

Channel 33 Discord

At first glance the RPV Channel 33 financial rift between past Station Manager Gabriella Holt and members of the staff and city council could be dismissed as petty bickering or even a misunderstanding. But, there is more to the story as everyone runs for cover.

Consider the following:

1. Ms. Holt and the RPV City Manager, Ms. Lehr, have been at odds ever since the former was told to report to the latter.
2. Ms. Holt was a key Paul Wright supporter as was Councilman Gardiner. That put them in direct conflict with the 3 incumbents during the recent election.
3. Dr. Gardiner had been the major supporter of Channel 33 until he recently withdrew from the 2-councilman Channel 33 "coordinating committee". There are also unconfirmed reports that he may resign from the council as a result of several major financial policy conflicts.
4. There is overlap between Channel 33 and PV Net that includes funding and management control issues.
5. Dr. Gardiner and challengers Paul Wright and Don Reeves all questioned the cost of Information Technology (IT) that has grown to almost \$800,000 per year or about 5% of the General Fund budget. The general management audit was, coincidentally, scheduled for after the election.
6. IT and overall financial integrity is the responsibility of the Finance Director although the City Manager has management responsibility including Channel 33 expenditures.
7. Now that Ms. Holt has resigned, paid personnel will undoubtedly replace her volunteer efforts if Channel 33 is to survive. That would increase the stated FY'07-08 budget of \$145,000 in our "cash strapped" city.
8. Now, \$15,750 will be spent on a survey just to find out if there is really any justification for the Channel 33 budget. One councilman is quoted as noting that if you think that anyone subscribes to Cox Cable to watch Channel 33 then you are sadly mistaken. Only Don Reeves challenged the viability of a government owned TV station before and during the election.
9. Now that Ms. Holt has declared her candidacy for the State Assembly there are even possible undertones of political vindictiveness.

Where will this go and is it indicative of the financial mismanagement we have often noted? Should Channel 33 be killed as we have suggested? It is one of the nice "wants" that was funded while 80% of the property owners were being assessed the storm drain user fee. You may or may not be part of the Telecommunications Management Corp. survey but you might want to express your opinion directly to the city or to PVPWatch.