A PATH FORWARD

LEADERSHIP LESSONS AS THE PANDEMIC CONTINUES

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

As the coronavirus spreads and our national response unfolds, I wonder how history will treat our leaders. Perhaps it's all too new to rate.

I remember my grandfather talking about President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his fireside chats. The series of 30 evening radio addresses assuaged a divided country at a time of financial hardship and war. Two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, 62 million people (nearly 80 percent of the country) listened to the broadcast.

Roosevelt is still regarded as an exceptional communicator. His tone and manner were reassuring, as was the directness with which he spoke about the war effort.

"If they (the American people) understand ... what we are driving at, I am sure they can take any kind of bad news right on the chin," Roosevelt said.

Now, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has taken a leadership role in the coronavirus response.

His state is the epicenter of the virus here, with more than 40,000 cases, and his daily press conferences are covered widely.

Cuomo, a Democrat, has emerged as a trusted news source who is admired by many for his handling of the outbreak.

Ten days ago, Cuomo mandated that 100 percent of nonessential workers in the state must stay home, similar to the order issued by California Gov. Gavin Newsom. He said at the time, "I accept full responsibility. If someone is unhappy, blame me," acknowledging that people will lose their jobs.

JOHN MINCHILLO AP

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a news conference Tuesday at the Jacob Javits Center, which will house a temporary hospital in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The ability to take responsibility is the hallmark of a true leader, in government and business alike. It affords an opportunity to become a source of strength and reliability that may otherwise be lacking.

Writing for ConantLeadership in 2017, Douglas Conant says, "The more challenging the situation, and the higher the stakes, the more urgent it is that you behave in a trustworthy way. Remember that emotions are heightened, and stress is high in times of trouble."

Similarly, Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has demonstrated leadership in his state.

A Republican, DeWine has been outspoken about keeping Ohio residents safe. He was early to issue a stay-at-home order, saying, "The truth is that protecting people and protecting the economy is not mutually exclusive. In fact, one depends upon the other. The fact is we save our economy by first saving lives and we have to do it in that order."

As the president of a local nonprofit, I think about these lessons as I grapple with leading from home.

In a recent *Forbes* article, John Hall writes, "Lives are on the line, and business leaders have a responsibility to be there for their communities, whether they can be there in person or not. Employees and customers know that. What they are looking for is whether you're up to snuff as a leader."

Here are three actions I'm taking:

1. Communicating with transparency, urgency and empathy: Even as we get the hang of working remotely, the challenges continue. One of them is making sure that people know I'm here for them, albeit not down the hallway. Everyone on the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) team has my cellphone number and an invitation to share their ideas and concerns. (Some are even calling.)

2. Maintaining accountability and a shared sense of purpose: Early in the crisis, we made a decision to cancel NCRC's annual awards dinner, scheduled for April. This is our major fundraiser of the year and provides the "working capital" that fuels our programs. Our development team is fired up — determined to fill what might have been a very large hole.

3. Moving forward, with optimism: In a seemingly slower world, there's still a lot of work to do. Tensions are running high and many in our community are hurting. Healing the hurt is what NCRC is all about. On Thursday, we held our first Virtual Community Circle to engage San Diegans in dialogue about keeping the peace at home. The conversations will continue.

Over history, the actions of our leaders have determined how we emerge from a crisis.

While the end of this pandemic is not yet in sight, it is likely that history will repeat itself.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based organization working to create innovative solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. NCRC is nationally recognized for its conflict management and communication strategies. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com

DEFEAT
Building is 'essential'

FROM **B1**

"San Diego is becoming Democrat-led. Democrats in general have very different ideas about housing than Republicans, who mostly own housing. Democrats have the highest housing need. Projects that offer low- and middle-income housing will have an easier chance in the future to gain approval. In the county, large master-planned communities are the only type of projects that have the scale to offer low- and middle-income housing as part of an overall housing product mix, including attached and detached units."

