

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

One Man's Opinion

By Gerry Chong

My wife and I are honored to be close friends with a family of heroes right here in El Segundo. One son is on active duty with the Navy, and the other with the Marines. Both men enlisted during a shooting war, knowing that they would probably be called upon to put their lives at risk. Yet, both are eager to do their duty in protecting us all. To say they are courageous and patriotic is a gross understatement.

In reflecting on these men, one cannot help but think about the approximately 100,000 U. S. and NATO forces currently fighting in Afghanistan. The war goes on for them every day, yet when their military leaders asked the President for the additional forces needed to win the war, he temporizes.....as the killing goes on. What must be on the minds of the forces on the ground? As the fighters make the ultimate commitment, the question must be asked as to whether or not the Administration has a similar commitment to the goals it had set out itself just six months ago, on March 27. Then President Obama identified Afghanistan as a war of necessity, and one needed to defeat the terrorists that brought us 9/11, but today he is weighing the politics of his Party against the unanimous advice of the nation's military leadership. For many people, anything less than a full-throated support of the troops would be viewed as a tactical withdrawal as a prelude to ultimate defeat. Such a result would stain his presidency and be a shameful part of our history forever.

Liberals have always derided Conservatives as being "values driven" as opposed to their

"clear eyed vision of reality." This question of whether or not to support the troops, who have supported the President with their very lives, is a "values" question. For the Liberals, they are tired of the war. Win or lose, they want "out." Which are you?

That reminds me of something that has been circulating on the internet, describing the differences between a Conservative and a Liberal:

If a Conservative doesn't like guns, he doesn't buy one. If a Liberal doesn't like guns, then no one should have one.

If a Conservative is a vegetarian, he doesn't eat meat. If a Liberal is a vegetarian, he wants to ban all meat products for everyone.

If a Conservative sees a foreign threat, he thinks about how to defeat the enemy. A Liberal wonders how to surrender gracefully and still look good.

If a Conservative is a homosexual, he quietly enjoys his life. If a Liberal is homosexual he loudly demands legislated respect.

If a Conservative is down-and-out he worries about how to better his position. A Liberal wonders which government program will take care of him.

If a Conservative doesn't like a talk show host, he changes the channel. Liberals demand that those they don't like be banned.

If a Conservative is a non-believer, he doesn't go to church. A non-believing Liberal wants to ban all mention of religion.

If a Conservative decides he needs health insurance, he shops for it or chooses a job that provides it. A Liberal demands that his neighbors provide it for him. •

Aerospace and SMC Celebrate 50 Years of Partnership

The official grand opening of the A9 pedestrian bridge that links The Aerospace Corporation and the Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC) was celebrated Tuesday, Sept. 29, with colorful military tradition.

Aerospace senior management and SMC officials greeted U.S. Congresswoman Jane Harman, 36th District, El Segundo Mayor Kelly McDowell, numerous space industry executives, and many other distinguished guests to the well-attended ribbon cutting ceremony.

While the City of El Segundo identified the bridge as the gateway to space, the corporation and SMC acknowledged it as a symbolic link that permanently connects partners who will soon embark on a celebration marking a half-century long relationship.

"As we are about to embark on our 50th anniversary, our space partnership is stronger than ever," said Dr. Wanda Austin, president and chief executive officer. "This partnership has allowed our scientists and engineers to work on some of the greatest technological advancements in history.

"It has also brought together space visionary leaders like Gen. Bernard Schriever and Dr. Ivan Gettling," she added. "Our focus then and now is on assuring space mission success."

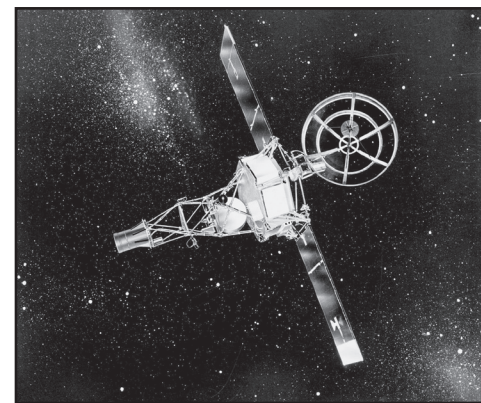
Lt. Gen. John "Tom" Sheridan, commander, SMC, stressed that the partnership between the City of El Segundo, SMC, and The Aero-

space Corporation is a permanent one due to the installation of the new pedestrian bridge, and he thanked all of the team members for their joint effort.

El Segundo Mayor Kelly McDowell introduced Congresswoman Jane Harman who said that the synergy between The Aerospace Corporation, SMC, and nearby industry is more important than ever.

She discussed what she calls the "gray wave" washing over the Aerospace industry and the competitive appeal of high tech titans like Google and Microsoft to the next generation of scientists and engineers.

Harman asked for the scientists and engineers in the audience to be willing to become ambassadors for their craft and to share their passion for their work to the next generation. •



City Council

from front page

the maximum permitted level of 0.80 up to 0.92. However, Cambria's more compact design would mean decreased building mass and fewer car trips--points that resonated well with each of the Council members.

To perhaps offset the additional FAR, the applicant is willing to build a LEED certified hotel to make Cambria a green building, and to put aside \$75,000 for public art displays.

