

## MEDIATE THIS !

## THE BARKING DOGS AND THE GROWLING NEIGHBORS

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

## Dear Mediator:

A family on our block leaves their two dogs in their fenced yard while the parents work and the kids are in school. The dogs' constant barking infuriates people who are home during the day. The owners have promised to take action, but the barking continues. Two neighbors are circulating a group noise-code complaint. Some of us are uneasy about this. We really like this family, and we don't want them to have to pay a fine or give up the dogs. Are there less drastic steps?

*Trying to Keep Peace in Point Loma*

## Dear Trying:

A life lesson we learn in mediation is that the legal solution is not always the best solution. A formal remedy under the law will involve procedural hurdles and social costs. An informal settlement using conflict resolution tools could deliver shared benefits in a very short time.

One approach would be to frame this in both human and canine terms. Any persistent loud noise will irritate people within earshot. But a dog's prolonged barking is the plaintive sound of a creature in distress.

We are hard-wired to find a way to alleviate such anxiety. When someone on your block initiates a neighborhood dialogue, which is the first step in resolving this conflict, focus on the humane need to address the plight of the animals.

Two of you who feel empathy for the family should request a friendly meeting with the parents. Explain that you understand the difficulties of juggling full-time work with caring for dogs and you want what's best for their pets. Then ask if they have explored options for mitigating the problem.

In barking disputes that our community mediators handle, mitigation typically involves training programs, exercise regimens, and/or benign anti-bark collars. (In non-mediated disputes where owners are forced to pay fines, they eventually take mitigation steps they could have used in the first place.)

Once the family agrees to take responsibility, arrange a separate meeting with the leaders of the complaint campaign. In this discussion, you'll examine the pros and cons of legal and extra-legal avenues.

Getting action on code complaints from overburdened agencies can take months. While the



GETTY IMAGES

**This week's query seeks how to address a family whose barking dogs are fenced outdoors throughout the day. The dogs depicted above are not those mentioned in the complaint.**

bureaucracy moves slowly, the barking will continue. And the legal outcome will end in hostility and estrangement.

But working together could restore peace fairly quickly. When neighbors pool their skills and resources, creative ideas emerge, and everyone gains from the shared accomplishment.

To prepare for a third meeting

with all neighbors invited, compile information about dog training programs, including affordable classes at the San Diego Humane Society, and about anti-bark devices that use ultrasound or citronella spritz to disrupt the barking habit.

At the all-hands gathering, the peacemakers among you should emphasize that this family wants

to do the right thing and they need help and support. Then open the floor for a brainstorming session to discuss the training and device options and other ideas.

Clearly, these dogs are spending too much time cooped up. Neighbors who are home during the day might be willing to take them on walks or even bring them over to visit.

Dogs have a funny way of seducing people with their abundant gratitude for kindness. Anyone willing to spend a little time caring for lonesome pets will get a sizable return on that investment.

Not everyone on your block will favor this "takes a village" strategy. Some people are adamant about the primacy of cold justice. But if even a few people are willing to help this family, the result could be a new spirit of neighborliness that will pay off well into the future.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as President of the San-Diego based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. **Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution?** Please share your story with The Mediator via email at [mediatehis@ncrconline.com](mailto:mediatehis@ncrconline.com) or as an online submission by visiting [www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis](http://www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis). All submissions will be kept anonymous.

## NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

## EDUCATION: LAURYN SCHROEDER

## S.D. Unified to discuss \$3.5B bond

San Diego Unified School District officials on Tuesday are set to discuss a \$3.5 billion bond measure to improve school safety, technology and infrastructure.

The measure would add 6 cents to property tax bills for every \$100 of assessed valuation, or about \$300 for a home valued by the county at \$500,000.

The proposal, being called the "Safety and Repair Bond," is backed by a coalition of parents, teachers and business leaders known as Safety and Learning in Our Schools.

Coalition leaders say the additional funding would help the district improve aging classrooms, eliminate lead from drinking water and enhance campus security, among other things.

"The average age of San Diego schools is close to 50 years old, and we have seen repeated stories about lead in the drinking water and an overall lack of modern security measures," said coalition chairman Andy Berg in a news release. "We cannot expect our children to be ready for their future careers when they are learning in classrooms

that predate the internet."

According to a poll commissioned by the group, more than 65 percent San Diego voters back the idea. Some board members have already voiced support for such a measure.

The district recently had to cut \$8.5 million from its budget and eliminate 217 jobs to make ends meet in the 2018-2019 school year.

The district's capital improvement projects are currently funded by two previous bond measures — Proposition Z and Proposition S.

