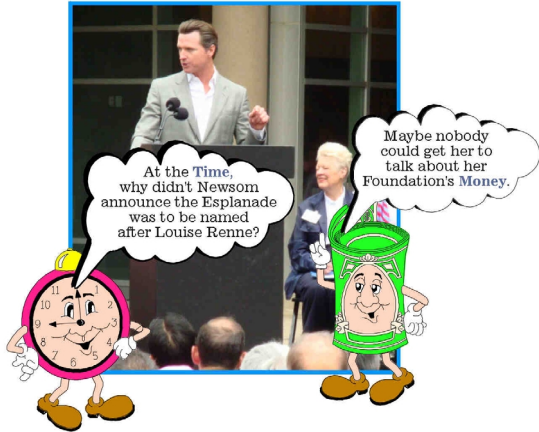


More on San Francisco health commission naming Laguna Honda Hospital spaces after strange bedfellows

by Patrick Monette-Shaw
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Newsom didn't mention spaces being named for Renne and Kanaley during LHH's June 24 ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Renne didn't toot her own horn, either, on June 24.



And Mivic Hirose didn't announce naming spaces after John Kanaley on June 24 either.

There are more reasons to be concerned about the naming of spaces in the new Laguna Honda Hospital facilities, since the naming of spaces wasn't announced during LHH's ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 24.

For starters, the former president of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, Matt Gonzalez, noted in an article first published in *Mesh Magazine* in June 2004 that "one of the most irritating governmental practices to emerge in the late 20th Century was the selling of naming rights to public spaces and assets."

He was referring, of course, to the trend of selling naming rights of sports arenas and stadiums to various corporations, specifically San Francisco's Candlestick Park, in order to generate revenue for municipal budgets, rather than naming facilities after philanthropists who helped fund construction of public infrastructure projects.

Gonzalez's concern involved affixing corporate names to public property and commercializing public spaces.

But by extension, the same concern should be applied to all public assets built with public monies, including Laguna Honda Hospital. Gonzalez questioned how far this may be taken, wondering why naming rights aren't applied to the sponsorship of City Council seats or to the Mayor's office itself. He noted "Bank of America City Hall" had a nice ring to it, but concluded that "it is not the proper role of any city to act as an agent of public relations firms," to prop up tarnished corporate identities.

If we're not going to name public spaces after tarnished corporate identities, why would we name public spaces for *individuals* having potentially tarnished identities?

After all, during the Health Commission's November 2 meeting one Joseph McNerney, a gentleman from San Jose, testified and reportedly denounced Louise Renne and her service while San Francisco City Attorney, saying he "wouldn't name a doghouse after her."

The draft minutes of the November 2 Commission meeting censored McNerney's testimony, reporting merely that McNerney "did not agree with naming part of the new LHH complex after Louise Renne." There's a world of difference between "didn't agree with" and "wouldn't name a dog house after."

Had her name been vetted for naming rights prior to the Commission's meeting, perhaps it would have been reconsidered. Draft minutes of the Health Commission's November 2 meeting obtained under a public records request shows that Commissioner Chow was unhappy that matters involving LHH had not been brought first to the LHH Joint Conference Sub-Committee for vetting and consideration before being dropped in the lap of the full Health Commission.

After all, Renne hasn't, to anyone's knowledge, contributed as other philanthropists have.

Take, for example the estate bequests of Martin Heller, Marie Lewis, and William Lenahan to LHH's patient gift fund. Each of them endowed hundreds of thousands of dollars for the benefit of LHH's patients through estate giving contributions.

Their bequests helped the patient gift fund obtain a balance of over \$2 million dollars in 2004, but to date, there has been no explanation offered why the bequest sub-accounts within the patient gift fund now have a zero balance.

By contrast, Renne's personal donations to LHH remain unknown. To be fair, her law firm — Renne Sloan Holtzman Sakai LLP — but not she herself, contributed the bare minimum of \$2,500 to be listed as a Patron Sponsor in LHH's program booklet for its black-tie gala dinner and ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 24.

Why should Renne's mere \$2,500 contribution filtered through her law firm qualify for naming rights, but the Heller, Lewis, and Lenahan major bequests did not?

Although Gerald Simon Auditorium at LHH was named after the San Francisco businessman who founded Laguna Honda Volunteers, Inc. in 1957, it was because Volunteers Inc. has raised millions of dollars to benefit LHH patients.

By contrast, Louise Renne single-handedly incorporated the Laguna Honda Foundation in 2004 by obtaining non-profit IRS status, but refuses to disclose how much money her foundation has raised, whether any of its funds have actually contributed toward benefitting patients, and won't release income-to-expenditure data so the public can evaluate her foundation's stewardship of charitable contributions.

Within six months of forming her Laguna Honda Foundation, Renne shuttered it, suspending its operations, since she had no binding "memorandum of understanding" with either the City or with LHH to guide operations of her Foundation. To this date, it is thought her Foundation still has no employees to assume its operations, in stark contrast to Volunteers, Inc.'s decades of service.

The draft minutes of the Commission's November 2 meeting shows that Commissioner Sanchez is still attempting — to no avail — to have a Health Commissioner appointed to Renne's foundation board of directors, six years after she formed it.

The minutes also censored concerns of Commissioner Illig. During the November 2 meeting, Illig complained the Health Commission is not being presented any information about gifts from Renne's Laguna Honda Foundation. He noted the Foundation raises money by using LHH's name, and felt there was something inappropriate about it.

Illig appeared to be steamed that the Laguna Honda Foundation solicits money for LHH and its patients, but otherwise operates completely outside of the Health Commission's orbit.