In a report, the applicant argued that the new concept would be a better fit for El Segundo's business travel-oriented market, while also noting that Aloft's recent track record showed that brand has been underperforming in other locations. According to a five-year fiscal analysis submitted by the applicant and compared to previous projections made for Aloft, the Cambria project would generate more bed tax revenues for the City because of the increase in room size and higher room rates.

Though in favor of the changeover to Cambria, Mayor Kelly McDowell asked for an increased community benefits package in which applicant monies could be used for downtown El Segundo and the aquatics fund.

With Tuesday's decision not to deny the initial request, the developer is expected to complete a full application for processing. If there are no hitches in the proceedings, Cambria Suites could begin construction in March with a projected opening date in May 2011.

One More Tweak to Filming Ordinance

The Council agreed to add another revision to the ever-evolving local filming ordinance, which will be up for final approval in the coming months. The amendment increases maximum allowable filming days to 80 per year in industrial and commercial zones that are not within 275 feet of any residential properties--and are east of Sepulveda Boulevard and south of El Segundo Boulevard. Under the last set of changes discussed two

weeks prior, the ordinance would have still limited filming at such locations to 25 days annually unless it is considered "no impact filming."

Councilmember Bill Fisher initially sought to set no limits on filming days in any commercial/industrial areas 275 or further away from residences, but Councilmember Carl Jacobson was uncomfortable with an open-ended arrangement and suggested the 80-day maximum as well as the more specific geographical guidelines.

Under the new scenario, commercial and industrial properties in these areas would still be able to protest filming according to standards already prescribed: For low impact filming, more than 50 percent protest shuts down production. Only one protest is enough to stop filming if a street closure is required. If more than 10 percent of properties located within 275 feet of the filming site protest, that is enough to shut down production in situations that aren't low or no impact.

Extra COPS Grant Monies

Local law enforcement officials are getting an unexpected windfall. Though originally anticipating only \$25,000 in 2009/10 Citizens for Public Safety (COPS) block grant monies before the City's budget was adopted last month, staff recently learned that two additional payments in \$25,000 increments had actually been deposited the previous fiscal year. On top of that, the grant administrator said the City should be awarded another \$25,000 for a grand total of \$100,000. In past years, the City has received \$75,000.

COPS grant monies must be used to "supplement law enforcement activities." In the past, the funds helped purchase equipment used in "front line law enforcement," including new handguns for all officers, less-than-lethal shotguns, tasers, DUI enforcement and mobile data computers.

For 2009/10, staff recommended utilizing

the monies to replace/upgrade the station video monitoring and recording system, purchase a PIPS Automated License Plate Recognition System, provide overtime funding for special enforcement details, and subsidized overtime costs associated with training recruit police officers. On Tuesday, the Council gave the go-ahead to use the extra funds to purchase the recommended items.

Bed Tax to Stay Put

Due to a tough economy that has seen local hotel revenues drop 20 percent or more and room rates fall to their lowest levels in many years, the Council agreed not to move forward with a proposed two percent transient occupancy tax (TOT, or bed tax) rate hike. Thoughts of such an increase came about during summer budget talks as staff looked to identify potential revenue generators for the City. It was suggested that a one percent bed tax rate raise could yield as much as \$500,000 in additional annual revenues.

During public communications, several local hotel representatives detailed the negative impacts of the recession on their facilities. "An increase in transient occupancy tax will kill us," said Hacienda Hotel general manager Joe Harding, who announced that published room rates at his hotel today are less than those of 1983.

Though he introduced the item, Mayor Pro Tem Eric Busch's actual intent was to persuade his colleagues not to pursue the matter. He noted that while hotel operators were more receptive about a bed tax increase four years ago, that their tune has changed dramatically. "It is entirely the wrong time to do this," he said, pointing to the difficult economy and erosion of room rates.

El Segundo set its current TOT rate of eight percent in April 1996, lowering it from the prior 10 percent. A survey of over 450 California cities showed that the median bed tax rate is 10 percent, while slightly higher (12 percent) for surrounding beach cities.

Council Meetings on Election Days?

According to current code, if there is a

non-municipal election on the same day as a Council meeting, the latter event moves to the following evening. Councilmember Carl Jacobson wants this policy to change so that Council meetings can still take place on those Tuesdays. A main consideration for the request: Jacobson often must attend other meetings for the City on Wednesday nights, creating a time conflict. He also argued that City business is equally important to election matters.

There were mixed opinions on the Council on the issue, with Busch and Fisher adamant about keeping current policy as is. "Election days are for the election, and that is the main function of government," said Busch.

Though usually out campaigning until just before the polls close on most election days, Councilmember Don Brann said he was still willing to support Jacobson's motion in honor of the latter's commitment to the community. Mayor McDowell suggested that staff could keep the agenda on election Tuesdays especially light and perhaps also cancel or delay closed session meetings. The item will return to the Council on November 14 for potential adoption.

Water Conservation Moving Forward

In passing a new water conservation ordinance (discussed in two previous meetings), the Council opted not to adopt resident and Tree Musketeer executive director Gail Church's suggestion on Tuesday to limit landscape watering to 15 minutes per station per week.

Though Mayor Pro Tem Busch felt that degree of conservation was something to aspire to eventually, he thought the current guideline of 15 minutes per station per day was a good enough starting place. His colleagues agreed.

Meant to encourage voluntary compliance, the new ordinance, among other provisions, will also limit watering to the hours between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., require leaks to be fixed within 48 hours, and prohibit use of a running hose for car washing. •