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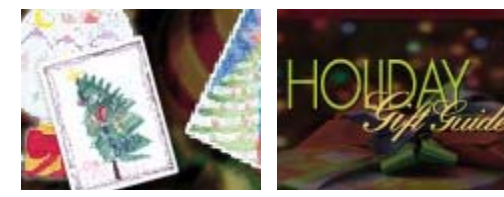
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NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR: Councilman makes headlines

• The addition of David Gordon to the Burbank City Council dais has kept the community's business in the forefront of news.

By Chris Wiebe

Burbank optometrist Dr. David Gordon's election to the City Council in the wake of the Stacey Murphy scandal signaled to many the emergence of a new era of local Burbank politics.

A councilman-elect whose unapologetic criticism of Bob Hope Airport expansion and overzealous land development — what his campaign derided as the "Los Angelization of Burbank" — made him a clear antidote to a City Council that Gordon supporters complained had become a rubber stamp.

After beating out council veteran Bill Wiggins with 37% of the vote, Gordon made good on pledges to fight for the public's access to information, scrutinizing meeting agenda items that would not likely have drawn much attention had Gordon not been on the council. Familiar refrains like "Has the public been made aware of this?" and "Has the public had a chance to comment?" often sounded in City Council Chambers.

"The council had not been used to someone questioning the decision-making

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LOS ANGELES TIMES

process," Gordon said. "It very often appeared that decisions had been made ahead of time. And I was very interested in having a public discussion and maximizing the public's involvement in the process."

But Gordon's persistence visibly irked other members of the council, some who say his questioning does more harm than good. "He's working to find or create issues that don't exist," said Councilman Dave Golonski, who has often butted heads with Gordon at council meetings.

"And it's a shame, because as a council person there's a lot of good things that you can be working toward and supporting."

But Gordon supporters say that his tenure on the council, which is approaching one full year, has brought closer scrutiny to city business and that, so far, his record reflects concrete strides in responsible city policy.

"With David Gordon on the Burbank City Council, we have again returned to actually discussing things as opposed to simply racing through them without thought and approving them," said Burbank resident David Piroli, a frequent council meeting attendee. "We used to be that way back in 1995 or so, but over the last several years it's really gone the direction of 'Don't discuss it, just approve it.'"

As a councilman, Gordon called for drug testing of council members in order to restore "trust and confidence" in city leaders after Murphy's resignation due to drug charges.

In accordance with stated campaign goals to curb overdevelopment in Burbank, he brought before the council plans for a 15-unit, multi-family housing project on Omer Lane, arguing that increased density in the Omer cul-de-sac would result in hazardous traffic patterns. The council ultimately sided with Gordon and rejected the project. But soon after, amendments to the appeals process on future land development forbade council members from appealing any project to the council while also a sitting member of that council.

Gordon was also the only council member to vote against increasing Burbank Water and Power rates, questioning the economic gloom that officials were predicting.

With two council seats opening up in April 2007, voters have the opportunity to further the shifting tides of local government, Gordon said.

"This upcoming election is of historic importance for the people of Burbank," he said.

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David Gordon is the Burbank Leader's Newsmaker of the Year.

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He has openly endorsed Carolyn and Philip Berlin's campaign for the two open council seats, contending that their election would continue the changing trends in Burbank local politics.

"Voters clearly rejected what had been done in the past during the last election," he said. "Voters realized that it was OK to make changes."

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