask questions and express concerns, one should think, specifically to influence the outcome? A specific comment directed at the body which could actually influence the outcome would go much further (to influence) than generalized, however well-meaning, comments after the fact.

I should hope that we would want to influence the outcome of any particular process. On the other side, we might only want to complain or showcase our opinion. Do we want to influence collectively or simply be heard individually?

Abraham Lincoln stated, “I don’t like that man. I must get to know him better.” Let’s expand that to “I don’t like that idea; I must understand more about it.” Voltaire said, “Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.” Please bring us your questions; involve yourself in the process and make the most of true influence. We all understand that “There is wisdom in the council of many,” and we continue to encourage each of you to involve yourself in our processes.

The PSJRA is a public agency. We are a small town, and each voice will be heard. But you have but to engage in the process when your influence is greatest—upfront, at the planning stage. Your ability to individually influence lessens as the collective process continues and is virtually gone by implementation.

Let’s identify with, affirm, and indeed become ambassadors of this wonderful city. This attitude will attract the “best of the best” and will, at the end of the day, distinguish whether we are a people that “things just happen to” or whether we are a people that “make good things happen.” Otherwise, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”