

Mayor John Dukes
Members of the Yuba City City Council
1201 Civic Center Boulevard
Yuba City, CA 95993

7 June 2011

Mayor Dukes and Members of the Council,

I continue to appreciate your willingness to hear alternate perspectives and dissenting views. I also appreciate that at the stage of the budget discussion tonight, you had no reasonable alternative but to approve the extension of 5% furloughs and the addition of 5% more.

My point this evening was two-fold. Without more input from the public, you are operating with assumptions which may be incorrect and that, as Mr. Jepsen noted, your law enforcement contract does not prohibit you from returning law enforcement officers to work, if the crime data suggests that you should do so. My question was, what data will you use? How will you monitor that question prospectively? What metrics will matter? I asked you to work with the Chief of Police **now** to set those parameters. If you wait, innocent citizens may suffer from your inaction or delay.

I should be clear that I do not discount how hard each of you has worked on this issue, especially on pensions which can be particularly contentious. To Council Member McBride's comment about being diligent in your closed door sessions, that was my point. There have been far too few options for the public to provide input into your process. The one day that you had a budget workshop last year, I stayed until I got called away and had to leave. This year I was unable to attend. But even that format does not compare favorably to the SACOG format which each of you understands from personal experience. The opportunities to brainstorm and subsequently determine principles and priorities which are possible in that format, are simply not possible in the meetings that you have held to date.

To the point of Mayor Dukes and Mr. Jepsen regarding the homicide and rape statistics, when is it a trend? I am well versed in statistics. To assume that a large increase in crime statistics after a reduction in law enforcement (yes, even two years later) is due to that force reduction, is as unwarranted as assuming that it is not. When I only have three minutes, I must focus on the most dangerous components of the data, whether they are a trend or not. At this point, we do not know if they are a trend, but it is *far safer* to assume that they **are** a trend and act accordingly, than to assume that they are not. Since you have chosen the less safe option, you might want to have a clear, proactive plan in place in case you are wrong.

To the point of having family here, I would say that we all do. While that supports the voracity of our good intentions, it does not support the inference that the process used or the results of that process were the best they could be. To Council Member Miller's point, it is tragic that Sacramento is in dire straits, but their situation has little impact on our decisions, or at least it should. You can certainly argue that when trying to outrun a bear, it is only important to be faster than the person next to you. I do not think that means that you should run only a little faster. I think that you should do your best and run as fast as you can. Maybe that analogy applies to economic and crime statistics, maybe it doesn't. Even if it means that the criminals are more likely to go to Sacramento after

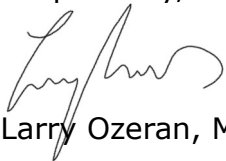
Sacramento is forced to lay off a huge contingent of their police, that would be a poor reason for us to do the same. I believe that we still want to make the best choice for Yuba City, regardless of what other cities may be doing. Mr. Buckland's comment about the reserve force was a welcome reminder of our options, but even then, the money has to be in the budget.

I agreed with most of what Mr. Jepsen said this evening, including finding a proper balance. However, I am looking at a larger sense of balance. What is the proper balance between what individuals pay for and what our pooled resources pay for through our government? That is a discussion that we have not had and should pass through a SACOG-like process. Maybe we will find that an abundance of residents believe that we should all pay for parks from pooled resources, maybe we won't. If we accept that the economy is likely to slowly be worse for the next two years or so, and that the real recovery won't happen for several stagnant years after that, maybe we won't mind if parks are individually managed by neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods might choose not to maintain their parks. If it takes six or 8 years to recover to 2007 revenue levels, those residents may, even in retrospect, decide that it was better to have the cash in hand for other efforts, and end up paying more to resurrect their park later, than to have spent money that we didn't have to maintain them now and for the several difficult years which followed. Maybe we will find that citizens support use taxes for what should be an individual expense. Maybe they will support higher sales taxes when they see continued increases in criminal activity. Until we have the broad discussion that we need, in a format that encourages citizens to participate, we won't know.

The purpose of this unusually long letter is to say that in these very troubling, crisis times, unusual measures are warranted. Some of your choices as our Council will harm as many or more people as they help. Is this really a path on which you want to make all of the decisions yourselves? Wouldn't you rather have a broad community discussion, much more than testimony or a workshop, in order to share the enormous burden of the decisions which must be made? You will probably have to make similar decisions next year and the year after that. As Mr. Jepsen noted, we would all like to see more community involvement. Community guidance can also inform your future challenges.

As a physician, I am trained to make life or death decisions, triage among multiple injured individuals, and accept responsibility for my choices. You are now in that same position, trained or not, ready or not.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Ozeran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "O".

Larry Ozeran, MD