Opponents of large developments in the unincorporated area say the opposite is true, that affordable homes need to be built near urban centers, not out in the boonies. Measure A, they say, would have forced developers to significantly change their business model.

Backers of the Newland Sierra measure promised to build affordable homes, but detractors questioned the commitment and urged voters not to trust the developers.

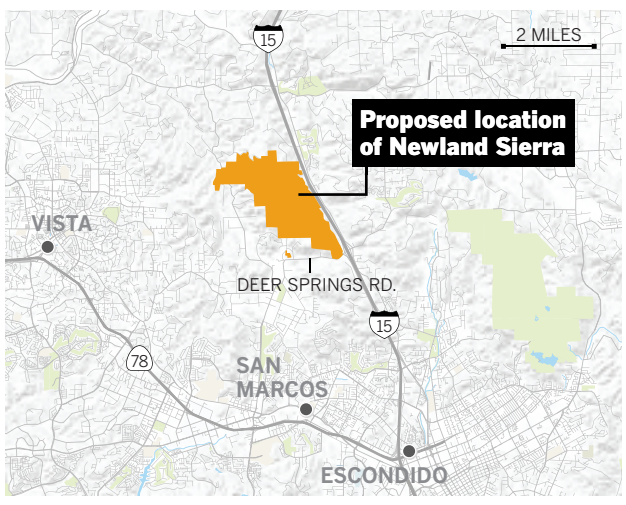
Dan Silver, the executive director of the Endangered Habits League, which was a major funding source of the Yes on A campaign, said he was still depressed by the outcome of the election.

"You hate losing by a razor-thin margin," Silver said. "I think we're looking at project-by-project battles again."

For several years, backers of Measure A, also known as the Save Our San Diego Countryside initiative, and opponents of the Newland Sierra project, have been waging war against what they consider sprawl development. Every time the Board of Supervisors has approved an amendment to the county's General Plan, they have filed suit in Superior Court. Just recently, the 2018 approval of two projects in the Harmony Grove/Elfin Forest area of North County was ordered set aside by a judge.

The challenge to the county's Climate Action Plan, being appealed now, has also stymied construction of approved projects. If the county loses the appeal, it is likely the plan will have to be redone. The old plan, those against sprawl development say, encouraged large projects in rural areas by allowing builders to offset greenhouse gas emissions caused by the developments by buying carbon credits from approved registries anywhere in the world rather than locally.

"Thousands of approved lots are tied up in climate litigation," Winckel said. "The outcome of these suits could materially impact housing delivery in the county and from there elsewhere. Copycat litigation will follow in the cities. If that happens, the housing crisis will exacerbate and be a millstone around the neck of our regional economy."



Sources: Newland Communities; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap U-T

The building industry today is considered an essential business and work continues during the coronavirus shutdown.

"This means we can finish off projects under construction," Winckel said. "The governor views housing as critical infrastructure. Both Measures A and B should never have happened. Very wealthy people, folks living in multimillion-dollar homes on large acreage were primary sponsors. The environmentalists were their fronts. Between these two interest groups, ALL housing is in danger."

Had Measure A passed, supporters say, it would have forced developers to change their business model because seeking voter approval of individual projects, as evidenced by Newland Sierra's Measure B defeat, would probably become too expensive and risky for them to even pursue.

"To me, the defeat of Measure A will historically be viewed as a real tragedy for planning in the whole region," Silver said. He and others maintain it would have forced the development community to work more collaboratively with environmental and community groups as well as with cities and the county.

Silver said looking forward, individual projects will be fought most often in the court.

"I think it's more likely we'll see continuing legal challenges because it's easier to bring a lawsuit financially than it is to put a referendum on the ballot and running a campaign against deep pockets," he said.

jharry.jones@sduniontribune.com

CODE
Cases ranked by priority

FROM **B1**

investigations. Because of the city's open data policy, all the cases are available for outside analysts to explore and spot trends.

Shifting from paper to computerized case records has another advantage.