Proposition Z, the most recent measure, passed in 2012 as a property tax hike called San Diego Neighborhood Schools Classroom Safety and Repair Measure. Totalling \$2.8 billion, its main purpose was to repair deteriorating classrooms, libraries, wiring, plumbing, bathrooms and leaky roofs, according to ballot language at the time.

If passed, the proposal on Tuesday's agenda would be the district's third borrowing measure in the past decade.

[lauryn.schroeder@suniontribune.com](mailto:lauryn.schroeder@suniontribune.com)

## THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

## New ownership of U-T officially begins

Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong came to the Union-Tribune for a town-hall style gathering Tuesday, one day after closing the deal to buy the 150-year-old U-T and the Los Angeles Times and their community papers.

The new owner, a biotech entrepreneur and billionaire, was joined by U-T Publisher and Editor Jeff Light and Norman Pearlstine, whom Soon-Shiong named the Times' new executive editor.

About two months ago Soon-Shiong came to the U-T to meet the staff after it was announced he was going to buy the U-T and Times. I wrote to readers that they should be excited about the change in ownership.

Tuesday's meeting confirmed that outlook. "We'll figure out a way to thrive, not survive," he told employees.

He spoke of his ownership being "without an end line" to "build something important."

"We will make an investment. No changes, other than make it (the paper) grow," he said. Based on reader feedback the Readers' Rep received and continued to get for months after then-Tribune Publishing bought the U-T from Doug Manchester in May 2015, I think it's important to emphasize that the L.A. Times is not buying the U-T. Publicly traded Tribune Publishing (later called Tronc) owned the Times, and many readers would make a comment along the lines of "since the Times bought the U-T...."

The U-T and the Times are separate sister papers. They are part of what Soon-Shiong has called California Times, the group of publications he has acquired. (There is no more "California News Group," which Tronc called its SoCal venture.)

The U-T's reporters and editors will work out of the downtown San Diego and San Marcos offices. The Editorial Board will remain the U-T's. The editorial team will stay the same, with Editorial and Opinion Director Matthew T. Hall; editorial writer Chris Reed; Op-ed Editor Blanca Gonzalez; Letters Editor Andrew Kleske; and Abby Hamblin and Luis Gomez producing The Conversation for online and for podcasts.

Several readers have called since Soon-Shiong's intention to buy was announced to ask if he is conservative or liberal and how will it affect the news and opinion pages.

He has said he is registered independent. "I support the right, and I support the left, and I support the middle as long as they are going to make an impact that is truly, truly, truly for the common good," he said an April 15 story by U-T

reporter John Wilkens.

Soon-Shiong's political persuasion doesn't matter. He said he will not influence news stories. He believes in fair, truthful coverage, and he supports opinion pages with vigorous debate and views from multiple positions.

Although the U-T and Times have shared stories over the past three years — U-T stories frequently run in the Times' California section — a stronger partnership is envisioned for the future.

Light spoke of the benefit "from a great relationship."

Soon-Shiong mentioned collaborating on podcasts, and he foresaw dual bylines on stories — a "mutual strength."

Pearlstine, the Times editor, gave examples of the border, where U-T reporter Sandra Dibble's expertise is widely acknowledged, and Comic-Con, where the Times' Hollywood connections could be tapped into, as two areas ripe for partnerships.

I asked Light for a perspective on what Soon-Shiong's purchase means to readers. Here it is:

"People should know how fundamentally important Dr. Soon-Shiong's investment is. As a publicly traded company, the road ahead for us looked extremely difficult. If you spend some time with the former owner's financial statement, you will see the challenge that group faced: to increase the bottom line even as the top line declined. We were in a race against time.

"Dr. Soon-Shiong has offered us the promise of investment in technology and in journalism, an endorsement of our public service mission and the assurance of editorial independence. These are the life blood of our organization.

"The Union-Tribune has changed hands four times in the last nine years, paying handsome returns to a succession of owners. All this while our staff has made the sacrifices needed to build a local news company that works.

"Dr. Soon-Shiong is greeted with enthusiastic applause by our staff. We know that he has arrived just in time. He has given our journalists the stability they need to focus on our mission, and given our executives the time they need to transform our business model. I consider it very good news for San Diego."

[adrian.vore@suniontribune.com](mailto:adrian.vore@suniontribune.com)

## PUBLIC SAFETY: DANA LITTLEFIELD

## Dangerous combo: kids, cars, heat

Last week marked the arrival of summer, and with that came the annual reminder from a national watchdog groups that leaving a child unattended in a vehicle is not only dangerous but could be deadly.

Kidsandcars.org, is a Kansas-based organization that conducts research and collects data on instances of children being "injured, abducted, disabled, or killed because they are left unattended in or around vehicles," according to the group's website.

