

Dear Mayor Dunbar and Yountville Town Council Members,

I am writing to you regarding my reactions to your latest decision on Commission appointments.

As the newest member of the Yountville Arts Commission, I feel a bit discouraged by your decision to appoint a new member to the Commission instead of a current, active leader within our group. My reactions relate particularly to the recent vote tally for ranking applicants.

As I look at the Council Member's ratings for both Yountville Community Foundation and the Yountville Arts Commission, what stands out is the exaggerated divergence of candidate scoring. Case in point: two Council Members gave candidate #1 for YCF scores of ones (lowest scores) while the other three members gave them threes (highest score). They scored the reverse for candidate #3. The same two members gave candidate #3 the lowest score and candidate #1 the highest. A similar pattern appears with the scores for the Yountville Arts Commission.

Two things jump out at me. First, I wondered if there were written criteria for ranking candidates agreed upon beforehand. If not, it seems useful to have some so there is less extreme divergence in the way Council Members rank candidates.

If there are criteria, it appears that Council Members are not in agreement with how they interpret and how to score such criteria. Both alternatives seem problematic and lead to problems in terms of which candidates are recommended. In particular, people could be ranking who they like because they are friends or a good neighbor, rather than the quality of work and contributions candidates are likely to produce.

The other thing that jumps out is that this can easily lead to rank manipulation, where one person ranks their favorite person the highest and the favorite person of others the lowest in order to get their way. When two out of five people agree on who they like best, such manipulation becomes even more effective.

Finally, and most importantly, it also appears that little weight is placed on what Commissioners have accomplished and the contributions they have made. It seems you ask people to commit to the improvement of life in Yountville, as in our case, the Arts. But you may or may not commit to us and our efforts.

As the newest member of the Arts Commission, I have watched closely the intense contributions and commitments each of these other members have made. I feel disappointment that such efforts do not seem to impact the candidate rankings. While the Town Council certainly provides strong financial and staff support, the time and efforts of Commission members appears to be a one-way commitment of us to the town and not the reverse.

If someone on the Arts Commission is not doing their job or is not contributing, I would be supportive of moving them out of the group. But in all my professional years, I don't believe I

have participated with a group where people raise questions and challenge when appropriate while also being cooperative, supportive of each other, and all working hard to contribute in their own way to the outcomes of the group.

If you want new members on the commission, I understand that. But you could create a more palatable process than asking members, after intense work and contributions, to re-apply and then be rejected without apparent cause.

If the Town Council is not satisfied with how the Arts Commission is functioning or our productivity, maybe it would be time for a candid discussion between the two groups. But to reject an active leader creates, for me at least, an atmosphere of discouragement.

I believe this is too small a town to create hard feelings, especially if rank manipulation is the process used to make such decisions and contributions are ignored.

Geoffrey K. Leigh, Ph.D.
Yountville Arts Commissioner