

GEORGE WEISS | Laguna Beach CA — City Council Member

PUBLIC COMMENTS AT CITY COUNCIL — Sept. 26, 2023

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Michael Morris (23:53):

George Weiss has shown himself to be an honest and fair council member, who values transparency and puts interests on a level playing field with those of the special interests, the developers and chamber of commerce. I wish the same could be said for the majority of the council.

He, and Toni Iseman before him, is the loudest voice for residents who don't have the same access or donor dollars to be fully heard. And access is really key. Studies have shown that deep pockets really afford greater access, and my fear is that the council allows the access for the deep-pocketed developers and chamber of commerce representatives that then influence decisions when resident voices cannot compare in of the number of access points to make their opinions felt. Thank you.

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Michelle Monda:

Hi, Michelle Monda. . . look forward to a city manager who is going to work for all the city council members, not just a few, and also work for the residents as opposed to the city manager, so welcome . . . and the third thing I'm here to say: City Council, I'm very very disappointed in you. I am here to support George Weiss. Why am I disappointed in you? I'm disappointed because you are laying all the blame for all the mistakes that the former city manager made and you're blaming this man.

You're letting it happen. You know what happened. You know why she left. She did not leave and retire. You gave her a graceful way out. I'm very disappointed in you for not being honest with us and telling us what really happened. But okay, let's say you don't tell us what really happened. But to lay it all on George and to let people, week after week after week, come out and say the most horrible things about him when it's patently not true. It is not true. I understand you were in a political squeeze here.

I'm delighted you got rid of her, and kudos for that. Thank you. That it took two and half years is of a shame because we could have had somebody of the caliber of Mr. Joyce here. I'm asking you: please be honest. Please give—set the record straight about George. It's not because of some bogus claim, and I'm not going to litigate that here. You already know the story. But please be honest. Thank you.

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Susanna Cruciana

. . . pickleball. . . as for George Weiss, he was one of the first ones who came to help me three and a half years ago when I moved into Vista Aliso. This was like the end of 2018. He was the only councilmember who responded to my plea to ask what the hell was going on. That noise. And I didn't know anything about pickleball then, so I declined his kind offer to a sound test I thanked him.

Recently I contacted him and he was the only one that came over within ten minutes, to listen to the noise and know it was a real problem. So we are to a residential area as is the rule for pickleball. It's supposed to be 500 feet away. We are 25 feet to 50 feet, and two people here are signing up to speak about it, so can we play that clip, if you can?

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Patrick Cannon:

. . . pickleball . . . Mr. Weiss has come down there and addressed the issue and we do appreciate the fact of this transparency and the conduct that he's had in this community.

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Joy Berry:

Hi, my name is Joy Berry and I researched and contacted an employment attorney to better understand 'hostile work environment' before tonight and learned such a claim is very narrow and requires repetitive evidence. I also read the press release and the separation agreement.

The city's press release states that Shohreh's agreement was negotiated in response to a hostile workplace claim filed by her following a period of conflict with a city council member. Yet her separation agreement states no claim was filed. It references verbal complaints, not a written, formal complaint. So which is it—a verbal complaint or a real, evidence-based claim?

Was the press release a political statement? Could the press release be viewed as a form of harassment and hostile work environment against Mr. Weiss? Because of the lack of transparency and conflated and misleading staff reports, chaos and mistrust has arisen in this community. Are you all willing to make a change?

Anyone can complain; plenty of us are doing it tonight. But why would you make this accusation and use public funds to settle, predicated upon verbal complaints that is not formal evidence-based written claim? Is it based on hearsay? If there is evidence, the public and, certainly George, has the right to know.

I believe the law indicates one is innocent until proven guilty. What proof do you have to point blame or to prove guilt.

Alex, you ran in the election on transparency. Isn't the time now to be transparent and provide evidence of this claim? Or so-called verbal complaints?

Maybe there was a mistake made and no one wants to admit it. We all make mistakes. I do. That's okay. But it's not okay to blame others for mistakes. It's not okay to blame George for the removal of the city manager with no investigation or evidence of a supportive claim.

So, if she made mistakes--as we all do—and George questions those mistakes, it's not illegal; it's not hostile; it's doing his job. George tends to question the staff and rightly so.

Real leaders do just that. They question their staff and if this is challenging of decisions in that conflict, I don't think questions create conflict. Other than George, you all often accept whatever city staff, city attorney, or applicant recommends to you, over and over again. That is not why we elected you.

Who will be there for us to enforce the rule of law? The press release made folks jump to conclusions, pitting citizens against one another instead of focusing on the facts. What evidence was produced? Peace is not absence of conflict. It is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means that is found in a great leader. Only transparency, in my mind, will bring peace amongst all the citizens. And I beg for peace. We don't like all of this—all of these issues. So, transparency, please. Be forthright. Thank you.

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M.J. Abraham:

While the former city manager has been removed, which I fully supported, it has left residents deeply concerned about how the removal was handled, and the disrespect shown to one of our most responsive and transparent council members, George Weiss. There's no question that this city manager created tension and division among our employees, our council, and the public.

This was inevitable. Ms. Dupuis was not highly regarded as an ACM and she didn't have the knowledge, the

experience, the judgment and/or the personality deemed necessary to stakeholders to become our city manager.

Sadly, in 2021, the council majority refused to listen to constituents and this is the result—the failure of this individual, and a city in disruption. This should never have happened and it should never be repeated again. The most recent action of this body to facilitate a retirement with added benefits package and given substance to an unsubstantiated accusation by a well-documented troubled employee _____ to the demand for her termination or resignation is under serious debate the question.

I hope it does get investigated. It begs the question though: is this responsible leadership? It certainly doesn't seem like a wise or healthy governing practice or precedent to set in our city.

We're sorry, George Weiss. We thank you for your diligence in seeking answers for our questions and our concerns about city business and our finances and demanding accountability and transparency. Please don't stop. We are counting on you to continue, no matter what pressure your co-council members put on you or the community supporters that they have.

This council has work to do to repair the damage that's been done to everyone involved here, including myself and my family, and to our city's reputation. I urge you to put your agendas aside and move on and, please, share that at some point let the public know why the decisions were made by you that harmed George Weiss. Thank you.

