

From: [Pat Marriot](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment Item not on agenda Jan 11, 2021 public ethics
Date: Wednesday, January 5, 2022 4:46:54 PM

Council Members,

For the record, my op-ed (below) was published in the Palo Alto Daily Post on December 16, 2021 under the headline, "Bias clouded council's vote on theater."

The issue is relevant beyond the theater vote.

Pat Marriott

Ethics and the Public Trust

In recent years political discourse has devolved to the point where laws – codified and seemingly clear cut – are interpreted according to a politician's needs.

But what of ethics, far more ambiguous than laws?

I was prompted to explore public ethics when the Los Altos city council voted 3 – 2 to approve a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a residents' theater working group (TWG). The city agreed to hold a downtown parking plaza five years as a potential site for a new theater while the group tries to raise funds for a feasibility study.

Former Mayor Fligor has lobbied relentlessly for a theater since January 2021, when she pressed for a council objective to support the TWG. She emphasized no city money or staff would be required. Other council members argued a theater is not a city asset nor part of the city's infrastructure, but Fligor won deciding votes from Councilmembers Weinberg and Meadows, who also voted for the MOU.

Fligor addressed the TWG at its first meeting saying she had met them before or "you're a dear friend." She noted she and the group's leader "go way back. ... I know her family well" and she "would not be on Council today if it were not for [another group member]."

The local paper published an article headlined, "Mayor Neysa Fligor last week expressed support for building a new theater downtown." It reported a Chamber of Commerce meeting where she said, "a theater would provide so many benefits to the entire community. For me, it's a win-win."

Yet the TWG admits that a theater will never be self-supporting and they will ultimately look to the city for financial support.

The group lobbied council members, commissioners and business owners, but did no public outreach. At a meeting summarizing lobbying efforts, one member reported on her "great meeting" with Councilman Weinberg: "He's a strong proponent. It's fun to talk to a councilperson so positive to make this happen. ... Jon has coached us. ... He wanted to be cutting the ribbon for the theatre. That's how excited he is."

Residents voiced concerns about Fligor's and Weinberg's advocacy before the proposal came to Council. Acknowledging those concerns but ignoring their gravity, Fligor said, "The key for myself and other council members is that we are fair and open minded when it comes to us. I still would approach it with an open and fair mind."

The city attorney said officials can have strong opinions as long as there's no financial gain.

That's the law. What about ethics? I looked to the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics for guidance. <https://tinyurl.com/MCAethics>

When we vote for public officials, we assume they will represent all constituents and make decisions for the common good. We expect them to be trustworthy, to act with transparency and to keep an open mind before making decisions. Fairness demands all opinions be heard without preconceived bias.

Conflict of interest – or the perception of conflict of interest – favoring friends or private groups tells the public their vote, their opinion, doesn't count.

Fligor bumped TWG to the head of the line for Council consideration. The planning and financial commissions never weighed in on land use and fiscal impacts. Yet the city faces a \$25 million budget shortfall with multiple priority projects unfunded.

Los Altos ethics guidelines say, "Public service ethics is not only about doing the right thing, but also about the public's confidence that indeed the right thing has been done."

Fligor's and Weinberg's obvious support for a special-interest group has eroded public confidence. They, and all public officials, would do well to remember the law is a floor, not a ceiling, for public service ethics.

From: [Pat Marriot](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Public Comment Item not on agenda January 11,2022 Cities Association Board
Date: Wednesday, January 5, 2022 2:28:59 PM

Council Members,

I offer, for the record, my letter to the Town Crier, which was published in the online edition January 5, 2022. Councilwoman Fligor's power grab, backed by Councilmembers Weinberg and Meadows, violates tradition and fair play and brings shame on our city. Fligor should be embarrassed to attend the board meetings, knowing she has usurped Mayor Enander's rightful place.

Enander deserves mayor's board seat

Los Altos City Councilmember Neysa Fligor's insistence on keeping her seat on the Cities Association Board of Directors was inappropriate and divisive. She claimed she has to stay to continue work on the diversity and justice subcommittee and the transition to a joint powers authority.

Mayor Anita Enander is supremely qualified in those areas and would contribute greatly to the discussions. If she took her rightful place on the board of 15 mayors, Fligor would still keep her seat on the Executive Board, which is a separate entity. And it's the Executive Board that's responsible for continuity, since many cities change mayors every year. That rotation benefits cities and residents, with each mayor bringing new experience and talent to the board.

Fligor said, "I can't emphasize how important it is for me to continue serving."

Important to her? Of course. But not to the residents of Los Altos or to the Cities Association. What's important is teamwork, respect and integrity. Denying Mayor Enander the seat is an insult to her, to long-standing city policy, and to Los Altos residents.

We expect fair play from our elected representatives. Holding public office should not be a way of fulfilling one's personal agenda.

Pat Marriott

Los Altos

From: [Couture, Terri](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Fw: City Council meeting Jan 11, 2022 for Items not on the agenda
Date: Monday, January 3, 2022 7:28:22 PM

Dear City Council, city staff and members of the public

The new Los Altos mayor Anita Enander should serve on the board of the City Associations of Santa Clara County.

However, Neysa Fligor begged to continue in that position, even though she is no longer mayor, thus breaking a 12-year tradition of the current mayor serving on the board.

Why did Fligor discount and disregard this tradition?

Why did Fligor push to stay?

In Fligor's November 23, 2021 letter to the public she touted civility and cooperation. She spoke of respect and tradition. Her actions speak louder than her insincere platitudes. She seeks division when there should be cooperation.

Councilmembers Weinberg and Meadows, who voted against Mayor Enander serving on the board, can remedy this decision by revisiting their votes.

The council is supposed to take care of the citizens of Los Altos, not pursue selfish endeavors.

Sincerely yours,
Terri Couture

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