On Wednesday, a 23-year-old Northern California woman was arrested after allegedly leaving her 18-month-old son in a car with the windows rolled up for about 10 hours while she socialized with people inside a home, according to the Mendocino Sheriff's Department.

The child, Chergery Teywoh Lew Mays, died.

The incident marked the 17th heat-stroke death in the United States this year, according to kidsandcars.org.

Based on its research, kidsandcars.org says there have been 56 child hot-car deaths

in California since 1990. In 2015, an El Cajon mother of four was sentenced to 10 years in prison for unknowingly leaving her 4-month-old son in a car, where temperatures rose to more than 125 degrees.

Baby Giovanni was in the car alone for 14 hours in July 2013. He died shortly after he arrived at a hospital.

Earlier this month, a 2-year-old was reportedly left in a car for two to three hours in Sorrento Valley. The child was taken to Rady Children's Hospital and then released.

A few tips from kidsandcars.org:  
 • Put something you need in the back seat to remind you to open the back door every time you park (e.g. a cellphone, employee badge, handbag, work computer).  
 • Keep a stuffed animal in baby's car seat. Place it on the front passenger seat as a reminder when baby is in the back seat.  
 • If a child is missing, immediately check the passenger compartment and trunk of all vehicles in the area carefully.

[dana.littlefield@suniontribune.com](mailto:dana.littlefield@suniontribune.com)

## FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

## SAN DIEGO LOSES A TEAM

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

## Thursday, June 24, 1971

In a move that surprised many, Bob Breitbard announced the sale of the San Diego Rockets professional basketball team to Houston for \$5.6 million. The San Diego Rockets — named after the Atlas rockets manufactured nearby — began as expansion National Basketball League team in 1967, and played four seasons at the Sports Arena.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

## HOUSTON GROUP BUYS SAN DIEGO ROCKETS

## Players, Coaches Surprised

The San Diego Rockets basketball team was sold to a group from Houston yesterday for \$5.6 million in a move that caught San Diego officials and Rockets' players and coaches by surprise.

The National Basketball Association said the team will move to Houston for next season. However, city officials said last night there may be legal ways to keep the Rockets in San Diego.

The sale clouded the future of the International Sports Arena. It brought charges the Rockets were driven out of town and countercharges that franchise owners sold the team for a quick profit.

City Atty. John Witt said the city may have legal means to force the team to stay in San Diego. City Mgr. Walter Hahn agreed

the city may have recourse but neither would discuss possible action.

## CITY MOVE

Hahn said the city would in all probability take over the operation of the Sports Arena. NBA Commissioner Walter Kennedy said the Houston group was headed by real estate developer Wayne Dudleston, investment banker Billy Goldberg and sportswriter Mickey Herskowitz.

Bob Breitbard, the principal owner of the of the club in San Diego, will keep a "small piece" of the team, Kennedy said.

He said the sale price was \$5.6 million. The commissioner announced the transaction only moments after the NBA board of governors formally approved it. Breitbard



bought the team for \$1.7 million in 1967.

Kennedy said the team, which will retain the name Rockets, will play most of its home games in the news 11,500-seat Hofheinz Pavilion at the University of Texas and a few games in the Astrodome.

San Diego attorney Thomas M. Hamilton, a club official in the San Diego franchise, accused City Mgr. Hahn and county Tax Assessor E.C. Williams of forcing the Rockets to leave the city.

Hamilton said Hahn was negligent in failing to provide for municipal operation of the arena. And Hamilton was angered when the assessor handed the club a tax bill of \$141,000 yesterday and demanded payment

by June 29.

## VEHEMENT DENIAL

Hahn was vehement in his denial of Hamilton's charges.

"To say that anybody ran the team out of town is pure hokum," Hahn said. "It's a smokescreen for a sale that enabled somebody to make a lot of money in a hurry."

In a telephone call late last night, Breitbard said the tax increase and a June 30 eviction notice for unpaid bills forced his decision to sell the team.

"I fought hard to bring professional basketball to San Diego," he said. "I had no idea we would ever take it out."

Neither Rockets general manager Pete Newell nor coach Tex Winter had heard the news of the sale when reached by telephone.

## SURPRISE MOVE STUNS GM NEWELL AND NEW COACH

The San Diego Rockets, so conspicuous for turmoil in the past, today are conspicuous only by their absence.

Rockets' owner Bob Breitbard last night announced the sale of the National Basketball Association franchise to Houston interests for \$5.6 million, four years after he brought the expansion team for \$1.75 million.

Texas real estate developer Wayne Dudleston, attorney Billy Goldberg and sportswriter Mickey Herskowitz have bought themselves and the city of Houston a basketball team, complete with favorite son Elvin Hayes.