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Chris Catsimanes: The following is being read for Claude Morgan who was unable to attend tonight.

“Good evening, council members and Mayor Whalen. Anyone who follows the local government in Laguna has witnessed the saga of ex-city manager Dupuis unfold over the last two and a half years.

Many residents are conscious of the nonsensical explanation that councilman George Weiss was somehow blameworthy, prompting her retirement. There is no need to list the numerous misjudgments and missteps crafted and created by the former city manager. The actuality is that she committed just too much turmoil, tension and upheaval in the mere two and a half years of her span as city manager of Laguna Beach to be retained.

The rationalization provided, I assume by you, Mayor Whalen, for the mutually-agreed separation was pinned on Councilman Weiss as a misguided effort to divert, redirect and deviate from the fact that Dupuis was a toxic commodity in our city, making it necessary that she be shed.

The fact that you, Mayor Whalen, Mayor Pro-Tem Kempf, and former city councilman Blake lobbied for her initial hiring is heartily suspect. Dupuis's hiring as city manager greatly benefitted the three-vote council majority to vote pro-development, pro-tourist—at the expense of residents—pro-parking structure, and pro-Mo Hornarkar agenda, I might say, in our community.

We, as residents, have a promising opportunity in the next election cycle to retrieve our direction as citizenry and reclaim Laguna Beach for us residents. The consequence of the collective decision by three council members to hire someone who had never had a position as city manager, and did not have the academic credentials for that position was the root of her demise, plain and simple.

It is time to put an end to blaming the only council member who stood up to the horrendous abuse of power that consumed our city. It is time to move on. My thanks to Council Member George Weiss for taking the constant attacks and not yielding to the thoughtless anti-resident direction that some of our elected officials have taken in the past and continue to grasp for in the future. Thank you. Claude Morgan.”

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Johanna Felder:

Council, I'm reading a letter from Barbara Manalis. “I am writing in regard to the confused messages and innuendoes concerning Council Member Weiss and the closed meeting which the council held to which he was excluded.

Since George was first elected to the council, I have had many contacts with him over the years; always found him

responsive, respectful to neighborhood concerns; a sorely-needed advocate for residents' concerns, who put out a lot of effort, and takes initiative in following through, and is a man of his word.

This mess with the departure of the former city manager surely cannot be attributed to him. If there is blame to be had there, there are many hands that contributed to this debacle, not least of all the former city manager herself.

Hopefully the public airing of this situation will help so that we can find a way to work together without these kinds of vindictive smear campaigns against one another. At least that is the hope that many of us have had with the election of this new council and setting an example of a more positive way to interact with each other around our differences.”

Thank you. And I am surprised that the first person that came up here wasn't around. I guess maybe he never tuned in to the council meetings with Peter Blake. I mean, talk about abusive! Constantly! To not only residents but to former council members. So to talk about George is absolutely unconscionable. Thank you, George, for your service.

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Liza Interlandi Stewart:

Hello, council. My name is Liza Interlandi Stewart, and I've been coming to these council meetings for 35-40 years now, until five years ago because there was the true bully that was voted in onto our council and he attacked citizens on a regular basis—through emails, on the dais, through planning commission meetings.

And for anybody that could call George a bully, they must not have been watching the last four years because George has been a voice for the citizens. He contacts citizens to get us involved with projects and then in our neighborhoods and around our city.

I'm very grateful for George being on the council and I'm looking forward to the five of you working together as a team, and not, you know, against each other, because that's what you are. You're a team for Laguna Beach and the citizens here and I really thank you all for everything that you do, and I'm really looking forward to the future and less conflict.

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John Thomas:

I came here to support Council Member Weiss. I think he does a good job. But as I see it, what is more important at this moment in time is that it is time to move on. And it's time to end the divisiveness in Laguna.

There are people in town trying to foster a kindness campaign. I'm not even asking for kindness, I'm just asking for civility. We have a real opportunity to reboot Laguna. We have a new city council, a new city attorney, and a new city manager is coming. There are fewer reasons for divisiveness in Laguna and yet we still have columns in the paper and letters to the editor by people trying to drive wedges in our community.

It's time to turn the page and our city government can help by being fully open with the community, whether the information is good or bad news, we can handle it. Because in the absence of facts some people make up their own—which is what is going on here—it's okay to have opinions, but it is not okay to make (audio stops, fast forward) . . . so we don't know what we're talking about when we're complaining.

So people improvise. They create their own explanations for things. Left in a vacuum, nature wants to fill it and we can see from this episode how that filling this void can add to the divisiveness.

A city leadership can also help by setting a good example in terms of cooperating with one another. People may not agree on some topics but having a healthy discussion about that topic, where differing views are expressed and explored can lead to more thorough understanding of the issue, and can lead to a better outcome.

So let's get past the blame game, do what the mayor suggested, and the public needs, move forward and find a new city manager and prioritize the city's business. We are all so fortunate to be able to live here. Let's move on. And let's see a city that operates with openness and a spirit of cooperation among the elected, within the staff, and

between the city and its residents. Thanks.

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Charles Michael Murray:

Hello, my name is Charles Michael Murray, founder of Endangered Planet, CMM Studio and My Legacy Tree. Hello to the city council and all the members. It is an honor to address you today.

I fully endorse Council Member George Weiss. I worked with him closely, building his website, as he recapped city happenings, including our city trials and tribulations. In my opinion, he has the patience of Job and he is unsurpassed in loyalty to our community.

My father taught me that there are those that look and those that see. George goes beyond both. He looks into the soul of the situations in our small town, and sees the reality, and offers logical solutions. Politics should not be a team sport.

I should not have received, nor did I deserve the snarky remarks spattered at me from the last city manager when I was setting up to shoot video for the city public strategic meetings—2022 and 2023. That's two years in a row. I say good riddance.

Doing the right thing is the right thing to do. My cap is something I designed and I often wear it. It says 9/12. It is my opinion that our country and our city was last fully united on 9/11. Do you remember 9/12? Do you remember that day? May this council find ways to reunite and not divide our city. We can and must do better. Let's get on with it. Thank you for listening.

George, thank you for all you do.

