

PRESENTATION TO GOVERNMENT CLASS
VENTURA COLLEGE
MAY 11, 11:00 A. M.

OUTLINE

*Santiago
light*
spud on Gonzales

I. Opening Statements

Thank you. Pleasure to meet with your class here today. Teacher should be commended for efforts to supplement textbooks with outside resource persons. Hope the information I provide is of some interest and assistance to you. Would like to present some information and observations regarding local government and then respond to any questions you may have.

II. Value of Government Class

This course should be helpful to you in understanding not only the processes of government, but also the jurisdictional division of government. If citizens are to evaluate the performance of government and influence its decisions, they must understand what level of government is responsible for various functions/programs. These jurisdictional divisions often complicated--overlapping today, but do still exist.

III. Local Government

Would like to focus this discussion upon the responsibilities and functions of local government, and to discuss its responsiveness to the people.

A. Responsibilities

1. Changing Character

Traditionally, local government has been responsible for providing basic municipal services needed for healthy

and pleasant living (e.g. water, sewage and refuse collection and disposal, street improvement and maintenance, etc.). Today, many new demands placed on local government (e.g. public transportation and housing, land use control, environmental protection, recreation programs, community relations, etc.); some of these are a result of federal and state requirements, many others are in response to changing needs/expectations of citizens.

2. Concern for Quality of Life

- a. New and intense concern today for the quality of our physical and social environment. Pursuit of high quality environment requires cooperative efforts of federal, state, local agencies-- including regional councils of governments (e.g. S.C.A.G., V.C.A.G.).
- b. Local government's primary contribution to this effort is in area of land use control. In Oxnard, General Plan adopted in 1969 provides overall framework to guide this control strategy. General Plan revision now needed in light of federal action (e.g. air quality standards), state action (e.g. additional mandatory General Plan elements), County action (e.g. agricultural element), initiative action (Proposition No. 20), and changing views of citizens as to type of community they desire.
- c. Results of these actions and concern in Oxnard will undoubtedly be smaller population (less than 550,000 - 750,000 anticipated by current General Plan),

preservation of more open space, higher quality development. Oxnard already involved in responding to these predicted changes (e.g. Phased Development Program, Open Space and Conservation Element, higher development standards).

B. Functions

1. City Council is legislative body for Oxnard City Government and, as such, governs affairs of city by enacting laws, developing policies, and determining level of municipal services. Council composed of five members elected at large for four year terms. Council members select Mayor, who presides at meetings and serves as the ceremonial head of city government at business meetings and social functions.
2. Matters come before the City Council for action in many different ways. ⁽¹⁾ Annual adoption of budgets set ⁽²⁾ level of services and determines ^(b) priorities for capital improvement projects. ⁽²⁾ Proposed changes in City policies (e.g. sign ordinance, development phasing) or new programs (e.g. redevelopment) are brought before the Council in several ways: ^(a) by members of the Council, ^(b) by City staff recommendations, ^(c) and by the urging of the public. Prior to action upon such proposals, the City Council receives reports analyzing their advantages/disadvantages, and hears from the public as to their views. In the case of major proposed changes, City Council action is taken at public hearings in the evening which provide maximum

* ①
City manager
Forum

②

See other ③

your neighborhood
Council - increase
via public

Protect & serve community
④

opportunity for citizen input. Overall objective of the Council in considering each of these proposed laws, policies, or programs is the development and maintenance of a well balanced community which not only fulfills the basic needs of local residents, but also provides a pleasant environment in which to live.

C. Responsiveness

Purpose of local government is to respond to needs of its constituents. In order to effectively meet this purpose, elected and appointed officials must keep in close contact with the consumers of City services and respond to expressed needs. City of Oxnard attempts to do this in many ways:

⑤
out meetings

1. All meetings of Council and appointed City groups are open to public; citizens regularly express their views at these meetings and action often results.

advisory groups

2. City Council has established some 13 different citizen groups which advise the City Council and City staff in specific functional areas (e.g. Planning, Parks and Recreation, Community Relations).

individual contact

3. City Councilmen receive many contacts from individual citizens regarding their needs and problems; these contacts result in the consideration of issues by the Council as a whole, and/or direct action on problems by City staff (upon referral through City Manager's Office).

⑥ other
Can't meet all needs immediately

4. Council has recognized need to develop even more opportunities for citizens to express their views and influence decisions of city government. Neighborhood Council Program has been established to provide these opportunities. Based upon neighborhood boundaries of General Plan (Planning area - 144 neighborhoods, Phase I Area - 71, fully or partially developed now - 40); all property owners or residents 18 years + are eligible; 5 members Executive Board; advise City Council, appointed City groups, City staff, other agencies on needs - evaluate existing service programs - offer recommendations and information; will receive City support - staff, supplies, postage, etc. Fourteen Neighborhood Councils now established. Neighborhood Councils will give citizens even greater voice in governmental decision making process and, thereby, more control over their destiny.
5. City Council has also established a community relations program to respond to needs of individual citizens; includes Community Relations Representative, four aides; operates from City Hall and two field offices; provides general "ombudsman" type services which help to cut the "red tape: and promptly respond to problems.
6. Colonia Multi-Service Center another example of City's effort to be responsive to community needs; will bring numerous service agencies (e.g. Social Security, Department of Human Resources Development, Social Welfare, County Health, etc.) to one convenient, easily accessible location.

IV. Personal Observations

A. City Council Service

Serving as City Councilman challenging; presents many opportunities to encourage and provide leadership to the betterment of community's physical and social environment. Can be frustrating since needed changes often occur slower than we would like; this slowness is often caused by complexity of procedures which City, by law, must follow, and by the involvement of other agencies in the approval process of many projects; while often frustrating, many of these procedures/necessary approvals help protect the public interest, and assure that projects are consistent with community and national goals.

B. Challenges

Oxnard City Government, as other city governments in Ventura County and throughout the nation, are facing many critical challenges:

1. Need to carefully regulate growth while still providing homes and jobs for city residents.
2. Develop revenue sources which allow city government to respond to growing demand for city services, especially in such areas as parks and recreation, which will be needed as available "leisure time" increases.
3. Develop balanced transportation systems which provide mobility while preserving environmental quality.
4. Further define relationships with other local governments, regional organizations, state and federal agencies.

5. Improve quality of environment through pollution control strategies and innovative policies regulating the use and reuse of land.
6. Continue to bridge communication and cultural gaps among citizens and build a more harmonious and unified community.

V. Questions and Answers