But Illig's concerns also weren't included in the meeting minutes (yet another reason the Health Commission's meetings should be broadcast on SFGOV TV to prevent censorship of what actually transpires during commission meetings).

As for naming spaces in the new LHH after John Kanaley, several readers have supplied additional history.

The poorly-worded resolution Mivic Hirose submitted to the Health Commission claimed Kanaley “was regarded as a turn-around agent at Laguna Honda, which saw dramatic improvements in state licensing surveys under his tenure.”

Keen observers have pointed out, however, that the reason LHH stopped failing State surveys (at least for the time being) was because LHH was forced to stop its infamous Flow Project of 2003-2004 involving dumping of San Francisco General Hospital patients into LHH.

During the 2003 Flow Project (there were other flow projects within DPH before), the State came to LHH to investigate changes in LHH’s admissions policy and sat in on an LHH Admissions Committee meeting. The State told Kanaley up front that Dr. Katz could not be listed as the final arbiter on admissions decisions because Title 22 is clear that the Executive Administrator of skilled nursing facilities, not a Public Health Director, is responsible for admissions decisions.

Kanaley reportedly told the State, oafishly, that he was prepared to take responsibility for admissions decisions. The State had to tell him that he was required to, and had no choice but to, make admission decisions, demonstrating Kanaley’s lack of familiarity with State law. As far as this goes, Katz must have known he couldn’t force LHH into giving the director of public health final arbiter decisions that would conflict with State law, unless Katz, too, lacked knowledge of Title 22.

Had the Flow Project — with its emphasis on illegal and dangerous admissions to LHH, and the resulting chaos in clinical services — continued, State citations and failed surveys would have continued.

The U.S. Department of Justice stepped in and ordered San Francisco General Hospital to stop using LHH as a dumping ground for non-paying (decertified) patients. The DOJ required SFGH to develop a placement program to send these patients to community settings, and to use LHH only as a last resort.

As well, Mayor Newsom intervened in 2005, and ordered director of public health Mitch Katz to reinstate LHH’s admission policy to its pre-2004 version, halting the flow project.

Stopping the flow project and the DOJ’s involvement were the “change agents” that reduced LHH’s State citations, not John Kanaley. Since it is clear Kanaley wasn’t the change-agent saint LHH has tried to portray him as, this rationale for naming a space after him in the new facility falls apart on close inspection.

As other observer’s recall, Kanaley was half-way through his tenure at LHH when LHH received its first and only “AA” State citation involving a patient’s death in its 140 year history, at a cost of \$100,000, plus “negative publicity.”

During a community meeting in 2004, Kanaley claimed “supportive housing” would be provided at LHH. Then he corrected himself and said LHH would provide “assisted living units.” Then he admitted he didn’t know the difference between the two. The community was aghast at his lack of knowledge.

Other observers recall that during an LHH Quality Management meeting, Kanaley astutely declared that by self-reporting adverse outcomes to the State, LHH was increasing the likelihood of State citations. He reportedly opined LHH should cut self-reporting, apparently believing citations would fall off. But another senior hospital executive pointed out that self-reporting was a State law which LHH was required to do.

It was clear Kanaley didn’t like being corrected by subordinates in front of other staff. Since these internal staff challenges may have contributed to Kanaley looking like someone who didn’t know what they were doing, head-chopping of experienced LHH administrators ensued.

Kanaley served just four-and-a-half years as LHH’s administrator. By contrast, LHH’s Moran Hall was named after Louis Moran, LHH’s executive administrator for 21 years between 1951 and 1972.

During Moran's tenure, LHH didn't receive a "AA" citation from the State; under Kanaley's watch, LHH got slapped with its first "AA" citation. Kanaley's "first" should have automatically disqualified him for naming rights, had there been any objective criteria to evaluate awarding naming rights to public spaces.

Beyond all of this, LHH does not appear to have had an internal process for naming spaces, like LHH did in choosing its new logo. Reportedly, neither LHH's staff, nor its residents, nor the Health Commission were consulted prior to the decision to name spaces after Kanaley and Renne, since LHH published no process to evaluate nominees to have spaces named after them.

Amazingly, although City Charter section 4.104 requires boards and commissions to adopt rules and regulations consistent with the Charter and to give members of the public 10 days notice before rules are adopted, there appears to be few rules about naming city facilities.

San Francisco's Director of Administrative Services has "charge of all public buildings and grounds of the City and County" not otherwise under the jurisdiction of a commission, so regulations for administration of DPH buildings and grounds appear to escape Administrative Services and the Board of Supervisors review.

A search of the Health Commission's and Department of Public Health's web sites reveals there are no published processes for naming DPH facilities, for evaluating potential honorees, or for vetting naming rights.

In the absence of a process, the Health Commission should overturn its premature vote to name spaces after Renne and Kanaley. After all, naming facilities without a pre-determined process, and objective and subjective criteria, cheapens the value of naming rights — and the ensuing honor — which is typically reserved as a means to generate philanthropic giving.

Renne's contributions clearly don't match Gerald Simon's. Kanaley was no Louis Moran.

Why the pair of them are now being honored with naming rights is inexplicable, since during LHH's ribbon cutting ceremony on June 24, even Mayor Newsom didn't announce the naming privileges. What happened between June 24 and November 2 to suddenly grant this pair of strange bedfellows this honor?

San Francisco's Board of Supervisors should step in, and strip Renne and Kanaley of their dubious naming rights recognition, since the process appears to have been wildly abused.

After all, as Matt Gonzalez has noted, it's not the proper role of any city to act as a public relations agent to prop up tarnished identities.

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Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.