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David Dyrnaes:

Hello, I'm David Dyrnaes I'm a 22-year Laguna Beach resident and a property owner. I'm familiar with both sides of the designing process and the board and in July Councilmember Weiss initiated a council review of the DRB approval for 205(?) Temple Hills Drive deck extension, after they had been red-tagged in September of last year for attempting to do it without a permit.

That review was less about the DRB approval and more focused on Director Marc Weiner's use of process that benefitted the applicant. In January, Director Weiner waived the mandatory DRB review, accepted falsified plans, and issued a building permit.

After my second code enforcement complaint stopped them, the DRB review was finally scheduled. Unfortunately, Weiner directed planning staff to manipulate the staff report that overrode building staff, and authorized work to continue throughout, up to the scheduled DRB meeting.

Councilmember Weiss called for the review because he recognized the pattern of abuse of process by other properties, such as 45 Mermaid Terrace.

There is no better example of the abuse of process than the ex-city manager standing down the police during the armed takeover of Hotel Laguna and 14 West.

Under increasing scrutiny, Dupuis applied direct and discredit tactics against Councilmember George Weiss—probably her most vocal appointment—by raising unsubstantiated claims against him.

This council supported her narrative and negotiated a well-paid exit without any due process or revocation of her claims.

At the July council meeting, Mayor Whalen asked Director Weiner if unpermitted work had been conducted at my

neighbor's property. Weiner lied and said no. This council accepted his false statement even though you all had copies of the city's files confirming the 2022 red-tagging for an unpermitted deck extension attempt in your hands.

Further, my neighbor screamed obscenities and hurled unfounded accusations at Councilmember Weiss prior to your upholding the DRB's approval. And then Mayor Pro Tem Kempf had the audacity to accuse him of using the review process to "put his thumb on the scale."

Well, I'm here to admonish Ms. Kempf and the rest of the council for their support in hiring the ex-city manager, which resulted in her and Director Weiner's (her acolyte) fully standing on that scale through repeated abuse of process, and at the expense of Laguna Beach residents.

Thank you for your time and welcome new City Attorney Garibaldi and new City Manager Joyce. I hope you're familiar with the concept of reliance of contract and I would keep an eye on City Director of Community Development Weiner because he needs to be on a short leash. Thank you.

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Neil Fitzpatrick: (GW Note: Neil is former 12 year City Council Member)

Good evening. Neil Fitzpatrick. I'm here to add my thank you to George Weiss for standing up for us, especially in the dark years of '21 and '22 where he shone a light on many issues that we should know about that we didn't get it from anyone else. So George alerted us, the public who wanted to participate and he took the abuse for that. So, thank you, George.

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Toni Iseman:

(GW: Toni is referring to Niel Fitzpatrick) He's one of the reasons I ran for council. He showed integrity and compassion, and followed up and listened, and it was a real role model. I did have the privilege of checking out council members for 24 years. I have a little history.

And I can tell you no one ever worked as hard as George. I could not imagine where he found time to be with his lovely family and so forth because he was talking to people and getting information and being—going far beyond what would ever be expected of a council member.

I actually suspect, if I were still on the council, there may have been two people named on this issue. It could have been George and Toni.

Here's my experience: a few years ago, Mo got three stop work orders in one week and people said 'do something about this; what's going on?' I went in to see the city manager and I said, 'Mo got three stop work orders in one week.' First thing out of her mouth was, 'Anyone who complains about Mo is prejudiced.' Second thing out of her mouth was, 'And you didn't vote for me.'

Now, that may not be significant to everybody in the room, but you guys know what that means. There was a complete violation of the Brown Act. The way that we pick a city manager is so confidential that we find very private rooms to meet so that people don't see different council—different people walking in for the interview.

Why is it so private? People who choose to apply for a job may very well be a city manager someplace else and they don't want their city to know they're looking. We honor, honor, that privacy.

So, how did Shohreh know that I didn't vote for her? Well, it wasn't George and it wasn't me. There were two people, maybe three, other than the two of us that told her—someone told her that.

So that was the beginning of a difficult relationship. And I asked her many, many things, usually minor. And maybe I'll make my list and hope that it can be achieved under the circumstances.

Please recognize how lucky we have been to have George, and thank him rather than assault him.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS —

VIA EMAIL OR OTHER TO GEORGE WEISS AND OR CITY COUNCIL

Tony Fisch

Dear Mayor Whalen and pro tem Kempf,
over the past 5 years you have passed council and city leadership back and forward like a track baton. This term you are also leading 2 new members that for the most part see your voice as their own. 4 of you members persist in ignoring 99% of every question we ask you in council. You fail to communicate hugely important strategy, your intent and direction to we voters. Your inaction to voters is beyond neglectful.

Your actions in my opinion do spell a crystal clear path of personal opportunism.

The last time I witnessed blame without merit of the magnitude you directed at council member Weiss was when LA Mayor Eric Garcetti falsely attempted to ruin the career of the deputy Fire Chief, Fire Marshall of Los Angeles. Garcetti gave the LA Times an exclusive that struck a baseless blow. Garcetti did so to remove the chief who had positively transformed the city's fire inspection process removing ten years of inspection back log, and the double time pay that inspector cronies benefitted from for years. Garcetti's benefit was a \$373,000 donation from the Firefighters pension fund to his re election campaign, and union endorsement for re election.

It took about two years, but two weeks before I was to be deposed as a witness on the chief's behalf, Garcetti and City of LA settled with the chief for high 7 figures. Public apology, full pension reinstatement. The chief was a hero.

You leading a collective allowing council member Weiss to be blamed for a hostile workplace and the "retirement" of Shohreh Dupuis sickens me. The 4 of you have lost my vote forever, and the vote of every neighbor and citizen that I can reach and touch.

George Weiss has NEVER been told WHAT he was guilty of, nor has any evidence been presented. Your witch hunt to protect personal agendas speaks volumes. Your lack of willingness to follow city councils in LA, Bell and Anaheim to self investigate potential corruption and collusion also tells its own story. In my opinion you are hiding.

Does edited body cam video footage, failure to investigate and charge Dupuis for lying to a police officer ring a bell? These few samples just scratch a surface in my opinion.

