

SUPPORT ARTS CONSORTIUM

Hatched into a henhouse of wordsmiths, I spent some grade school moments with Reader's Digest's "It Pays To Increase Your Word Power". I liked older words with dramatic sounds and stories. As Solomon said, there's nothing new under the sun and those words connected me to the past.

The state of fiscal affairs in Fairfield and the well calculated projections of Finance Director Bob Leyland bring such a word to mind; draconian. In 621 B.C, Draco, a Greek lawyer and statesman, laid down a code of laws that mandated severe penalties for minor crimes. Today draconian connotes rigid, harsh or oppressive.

Municipalities make draconian cuts when income does not meet expenses and new taxes are heretical. The en vogue federal response is simply printing more money and employing hope as a method. Unless a \$13 million dollar golden goose squats a big one into our community nest egg, your city council has to make draconian cuts.

Reengineering of resources, more smartly pulling from volunteer pools, forging of strategic municipal and private partnerships and the matching of talent with terrain always helps.

There is an example brewing. Although the absolute dollars saved is not high, the delight and dividends for all could be.

When faced with a budget shortfall last year, an insightful council took to heart the Vice Mayor's artistic mantra, "Arts are the soul of a community." They continued a 25 year funding tradition and passed a new free rent resolution removing costs for grant recipients who use the cultural arts center. (FCCA) Thanks to former Community Services Director John Delorenzo, Interim Director Sandra Reece Martens and hard working city staff including Maureen Lillemoe and others, the policy is a huge success.

Now volunteers from the arts and business such as Missouri Street Theatre's Pam Sperring and Solano Repertory's Barbara Norris and Keith Stout of Vaca Jazz and Monica Tipton of Mira Theatre and fifteen other arts groups throughout the county with Catherine Salmon of North Texas Street Association and Paul Fondersmith of Nvisionary design are pooling resources. They are finishing a web site and blog and building an arts consortium (see mock up at <http://www.nvisionize.com/FCCA/index.htm>) that will educate, inform, engage, entertain and electronically ticket everyone in the county.

They presented their ideas to the City Manager and Community Services staff, adding Gale Spears of Marketing and Steve Garrison - Information Technology guru to the mix, and the city remarkably changed course to look at their ideas.

Using funds earned from the Arts Gone Wild Gala, this site showcases the richness of Solano creative arts. If everyone plays, smart marketing combined with strategic business partnerships and on line inexpensive comprehensive ticketing solutions will save advertising revenues for artists, provide superb

customer service, garner great strength in numbers and provide a multi-vehicle marketplace supporting local businesses as well as the arts.

If this succeeds, we may finally integrate the sizzle of the arts with the economic stake we all have in our home town as we recreate and buy retail locally.

What can you do?

Support the consortium. Community Services took the lion's share of past cuts. Our astute City Manager is getting expert consultative advice regarding any reorganization of Community Services and perhaps City Redevelopment makes sense and saves dollars. Speak up.

This consortium works if a few crucial arteries of life's blood are left intact. During renovation, Solano College Theatre will pay to use FCCA. The city would be wise to continue the free rent resolution and in kind, continue some level of grants support, say 2/3rds of past, while the consortium lifts itself up. The efforts of the consortium are an investment, not expenditure.

Here's another word...As many worthy issues compete to survive, this wise act of comity may not fill a \$13 million hole, but it will not dig one either.

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield.