

# Big MAC Puh-leeze, Hold the Cheeze

I came in to the meeting at the Redwood Playhouse just as an efficient, scholarly millennial provided by the County was giving a concise explanation on the nature of MACs (Municipal Advisory Councils) to a surprisingly large circle of attendees filling the Playhouse floor from the stage almost to the row of solid chairs. Way over 50 people in attendance to influence the creation of an entity meant to influence the Supervisor directly. KMUD was there live, so it's in the archives. The Presenter distinctly mentioned that the Ca. code 31010 posited *elected* or appointed representatives to a MAC (which is not a committee or commission, but a Council.) However once the discussion got under way, led by the Planning Dept. Chief, John ("Just Obey") Ford, a rather docile discussion ensued, focusing on a convoluted scheme of appointing Council members which diluted real representation.

A number of the attendees were already on that page. No surprise. I had been primed I went to this Municipal Advisory Council meeting with some political background knowledge and a shorter education by Wikipedia. I expected that the two already competing MACs (sort of a *for profit* one and a *non profit* one) would duke it out and the for profit one, made up of Donors to the Supervisor, would absorb the non profit one, made up of community service, grant seeking professionals. Didn't happen that way. The *non profit* one was there to the number of six or so. I had difficulty identifying anyone from the for profit one. But what does a Big Donor look like anyway?.

Ford had the mike in the middle of the circle, behind him a seated Estelle. Prime Minister Ford's job was to go out among the lambs and shear them on behalf of the Queen. The difficulty was that a lot of people had showed up and KMUD was putting out a pretty good loudspeaker. This was not the dozen or so agenda bearing, economically obsessed acolytes looking for a role. Sure, many people were unquestionably there to snag themselves a Council seat, but here out of nowhere with almost no promotion was a real crowd of the curious and the suspicious. There was a whole row of High Hippies, a lot of other familiar faces and an a sizeable sprinkling of Millenials. Meanwhile, the appointment selection process droned on. Rank choice voting? Just rank.

Things shifted rapidly from *appointees only* to my favorite topic, *community democracy*. Insistent inquiries from the opposition present (me, Sean and Jackie) sparked a broader discussion. Sean reiterated the relevant code and a concerted attack revealed that Ford was ill-informed about the project at hand. He denied at first that election was any part of a MAC but the actual code read to him by Sean and others forced him to broaden the discussion, or go down in flames. He is an experienced flak catcher, and even though he had come dutifully to promote some version of Estelle's MAC, a good High School Principal doesn't to leave a rioting student body in his wake. It was important to prevent uproar which members of The Opposition were on the verge of provoking. Ford shifted gears and embraced a more open discussion, elections included. Once he did that the discussion became lively and the audience became less docile and more involved.

I have a sign for the *riot occasion*, though not with me in the building: **"REPLACE ESTELLE/RECALL HONSAL/FIRE FORD.** Ford's credibility - after he inadvertently showed his cards - had tanked. Undaunted at the dissolution of his formal mission, Ford took the lead in the discussion - even to the extent of showing interest in a process for electing MAC members. I had sort of lost track of my mission as well. I just couldn't let well-enough alone. Why fire Ford - right now. Here I have to admit that I have had a lot of ideas in the direction of bringing direct democracy to the SoHum area. Just like this meeting - which accidentally turned into a kind of Town Meeting. Frankly I like anything that gives focus to open discussion in this SoHum community about finding a conduit for community opinion and policy demands, and **so I was sucked into taking the discussion seriously.**

You see, I remember when the first MAC was proposed long ago, using a non-profit base. That MAC was shot down, despite being literally signed on to by a host of nonprofits and community activists. All it took, after all that work, was the mere appearance of the heavy artillery of a local Baron losing his temper at the appropriate Board Meeting, backed up by the Chamber's own charismatic editor- and a handful of others. Money sets the rules and don't forget it.

So why throw any government machinery into the works at all? Laissez faire? The current Board of Supes provides that kind of cover. But things change when you are running for office - for a Third Term!!! You might get a few minutes of "representational" democracy out of it. Too bad I didn't spend more time working for two term limits! (I would really like one term limit) But then other MACs, like Santa Cruz I think, used the Municipal Advisory Council as a place to put big donors (Big Donors). Like a Richie Rich Club.

