

Good-governance group Informed Rossmoor Voices to disband

By Craig Lazzaretti

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Informed Rossmoor Voices, which was founded in 2009 as a residential advocacy group to promote good governance, is disbanding.

Wayne Lanier, who has served as chairman of IRV's board since 2014, is no longer able to continue in the role because of illness, said longtime board member Sally Kirby. As a result, the group decided to disband and distribute its funds between Sustainable Rossmoor, which Lanier helped found, and the Rossmoor Fund. Each group was given \$2,090.

IRV once counted about 200 members, but membership had dropped off over the years, said Kirby, who had kept the group going along with Lanier and Christine McInerney.

"I think people just got sort of fatigued," Kirby said.

Early leaders of Informed Rossmoor Voices included Gail Strack and Dick Locke. Strack produced the first presentation on solar power at Rossmoor about a decade ago.

"It was a packed Fireside Room," said Karen Perkins, one of the founding members of IRV. She credited the presentation with starting the momentum for the adoption of solar power in Rossmoor.

Locke and others successfully lobbied that GRF directors terminate the GRF management bonus and negotiate annually with Comcast, Kirby said.

Eventually, several IRV members went on to serve on the GRF Board (including current members Dale Harrington, Sue Adams and Carl Brown), Kirby said. Locke served on the GRF Finance Committee, and a half dozen other IRV members served on Mutual boards, including two as chairs. Diane Guilfoy and Geri Pyle served as GRF Board presidents.

Informed Rossmoor Voices sent regular GRF/Mutual meeting reports to members and operated a chat board and website.

Locke said the group had a reputation among some as being anti-GRF administration, but its focus was on informing the Rossmoor community about governance issues and residents' rights. He pointed specifically to its work to educate residents on how the Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act, which governs condominium, cooperative and planned unit development communities in California, applies to Rossmoor, as well as "making the community aware of what their rights were under the (GRF) trust agreement."

Kirby, Locke and Perkins said they consider the number of IRV members who went on to hold prominent positions on GRF and Mutual boards as one of the group's top legacies.

Perkins points out that five of the six founding members of IRV were women. They started IRV after attending the final meeting of the Committee for Open, Responsive Government (CORG), a previous good-governance group. Their activism helped pave the way for more women, who comprise the majority of Rossmoor residents, to take on a greater voice in the community at a time when men held most leadership roles.

The original six met for nine months, developing IRV's mission statement. "We decided we would focus on Rossmoor governance, trying to improve it both in policies and in monetary expenditures, and also would explain Rossmoor governance to those newcomers who requested information, often on a whole range of topics/problems," Perkins wrote on IRV's chat board.

Locke believes the presence of IRV members on the GRF Board led to more engagement with residents over projects such as the building of the Fitness Center. "There was a lot of community input on the Fitness Center," said Locke, contrasting that process with the earlier Event Center project in which he said such input was missing.

He also noted IRV's role in pushing back against proposed GRF budgets that would routinely include large coupon increases.

Said Perkins: "Rossmoor has always been a community that cares about how high the coupon goes."

With IRV disbanding, Locke said he is concerned whether the cause of good governance in Rossmoor will suffer.

"There is a need for an organization like this," he said.

Rossmoor Life Council