

Spontaneous Combustion - Time for Recall

Citizens Supporting Police Call for Recall

Desert Hot Springs, CA – Citizens showing support for all police officers and officer Paul Tapia with a five day rally are also demanding recall of Mayor Parks and Councilman Matas as well as replacement of City Manager Rick Daniels, City Attorney Rubin Duran and Finance Director Jason Simpson.

After officer Paul Tapia was informed of his imminent suspension or possibility of termination, citizens organized grass roots support, taking to the streets armed with a determination to achieve justice and victory.

Tapia is also the president of the police officers association and locked horns with Daniels over a Christmas toy give away to disadvantaged children.

All three television network affiliate news crews and the daily newspaper covered the rally. Officer Tapia also came under fire from Daniels during recent negotiations for a new police contract.

Spontaneous and nearly universal support was apparent from hundreds of well-wishers driving by and honking horns in noisy support. Also noticeable was considerable support by members of the local fire department.

A Christmas toy give-away sponsored by the police officers association and members of the fire department was tormented by Daniels who refused use of the Senior Center for the event.

“I am not a grinch,” said Daniels in explaining his decision denying use of the Senior Center, a facility that was never a problem in past events.

“The only reason Daniels kicked them out of the Senior Center is because Daniels is out of touch with the community,” said one of the protesters. “He gets paid more than a quarter million dollars for this.”

Tapia found another venue thanks to Mike Bickford, owner of the Miracle Springs Hotel, offering his facilities for the Christmas event. Mayor Parks, who has been outspoken in her criticism of Bickford and outspoken in her supporting of Daniels, is specifically targeted by the protesters as a problem maker not a problem solver.

Protesters explained they are also demanding a recall of Matas who votes in lockstep with Parks. Simpson remains under fire for hiring his friends and business associates from the city of Temecula, where he lives, instead of following city purchasing and personnel policies and supporting local area businesses. Daniels is a target for replacement as the city has lost millions due to his decisions which have resulted in Duran pocketing hundreds of thousands of dollars in extra legal fees.

Seeming unusually pleased to see the public protesting in support of police officers and Tapia while calling for her recall, Mayor Parks dropped by and warmly greeted protesters saying “I’m happy to see democracy in action.”

Mayor Parks, councilman Matas and city attorney Duran have been lumped together with Daniels as “The Gang of Four” by protestors viewing them as obstructionists with selfish motives, enriching themselves and their cronies.

“The Gang at City Hall is only preserving their own selfish interests,” said another protester. “Attacking Tapia as a way to punish him because he is the president of the police officers association and is a stand-up guy for negotiating a new contract. Of course they don’t like that. Parks and Matas don’t like people making waves. It’s obvious. Tapia is a good guy so, of course, they are going after him.”



Problems between the Gang of Four and officer Tapia have been increasing as the police officers association has been unsuccessful in achieving promotions of rank and file officers within the force. According to Tapia, discrimination against rank and file officers is not only illegal but insulting to good officers with academic qualifications and experience.

The very next day after reaching an agreement with the police officers association the city notified Tapia of his potential penalty of suspension or termination.

“One person equals 300 people who haven’t spoken up” seemed to be the mantra repeated by the protesters who vowed not to give up until changes are made for the better.

The public is invited to join public protesters Sunday, Feb 5; 10:00 pm to 2:00 pm at the corner of Palm Dr. and Pierson Blvd.; Monday, Feb 6; 7-9:00pm Starbucks on Palm Dr. Also Monday, 10:00 pm to 1:00 pm corner of West Drive and Pierson Blvd. Tuesday protests start at 7:00 pm on the same corner of West Drive and Pierson Blvd and will continue until the Tapia hearing is concluded.

Protesters interviews for this article asked to keep their names anonymous as they expressed fear of retribution.



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Publisher and one of the writers for the Desert Star Weekly, the California desert's #1 and only alternative independent weekly newspaper. Dean started in the newspaper business at age nine, delivering the weekly Shopping News in Long Beach, California. He wrote, published and sold ads for his first independent newspapers in 1969 while in high school and has been writing ever since. Art Kunkin, then publisher of the LA Free Press and now of Joshua Tree, was then and remains now his inspiration and a weekly columnist in the Star. While Dean's "cactus thorns" can be sharp and pointed, he has a passion for art, music, good food and healthy living. See www.desertstarweekly.com/who-we-are for more.

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