

## **Redlands Daily Facts**

**July 19, 2007**

### **Letter to the Editor**

#### **Redlands' problem isn't revenue, it's spending**

In a Redlands Daily Facts story on Friday, July 13, Redlands City Manager Enrique Martinez was quoted as saying, "We're turning a corner" regarding city finances.

But wasn't he exaggerating a bit? The City Council has approved major new contractual expense obligations costing millions of dollars coming due in the next couple years and has announced no firm plan for paying for them. The city is not even close to the corner, let alone turning it.

I do believe City Manager Martinez is moving in the right direction, but it's a long road to that corner, and it will take a City Council that asks the right questions and makes the right decisions to get there.

The Blue Ribbon Committee, which is a good idea, will find that the city's finances have serious structural deficiencies that must be addressed before the city can claim it's turning the corner for the long term. For instance, city spending is seriously out of control in favor of consumption expenses and not enough for infrastructure and reserves, and members of the City Council frequently haven't asked the hard questions and made the hard decisions to prevent it.

Council members have spent nearly every dollar on these everyday items, so much so that they didn't have enough for maintenance of our streets, parks and even our city cemetery. Drive through Hillside Memorial Park, and you'll see what I'm talking about.

The city's financial problem has not really been a revenue problem.

The city's budget reports show that in the two years since the 2004-05 fiscal year, general fund revenues increased from \$48.8 million to an estimated \$59.2 million in 2006-07, a 21 percent increase. That's nearly three times the rate of inflation.

No, it's clearly not a revenue problem. It's a spending problem. And, with all the everyday spending, there has been very little for capital improvements such as other cities finance through their general funds, improvements that are necessary to keep Redlands a first-class town and to preserve our Redlands lifestyle.

It doesn't have to be that way, and it isn't that way in most other cities of similar size in Southern California. In my campaign for city council, we'll further emphasize how sound long-term financial policies and processes should be implemented that are necessary to protect Redlands as the special city that it has always been.

Then the city manager will be right about turning the corner.

**Jerry Bean**

Redlands

Candidate for Redlands City Council