Should litigation proceed in one of several potential pending cases, Mayor and pro tem, Dupuis, Kohn, Wiener, Honarkar and others will be deposed. I suppose investigation comes in various forms.

George Weiss is a hero to me. He has courage, respect for voters, and cares about our best interest. Our property rights, safety, rule of law and dignity are important to him. He lives his oath of office.

If I get the opportunity I will vote for member Weiss.
Thank you.

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Ms. Nazish Mir, M.A.

Dear City Council Members,

I am unable to attend the City Council meeting tonight, so please accept this letter as an expression of my support for Councilman Weiss. George Weiss is an asset to Laguna Beach and a champion of causes dear to residents. He

has been extremely professional, respectful, intelligent and diligent in every exchange and on every project. I highly value his service on our City Council.

In regards to the former City Manager, I find it difficult to understand that Councilmen Weiss behaved the way she claimed. I have not seen any evidence from her, and based on my experience with him, I find her accusations a completely inaccurate depiction of him.

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David and Jeannie Sullenger

I was at the meeting today but I did not speak about my complete support of George Weiss to represent the residents of Laguna Beach on the city council

My wife Jeanne and I have lived here for 28 years.

We both have known George for 20 years.

I am honored to call him my friend. I believe I know George better than most of you in our city government.

I know that he is a good and honest man who loves Laguna Beach very much.

I know that George has worked very hard to keep our city on the right track as much as local politics will allow.

George has the full support of both Jeanne and myself.

Yours truly

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Jerome Pudwill

City Council Members -

I'm beyond disgusted, disappointed and outraged by the dishonest way the "retirement" of the City Manager has been handled, along with the ongoing smear campaign the City Council is waging against Councilman Weiss.

Bob and Sue – residents see through you.

You insisted on appointing Shohreh Dupuis as City Manager despite many other candidates with more experience and better credentials having applied for the position. Her failure is your failure. You hired her for complicity, not competence. You wanted someone to help ram your agendas through – regardless of what they cost residents or what residents wanted.

Ms. Dupuis didn't have the skills, the tact, or the temperament for the job. But you and Peter Blake chose her anyway. And backed and praised her all the way down the line.

But her failure was inevitable. And it became evident to everyone – including you – that she'd become a civic and political liability – especially for Bob Whalen,

who may run for office again next year. She wanted out. And the City Council needed her to go.

So what better way than to concoct the lie that she'd been subjected to a hostile work environment by Councilman Weiss? She gets the excuse of a threat of a lawsuit in order to extract as much as she could in a pay-off, plus a face-saving excuse to get out. And Bob Whalen and Sue Kempf get to blame others for their disastrous hire, while also smearing the one Councilman who's stood up against

their surreptitious governance.

Compounding problems, the City Council violated the Brown Act by holding

closed door sessions to negotiate Ms. Dupuis' severance deal – sessions which were illegally noticed as meetings to discuss her unproven, verbal claims – keeping everyone in the dark, especially the accused, Councilman Weiss.

As part of these scapegoating kangaroo trials behind closed doors, Councilman Weiss was judged without being told the specific claims he's charged with, he was never interviewed by you, and he was never allowed to defend himself – all while his name was being publicly dragged through the mud.

Worse yet, Bob Whalen – a potential political rival of Councilman Weiss – was put in charge of spearheading the negotiations instead of bringing in an outside, independent negotiator. And what does the Council do? Immediately roll over and fabulously over-pay-off Ms. Dupuis without proving her claims and before any investigations are completed – as though her go-away hush-money pay-off was justified and all Councilman Weiss' doing.

There's something wrong with the City Council when it quickly rewards a retaliation-minded accuser without any proof or investigation – all after she's used a ruse to extract the biggest pay-off he can get. It opens up the question of what did the City Council have to cover up should there have been a legal filing and discovery? And is the City Council not now just joining in on the retaliation?

For all this talk about creating a hostile work environment – look at yourselves. Who's doing the hounding? Where were you when your acolyte Peter Blake was pounding on Toni Iseman, George Weiss and many others?

As for George Weiss, I can see why certain Council members resent him. He's everything they're not. He's transparent, engaging, respectful, honest, responsive to residents' issues, practical, fair-minded and fiscally conservative. Plus he's alerted the public to every boondoggle that has been autocratically or sneakily tried to be imposed.

I know politics is a sleazy business, but you are setting a new low.

Call off the hounds and back off George Weiss.

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Margo Ganson

Gosh, George, I'm not sure that this should be approached in this way rather than being handled within the confines of the City Council and City of Laguna Beach. If this happened to me in the corporate world. I don't think I would call upon my friends to get involved in something between me and the company, and I'm looking at this as pretty much the same thing. I'm just wondering if the professional and responsible thing to do is try to resolve the matter as amicably as possible and move on. Otherwise, this may become much bigger than it ought to be.

Kindest regards.

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Pat O'Brien

Hi George,

I am so sorry you have to deal with this awfulness. As a Board member, I am insured by the organization against legal actions. The insurance pays for my legal representation. Is that not the case with you? It should be, since this suit is a consequence of you doing your job.

Hang in there,

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Slade Carlton

Got your back, Sir! It's the classic finger pointing with three pointing back at the accusing party. Shoreh accuses you of a hostile work environment right on the heels of her publicly badgering three citizens of Laguna Beach. And of course she ends her reign with a hostile lawsuit. Good riddance!

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Diane Dowall

Morning George, you have our full support...we so appreciate your service, commitment, and insight...we are dismayed that you have become the scapegoat...we've encountered people like the former City Manager who weave their web of self-interest and scheme to self-promote and work against the greater good...her retirement is a plus for Laguna Beach...unfortunately, you are suffering because you have the backbone and morality to fight...we will respond to the future email with pleasure...best regards, Diane Dowall

Elizabeth Suzanne Jones

Thank you, George.
I firmly support your position in all respects,
sorry it had to come to this.

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Jason Rem

Hi George,

As a truth seeker and someone trying to use common sense and logic in decision making you are being attacked by those who are more than likely creating hostility to protect their position and power. Stay the course and don't amplify their efforts.

