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WEAVER GOES 'ROUND THE BEND... AGAIN

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It's been a while since Glendale Mayor Dave Weaver engaged in one of his petite mal rants, but on Sept. 5 he gave us a doozy. As usual, his familiar red-faced, blustering episode of anger came after having been caught red-handed. In a new development, however, you can see the fit for yourself.

First, some background. In recent years, while serving as impresario of the annual "Dreaming of Roses" event to raise money for Glendale's float in Pasadena's Rose Parade, Weaver also became involved in the "Miss Asia USA" beauty pageant. The former is an offshoot of the Glendale Rose Float Association (GRFA), albeit one that routinely disregards the parent organization's by-laws and countless accounting standards. The latter is a contest to pick the prettiest, poised young woman - from among the dozens who pay a \$500 entry fee - to wear the sash emblazoned "Miss Asia USA," "Mrs. Asia USA" or "Miss Teen Asia USA."



Glendale Mayor Dave Weaver, not smiling these days.

What the pageant, a for-profit venture previously unheard of in local circles, and the not-for-profit float fundraising effort have in common escapes me, save for Weaver's involvement. But one year the pageant turned up as a "sponsor" of Dreaming of Roses, and Dreaming of Roses was listed as a sponsor of the pageant.

The producer of the pageant, Virgelia Villegas, has a day job handling catering and event sales for a So. California hotel. She turned up as a member of the Dreaming of Roses committee, a panel created outside the GRFA's rules, with members picked by Weaver.

Soon, Miss Asia USA winners were riding on Glendale's float in the Rose Parade, and the pageant's producer, "Virgelia Productions, Inc." was using photos of Weaver with pageant winners to promote the event. Villegas has been presented a council commendation for her pageant at one meeting, and weeks later returned to address the council to promote the upcoming "Dreaming of Roses" event.

With the pageant sited previously in Orange County, Weaver boasted it was a big "get" to have his pal's show move to Glendale. The "Historic Alex Theater"

became the pageant's official home, and a sportscaster for Glendale's own KABC TV became the emcee. (The office for Virgelia Productions, Inc. is listed at an address in a multi-family residential building in Panorama City.)

The pageant's glorious path north was smoothed when SOMEBODY convinced Glendale City Hall, local developers and other local business people to start sponsoring the event. For example, just as developer Rick Caruso was campaigning to win council and citizen support for the redevelopment project now known as "Americana at Brand," his firm popped up as a sponsor of the Miss Asia USA contest. Soon, Gangi Development, Grubb & Ellis, Charter Communications and other familiar local firms were on board. Glendale Water and Power has been a sponsor from the start. After developer John Gregg recently sold "open space" property to the city for \$15 million, one of his companies turned around weeks later and paid \$12,500 of the pageant's expenses.

According to several sponsors I've spoken to, it's no coincidence that "Dreaming of Roses" and the pageant share many sponsors. They say Weaver either directly asked them to sponsor "Miss Asia USA," or that he introduced them to Villegas at private lunches, then let her ask. Because of concern Weaver would be angry at them for speaking to me, every sponsor spoke to me on the condition I not name them.



A contestant makes Glendale proud.

Okay, so that's how Glendale became home to a beauty pageant that has young women parading in swimsuits and interviewing with judges. (Yes, of COURSE Weaver has been a pageant judge.)

What does all that have to do with the Little General's latest temper tantrum on the dais?

Barry Allen, a local activist, political player and pain in the backside of some city officials, learned that in March Glendale provided the most recent Miss Asia USA event many city services and facilities free of charge. We've since learned the giveaway has been a three-year tradition.

The freebies for Villegas' company go well beyond cases of the city's bottled water handed out to production staff, contestants and other visitors. Glendale taxpayers provided use of the auditorium and meetings

rooms at the Glendale Central Library for the contestants to rehearse, and for workshops conducted by coaches from a modeling and acting school.

The city also gave Miss Asia USA free space for press conferences, and for reporters to interview contestants. Press covering the event is typically limited to those also serving as sponsors. A partial list provided by the pageant includes The Korea Times, Beirut Times, Armenian Television, The Sri-Lanka Reporter, Taiwan Daily and Vietnamerican Weekly.

A search of archives for the Daily News and Los Angeles Times revealed no hits for "Miss Asia USA." The Glendale News-Press has provided Chamber of Commerce-like coverage of the pageant, but has barely mentioned the running scandals surrounding either the pageant or "Dreaming of Roses."

