

The 2020 7th District Optimist Club

by Richard Lord

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The 7th District Optimist Club (Club) shall have a change in leadership for 2020 beginning at the end of September 2019. This shall be a welcome change from the 2019 leadership. I expect the 2020 Club leadership to act with the upmost of integrity and honor.

Consequently, I have updated and upgraded my rating of the 7th District Optimist Club on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the best from a 3 to a 4. The advent of new Club leadership is the basis of the rating change from a 1 to a 4. Please see my article in this webpage section entitled "Update on the Decline of the 7th District Optimist Club," and my article "7th District Community Service Organizations Descriptions and Ratings" in the previous webpage section entitled "Description & Ratings of Community Service Organizations."

I would have upgraded my rating to a 5 if it were not for the fact the Club Board of Directors shall consist of many of the same few that have so despoiled the Club. The negativity of these few shall be a challenge to the functionality of new Club leadership. I shall upgrade my rating to a 5 should the new Club leadership exert itself with exceptional veracity; but shall downgrade it back to a 1 should it succumb to the influence of these negative forces.

From my many years with the Club, it has ranged from between 100 to 120 members. Of that number, only about 25% or between 30-40 members are actively engaged in Club activities. The lack of member participation is due to (1) membership ageing, (2) those who are members in name only for the sake of public recognition, and (3) those who cannot abide the hostility of the few same retrograde members who continue to control Club leadership polluting the atmosphere with negativity.

The Club also has structural issues. Namely, it is all male and all white. The Club is out of touch with the current age and time, and it shall be a challenge to attract new members given that it excludes 3/4ths of the American adult population.

In the 70's, Optimist International opened up to allowing woman members. The Mechanicsville Optimist Club has female members. I dare say, if the Club had female members and members of color, it would have greater civility and be a far more hospitable organization. Given that most of those who participate in Club activities are long retired, over the next decade, the Club shall lose most of those who actually do the business of the Club.

The Club just lost James "Duffy" Owens. Duffy did much for the Club, was a voice of reason, and shall be greatly missed. Duffy is the first of the beginning of the upcoming great departure of an aging Club membership.

Duffy supported my becoming BOF Chairman in 2015. I became Chairman when Robert Steele Pogue abruptly stepped down as Chairman in a bitter dispute with the Club. I have been told I saved the BOF when I stepped forward volunteering to be Chairman when no one else would.

The Club had better reform itself broadening its membership and improving its climate. This, if it is to continue to exist. This is a case of "Change or Die".