

Commentary: Current Huntington Beach council majority sending city in wrong direction

By Former Huntington Beach mayors and council members Connie Boardman, Kim Carr, Debbie Cook, Barbara Delgleize, Shirley Dettloff, Jill Hardy, Linda Moulton-Patterson, Joe Shaw and Grace Winchell Oct. 24, 2023 4:56 PM PT



The sun sets over the Huntington Beach Pier in November 2022. A number of former city officials write that the current City Council majority has made several wide-ranging political missteps that will bring harm to the city.

(File Photo)

Since December 2022 the Huntington Beach City Council has, at every meeting, brought forth controversial agenda items that have been met with

public opposition.

At the very first meeting, rather than following established council policies, they chose a newly elected fellow council member with no city experience but who shared their views to be our next mayor rather than the council member with experience.

At the next meeting they changed campaign contribution limits from \$620 per person to \$5,500 per person and gave the city attorney such a substantial raise that he now makes more than the city attorney of Los Angeles.

They stopped the volunteers of the Huntington Beach Interfaith Council who represent a variety of faiths from giving the invocation.

They then voted to replace the council voting on what flags could be flown at City Hall with an ordinance to prevent the Pride flag, or any other commemorative flag, from being flown at City properties. They settled a lawsuit brought by the air show for \$7 million before a judge could even dismiss the suit against the city, and they continue to refuse to make the rest of the settlement public.

Their actions have led to a lawsuit over housing numbers, and the loss of four of the city's top administrators. More recently, this council eliminated several citizens boards and committees, then gutted the city's Human Dignity Statement.

At the Oct. 17 meeting, this council voted to make changes that would change how our beloved libraries are managed. Instead of a well qualified staff making decisions, they voted to have a council-appointed panel of up to 21 members determine what children's books would be allowed in the library. The power to reject books or to determine what our children should read is book banning!

By approving a committee with the power to ban books from our libraries, the Huntington Beach City Council majority showed they do not believe parents and guardians have the wisdom to help their own children select books from libraries by themselves and need the government to interfere. This action was taken after hundreds of our residents objected to what the council was doing. This book banning will damage our library's excellent reputation for years!

At the same meeting, the majority on this council voted to place charter amendments on the March 2024 ballot that will harm our city.

One amendment pulls the city out of the county's voting system, something no other city in Orange County does. This amendment would require the city, rather than the county, to operate municipal elections, require voter ID and monitor ballot drop boxes. Both the California attorney general and secretary of state have warned this amendment is inconsistent with state law.

Why would the city want to take over a process currently done exceptionally well by the award winning O.C. Registrar of Voters office? There is no problem with voter fraud in Huntington Beach. There is no sound reason to waste taxpayer dollars to take over the operation of the elections of our council, attorney, clerk and treasurer.

City staff estimates the cost for one election will be between \$1.35 million to \$1.69 million. Taxpayer dollars. City staff reported the cost to provide 20 ADA-compliant voting locations can't be known at this time. Despite not knowing the total cost to taxpayers, the council majority recklessly voted to put this charter amendment on the ballot. In addition, this amendment opens the city up to a variety of lawsuits, which will result in the spending of even more taxpayer dollars at a time when the city is cutting budgets and services.

As mentioned, earlier this year the council passed an ordinance that requires only military or governmental flags be flown at city facilities, changing a

policy that allowed the council by majority vote to decide what commemorative flags may fly on city property. This authoritarian ordinance is now proposed as a charter amendment that would require a unanimous vote of the council to fly commemorative flags. What on Earth happened to majority rule?

Currently no charter section requires a unanimous vote by the council. Should the first unanimous vote required be over flags? This amendment will also prevent any cultural or national flags from being displayed at the library or other city facilities.

Make no mistake, this is an attempt to place into the City Charter language to make it almost impossible to fly the Pride flag during Pride month at city facilities. This kind of intolerance should not be in our charter. This amendment and the others must be voted down.

We urge the people of Huntington Beach to reject the damaging amendments the council majority is proposing. Please go to the website ProtectHB.org to join us in opposing these amendments to our City Charter.