

Editorial

Give nonprofits a discount, not a waiver

FOR CONSCIENTIOUS citizens and businesses, one of life's everyday dilemmas is choosing which of the county's hundreds of worthy nonprofits and charities deserve support.

It's also a major conundrum faced by local governments, which receive a constant stream of requests for contributions and donations.

At the federal level, where they spend money with no regard for the future or the taxpayers, and just print or borrow whatever they don't have, the problem doesn't exist. "Money for everybody," is the motto in Washington, especially if the person or group asking for it is a political supporter.

But the rest of us, including local governments, have limited amounts to spend and give away. Saying, "No," to someone whose cause is just as worthy as the person you just said, "Yes," to is hard. But you have no choice. It's impossible to say, "Yes," to everybody.

The city council ran into this problem last week when it made a \$14,930 grant of services to the Carmel Art Festival so it could take place this year, but told an event that raises money for homeless animals it would have to pony up the full \$400 fee to stage its small event at Carmel Beach.

But is the dog event less worthy of the city's support than the art festival? Hardly. In fact, it would have been just as logical for the city to make the opposite decision, granting a waiver to the dog event but not the art festival.

In fact, the reasons for granting the waiver to the art fest—that it brings people to town, has a positive economic impact, has a charitable component, and is "congruous with the city's history as an artist community"—could just as well apply to many of the galleries in town. Are they to be granted waivers from paying business license fees and sales taxes?

King Solomon may have been wise enough to make determinations like that, but we think a better course for the city council would be to decide which non-profit events are suitable for downtown, and then give all of them the same discount, say 20 or 25 percent, from the applicable fees.

Charities, after all, receive donations, but also pay for many things they need. There is no reason for taxpayers to be stuck with a big bill just because one charity or another doesn't have the public support it needs to function.

The city either needs to waive fees for everybody, or for nobody. The fairest thing is not to try to figure out whether dogs or artists are a more worthy group for taxpayer support, but to expect all charities to pay a significant portion of their own way. If they can't raise the money to do so, then they need to find a cause whose supporters are numerous enough to keep the charity afloat.

BEST of BATES



"Have you lived here all your life?"

"Not yet."

Letters to the Editor

The Pine Cone encourages submission of letters, which address issues of public importance. Letters cannot exceed 350 words, and must include the author's name, telephone number and street address. Please do not send us letters which have been submitted to other newspapers. We reserve the right to determine which letters are suitable for publication and to edit for length and clarity.

The Pine Cone only accepts letters to the editor by email. Please submit your letters to mail@carmelpinecone.com

'Mean-spirited attack'

Dear Editor,

I'm not sure if many of the retailers and realty organizations who support The Pine Cone read your editorials, but maybe it's time to help them understand how off-base your positions and ideas have become. Your attack on teachers' salaries is yet another example of your biased and mean-spirited approach to issues facing our county.

By any measure our schools are fair to good (last I looked, the U.S. rated midway in public school quality amongst the industrialized world, and California was quite far down the list of the 50 states). There are many issues that account for this less-than-stellar performance, but one for sure is the level of pay. A college graduate with a teaching credential is offered here in Monterey a \$40K starting salary. A very large component of California college grads are offered \$60K or more. In a decade or more a teacher

might climb all the way to \$80K while your fellow grads earn twice that amount.

And the best of the grads look at compensation levels that are truly out of sight. For many companies the top salary used to be no more than 40 times the lowest salary in the firm. In just 30 years that ratio has grown to nearly 400 times. So an office assistant at a California corporation making \$50K sees the "boss" making \$20 million. And in the financial sector it's still greater. And here you are having us focus on the modest salaries of our dedicated Monterey school teachers. And slamming them personally in the process. Shame on you!

Peter Nosler, Carmel

Editor's note: After receiving the above letter, we pointed out to Mr. Nosler that in our March 29 news story about salaries in the Pacific Grove Unified School District and our April 5 editorial asserting the importance of reporting those salaries, we never stated, or even implied, that those salaries were too high. We left it to the reader to judge whether they were too high, too low, or just right. In response, Mr. Nosler submitted the this reply:

Who's kidding who here? If you really want your readership to know what school teachers are being paid, then tell the story. I don't have the time to research it, but I believe the median salary for some 180 Monterey school teachers is under \$50K. Yes, some are making twice that. Yet you only tell about the top 10 in an obvious effort to build on your longstanding position

See LETTERS next page

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