



May 26, 2022

The Price of Freedom of Speech

There hadn't been such an attack on free speech from the City Council dais since 2018 when Councilmember Linda Milhaven accused those who opposed the Desert Discovery Center of being "terrorists."

It probably came as no surprise to City Hall watchers that Councilmember Milhaven's political understudy, Tammy Caputi, was the councilmember who, during last week's council meeting, staged a premeditated attack on a citizen for her political ideology because it didn't match Caputi's views. Putting the "bully" in bully pulpit, the thin-skinned Caputi admitted she was fed up with all the critical emails that weren't "fact based."

It was another moment in the cringe-worthy series of events from Tammy Caputi that's alienating her from other councilmembers – except Linda Milhaven.

The unfortunate recipient of Caputi's wrath was Laurie Coe, the community advocate who had been nominated to serve on the city's Planning Commission by Councilwoman Kathy Littlefield. Evidently in the past, Coe had the audacity to oppose development projects that Caputi had championed.

That was enough for Vice-Mayor Caputi to use the commission appointment process to publicly interrogate Coe and humiliate her in front of the community. Coe later wrote councilmembers: *"It is truly an abuse of power by the Vice Mayor. No other applicant that night or at any other meeting like this has been treated with a public attempt at shaming and humiliating a citizen."*

But that's the way Tammy Caputi rolls.

Everyone, at one time or another, has known a "Tammy Caputi." Probably in high school. That petulant teenager always on the verge of a snit who loves being the center of attention, usually at the expense of others.

Caputi's lack of tolerance for those who disagree with her and who have the nerve to criticize councilmembers puts her grossly out of step with "listening to residents" – a major theme that's dominating the current campaigns to fill three council seats in the November election. As for Caputi, who has three more years left on her council term, there isn't even the hint of pretense about listening to residents' input. Unless, of course, it's someone who already agrees with her.

Coe, who failed to be appointed to the Planning Commission, got the last word in her email to the City Council:

"The biggest takeaway from that meeting is that if you don't go along to get along, you can't serve on the Planning Commission. The whole point of this commission is to bring the community into the process of variance approvals.

"Sitting on the dais is a position of power. There is no need to attack and impugn people's character."



BITE ME!

This week's best sound bite comes from Planning Commissioner Christian Serena, made during the commission's discussion whether to allow the developer of 92 Ironwood apartments to renew its application under a new name and several changes to the project.

"I think it's tough given the way the code is written. We're slicing the baloney pretty thin."

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