Don't buy into it, do not respond when unnecessary and do not change your course. You have done a lot for that small but mighty town. And at some point know you have done what you can for the city and get back to your pursuit of personal happiness. George Washington taught us that in his farewell address.

This too shall pass and you made it through Summer. On another important note, My website will be updated soon with Fall EMF Alerts and advice.

<https://rementertainment.com/5g-ev-crisis/>

Laguna in my opinion is bringing too much harmful technology and too much EV into the town since 2020. The low level Antennas installed around town are proven very harmful especially in such close proximity to Civilians. Here are 100s of proven studies on that. Please share with Alex.

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Kathy Tanaka

Dear City Council,

We are thankful for George. He always lets us know what's going on and will take the time to talk to us. We need transparency in all government. Let's all work together and put our energy into making Laguna a great place to live. Not just a great place for tourists to come.

Sincerely,

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Natalie Hall

Hello Council

My Name is Natalie Hall and I have lived here in beautiful Laguna Beach for 5 years.

I first got introduced to George through my Husband Jack Robbins. My husband Jack spoke with George briefly back in 2020 when they bonded on both being in the Marine Corps.

Mr Weiss you could tell had a huge passion for his country and his city of Laguna beach.

I myself started personally having dialogue with Council member George back in 2020 when I noticed the safety issues on my street.

I have never been one to challenge issues or would ever go to council meetings over topics the city discusses and debates but when it comes to safety I felt like I needed to do something.

George always answered my emails and you could tell put so much thought into what he was saying and asking. I could tell through every interaction and email he was a man of integrity and principles. That he took being a council member with great pride.

Even though I didn't have the story "I have lived here 30 plus years" George made me feel like my voice mattered, that my concerns were being heard. That he was going to put himself out there to help me. Because it was something he saw first hand needed to change.

When George asked for my support in measure Q a few years ago I had to kindly tell him it was something I didn't believe in and support. George did not challenge me, or argue with me even though I knew it was a huge priority for him in this town.

He was respectful and open to my family's views and understood that I thought differently. Most people lead with ego and most would have written a person off for not sharing and supporting a person who had done so much to help a resident.

Not George, George continued to help me and my family because it was something he believed and he made me feel like my concerns were a priority.

George has morals, he has principles but most of all George cares truly for the residents and what he thinks and believes is right.

George has always served his country, he put his life on the line for his country and now he continues to put himself out there on a local level for everyone in this town.

He wants people like me who are in their 30's with young families to thrive so that we can have the safe lifestyle his generation gave their families.

Thank you Council member George for standing up for what you believe in, putting the residents first and helping people like myself feel safe and heard.

Catherine Jurca

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Dear Council,

I have been invited by a Laguna resident to write in support of George Weiss and do so gladly.

I am one of many residents grateful to George for putting us first. He has a keen sense of what makes Laguna Beach special and has committed himself to standing up for those of us who worry about both the pace and magnitude of changes to our city, and who has routinely objected to staff members that avoid soliciting or simply choose to ignore public input in order to hustle things along. The disgraceful and seemingly never-ending Hotel Laguna project is just the most conspicuous example. And the implication of the Shopoffs in Anaheim's monumental corruption scandal should remind you always to think hard about who stands to profit from the decisions that the City makes.

I have been distressed to see the vitriolic attacks on George under the fiction that he cost the city vast sums to settle Shoreh's lawsuit. We all know that anyone who could and should be fired for cause gains significant leverage through a preemptive lawsuit. Indeed, the relatively trivial sum it took to get rid of her reinforced my belief that she had no case and never intended to litigate, but rather wanted to get ahead of her dismissal and control the narrative: I am not fired; I choose to retire; I was ill-used, and the City bought me off. She is unhirable after this, but the narrative allows her to preserve a modicum of dignity.

The bad part is that Council needs to go along with this nonsense. That's part of the bargain. And as a result, George is taking the hit for previous Councils' poor decisions in relation to Shoreh and to the policies that created such controversy and upset in the community. I am glad he stood up for us and called her to account, but he shouldn't have had to.

⋮

Neil Fitzpatrick (GW: Neil served on City Council for 12 years)

The public response to the departure of the former city manager is being warped by the lack of a thorough official L.B.City response. It appears to be more of a cover for the L.B.City Manager's responsibility.

How did George Weiss become the focal point of this issue. George's biggest fault, if it is one, is that if he sees what he believes to be an injustice he speaks out. Quite frankly he has done what the public lacked in alerting people to issues that needed a good public review. How else would we have learned:

- * About Mo and the Hotel Laguna sweetheart deals, red tags and all.
- * Purchase of unsuitable land (TiAmo) without a financial appraisal.
- * The near loss of our local library in its current location.
- * The financial impropriety of the planned Presbyterian Church parking garage give away.
- * The complete design of the Promenade by outside paid consultants, shutting out our Planning Commission, local professionals and the public.

We have been living through several years with a government that has strived for maximum secrecy and a disdain for public participation. George Weiss has been a life saver for keeping the public informed.

Thank you George for being our Paul Revere.

⋮

Dr. Russ Hill

Hi George,

The following is a copy of a letter I sent to each of the other City Council members on your behalf.

I am writing in support of Councilman George Weiss.

I have found George to behave with exemplary professionalism in my dealings with him exploring various ideas to potentially benefit our city. In multiple meetings with me George has demonstrated genuine interest, wanting to learn as much as possible about each topic. His demeanor was always friendly yet professional.

From what I have read, it seems that Mr. Weiss's interest in doing his best for Laguna Beach, including reducing wasteful spending and encouraging useful projects while holding staff accountable have been misconstrued as attacking and promoting a hostile work environment.

As a product of the private business sector, Mr. Weiss brings a professional management style of expectations that may have exceeded the civil service management style of our city office.

In my view Mr. Weiss represents an important component of our city council. I find it difficult to believe that holding employees of the city accountable is equivalent to creating a hostile workplace unless those being held accountable are threatened for exposure for not holding up their end of their responsibility.

I believe it would be a mistake to take any untoward action toward Mr. Weiss. In my view he represents the best of Laguna.

...

