

# LAKE SIDE NEWS

## Community Watchdog



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### Let's jerk the people around— One More Time

It is too bad that our City is not more affluent but I can't help but believe that part of the problem is caused by its own decisions. Take for example, the Senior Center. To give that away for \$1,000 a year does not make any business sense. They could have rented it at fair market rate and those proceeds could have been used towards a trolley for the elderly, disabled and those of meager means. They leased away our landfill for \$1,000 a month that had been closed for 15 years at a cost to us then of over \$2 million dollars. Now this company is dumping who knows what. Are we suppose to believe surface soil tests as conclusive as to what has been dumped and covered up there? And why make that decision when we were preparing it for development. 65 acres must be worth a lot of money. Not now. To build on it now, the houses must be on stilts! And just think of the little kids rolling around on top of all that (ugh) stuff . And now they have caused billboard blight.

Last June the Commission on a 3 to 2 vote (the usual suspects—Lowe, Clemens & Vespo) (remember those names!) voted to allow 110 foot high billboards to be erected along our city property bordering I-95. The Commission knew that this would affect residential neighborhoods, just not their neighborhoods. Even the Mayor said there was "concern about eye-pollution and the location of the billboard signs." Did this stop them? The billboard sign company had threatened to sue the city and presented the City with a "settlement agreement" before a suit was even filed. We have a sign ordinance and this Commission was intimidated by the threat of legal action where other cities have won this very same sort of case. It is just easier, I suppose, to give in to blight and eye pollution when you will make a few bucks out of it. Yes, the City stays out of these kind of legal actions. They don't fight them because it is always easier to fight the people whose pockets are not as deep. And this company knew that. "Let's jerk that little town around," they said.

Bob Baldwin, who was only the Interim City Manager at that time and now is our full-fledged City Manager, said it was a better deal to accept this "settlement offer and take the money up-front." Mayor Clemens supported it. Vice Mayor Lowe, although voting against this in the past, now voted to allow billboards. Commissioner Lowe never lets us down for many bad decisions in her District. The City Attorney piped in and said that the billboard company would even



### One view from my LR window BILLBOARD BLIGHT

pay the attorney fees. Such a deal. There was not even a law suit at this point. And the nerve of Interstate Outdoor Advertising. Are they the Mafia, or what?

Commissioner Jennings said that billboards were "obnoxious." Mayor Clemens wanted the money from the signs to be allocated towards the NEW City Hall that Commissioner Vespo sees in his dreams, and said if it was not allocated, it would be whittled away on other uses. They can't trust themselves. Don't blame them there.

Mayor, can you see these billboards from where you live in College Park? Commissioner Lowe, can you see them from 12 Avenue South. Commissioner Vespo, can you see them from S. Palmway? I think not. Now all of us who live in the western (forgotten) community at Lake Osborne Drive, Griswold, Wright and Virginia Drives as well as the streets across the Lake and on the East side of I-95 at various angles for a block or so, will be viewing this for 15 years or more. One was installed right at the foot of what has been a beautiful, unblighted, residential neighborhood. You continue to help destroy our neighborhood with the decisions you have made. "Let's jerk the people around again," you said.

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