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'All small business owners licensed to operate in Burbank should be fully notified of any City actions or plans that may impact their enterprises.'

By One-On-One Denise Ames on July 11,2007



Popular optometrist Dr. David W. Gordon, O.D. was elected and took over the Burbank City Council seat once held by the controversial Stacey Murphy. Born in Levittown, N.Y. and relocating to Los Angeles with his family at age 10, he has since become a very outspoken member of the community. Dr. Gordon joined the people and called for neighborhood protection from traffic, overdevelopment and has remained against airport expansion. He has also volunteered and served in numerous community positions and organizations including the Magnolia Park Citizens Advisory Committee and the Planning Board of which he chaired for a year. During a trip to El Salvador in 2004, Dr. Gordon met with many local leaders in eye care to share with them professional advances, many here in the U.S. take for granted, and upon witnessing areas suffering from dire poverty he contributed substantial donations to local eye care charities.

Ames: How did you become interested in politics in the first place?

Gordon: I learned after investing my entire life savings into purchasing the office building, where I operate my small business, that the City had plans to widen Hollywood Way and eliminate on-street parking in an effort to enhance anticipated increased traffic volume to and from an expanded Burbank Airport. This would have destroyed my business and my investment. I became informed, got involved, and worked very hard together with my residential and merchant neighbors to protect our homes, families and livelihoods.

Ames: Why did you want to take over the seat vacated by Stacey Murphy?

Gordon: The Stacey Murphy affair was a tragedy for her, her family, and the City as a whole. The people of Burbank were shocked and saddened. Nevertheless, I felt strongly that the council had to pick itself up and move forward with running the city. I decided to run for the City Council to restore trust and confidence in the office. It had become plain to me that it was time for a change; the status quo was just not good enough anymore and people were demanding more accountability from their elected officials.

Ames: Why do you think the people elected you?

Gordon: I have lived and worked very closely with the people of Burbank for over 25 years. My family lives here, my small business is located here, and my young son goes to Burbank schools. I am an integral, committed, and dedicated member of this community and they believed my campaign pledge to always put them first. I consistently support our small businesses and have steadfastly called for full public disclosure, access, and participation in our local government.

Ames: How is Marsha Ramos doing as mayor?

Gordon: Mayor Ramos has been respectful and responsive to public speakers as well as to other members of the council. When her views differ from others, she will often graciously comment, that "we will just simply have to agree to disagree." Her conduct is refreshing and conducive to cooperation.

Ames: What would you like to accomplish as a councilmember?

Gordon: I hope to protect and improve our City. Burbank is a gem of a city but its cherished small town character and family oriented traditions face a tremendous and growing threat from excessive traffic, overdevelopment, and lack of real affordable housing. In my first term of office I hope to shed light upon and clarify for the people of Burbank what has been happening to this beautiful island city surrounded by a burgeoning sea that is Los Angeles, and find ways to protect and preserve what is here now while planning for reasonable future development.

Ames: Environmental issues seem to be a strong point with you.

Gordon: I am continuing my service this year on the Council's Environmental Oversight Committee. Among the highest environmental priorities affecting all of Burbank citizens are our water resources and air quality. Our Burbank Water and Power Department is doing an excellent job securing and planning for reliable access to clean, safe water, while addressing long-term water conservation goals by planning recycled water programs for irrigation and other non-drinking applications. Unfortunately, air pollution is still a serious problem for Burbank. Auto and truck exhaust, aviation emissions, as well as regional contaminants related to freeways, trains, and weather patterns have adversely impacted Burbank's air quality and pose a far greater threat to public health than the recently highly publicized occasional, brief exposure to outdoor tobacco smoke. I have called for expanded monitoring of air quality across the city, not just in one or two nearby regional measuring sites. Carefully monitoring our air will allow us to better address our serious air quality issues.

Ames: What would you like to see happen with the Bob Hope Airport congestion problems?

Gordon: Passenger traffic continues to grow and is expected to double within the next decade. Increased air passenger utilization correlates directly to increased local traffic. Unless real restrictions are set in place now to retain the current size and location of the existing terminal, traffic will increase to such an extent that it will overwhelm our existing roads, intersections, and overall transportation infrastructure in the not too distant future. Approved development of high volume restaurant uses at the entrance way to the airport will exacerbate rather than mitigate the heavy traffic volume already there. The most certain way to minimize airport congestion will be to retain the current size and location of the existing terminal and not allow high traffic generating commercial development proximal to the Airport Zone.

Ames: What was your biggest accomplishment while on the Burbank Planning Board?

Gordon: The approval of both the Warner Bros. and the NBC Master Plans. The two 20-year studio entitlement projects involved hundreds of thousands of square feet of studio-related development, billions of dollars of capital outlay, and the promise of thousands of good paying jobs. An important part of my involvement on the Warner Bros. project specifically protected the residential neighborhood immediately west of the Warner Ranch Lot, which originally was to include a major gate on Pass Avenue to be coupled with a planned westbound 134 freeway onramp at the Lakeside Shopping Center. My participation on the NBC project resulted in restrictions on use and development at that site designed to limit the large-scale development to studio related use. The later piecemeal sell off of the Catalina site now being developed with high-rise office buildings was never envisioned in what was approved as a single, studio-use project. The approval to clean up the chemically contaminated former Lockheed "Superfund" site with a vapor extraction system was another big accomplishment. Approval of the Lockheed vapor extraction system ultimately led to development of the Empire Center, one of the most successful retail centers in the country.

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Ames: Any suggestions on how to further support our small businesses in Burbank?

Gordon: Yes. Many small business owners are tenants rather than owners. As a result, they are not always directly notified of changes in zoning, ordinances, or business enhancing opportunities. All small business owners licensed to operate in Burbank should be fully notified of any City actions or plans that may impact their enterprises. Further, before new regulations are passed that will potentially have adverse economic impacts, such as a non-smoking ordinance or the installation of parking meters, all small business owners should be notified and surveyed to assess how they may be affected. Requests for discretionary entitlements by small businesses, such as conditional use permits or variances, should be handled with the same due consideration extended to big businesses or developers.

Ames: Hobbies and other interests?

Gordon: I particularly enjoy deep sea fishing. I am very active with my son in various league sports such as baseball and basketball. I like watching and attending professional baseball games. I also enjoy traveling and am an ardent student of history, particularly military history from ancient to modern times.

Ames: Where does your willingness to help others stem from?

Gordon: Although I never lacked for food or shelter, my parents telling me how hard it was for them growing up during the Great Depression when worrying where the next meal or rent money were coming from was paramount. My parents taught me the importance of hard work, honesty, and self-reliance. I view donating time to my community as a privilege, an opportunity, and an honor.

Ames: How do you balance your busy life?

Gordon: I very carefully plan and allocate my time between family, professional, and City obligations. I am blessed with a very supportive and understanding family and office staff. I make certain to take every opportunity to spend quality time with my family. Most importantly, I take my commitment to represent the people who elected me very seriously. I don't view my time commitment towards City Council issues as a burden, but rather as honor and a privilege.

You may contact Dr. Gordon at City Hall, 275 East Olive St. in Burbank, call (818) 238-5750 or e-mail dgordon@ci.burbank.ca.us.

"One-on-One" will continue the Burbank councilmember profiles with Dave Golonski on July 18.

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