Michele Monda

Dear City Council-

I am very disappointed, yet sadly not surprised, by how you have handled the separation of Shohreh Dupuis. Am I happy she is gone and you finally did the right thing? You bet. But to blame George Weiss is shameful and I know that you know this. You needed a "graceful" exit for her and blaming George seemed the way to go.

But how can you have made this decision WITHOUT any written proof from her? Without having interviewed George? Without seeing the final report from the investigator? Without even letting George know what he was accused of doing? Without questioning that she accused him of the VERY SAME thing that she accused 4 residents, me being one, of doing - again with no proof? This smacks of a kangaroo court in a third world country. You played judge and jury without letting the "accused" have due process or defend himself.

The truth will out - you have all behaved dishonorably especially Bob and Sue who shoved this woman down the throats of Laguna despite not being qualified or experienced for this job. Despite residents telling you what we wanted in a City Manager and she wasn't it. This whole affair is on you - you put her in a position to fail our city and ultimately fail in her job.

I ask that you do the right thing now and admit that George is NOT the reason she was let go - for it was that and not a tidy retirement. She brought it on herself. The money you cost us by letting her retire extends to her housing agreement - any idea how much more that cost us? Conservatively it's another \$500k which numbers back up.

I also know that you will ignore this. Just know that the majority of residents are on George's side in this. You will not be viewed favorably. I'm sure you could have found another way to exit her - you took the easy and cowardly way out.

...

Rio Phior

Dear City Council,

I am sending this email because I believe George Weiss has been maligned by our former City Manager for questioning her many poor decisions on behalf of the city and its residents. I would like her or any of you to show or prove one action on George Weiss's part that supports her claims of a hostile work environment. I also feel he has been maligned by you as a collective, in your support of this claim.

You can blame yourselves for allowing, and supporting, the poor and unpopular decisions made by our City Manager, every step of the way. In fact, from my POV, Mr. Weiss has been the only council member willing to question our City Manager's decisions or to represent the questions asked by many of the citizens of Laguna Beach.

Mr. Weiss's integrity and honesty are above reproach. He also is the only council member with no personal, career or business agenda. He is strictly a public servant and the only true representative of the people. He is strongly supported for this reason.

That you as a collective are allowing him to be blamed for a hostile workplace and the retirement of Shohreh Dupuis is stunning. All of you have lost my vote for this reason, and the vote of every neighbor and citizen that I personally know.

The most compelling fact is that Mr. Weiss has NEVER been told WHAT he was guilty of, nor has anyone presented any evidence. The public sees this as a non-transparent witch hunt to protect your own personal agendas.

You have all decided behind closed doors that he is guilty without even the benefit of the independent investigator's report, or a full investigation (he was never interviewed). The lack of transparency supported by this administration and council collective is unprecedented.

Clearly, residents see this as your graceful way for Dupuis to leave and you are making Mr. Weiss a convenient scapegoat. It also appears to be one more attempt our City Manager and her law firm to acquire another payday.

Disappointed, disgusted and discouraged,

⋮

Marion Skaggs

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to you in defense of George Weiss.

There has never been a PEEP in the news or grumblings among my fellow Lagunatics complaining that George Weiss is a bully and "needs to go".

He has stood up for our 'right to know' and spoken for how we feel and want things to be in our small city. To the contrary the Blake/Dupuis era was the worst I can ever remember in my 62 years as a resident and homeowner.

Low morale among city employees, police officer departures, the crazy gun-armed fracas at Hotel Laguna, the horrid treatment of citizens and Toni Iseman at council forums, closed door meetings violating the Brown Act, wasting money on Ti Amos and not even asking the South Laguna residents to give their input about a fire station there, another white-elephant parking idea that isn't moneywise, thinking of or planning to sell our library, AND, best of all - the mysterious-fish-emulsion-vandalism-attack brouhaha. A suspect has never been found with all the Ring and Arlo cameras that everyone has these days.?? Sorta like the OJ conundrum never being solved if you ask me. Anyway...Good Grief!!

Bad management and toxic behavior seep and come out of the cracks. I certainly picked up on it! And it's not fair to blame George Weiss and for him to be thrown under the bus to save face for Shohreh Dupuis. He did right in criticizing her. Pure and simple... I'm so glad she's gone!

Let's choose higher now, not lower,

⋮

Bhagu Bhatia

Please keep George in our LB Council to enrich and encourage open discourse and bring clarity into many amorphous topics covered by our Council.

Thank you very much,

⋮

Rita M Conn <ritamconn@gmail.com>

Dear City Council,

I have great respect and affection for the two senior members of the council that I know well. I consider Bob and Sue friends. I have worked with Bob on a few issues and he was always so available and involved I appreciate that.

As a marriage counselor for many years I am critically aware that there are always two sides to every issue.

In my opinion, George seems to often present the other side of the issues. I support that. I think it is important and I appreciate that he goes to the trouble of informing the residents with his newsletters that give a recap of council meetings.

As far as the hostile work environment, what are the exact charges that appear? There certainly must be another side to her story that the public should be aware of. As an outsider, it sure looked like Shohreh showed special and unfair favor to Mo.

Above all council, let's keep the peace and continue to show respect to one another, even when you disagree. In this way you will endear yourself to the public.

⋮

Thomas Osborne

Councilmembers,
For me, George Weiss is the freshest breeze to blow through Council chambers in a long time. I see him as principled and courageous in that he fights for transparency and stood up to a bullying, insulting former Council member. George's thinking is clear, independent, and fact-based. Moreover, he has a grasp of the environmental issues, including the need to lower carbon emissions, Council is contending with. I appreciate his work to bring Rivian electric trucks to Laguna. I do not think, based on the information I have, that George is responsible for the recent retirement of our city manager. Weiss would make a good mayor of our city if he ever gets the opportunity to serve in that capacity.

Thank you for serving our city as councilmembers., Tom Osborne

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Charlie Zender,

Much of what I know about Ms. Depuis' professional conduct has come from your bi-weekly CC summaries. You provide much-needed transparency to city issues, and always seem to be scrupulously fact-based. No wonder Ms. Depuis is uncomfortable with you :) I appreciate how you present facts and encourage readers to draw their own conclusions. My conclusion is Laguna is better off with her resignation.

