

Ryan Gilbert
58 Lakeview Avenue
Piedmont, CA 94611

Councilmember Jeff Wieler
c/o City of Piedmont
120 Vista Avenue
Piedmont, CA 94611

October 9, 2012

Per email

Councilmember Wieler:

Re: Your comments on Facebook to Michael Rancer

On Sunday evening (October 2, 2012) you launched a verbal tirade on Facebook against Michael Rancer, the Chairperson of Piedmont's 2011 Municipal Tax Review Committee. Your tirade is online at www.facebook.com/jeff.wieler.

Mr. Rancer is listed as your friend on Facebook. I understand that in response to your posting urging Piedmonters to "check out" the website to the Yes on Measure Y campaign, Mr. Rancer replied that Piedmonters should also have a look at the website for No On Measure Y.

He replied to you as any Facebook friend would, in accordance with expectations of common decency and First Amendment right.

You took some severe action. Firstly, you deleted his original comment. It is nowhere to be seen on the site. Then, you proceeded to verbally attack Mr. Rancer. This exchange is still visible to the public under your name on Facebook. To refresh your memory, an extract of your Facebook is reproduced below with all your typographical errors (and your full page is attached to this letter):

Jeff Wieler MIKE, WHEN THEY GO TIO YOUR SITE, THEY WILL SEE YOU WANT TO SLASH PUBLIC SAFETY. YOUR LACK OF CONCERN FOR SAFETY IS APPALLING TO ME. Yesterday at 7:39pm · 1

Michael Rancer No, they won't see that because that's not what we are advocating. But what we are doing is asking questions about why services in Piedmont cost so much more than in other small, affluent cities and why the Council is not pursuing that issue. People are free to ask questions and come to their own conclusions. 23 hours ago

Jeff Wieler You're not asking questions. You're advocating cuts. You know less than nothing about police or fire services, yet you have the unholy presumption to try to treat public safety like a bookkeeping exercise. If you want to debate public safety do so by engaging the police and fire chiefs, or find somebody with some expertise to teach you the basics. You embarrass yourself. 23 hours ago

Jeff Wieler Mike, you were a finance officer for UC, and you're now collecting one of those govt pensions you complain about so much. Want to tell me what experience you have in public safety? If none, then perhaps you should stay away from trying to make decisions that affect people's lives. I've been there -- it's far more complex than you realize. And when you get it wrong, there are dead bodies
23 hours ago · Edited

You had a lot to say about Mr. Rancer's background. I have no doubt that you have studied his excellent resume.

1. You voted to appoint him to the Municipal Tax Review Committee.
2. You strongly supported his election as Chair of the Committee.
3. You and Mayor Chiang were at all times highly complimentary of Mr. Rancer and the quality of the Committee's report.
4. You supported him as the spokesperson for the failed Measure A Sewer Tax and regularly worked with him on that failed campaign.

You certainly know Mr. Rancer well, and even accepted his endorsement of your candidacy in 2010.

Despite your personal knowledge of Mr. Rancer and his professional experience, you now say to him "you know less that nothing about police or fire services, yet you have the unholy presumption to try to treat public safety like a bookkeeping exercise." You then add "You embarrass yourself".." Later you challenge Mr. Rancer: "Want to tell me what experience you have in public safety".

I will refresh your recollection of Mr. Rancer's credentials and the reason why you supported him in the past:

- BA (UC Berkeley), Masters in City Planning (MCP)(UC Berkeley), Masters in Public Administration (USC)
- 1979-83 - On staff of Congressman Norman Mineta, then a member of the House Budget Committee.
- 1983-86 - Chief of Staff for a member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors with budget oversight for \$1 billion county budget, including Sheriff's Dept.
- 1986-87 - Capital Project Manager, Santa Clara County Executive's Office, responsible for Civic Center plan including county jails.
- 1987-1996 - Budget Director, Santa Clara County Transit District (later Valley Transportation Authority) (\$300 million budget, including Transit Police).
- 1996-2008 - Chief Administrative Officer for UC Berkeley Library System (\$85 million budget, 300 different funds). Responsibilities included business, finance, budget, human resources, facilities and security).
- 2008-2011 - Budget Director for UC Office of the President (\$500 million budget, 500 different funds)

Mr. Rancer seems like a very qualified subject matter expert to deal with financial matters in Piedmont., including the cost of public safety.

You claim to have the experience needed? You write: "I've been there – it's far more complex than you realize."

Well, where exactly have you been? According to your biography when you ran for office in 2010 you are a "Business Manager" and a "Columnist". You described 30 years of corporate and non-profit financial management experience, 15 years of volunteer service and 7 years writing the "Piedmontage" column in the Piedmont Post. You previously served one term on the Piedmont City Council. You also received a bachelors degree in an undisclosed subject from Princeton and an MBA from Harvard Business School back in the mid-1970s.

Please take a moment and compare your credentials and those of your fellow Council members to Mr. Rancer's credentials. Based on the standard that you applied to Mr. Rancer, neither you nor any of your Council colleagues would be qualified to deal with these matters.

I would argue that you are insulting public servants like Mr. Rancer when you belittle their credentials and then falsely claim to have superior experience on the subject matter.

But for the many that know you in Piedmont this is not surprising. You are well known for using your bully pulpit as a Piedmont Post columnist and your position as Council member to insult, disparage and tear down well meaning citizens who take an opposing stand on issues that you support.