City facilities are available for the public to rent, but for-profit groups are supposed to pay standard fees. Non-profit groups pay a reduced fee. Glendale's Library Services Director Nancy Hunt-Coffee has confirmed that, through just the most recent event, Villegas and Weaver enjoyed for free facilities that would have cost anyone else \$2,500. Hunt-Coffee said she approved the free rent because Weaver asked for it, and so she didn't bother to check the production company's profit status.

But that was just scratching the surface of the taxpayer largess. Weaver also asked for and received the services of seven Glendale Police officers. When word of that broke, much was made of the fact that reserve officers were used, volunteers who wear the city's uniform and badges, but who aren't paid members of the department.

Unfortunately, the whole truth is that Glendale pays for the extensive academy training of those officers, for their uniforms and equipment, and for their on-the-job insurance and other costs. Reserve officers routinely serve as full-fledged officers throughout the city, even on regular patrols. In addition, taxpayers paid costs associated with the six city patrol cars issued to the cops working the pageant. But the Mayor's gal pal got all that and more for exactly zero dollars and zero cents.

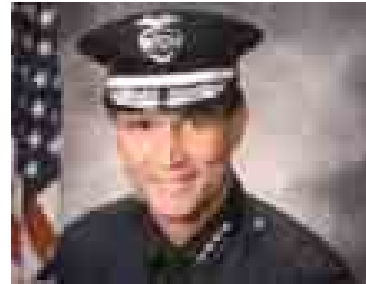
Indeed, when someone other than a council member employs those services, including for-profit and non-profit organizations, they pay something. Even Glendale high schools pay the reserve officers for working at football games.

Non-profit entities can enjoy what Police Chief Randy Adams described as a "discount." Some non-profits even get a "deep discount," which City Manager Jim Starbird said was limited to "maybe one or two every year," though no one in City Hall has yet been able to name groups on that special list. Even as part of the special report to the council from Adams, basic data and numbers were nowhere to be found.

Still, how much non-profits pay for police services is irrelevant, as the “Miss Asia USA” pageant is a for-profit endeavor. But according to Weaver’s explanation at the council meeting, he asked for the police services to be provided free because they’d been provided free in previous years.

Obviously dancing between protecting the very mayor who called him to the podium and telling the whole truth, the presentation from Adams bordered on hilarious.

Adams laid out a new “plan” for handling assignment of reserve officers in future to assure they’re used only for appropriate events, and that beneficiaries pay all the expenses. The core of this bold new move is having the task moved to an office directly under the chief’s control.



Police Chief Randy Adams, reports to the council.

How putting Adams in charge of dispatching reserve officers and assuring the city is repaid for the expense will prevent Adams from doing precisely what he’d done previously - dispatch officers and cars to Weaver’s pet project free of charge - may just be so ingenious a tactic that I’m too dumb to understand. Council members and staff must be much smarter than I, because no one mentioned the point.

But Weaver’s snit was yet to come. Barry Allen addressed the council after Adams’s presentation, noting that, while reserve officers are unpaid, there are many costs associated with their service. As an example he cited the patrol cars. When Allen left, Weaver called Chief Adams back to the podium and asked, “Is any group charged for use of the police cars?”

Clearly, Weaver hoped Adams would say, “Of course not. That’s crazy talk, Mr. Mayor.” Instead, Adams again danced between the whole truth, which would embarrass Weaver, and a lie, which would be obvious.

“The only time there’s a charge for the police units is when there’s an overhead charge incorporated into the billing process,” Adams said.

Unfortunately for Weaver, it had previously been explained that overhead is charged to all for-profit ventures, events like the “Miss Asia USA” pageant. But the pageant wasn’t charged. There was no “billing process,” because Weaver asked for it all free of charge.

Noting Allen had accused him receiving special treatment, Weaver then began to turn crimson and directed a question to Adams and City Attorney Scott Howard.

“Again, I’m accused of getting special treatment... Did I get any special treatment by asking if I could use them (the police officers), in the cost or whatever?”

Surely Weaver hasn’t decompensated to the point he's forgotten his then-nemesis Larry Zarian using the same tactic in the 1990s. That former mayor and council member was routinely accused of receiving special treatment, often from the city’s planning and permit offices. As the scandals bloomed, Zarian invariably turned to staff during meetings and, filled with outrage and hurt would demand of city staff, “Have I asked for or received any special treatment?!”

Perhaps there’s a city where staff can be relied on to publicly answer, “Well, of course, you big buffoon. You cross the line on a daily basis, and we’re tired of having to cover for you.” But Glendale has never been one of those cities.