"We don't have file cabinets full of papers all over," Sennett said. "It's terrific."

It's also created the opportunity to include code compliance violations on the Get it Done! app, which had been reserved for reporting of graffiti, potholes and abandoned vehicles when it was launched in 2016. In recent months, the city has added reporting of illegal encampments, reporting of illegal activity involving electric scooters and purchasing replacement trash cans.

Code violation complaints are among the next wave of complaints city officials hope to make available on the app.

Sennett said there is some chance that could overwhelm the division with a sharp increase in complaints but said she expects to be able to handle whatever increase results.

Complaints can now be submitted online, by mail or by calling code enforcement at (619) 236-5500. People making complaints are urged to first contact the person responsible for the alleged violation.

"Most people want to be good neighbors and are cooperative once an issue is brought to their attention," the city's code enforcement website says.

Once a case is opened, code officers prioritize it and then act accordingly.

Cases that pose imminent health and safety hazards or constitute significant code violations are given the highest priority, because they have the highest potential to result in significant harm to the community.

Examples include dangerous or unstable structures, inadequate barriers for swimming pools or spas, leaking sewage, uninhabitable living conditions and exposed electrical wires.

Inspections in such cases take place within one business day.

The next tier of cases are significant violations that typically require an inspection by an expert. They include abandoned properties, disturbance of environmental resources, damage to historic sites, substandard housing conditions or unpermitted grading.

Inspections in such cases take place within five business days.

The third tier is the largest and most varied.

It includes illegal accessory structures, adult entertainment inspections, billboard regulations, disabled access, violations of discretionary permits, elimination of off-street parking, fence/wall violations, food trucks and illegal garage conversions.

Other violations in this tier include garages used for storage, illegal news racks, outdoor merchandise displays, illegal recycling facilities, landscaping violations, illegal sidewalk cafes, storage violations and vehicle repair in residential areas.

This tier also includes unpermitted businesses, construction, demolition, dwelling units and electrical, plumbing and mechanical violations.

Inspections in such cases take place within 20 business days.

The final tier, which makes up about 10 percent of cases, includes neighborhood nuisances such as front-yard parking, garage sales and violations involving lighting, noise, signs or street trees.

In these cases, the city urges discussion among neighbors as a form of alternative compliance. If that is not initially successful, residents are asked to call the National Conflict Resolution Center at (619)238-2400 for mediation help.

"We try to give people options," Sennett said. "We are trying to create better neighborhoods."

Most cases in the top three categories warrant inspections, which are scheduled as soon as possible.

If an inspection reveals code violations, city officers then determine an appropriate remedy. This may include a citation, but typically the person responsible gets an opportunity to voluntarily correct the situation.

If that doesn't happen by a deadline the city sets, there are penalties that can be levied depending on the violation.

The city might direct a third party to demolish, secure or remove junk and debris and require the responsible party to cover the city's costs.

The city might also impose daily fines of up to $10,000, with $400,000 set as the maximum possible fine for a violation.

The city attorney also could file a criminal or civil case against the responsible party.

The city doesn't allow anonymous code complaints, but the name of the person who filed a complaint is typically kept confidential unless a legal proceeding requires the city to reveal it.

The city now has 67 employees in its code enforcement division, a number that has slowly increased since budget cuts after the Great Recession shrank the division below 60 workers.

With the city facing a new round of budget cuts this spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the division might shrink again.

david.garrick@sduniontribune.com

ACRES
Horse club operates now

FROM **B1**

not needed for any existing or future district operations.

After the land is appraised and biological studies are finished in coming months, the district plans to offer the land to the nonprofit San Diego River Conservancy, which has the first legal right to buy it, according to the California Public Resource Code.

If the group does not want to purchase the land, other government agencies and housing sponsors listed with the state's Department of Housing and Community Development will be provided with a notice of availability of the land for low- and moderate-income housing, parks, open space, schools, transit development, enterprise zones and utilities uses.