Sure the settlement cost LB some money now. In the long run LB will be better off knowing that city managers are accountable and under a watchful eye. Please continue to bring attention to questionable city decisions, to name names, and to act with integrity. You are a great civic role model.

Sincerely,

⋮

Gavin Jonas

Thanks for the public update about the City Manager. Just underscoring my appreciation for your integrity. I'm so glad you're not afraid to speak truth to power. Can't believe that no one presented you with a written complaint with clear charges (and evidence), much less a chance to respond. Sounds like more housecleaning is in order at City Hall.
Charlie

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Moe Farsheed

Doing the right thing doesn't always reward one. Yet, you are doing what you were elected to do. I hope your emails reach most Laguna Residents. I sent a response to the LB Indy in your support a few weeks back. I never read their guest writer pieces. Same windbags. This is just another example of the toxic propaganda we see in the press nowadays. One just has to look at Huntington Beach. Maybe you should do a regular guest piece in our local rag. Best Regards Gavin.

Thank you for all your hard work! Hang in there, you have many supporters!

⋮

Trace Klug

Please don't worry about it- honestly, I know your in this little microcosm of people who actually care, but most of the city's citizens could care less why or how she left (I can't even remember her name) and has never even been to a city council meeting or knew who that city manager was. She worked for us and thats all she was. I would just move on and not worry about it. It sounds like she was in way over her head, not nearly tough enough, looking for a way out and you were the best scape goat.

Thanks for being willing to even be our city councilman in such a highly stressed out type A controlling town. I couldn't do it. It's always the exact same way dealing with the parents in the school district too. There is always drama like this in a highly educated, successful, driven, type A town. I grew up in La Canada Flintridge and it was the exact same way growing up. Although my parents are both lawyers too so this doesn't even phase me

Take care and please don't worry about her inability to handle her job and this town- we definitely need someone tougher.

Thnx so much for your service-

⋮

Margaret Baldwin

George,

We all know you were not the problem -- even if certain people won't admit it. Several staff members have told me that Shoreh created a toxic work environment (yelling and screaming at staff members after hours) -- thus the high level of staff turnover.

The fact that she never submitted a formal complaint and her unwillingness to provide service to those she perceived as "against her" further demonstrates her manipulative and ongoing revenge-filled behavior. She was never cut out to manage people or an organization.

Hang in there. I'll send communications to the council.

⋮

Dear George,
I support you. I, too, wish you are and were given an opportunity to clear up any misconceptions.
I think there have been many visible mistakes made by the CM in spending like there is no tomorrow.

I copied her on a letter for a problem we, in the tree streets, are having with the trash problems. I never heard back.
Clearly it's better that she left.

I will set my calendar for the date you provided. If it were not for you keeping in touch, most of us would not know what was going on.

Remain strong and always tell the truth as you know it. It's the only way we can rid the city council of the pack that's left.

I've been a property owner since 1998. We've seen many good city council members and a few really bad ones who caused great harm due to group think.

You shall prevail.

⋮

Teresa Siaca

Dear Mr. Weiss,
Sorry you're going through this BS experience.
I'm so grateful for your transparency and honesty- you've been a breath of fresh air. Please don't quit. Laguna Beach needs you.

Sincerely,

⋮

John Jopson

We're behind you 100%.

⋮

Tim Hayes

Hey George, sorry for your troubles. I find you to be a reasonable pragmatic and congenial guy. I support you.
Best wishes,

⋮

Jim Danziger

Hello George,
Thanks for sharing this with others. I know Michele Monda has sent a request for concerned citizens to speak at Council next week on this issue. Your comments below seem to reveal a disturbing explanation for what has happened.

I want to share with you a Letter to the Editor I submitted to the Indy a week ago. The editor said there was not enough space but told me that it will appear in this Friday's paper and that it would not be edited down. We'll see if she keeps her promise. There is no question that what has been in the Indy the past two weeks was strongly biased against you.

I hope you will agree that this letter adds to the kinds of points you are making without going into some of the details about which I have no knowledge.
Stay as positive as you can! Best,

⋮

SUSAN PINTO

Very sorry this type of thing is taking place in town

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Lee Winocur Field

I'm sorry you had to endure this experience, all with the intention of representing our residents fairly and justly. I do not understand the details of what happened, but I can tell they have taken their toll. Thank you for being a voice of reason. We need you. I hope you will continue on the Council. You have my support.
Dr. Lee Winocur Field

Stay Sea

⋮

David Sobolewski

Big win...

Keep up the great work.
I admire your strength.

⋮

Audrey Prosser

I don't attend very many City Council meetings but I will be at this one. No need to respond, I'll see you there, and good luck -

Horrific treatment George. I am so thankful for you! You are a force. I will be on vacation on Tuesday on an RV Trip but I think you know that I support you! Audrey

⋮

Derek Peterson

Good work, George.
I'll do my best to attend in person or virtually if not traveling as planned.

Best,

⋮

Mace Morse

George,

I have penned three letters of support and each one is angrier than the one before. And wisely I deleted them all before hitting the send button.

I promise you I've not lost my skill set, but none of them are anything but angry, and that's not a way to win. Suffice to say that any person that knows you, or knows of your commitment to the city, can easily see who is on the right side of this. It's sad, and I've said it before, but when things are happening in the dark, why has it become acceptable to blame the person that turns on the light?

Aye yie yie.

If at all possible, I'll try for Tuesday night.

Hang in there.

⋮

Nicolas Thiery

Hang in there and keep up the good work.

⋮

Byron Nelson

George, I fully support you, your performance and your opinion of the "retired" City Manager. Although I am not factually informed of the political machinations involved in some of these disputes, she was toxic and opinionated before the facts were even presented to her. Many of her actions and directions seemingly may have been the results of a closer than an arms-length relationship with some person(s) with significant business of great import and impact before the City and its development future. She made some very strange decisions on allowing projects to "secretly" proceed without approvals and who was the forcefully inappropriate aggressive party in a combative confrontation at the HOTELS involving a civil dispute. How were these greater than innocuous errors in judgment interpreted? She apparently had the City act on these errors in judgment. Whoever gave her that separation "MEGADEAL" seemingly had limited appreciation of what she was factually entitled to, if anything, and the City's finances, duties and responsibilities to its citizenry were not considered and were secondary. This is particularly true, if some actions were taken based on verbal complaints, not reduced to written factual affirmations, while not allowing a considered response. Litigation should be avoided but sometimes the threat is hot air and sometime it is unavoidable. Why is this City so adverse to litigation, when the facts and deductions were heavily in its favor, as here, if she even threatened? This entire scenario seems inappropriate and very poorly considered and resolved.

