
The public deserves the truth—not a campaign of lies

By Rick Shepherd October 30, 2026

As an incumbent Harbor Commissioner, I have been through fiercely competitive campaigns before. Candidates disagreed, challenged one another's decisions, and made their cases to voters. But those campaigns were based on civility and integrity.

What we are experiencing this year is different. It is dirty, despicable, and desperate. Certain opposing candidates, who have been defeated in past elections, over and over again, appear to have decided that their only path to victory is to smear the Harbor, attack the integrity of its incumbents, and ignore the impressive progress underway (more on that below).

They found an ally in the Triplicate's previous editor, who presented "hit pieces" as factual news, and couldn't be bothered to do basic fact-checking. When confronted, he literally explained he didn't have time to fact check articles. I applaud the new editor of the Triplicate for giving me an opportunity to respond in a newspaper that now distinguishes facts from opinion, and gives those accused of wrongdoing a fair opportunity to answer.

Public scrutiny is part of the job of a Harbor Commissioner. However, outright lies and newspaper articles that lack basic fact-checking are another matter. Voters should know that as Chair of the Harbor Commission, I am at the Harbor virtually every day, and I ensure that it operates with integrity. I meet or speak with the CEO almost daily, often six days a week. Those conversations cover finances, operations, projects, expenditures, and problems requiring attention. I hold our CEO accountable, and he works hard, and with integrity.

At least twice each month, as part of my Commissioner duties, I review the District's financial statements and supporting records in consultation with our fiscal officer. I ask questions and follow up. The reality is that we have a Harbor run by hardworking people managing a difficult economic situation and addressing many problems they did not create.

On the other hand, we have a candidate running for office, Linda Sutter, who is simultaneously suing the harbor in federal court, trying to get taxpayer money because it is too stressful for her to be ruled out of order when she talks over people at public board meetings. She claims that board meetings have caused her to experience (and this is a direct quote from her federal lawsuit): "...ongoing stress.... including muscle spasms, and migraine headaches..." and now she wants the public to pay for her suffering. If she is too

fragile to suffer through contentious public meetings, it is debatable whether she has the strength to be a sitting Harbor Commissioner.

Instead of listening to a candidate grabbing for money in federal court, the public should take reassurance from recent audits by actual trained professionals, including the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and by Nicholson & Olson, LLP, an independent firm of certified public accountants based in Sacramento. Independent examination of the Harbor's finances matters. Especially audits conducted by professionals rather than political candidates who speculate and make assumptions because they don't understand finance.

For more than 50 years, I have worked as a commercial fisherman and boat owner, including 45 years operating from Crescent City Harbor. I served 15 years as president of the Commercial Fishermen's Association and have represented this community for eight years as a Harbor Commissioner. I know what a thriving harbor means to the families and businesses of Del Norte County.

I helped lead the Save the Harbor (Measure C) campaign, which has generated approximately \$2 million to support the Harbor. I also helped to secure over \$20 million in funding for Citizens Dock, the seawall, and other critical infrastructure. These achievements reflect the combined efforts of staff, commissioners, technical specialists, and our Harbor community. It was hard work, and we are proud of the achievements.

Our success includes reopening the ice plant and signing a new lease with an RV park developer who is committed to millions in new investment. Even more exciting, we have shrimp processing back in the harbor for the first time in 20 years. The Harbor still faces serious financial difficulties, and I will not minimize our challenges, but neither will I ignore genuine progress. For the past two years, we have heard a chorus of predictions that the Harbor is going bankrupt. It is always supposedly a few months away. Yet we have kept the Harbor operating through hard work and persistence. We must be doing something right.

I am asking voters to judge me by my record of achievement, and not by the desperate and frankly pathetic accusations directed at me. I am seeking an additional term to protect commercial fishing, help complete the major construction projects already underway, and build a stronger, more resilient Harbor for our entire community.