But then along comes the Liberals. They **like** government machinery! And they're - *nonprofit?* wtf So here is John (Just Obey) Ford come to merge the waters and only to discover a roiling sea. Ford's duty to Estelle was made impossible when the electoral option burst into view. Again, instead of continuing to emphasize his lack of credibility like other members of "the opposition" did, I began to take part in the discussion **with some enthusiasm.**

That's when I introduced my favorite election component, dividing SoHum into an "election compass", so to speak: Briceland to the **West**, Alderpoint to the **East**, Miranda to the **North**, Benbow to the **South**, with an additional **urban nexus** of Garberville, Redway and the concentrated settlement up the Alderpoint Road which I think is called The Meadows like the Industrial Park of which it's a sibling.

It was subsequently suggested to use the *Nine Fire Departments* to indicate important representational regions. I suspect that there aren't quite Nine Departments inside this proposed MAC, but I could see the relevance of fire departments as the locus of "town meetings". The discussion went further and further away from Ford's task as Prime Minister to deliver on his Queen's requests. It became a discussion of ways to produce better representation. It was obvious it didn't take much to improve the complications and convolutions of schemes using Supervisor appointments. The one Humboldt County has is McKinleyville, but Mendocino and Sonoma Counties already have half a dozen each. Mendo's are appointed, but Sonoma's are elected.

I continued to take part in the energetic discussion. One concern was that two crucial supes are up for re-election" Estelle and also Rex. Both share a mad desire for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term. If they fail in their bids, and are replaced by a couple fresh faces - like Sean DeVries and Cliff Berkowitz - it could mean a whole new ballgame where Steve Madrone, an outright Progressive, and Mike Wilson of Arcata are waiting for them on the Board. In that situation does it make sense to leave a lame duck MAC behind? Wouldn't it be more reasonable to elect an at large slate of MAC members in March when two supervisor seats were up. Of course it would. Districts meanwhile could be carved up more at leisure.

Ford continued to brush off questions about the deeper financial purpose of the MAC by one of "our opposition" and felt compelled to use his possession of the mike to cut Sean off. At one point, a concerned participant, who I think later identified herself as an aspirant to the nonprofit MAC, asked Ford to give the job of recognizing speakers to an associate. He ignored that suggestion for the obvious purpose of retaining some semblance of control of the group and get out of the room untouched.

Unfortunately or whatever, I kept trying to help accomplish a better meeting! To the point of offering an idea that left election discussion behind by using the MAC as a community Grand Jury evolving policy demands to be presented to a broad array of Town Meetings. This was of course a distraction from the simply implemented demand for straight at large elections of MAC members. Ford gave approval to these ideas quite openly, a hint that I had strayed from our real need to put emphasis on the real intentions of the MAC" provide a prestige reward for important Donors. When Jackie tried to pursue the possibility of corrupt motives she was put "on hold" by Ford. I feel sorry for playing the Good Cop rolem knowing that all will be forgotten when Ford and Estelle sit down to repair the damage. But an interesting meeting nonetheless.

**Paul Encimer** (Sean DeVries for Supervisor!)

## Marshall Islands Screwed Again

Five thousand miles west of Los Angeles and 500 miles north of the equator, on a far-flung spit of white coral sand in the central Pacific, a massive, aging and weathered concrete dome bobs up and down with the tide.

Between 1946 and 1958, the United States detonated 67 nuclear bombs on, in and above the Marshall Islands - vaporizing whole islands, carving craters into its shallow lagoons and exiling hundreds of people from their homes.

U.S. authorities later cleaned up contaminated soil on Enewetak Atoll, where the United States not only detonated the bulk of its weapons tests but, as The Times has learned, also conducted a dozen biological weapons tests and dumped 130 tons of soil from an irradiated Nevada testing site. It then deposited the atoll's most lethal debris and soil into a crater and covering it with a concrete dome.

Now the concrete coffin, which locals call "the Tomb," is at risk of collapsing from rising seas and other effects of climate change. Tides are creeping up its sides, advancing higher every year as distant glaciers melt and ocean waters rise.

Runit Dome holds more than 3.1 million cubic feet - or 35 Olympic-sized swimming pools - of U.S.-produced radioactive soil and debris, including lethal amounts of plutonium. Nowhere else has the United States saddled another country with so much of its nuclear waste, a product of its Cold War atomic testing program

Officials in the Marshall Islands have lobbied the U.S. government for help, but American officials have declined, saying the dome is on Marshallese land and therefore the responsibility of the Marshallese government. (!)

More details: [latimes.com](http://latimes.com)



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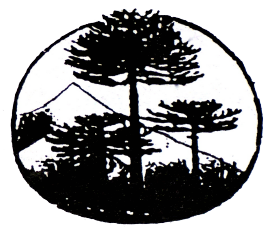
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will be extremist, but what kind of  
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