Here are examples of your bully tactics over the past few years:

1. You tore down and described as unproven and inexperienced any City Council candidate who was not part of the establishment that you seem to represent.
2. You regularly described opponents to the ill-fated undergrounding projects as being anti-safety and putting lives at risk, while ignoring the now proven facts that these projects would be financial disasters.
3. You applied the same treatment to the opponents of the failed Blair Park project, but went a step further and claimed that by opposing Blair Park these NIMBYs are also selfish and don't care about Piedmont's children, while ignoring the financial loss that Piedmont is now facing.

You make wild claims, often personal, and only when challenged do you apologize. Do you remember when:

1. You called Blair Park opponents the "Piedmont Taliban" on the very day that a Member of Congress was shot in Tuscon and lives were lost (1/12/11)
2. Although you served as Council liaison to the Planning Commission, when Council Member Keating raised the issue of the Commission's unanimous recommendation against approval of the Blair Park project, citing issues with General Plan consistency, visual impact and risk of undermining adjacent properties, you stated that "they're not qualified" and asked to "see their credentials" (3/21/11). At a subsequent meeting, your fellow Council members were forced to apologize for you and reiterate their support for the Council-appointed Planning Commissioners.
3. You called members of the MTRC and the LWV's Undergrounding Task Force "nattering nabobs of negativity" (8/24/11)

Piedmonters objected and wrote letters. You ate some humble pie and apologized and we all agreed to move on.

Unfortunately you don't seem to learn from your mistakes, and your apologies don't seem to mean anything, because your comments to Mr. Rancer sink to a new level of insult and thuggery that Piedmont has never witnessed before.

Maybe you enjoy saying mean things about well-meaning people exercising their democratic rights. Maybe you like a good fight and relish controversy. Maybe you simply don't care.

Your inflammatory comments and abusive bullying has sullied the already damaged reputation of the City Council. You've driven deeper the wedge that exists between supporters of your Council and Piedmonters who are seeking more accountability, transparency and improved fiscal control. You're making it even more difficult for Mayor Chiang to bring all groups together and address common problems as a community. Who would want to sit with you in a community meeting after being publicly insulted with no opportunity to reply?

As an elected Council member, one of two Council members authorized by resolution to prepare the Measure Y argument and rebuttal, and a member of the Piedmonters Supporting Measure Y campaign committee for a Yes vote on Measure Y, every public statement you make is associated with these groups.

Do the City Council and the Yes on Measure Y Committee support your bully tactics? Do they agree with your demeaning statements against Mr. Rancer? Are your actions representative of the "Piedmont way" and acceptable standards of decorum in our civic life?

If you want to debate Mr. Rancer, please do so without calling him names and tearing him down. Focus on the issues.

You make blanket statements that the defeat of Measure Y will put public safety at risk. I would argue that you have no basis to make this statement. Your Council has never had any discussion in this regard. Staff has never delivered any report with this finding. If this risk is even moderately likely, why is the Council not discussing contingency plans in the event that Measure Y fails?

Given these facts, your final comment to Mr. Rancer is especially troubling. You write: "And when you get it wrong, there are dead bodies". What do you know? Do you have knowledge of issues that will without any doubt put lives at risk? Have you discussed this knowledge with the Police Chief, Fire Chief or City Council? What should Piedmonters know? Are certain parts of Piedmont at a greater risk than others? What do you know that others don't?

Your arguments in favor of Measure Y are prime examples of your bullying. You make wild, unsubstantiated statements that you pass off as the gospel truth. And you then expect voters never to challenge your comments; because when they do you'll label them "Taliban".

So what can you do now?

I am sure that you will find some goodness in your heart and bluster out an apology to Mr. Rancer at your next City Council meeting. Nobody will hear the apology, because nobody

watches KCOM. Perhaps the apology will be recorded in the meeting minutes, but that too is unlikely given the Council's recent history of inaccurate minutes. and after-the-fact editorializing of the minutes by amendment.

Please ask yourself: Is that truly enough? Think about your hurtful, uncalled for attack on Mr. Rancer. Consider all the other Piedmonters you've insulted over the years and your apologies that now seem empty and in vain. What more can you do?

How about the following?:

1. Apologize to Mr. Rancer in writing in your Piedmontage column
2. Allow Mr. Rancer to publish a column of equal size in the Piedmont Post at the same time of your apology so he can make his argument opposing Measure Y
3. Submit your written apology to Piedmont's other news publications including The Piedmonter, Piedmont Patch and Piedmont Civic Association
4. Publish a copy of the apology on the www.yesonmeasurey.com.

Some in town would go further. They would suggest that you resign from the City Council and allow a more positive and respectful candidate to take your seat. I'm not suggesting this. I am told that if you do serve out your term and then decide to run again you will be opposed by well organized and well financed candidates who will make your negative character and personality a campaign issue.

In the interim, please do the right thing. Apologize to Michael Rancer. He deserves nothing less.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Gilbert". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Ryan Gilbert

Cc: Piedmont City Council

Geoff Grote, City Administrator; John Tulloch, City Clerk; Tom Curry, City Attorney

2011 Municipal Tax Review Committee

Piedmonters Supporting Measure Y

Piedmont Patch; Piedmont Post; The Piedmonter

Piedmont Civic Association