I know first-hand that Weaver scoffed at those instances 10 years ago. Then again, perhaps Weaver has forgotten those episodes because today he and Zarian seem to be chums who routinely support one another’s causes.



Former Mayor Zarian, Weaver's mentor in defense tactics.

Adams’s answer to Weaver was about as close to the truth as one could reasonably hope, and it sent me into a fit of laughter.

“If you or any council member ever makes any request of the department, we treat that very seriously,” Adams said. “We look at that and try to deal with that the best that we can.”

I was disappointed no one in the chamber burst into fits of the giggles. I’ve never seen a staffer come closer to telling the whole truth; that there’s no doubt council members get special treatment.

Clearly, that wasn’t enough for Weaver. He pressed it further, asking, “Do I get special treatment?”

“You don’t get any more special treatment than anyone else on the council,” Adams said. I had to pick myself up off the floor after that one, wipe the tears of laughter aside, and watch it over again and again.

Weaver then turned to City attorney Howard and asked, “Did I break any law?”

Howard said he looked at the issue “relative to any potential FPPC (Fair Political Practices Commission) or Political Reform Act violation, and the answer is no.”

That's a typical response for Howard, answering only a convenient part of the question. As Weaver is not known to have a direct financial interest in "Miss Asia USA," he didn't step afoul of the FPPC's conflict of interest rules. What Howard did NOT address was the obvious, undeniable and irrefutable "gift of public funds" issue.

Technically, one wonders whether in fact Adams and Hunt-Coffey are ultimately liable for providing gifts of public funds to Virgelia Productions and Weaver. But there's also no question it was Weaver who asked them to provide the gifts.

From there Weaver went into his rant, especially swelling and sputtering at Allen, who sat in the audience. He lectured Allen for making public records requests that revealed the giveaway and other scandals, and scolded him for smirking. Weaver alleged the Glendale resident has "made 171 requests for public information in 12 months, costing this city probably a quarter million dollars."

I wanted to ask Weaver the source of his claim about the supposed expense, and just how many requests for PUBLIC INFORMATION he thinks a citizen is entitled to make. State law and clauses in the California's Constitution that make providing public information inherent in every public employee's job certainly don't cap how many times a citizen can ask. But since I first started covering his "Dreaming of Roses" scandals, and since I advanced a source's challenge to reveal themselves publicly if Weaver would agree to dueling polygraph exams, Weaver stopped returning my calls. (For some examples of past coverage, [CLICK HERE](#), then scroll down to Feb, 2005; [CLICK HERE](#) for columns dating back to March, 2004, or scroll down the page you're on now to March, 2006 column)

Perhaps taking a page from President Bush's tactics with those who criticize his handling of the Iraq war, criticisms conflated into "attacking the troops," Weaver and Adams implied complaints about Weaver's giveaway somehow constituted criticisms of the police reserves. Much of Adams's presentation was an unnecessary testimonial to the valor and generosity of the officers. Weaver charged Allen had "done nothing but hurt the police department..."

Both efforts compelled council members to offer their own praise for the reserve program, but the dodge didn't work.

Finally, readers may want to confirm I've relayed this version of the story accurately, and to check for themselves that I've fairly characterized Weaver's rant – one that ended with the Mayor challenging Allen to run for office and take his place. Weaver referred to himself as "the big Kahuna." But we all know it's a chore to trek to the library for copies of a meeting tape that's more than three hours long. Well, hooray, that's no longer necessary.

Thanks to the city's truly marvelous new "on line archive" of city meetings, you can sit at your own computer and watch discussion of just this one agenda item. (Pay special attention to the excellent job Councilmen Bob Yousefian and Frank Quintero do of pointing out just some of the many large holes in the chief's report, and in Weaver's feeble arguments.)



Councilman Bob Yousefian - With colleague Frank Quintero, they didn't let Weaver or Adams off easy.

CLICK HERE to access a recording of the Sept. 5 meeting. First, go through the archives to the Sept 5 meeting and click on "VIDEO." Once the viewing screen appears, look beneath it and click on the "JUMP TO" menu and select "Item a, Chief of Police..." It immediately follows item 6, oral communications.

The chief's grossly incomplete report consumes the bulk of the 45 minute discussion, and Weaver's angry display begins its slow build near the end, at about the 1 hour and 52 minute mark for the full meeting.

But I recommend watching the entire discussion so all is in context.

Don't miss the final moments, when Weaver tries twice to have the matter wished away forever with a "note and file" vote. His colleagues had to insist city staff come back to an upcoming meeting to publicly provide the scores of facts and policies that inexplicably weren't available for this one.