

Mid-life crisis or end game?

SC/SCW Presidents Council struggles to reinvent itself

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DAILY NEWS-SUN

To lobby or not to lobby, that is the question that may tear apart a Northwest Valley leaders' organization.

The Sun City/Sun City West Presidents Council — which despite its name includes a host of organizations from throughout the Northwest Valley — is wrangling with the possibility of changing its focus from communicating to lobbying.

"Anything that smacks of politics leaves us out," said Charles Frankel, chairman of the Sun City West Fire District. "I've been a member of the Presidents Council since

1991... I see it's changing, and that may force me to resign."

Changing to a lobbying organization would mean many of the council's more than 30 member organizations might have to quit because their 501(c)3 status prevents them from participating in political activities. According to the Internal Revenue Service, 501(c)3 organizations "may not engage in carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities."

There are a few exceptions,

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but some Presidents Council members attending a Friday meeting to discuss a possible mission statement didn't believe lobbying should even be considered.

"When you mention lobbying, that completely turns me off," said Dorothy Hirtzel, Recreation Centers of Sun City president.

A schism appeared to be developing between service-type organizations and quasi-governmental organizations on the council, with the former wanting — or being required — to maintain the communication mission, and the latter hoping for a more aggressive approach.

The split was apparent in two differing motions presented to the council by members of a committee formed at the last meeting to draft a mission statement. The committee is comprised of Randy Fuller, Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association president; Esther Marie Capps, Coyote Lakes Community Association president; and Fred Berkenkamp, Sun City

West Community Fund president.

"It appears the committee of three is sort of split on what the mission should say," Fuller said.

One motion, offered by Capps and supported by Fuller, sought to table all discussion of a mission statement until after a May 23 meeting at which the possible formation of a homeowners association lobbying group would be discussed. The Presidents Council is not associated with that meeting, and in fact has scheduled its own meeting for the same day. Capps said the results of the HOA lobbying-group meeting could directly affect the Presidents Council's mission, which is why she wanted to delay that discussion.

Capps' motion would have prevented Berkenkamp from presenting his own motion on a possible mission statement, so she agreed to withdraw hers so his could be discussed. Berkenkamp said his proposal, which he termed a "minority report," was designed to make "continuation of unity a possibility." His motion asked all council

members to poll their individual organizations on their top two of the following three alternatives:

- Continue the council as an information and ideas exchange.

- Remain a single council, but become a full-fledged Northwest Valley-wide lobbying organization with an unlimited scope of issues and bylaws requiring funding support from all members.

- Split into two independent councils, one comprised of HOAs, recreation centers and other quasi-governmental groups operating as a Northwest Valley lobbying organization funded by members, and one comprised of 501(c)3 charitable and service organizations that would continue exchanging information and ideas.

Berkenkamp's proposal also requested the council members relay their groups' preferences as soon as the May meeting.

Berkenkamp said after the meeting that he believes lobbying has its place, but the council isn't the correct forum.

"Should some of the others

lobby? Of course," he said of the council's quasi-governmental members. "I'm all for lobbying if it's professionally done."

Berkenkamp's motion passed 13-2, with Fuller and Sun City Home Owners Association President Floyd Brown abstaining. Fuller and Brown are co-chairmen of the council.

Capps voted in favor of the motion, saying she might want to bring hers up for reconsideration in the future; only individuals voting with the majority can ask for reconsideration.

The Presidents Council also was slated to discuss the formation of bylaws and the possibility of establishing an annual election, but both were set aside until the mission statement could be resolved.

Fuller said the group might want to consider a name change: "We certainly don't want it to be known as the Sun City-Sun City West Presidents Council anymore."

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End of the line?

Council of Service Clubs
delays vote to disband;
will take up in February

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Like a boxer staggering to remain in a fight, the Council of Service Clubs of The Sun Cities Area took an eight-count last week but managed to fend off a knockout blow.

Action was tabled until the organization's February meeting on a proposal to disband after more than a dozen years of service to the Sun Cities.

Diminishing participation in the Council resulted in President Ablett H. Flury Jr. to recommend abolishing the organization, effective June 30. "It is a situation that has been building year after year after year," Mr. Flury said.

"The feeling is there is so little interest in maintaining the Council of Service Clubs, why do we keep it going?" Mr. Flury asked rhetorically. That feeling of disinterest was magnified by the lack of attendance at last week's meeting. Only 10 of 29 area service clubs, plus the Lions Foundation, were represented at the session.

Dissolution of the council would likely jeopardize the future of the seven roadside signs that herald visitors into Sun City and inform them of the area's service clubs.

Maintenance of those signs is one of the more highly visible functions performed by the Council of Service Clubs.

In addition, the Council also has provided a forum for the member clubs to discuss their activities, and maintains listings in the Sun Cities directories of club meeting times and locations.

"I really don't want to see the (roadside) signs die," Mr. Flury said.

That sentiment was echoed by Jerry Allen, one of two representatives of the Lions Foundation.

"We (Lions Foundation) are not interested in seeing those signs disappear. We have discussed taking over the maintenance of the signs. We have the financial wherewithal to maintain them," Mr. Allen said.

"I would hate to see this organization die," said Alex Post, another of the Lions Foundation representatives.

Participation and interest has been waning for several years, according to Mr. Flury.

"This organization is bankrupt in spirit," Mr. Allen observed.

"It's very disheartening," Mr. Flury said. "Here are service clubs that are active in the community, yet they can't seem to take care of their own business."

Mr. Flury explained that he sent certified letters to all the participating service clubs in

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December but response was not encouraging. "We received eight answers initially and two more have come in since," Mr. Flury said.

As of Jan. 20, only 10 of 29 members service clubs had paid 1998 dues.

The council generates funds by assessing member clubs dues of 50 cents per year, per member, Mr. Flury noted. "It amounts to about \$25 to \$30 per club." Up until a couple of years ago, the organization also staged a golf tournament as a fund-raiser.

An article concerning the Council's plight appeared in the Jan. 14-20 issue of the *Independent*.

Mr. Flury was asked if there had been any response to the article. "I think it shook up one Rotary club and the Altrus International," he responded. Both clubs submitted 1998 dues after the article appeared.

"I did get one phone call the morning after the article appeared," he continued. "The woman was the president of a bicycle club and she wanted to know if they could join. But they are ineligible (since they

are not a service club)."

Mr. Allen said the article and registered letter generated a great deal of discussion in a recent Lions Foundation meeting which resulted, in the Foundation decision it would be interested in maintaining the roadside signs.

The Council will next meet 2 p.m. Feb. 17 at the Lions Community Service Building, 9451 N. 99th Ave., Peoria, to discuss the organization's future. Those interested in preserving the Council are urged to attend.