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GAYLE WAITE

Dear Laguna Beach City Council members,

As a frequent observer of City Council meetings over the past 40 years I have resided in Laguna Beach, I cannot recall such a tumultuous time with city government as has taken place these past few years. Considering all the information that has come to light during these recent times as well as the information that has been withheld from the public, isn't it time to start the next chapter by being more transparent?

While Council member George Weiss openly expressed disapproval in public of some of the former City Manager's

actions, I never saw him do so in a hostile nor threatening manner. Of course, someone being criticized or disagreed with may consider it hostile. I also observed another former council member Toni Iseman express disapproval of the former City Manager in council meetings for which Toni was met with hostility and lack of cooperation on the CM's part. Was Toni also named for creating a hostile work environment by the CM? Some residents became so frustrated by the CM, they began to speak their disapproval in public meetings and requested transparency. Were they named by the CM for creating a hostile work environment?

I believe it became very apparent over the past year that there needed to be a change in the City Manager position. Too many problems had developed with staff, management of city projects and expenditures were not being handled well, the public was losing trust in city officials, and more.

However, to allow the perception of George Weiss being the responsible party for whatever claims the former City Manager may have put forward to threaten a lawsuit in hopes of a better settlement package does not seem justified nor fair. I understand Non-Disclosure Agreements have been obtained to complete the exit of the City Manager and full disclosures may not be possible. In my opinion NDAs best solve only the problem of avoiding protracted legal expenses and never answer what is the truth, especially for other victims in all of this, the residents of Laguna Beach.

I have experienced George Weiss to be dedicated to trying to do a good job of putting residents first and addressing their concerns whenever possible. His open communications with residents are well-known and appreciated by many. He deserves to have the full story told of whether he did anything wrong regarding the leaving of the City Manager.

This experience should concern each one of you in your role as council members. More transparency about it would also seem necessary for you five to continue to work well together. There is no question that you each care about the greater good of Laguna Beach but please, allow George Weiss's reputation to be cleared in this situation. I think Laguna residents are optimistically looking forward to the next chapter once this last one is truly settled.

Thank you for your many hours of hard work.

Sincerely,

Gayle Waite

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MJ Abraham

Dear City Council Members,

As one of four residents accused of the same defamatory accusations as Council Member George Weiss, I must express again my disappointment in how this Council has handled this issue as well as the recent exit of City Manager Shohreh Dupuis.

I believe all four of you know very well who is responsible for what transpired with this problematic employee. And it is not Council member George Weiss.

Fact is, CC Members Whalen, Kempf and Blake were advised that candidate ACM Shohreh Dupuis was not supported by City employees and the public and was not the "right fit" to serve as our City Manager. Public feedback during the recruitment process reflected this, yet this trio ignored everyone including co-council members opinions. Their refusal to listen and errors in personnel judgement has cost us time, money and unnecessary community division and turmoil.

Four residents and multiple community members will not forget that we repeatedly begged this Council to hold CM Dupuis accountable for her disparaging accusations during a council meeting this year and that you ignored us. Council Member Weiss being the only member who tried to help address the issue by offering both sides the opportunity to speak and be heard. It was trekking to watch the CM decline after her planned inappropriate attack and none of you caring enough to comment or request proof and accountability. Thus the issue continued and resulted in one pending lawsuit. Who knows if more may surface.

Residents will also not forget that members Whalen and Kempf allowed Peter Blake to openly attack residents and members Iseman and Weiss and CM Shohreh Dupuis to disrespect them as well. This lack of governing by this body is what fueled the CM to target CC Weiss for fulfilling his fiduciary responsibility to constituents by asking pertinent questions on items brought forth by Council, CM, Staff and the City Attorney. It's blatantly clear that CC Weiss was set up by the CM's harassment/hostile work place claim in retaliation for pursuing accountability. And this Council facilitated the CM's intended and expected outcome.

There is no question that the public feels relieved that this employee is gone. It was long overdue. But hanging the departure on CC Weiss without conducting a proper investigation and then rewarding a troubled and manipulative employee with a history of lashing out to mask her inabilities with an overly generous severance package isn't a relief.

Your decision making and leadership abilities are in question. Especially by the four residents and council member wrongfully accused and who by your prior and recent actions have now been subjected to even more unwarranted public hostility and harassment. It's very upsetting to say the least.

As we move forward, I hope you can see the damage caused by the last city manager mistake and will not repeat it. The public is disgusted with the dysfunction of our city government since 2018 and the controlling council members putting their agendas before constituents welfare. Enough is enough.

I am encouraged by the hiring of the BB&K Law Firm as our legal counsel. I am looking forward to the recruitment of a well-qualified and highly-experienced "right fit" city manager next and more internal city hall changes in 2023/2024.

Laguna Beach should trust and have pride in those we hire and elect to lead us, not ashamed.

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Vicki Crowe

City Council Members,

I am writing in support of our current council member George Weiss. It appears he is under scrutiny because he is honest, believes in transparency and acts upon it. While serving as a council member George has shown integrity and courage. Alerting the public to upcoming issues that involve taxpayer dollars is the responsibility of our city council, yet George seems to be the only member determined to make this happen. He has enabled the public to get their voices heard before action is taken. As a 37 year resident of Laguna Beach, I expect the same transparency and integrity from our other council members and our city manager. Our out going city manager was not transparent in her actions and also made poor financial decisions. I'm sure it was embarrassing for her when her factious report of her traffic stop was disclosed. Pointing out someones poor performance is not harassment. Actually, it is the responsibility of our city council to ensure we have a competent city manager with integrity. It's time for all our council members to be transparent, stop these closed door sessions and show the same integrity exhibited by George Weiss.

Sincerely,

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