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## Library campaign logo raises ethical questions

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by **Anne Louise Bannon**

The gift of a banner logo stirred up controversy at the April 28 meeting of the Altadena Library Board of Trustees.

Board President David Datz questioned if there would be a conflict of interest if the library district used the same logo as the Alliance To Save Our Altadena Libraries. The use of the logo was offered by the Alliance, which is an independent group that supports the continuation of a parcel tax to support the library district on the November ballot.

Because campaign law does not allow the library district or its trustees to explicitly campaign in favor of the parcel tax, the Alliance, a separate committee of local residents, was formed. Currently, the Alliance is focusing on raising awareness of the libraries, an area that recent strategic plans have noted has been neglected.

“One of the consistent weaknesses was a lack of communication,” community activist Monica Hubbard said, addressing the Board.

To that end, committee members, including advertising executive Tony Nino and marketing executive Bill Burnett, designed a logo reading “Our Altadena Libraries, Read On.”

“And now I’m going to fulfill my role as perpetual wet blanket,” Datz announced. Datz’s objection was that if the library uses the headline for its promotional materials, and the pro-tax committee uses it on their campaign materials, the public will confuse the two and think that the library is campaigning for the tax.

“If we adopt this branding for the library and later it’s used in the campaign, [the public] won’t be able to separate the two,” Datz told the meeting.

In addition, Datz was concerned about the fact that the Alliance developed the headline with the intent of using it in the campaign for the parcel tax.

“It was created for that purpose,” Datz said. “It’s an ethical opinion. As trustees, we have to keep our distance. There have to be some lines and boundaries.”

Nino, in response to Datz’ objections, went so far as to imply that Datz was more concerned about election rules than saving the library, clearly annoying Datz.

“Could it be you’re wrong?” Nino demanded during the exchange, a sentiment also echoed by Burnett.

Datz did note that according to CLA rules that if such a logo were to be used in all library materials and promotions, it could be used in campaign materials, and when he called for the motion on the issue, he insisted that “all” be in the language. Trustee Meredith McKenzie made the motion, amending it to include the word. In the end, fellow trustees McKenzie, Gwendolyn McMullin and Thomas Hubbard (Trustee David Tuck was not at the meeting) voted to accept and use the headline.

Other items of note on the meeting agenda included the first presentation of the library’s operating budget for fiscal year 2014/15 and the board’s official approval of the formal job description for the position of library director. With the official job description, the recruiting committee can begin to advertise for candidates to fill the position left open by former director Barbara Pearson’s death last December.

The budget also includes the urgent request to purchase new staff computers, since the current ones run on the outdated and unsupported Windows XP operating system.

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