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JAMES ARMSTRONG



Fullerton, California

As we mentioned on the “History of Cuts” page, current Santa Barbara City Administrator James Armstrong was hired as Santa Barbara’s CEO after having worked as the City Manager in Fullerton, California, for 9 years. The POA has spoken to Police Officers who worked for the Fullerton Police Department at the time Armstrong was CEO for that City. These Fullerton Officers expressed strong opinions about the terrible condition Armstrong left Fullerton PD in upon his move to Santa Barbara. As they described what Armstrong had done to them we recognized that he has been doing the same thing to Santa Barbara’s law enforcement while being employed here. They told us that they experienced a significant drop in their levels of service, due to Armstrong, and stated that, “it took us years to recover” after Armstrong left Fullerton.

The damage to police service doesn't appear to be the only destructive action Armstrong imposed on Fullerton during his tenure there. An organization called "Friends for Fullerton's Future", who tout themselves as Fullerton's Government watch dogs, have documented some of Armstrong's dealings in the City of Fullerton during his tenure there and are particularly critical of his involvement in, what they describe to be, a utility tax debacle that appears to have been a brain child of Armstrong's but which resulted in the recall of three Council Persons Armstrong appears to have convinced to "impose" said tax on the taxpayers. The quadruple "F" also reports of their vehement disagreements with Armstrong's running of the Fullerton RDRC (Redevelopment Design Review Committee).

The below link titled, "James L Armstrong a Case Study in Arrogance" discusses the "Friends of Fullerton's" views of Armstrong's "service" to the Fullerton community.

http://www.fullertonsfuture.org/2009/a-little-f-town-history-james-l-armstrong-a-case-study-in-arrogance/?utm_source=stf

The below link discusses Fullerton's RDRC's ill-fated efforts under Armstrong's leadership.

<http://www.fullertonsfuture.org/category/fullerton-design-standards/page/2/>

The Friends of Fullerton has the below picture posted on their site – they report that this is a picture of Armstrong doing what he did best in Fullerton ... they report that the pile, that is being shoveled by Armstrong, is manure.



Upon analysis of Armstrong's history of leading the City of Fullerton, the SBPOA recognizes many similarities to what he has been doing here in Santa Barbara for the past 9 years to what he did to the City of Fullerton. His decisions to use SB RDA money for "bulbouts" mimics the nature of what he did to the City of Fullerton's RDRC. His support for unnecessary tax increases in Fullerton, to stave off estimated, guessed at or divined

fictional budget deficits mimics what he has done in Santa Barbara on profound levels.

Santa Barbara

We must first point out that, before Armstrong arrived in “Paradise” we were getting along fine without him. Police service was being delivered to citizens by hard working Police Department employees and Santa Barbara had no money problems. Suddenly, upon Armstrong’s arrival, there appeared with him an almost instant, and non-stop, crisis necessitating the gutting of the police force, significant degradation of police services to the citizens, and Santa Barbara had, as reported by Armstrong, massive money problems.

In Santa Barbara, Armstrong has been an ardent proponent of tax increases, fee increases, fine increases, and the like. This onslaught of removal of additional money from citizen’s pockets was all accomplished by Armstrong under the auspice that the City has incessantly, for his entire 9 year tenure, been experiencing profound revenue problems. These money lamentations can be found in his Budget messages but Santa Barbara CAFRs (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report) give a completely different picture as to Santa Barbara’s *REAL* financial condition.

The CAFR is the document that can be used to see how the City ACTUALLY sits financially, while the “Budget” document is Armstrong’s prognostications about the state of the City’s finances. Armstrong supervises the production of the Budget document nearly a year before the fiscal year begins thus his Budget document’s lamentations about the City’s financial health are derived from mere monetary estimates. While Armstrong has incessantly bemoaned Santa Barbara’s financial situation in his 9 years worth of Budget documents, Santa Barbara’s CAFRs have demonstrated that it has been making millions upon millions upon millions of dollars each year – yet Armstrong has said that he had to gut the Police Department because of money problems and had to incessantly tax, fine, and charge the citizens at an exponentially increasing rate due to said money problems.

While government should always be fiscally responsible it is important that this responsibility be kept in the context of government’s number one priority, providing essential services to the community it serves. Law Enforcement services are one of the most critical components of the essential services. Armstrong reported in his 2004 budget message that he was abandoning a service oriented budgeting philosophy and moving to a “revenue targets” philosophy. This change initiated the massive elimination of Police Department positions leading to a significant loss of police service to the tax payer. Armstrong’s focus on making money, verses providing an essential service to the community, has demonstrated the utter failure of his municipal budgeting philosophy – a failure which occurred in Fullerton and which has also manifested itself here in Santa Barbara.

During the course of the past few months many people have asked the POA our opinion as to why Armstrong has abandoned their safety in order to generate revenue. We are unable to answer this question – it would require psychic power to delve into the intentions behind the man. What we can say is that it is tragically unfortunate that Armstrong has failed to use his considerable budgeting prowess, which enabled him to manipulate City funds in such a way as to create a facade that appeared to necessitate the elimination of something so vitally important as police service, for the benefit of achieving his personal priorities.

Based on the POA’s considerable analysis, and evidence collection in this matter, we are convinced that there has been no, and that there currently is not, any “fiscal crisis” in Santa Barbara – particularly not one necessitating the damage to the Police Department that Armstrong’s actions have caused. It is our opinion, based on this investigation, that James Armstrong has forsaken HIS profound responsibility to protect and serve the

community he works for.

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