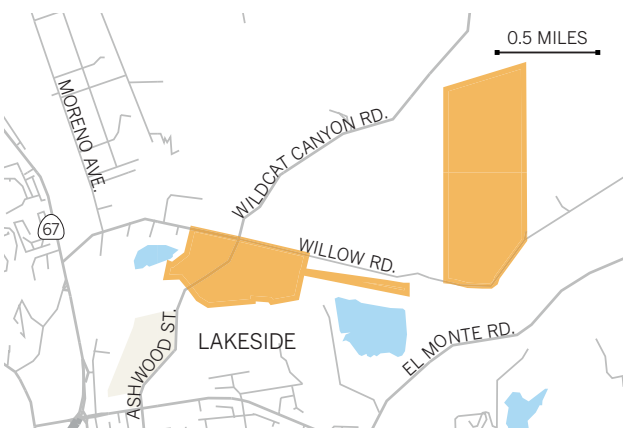
Artist and environmentalist and longtime El Monte Valley resident W. Duane Pillsbury and his wife of 41 years, noted animal advocate Joan Embery, live on a 50-acre swath of land across the street from one of the parcels that will be for sale. The couple is hoping the land across from their Pillsbury Land & Livestock Co. ranch will become available to the county and that the county will sell it to them.

Since 1981, Pillsbury and Embery have been leasing the 30-acre space for their Lakeside Saddle & Driving Club, which offers equine activities for members, including dressage, jumping and pleasure riding. The club has direct access to the San Diego River trails that take riders for miles through the scenic rural valley.

Embery, a world-class horsewoman in dressage, jumping and other disciplines, is probably best known for her conservation efforts and as the Zoological Society of San Diego's "Goodwill Ambassador" in the 1970s and '80s. Embery appeared several times with animals and an arachnid or two on "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson. She runs the Embery Institute for Wildlife Conservation from the ranch.

Helix Water property for sale

The Helix Water District is looking to sell three parcels of land it owns in Lakeside's El Monte Valley The land includes a rock pile and part of the San Diego River Bottom that it may sell to the county and land it is hoping to sell to an outside entity.



Sources: Helix Water District; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap

MICHELLE GILCHRIST U-T

Embery said the couple has been trying to protect the area, once filled with trash, rotting wood and suffering from a lack of upkeep, as open space for more than 30 years. She said they cleaned up the property, "tractored it," built arenas, pipes and fencing, bathrooms and more to create a facility they could be proud of.

"The club is a gem, it's one-of-a-kind," Embery said. "We have invested so much of ourselves into it, we've invested a half a million dollars into it. We have given our heart and soul to it. If the county gets it, we hope they will allow us to keep operating there."

Last week, Pillsbury zipped around the outside of the club in a golf cart, jumping out every few feet with a trash picker to grab items thrown to the side of the road. Embery said she sometimes feels like "the bag lady of Lakeside," picking up fast food boxes, hand wipes, cigarettes, beer bottles and more and putting them into a trash bag.

"Sometimes I just throw my hands up because there is a lot of work to keep it all up," Embery said. "I ask myself, 'Do I really need all this?' Then, somebody will come up to me and say, 'I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have this riding facility.' "

She said the community fears the land could be bought for housing tracts or condominiums.

"Most of the people in Lakeside really love the fact that we are a small, agricultural community," she said "We don't want to be Santee or El Cajon. We're just trying to hold onto what we feel is kind of our identity, the uniqueness, our character. It's what we like about living out here. People don't realize how special it is here. There's nothing like it in the entire country."

Dianne Jacob, longtime member of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, the ultimate decision-maker in the process, said she is hopeful there is an opportunity to keep the El Monte Valley properties Helix is selling in public ownership.

"Acquiring these properties would make a lot of sense for taxpayers and the community," Jacob said. "It would not only allow us to preserve critical open space in a beautiful area, but would help keep in place several important community assets."

karen.pearlman@sduniontribune.com