

## LA JOLLA LIGHT

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# Technology and open discussion can increase participation, diversity in community meetings

BY SHERRY NOORAVI, PH.D.  
Principal, Strategy Meets Performance

I am writing in response to the article "La Jolla Town Council considers it's purpose, Identity" in the June 19 *La Jolla Light*. First, I'd like to acknowledge the members of this group for their efforts toward making our community a better place. I also acknowledge the courage they have to take a step back and review the content, structure and attendance of their meetings.



Sherry Nooravi

I do agree that having more community members present and creating an environment where issues can truly be debated in a respectful way can be engaging for the community (in any community group setting) while at the same time, help bring out the best potential in our town.

In my work as a business psychologist, one of the biggest challenges I see with senior teams of companies is a discomfort to engage in the important debates that will help shape the company's future. Often times, leaders do not speak up because they fear they will disrupt the

## GUEST COMMENTARY

group's harmony, while at the same time noting that, too frequently, there are "elephants in the room." On the polar extreme, leaders will debate so aggressively that it is hard to have any harmony. The ideal situation is to build an environment that encourages healthy debate while maintaining respect for one another, knowing that everyone wants the best for the organization.

Following are ideas that have been on my mind for a long time that may help better engage our community and encourage healthy dialogue:

**1) Use technology to create more diversity and participation.** An example of this is to have a live stream of the Town Council /LJCPA/ LJVMA meetings online with opportunities for viewers to weigh in, comment and vote on issues. I'm certain that one's absence at these meetings does not equate to a lack of interest in our community. I'm sure there are working parents, college students and professionals who would want to be involved.

In my case, my travel schedule prevents me from participating (although I stay up to date by reading my *La Jolla Light* from cover to cover). It would be great to be able to

participate without physically being present. Furthermore, too often only those who are opposed to a proposal take the time to show up while those in support do not. We are fortunate to live in a time where we have such great low-cost technology available to connect us. Let's use it.

**2) Create an environment for respectful, open discussion and debate.** Let's find a way to discuss the issues of our town openly. It is hard to debate an issue when one has just two minutes to speak. True dialogue requires input and exploration; open workshops on important community issues will engage the community in ways a "hearing" cannot. A methodology that can help with this is to create a forum and bring in a neutral facilitator when needed, to encourage an open discussion and examination of all the facets of the issue at hand.

It is an exciting time in our history that feels to me like a renaissance period with the improvements to our coastal parks, a new symphony hall, movie theater and plaza coming our way. It can be a great time to get creative on new ways to support our business community, our residents and our visitors.

I am happy to continue this conversation and offer my support toward efforts to bring our community closer together. Contact me at sherry@strategymeetsperformance.com ♦

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Mid-coast trolley project: Back to drawing board!

The current planned Mid-Coast Trolley is not the solution to transportation or traffic in the La Jolla area. The plan as it currently stand has many flaws including:

1. Damaging the aesthetics and beauty of the La Jolla/University City community. A maze of raised track detracts and does not add to the beauty of this community.
2. Egress in the community will be harmed with substantial congestion at the planned raised trolley stop at the La Jolla Village Square Mall.
3. Many homes located on the bluff west of I-5 hearing the trolley running all day long and into the night.
4. Traffic will be adversely affected along most of the area the elevated trolley is being constructed.
5. The project does not address or resolve the existing heavy traffic traveling through the area and the I-5/I-805 merge.
6. Project does not address or resolve people travelling from north, east or west of the corridor.
7. The project is not designed to go any further north where much of the current and future growth of traffic will be.

The proposed project will not have sufficient ridership and is not the solution. SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments) needs to go back to the drawing board and provide a solution that is driven by what is good for the overall community, economics, and is part of an integrated solution to solve the traffic problems in the I-5, I-805 and University City/La Jolla Corridor.

The plan or solution must address traffic

moving through the community. The existing COASTER needs to be an integral part of the plan. The solution should include addressing people north and east of the area. Perhaps a trolley line along the existing railroad tracks all the way to Del Mar, with a transportation hub at or around the Del Mar racetrack, with a large parking structure, would make more sense.

This would 1) get real current ridership, 2) get thousands of people off the freeway, 3) save hundreds of thousands of gallons of gas, and 4) partially solve some of the current I-5/I-805 freeway system congestion.

Trolley tracks more in line with the existing rail lines would be less intrusive in the community, more efficient and less costly. The current planned trolley has minuscule parking to get people off the roads and is not planned for easy walking access from homes or residences.

People of La Jolla, voice your concern to your elected representatives. Those opposed to a trolley stop at La Jolla Village Square mall can sign an online petition at [lajollapetition.com](http://lajollapetition.com)

David Atz  
LA JOLLA

### Parade committee has right to call it what they wish

Howard Singer's latest petty and meritless campaign to change the name of the traditional Christmas parade into something "neutral" is yet another example of an absurd exaggeration of political correctness.

Mr. Singer seemed content with the name when he was garnering votes for membership on the La Jolla Town Council, as evidenced by an article in the Aug. 18, 2011 *La Jolla Light*. When

questioned by a trustee regarding his prior activism in changing the parade name, he was quoted as saying, "You haven't heard a peep out of me in all the editorials, I don't care what it's called. Forget the name, that's ancient history." Thus, after making this deceitful statement he was granted a seat on the council. Tut, tut!

Diversity does not mean neutrality, which makes us all bland and blends us into one colorless unit. The name "Christmas" is no more "insensitive" (as called by Mr. Singer in a Letter to the Editor in the June 26 *La Jolla Light*) than Ramadan, Hanukkah or Kwanza. Strange that Mr. Singer, and the other name-change advocates have not tried to change the names of the "Gay Pride Parade," which specifically excludes heterosexuals or the "St. Patrick's Day Parade," which is specific to the Catholic religion.

Are these two parades too big for these "super sensitive" people to tackle? I would be happy to attend a Hanukkah Parade, the Diwali Festival, Winter Solstice or a Kwanza celebration and enjoy the diversity.

The La Jolla Christmas Parade is a joyful tradition and all are welcome. I hope this privately funded parade is not bullied into a name change by the Singer group. Organizers have every right to call the parade what they wish and not have to answer to anyone. Instead of picking on the Christmas Parade, which, in spite of the "insensitive" name has been an enormous success for more than 50 years, why doesn't Mr. Singer fund his own parade and label it simply, "A Generic Parade."

Mary Rayes  
LA JOLLA

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