

Opinion: Will the Children Please Leave the Room!

July 10, 2025

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When I left California a few weeks back, I thought, mistakenly, at least most of the attendees at the last Crescent City Harbor Board meeting understood the time for recriminations and foot dragging was over. Time to buckle up, put away dissenting opinions, and get to the task at hand. Any further dissension in the room must take a back seat to the harbor's economic redevelopment needs, infrastructure, and the woeful state of its finances.

Clearly, the revelations produced at the June 25th meeting of the Crescent City Harbor Commission did not match with the distasteful revelation the Commission remained at odds, legal fees were mounting, the harbormaster's employment was a festering wound, and very little had been accomplished towards righting the ship. Something on the order of an out of control, squabbling bunch of six-year-olds each looking for the others to see it their way. Not a pretty sight.

Where is the leadership on the commission to be found? When will the children who didn't get their way wake up and realize now is not the time for personal feuds. The clock is ticking, remorsefully towards a scenario no one seems to want to face. Lawsuits only consume very limited resources and do not solve the problems of moving the harbor forward. It also reveals a distinct lack of leadership from those who choose to ignore the elephant in the room, massive debt, then throw childish tantrums as if it will solve the problem.

If the members of the Commission cannot put away their plastic swords, there is no way forward for the harbor. Those who can't, should resign immediately. Those who can grow up to be the commissioners the public expected them to be need to roll up their collective sleeves and get to work.

The harbormaster is not there to develop policy, and development, he works at the pleasure of the commission. He simply must carry out the wishes of the commission. It is on the shoulders of those elected to get off the couch and start directing. The harbor master could be Donald Duck and fail or succeed depending on the direction he receives. He is not there to carry water but be directed. Yes, really!

The biggest problem going forward is the members of this commission are failing to move the needle of failure in a positive direction, something, which has plagued previous commissions for decades.

Commissioners, it is what you were elected to do! Change course! If the harbor goes down in flames in the near future, this commission is solely responsible for the failure, not the harbormaster, a perception of secrecy, excluding the public, or "Brown Act" violations. The Commission is simply wallowing in self-pity because it approaches the harbor's problems like a ship without a rudder. The commissioners look everywhere else, but where their sights should be focused. Themselves! Take charge! Grow a backbone!

I am not sure where this kind of ethos which has percolated throughout all the ranks of County leadership has come from. Why is the Harbor's staff expected to come up with solutions for the dire straits the harbor finds itself in when there are five, hopefully mature and intelligent adults, elected to office for the precise reason of directing the show and more importantly finding solutions for staff to execute? What is wrong with this commission and those for years preceding? How is it the harbormaster has become the person everyone expects to carry the load and make decisions? When did this phenomenon come about? More importantly, why do we even need a Harbor Commission if the staff is expected to run things?

Time to leave the playpen, Commissioners or leave the room. Pull up your pants and get to work! Enough with the side shows and feuds. It does not matter who the Harbormaster is or isn't, get to work. Enough of the petty lawfare and grow up! Learn how to run a Commission meeting and give direction. Act like you are adults and at least pretend you want the harbor to be successful!