May 15, 2025

Dear Vacaville Mayor Carli and the Vacaville City Council,

At the Vacaville City Council meeting on Tuesday night, May 14, 2024, Vice-Mayor Ritchie responded to the public scrutiny received after announcing your support of California Forever (CF) and becoming the first elected official to announce support of the project. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the meeting, however, I watched the archived video of Tuesday's meeting and read yesterday afternoon's article in the Vacaville Reporter and feel that some things need clarified, including my role which started this whole snowball.

To get this out of the way, I am not opposed to growth and development. This industry has supported my family and without it, we would not have the life we have built today. I am opposed to anything that could affect my family's quality of life and financial stability. Until California Forever is able to prove it will meet these basic requirements and all of the unknown items are justified with facts I find to be in my family's best interest, meaning more than taking the word of an unexperienced developer, I will remain opposed.

I also want to let you know that I strongly disagree with boycotting businesses, closing businesses, or causing businesses any financial harm and I am not, as some ridiculously believe, trying to "take Vice-Mayor Ritchie down," "ruin his life," or "out to get him."

On April 30, 2024 when the Vacaville Reporter published an article announcing Vice-Mayor Gregory Ritchie's support for CF. Later that evening, I recalled seeing a hashtag while searching for property and loans: #californiaforeverhomeloans. An online search resulted in finding the californiaforeverhomeloans.com website. The website was branded with similar colors, fonts, using and not crediting the same community renderings CF uses on their website and marketing materials with no photo credits, and the site's browser tab title reads CF First Time Home Buyer Programs.

The content gave the perception it was an official CF website with the use of phrases such as "…take the first step towards making CF your forever home" and "Our mission is to empower the hardworking residents of California Forever with innovative home financing options, ensuring that you can call this dynamic community your forever home." In addition, statements such as "Connect with our live and local team today, and let's embark on this exciting journey together," and "Contact us today to take the first step towards making California Forever your forever home," led me to perceive CF was currently and actively offering home loans for the project. I was wondering why CF was asking people to contact them "today."

Curious about why CF was offering loans before homes were built, I looked in the website footer for contact information. I wanted to reach out to the CF Home Loan people and ask some questions. When I saw the physical office address was in

Downtown Vacaville, an online search of the address showed the address and phone number were the same Citizens Financial in Vacaville, a home loan company Vice-Mayor Ritchie owns.

I published a post about what I found to a Facebook group I Admin (link: https://www.facebook.com/groups/775318240797761/permalink/797699085226343/) Citizens Financial had the same address as CF Home Loans. I included the link to both of the websites with a request to please be respectful when reaching out to Vice-Mayor Ritchie. Less than 2 hours after my post, the website had been removed, but I located the archived version online.

The other admin on the page, Steve Ferreira researched and found there are actually 4 Fictitious Business Names (DBA's) with the CF name in them filed in Solano County by Vice-Mayor Ritchie and posted that information on our group page. The next morning, a statement from Vice-Mayor Ritchie was published on the CF Home Loans website which remains today.

Apparently, the press picked up the information Steve and I posted on our Facebook group, and on May 1, the Vacaville Reporter interviewed Vice-Mayor Ritchie who stated "…his business will be interested in helping people access the down payment assistance that California Forever has promised to provide." Then in the next paragraph he states "I want to make one thing crystal clear — neither my company nor myself have any economic relationship or interest in California Forever." I am not implying nor have I ever implied that there was a legally binding agreement between Vice-Mayor Ritchie and CF, or that there were any donations, contributions, etc., between the Vice-Mayor and CF.

However, since CF has been so elusive and unwilling (or unable) to explain anything in detail, and has not passed voter approval, this just raised more questions and the feeling he must know details about this project that have not been provided to the residents of the community. For instance:

- Why did CF Home Loans website ask people to connect "today" if there isn't going to be anything built for a long time?
- Is something happening sooner the residents of Solano County are not privy to?
- How does Vice-Mayor Ritchie know how to access CF's down payment assistance and why would CF allow him to have access to this money?
- How does he know how much an individual will need for a down payment when there aren't properties to move into?
- If he is merely helping people and has no foreseeable income or economic benefit by offering home loans and is not affiliated in any way shape or form with CF, and there is no conflict of interest, then why did he take the website down?

As someone who is opposed to this, it was very deflating to learn that someone I looked up to as an honest and reliable community leader would back a private sector full of

unknowns and a proven track record of blatant dishonesty, fact-twisting, inability to backup statements, has not yet forged one development agreement or taken other legal measures to solidify their voter guarantees, and publicly mocks our community. After thinking about it, I was hopeful as a supporter of CF and someone who has always had the best interests of Vacaville in mind, Vice-Mayor Ritchie's support would provide us with the fact-based honest answers the community is looking to receive. Unfortunately, that has not been the case

After watching the video from Tuesday's Council Meeting and reading yesterday's article in the Vacaville Reporter, I was no longer let down by Vice-Mayor Ritchie, I was appalled and I am angry. First, I feel he needs to answer some questions and offer the honesty and transparency he claimed in the statement he read. For instance, how does he know the home loan details I mentioned above?

Next, if he was really being honest and transparent, he would take accountability and come clean that he actually has 4 DBA's using the CF name. This can be found on the Solano County website FBN search file #2024-000090. If he would have corrected the newspaper and the citizen who both commented on his 2 DBA's, that would have offered his community transparency.

Vice-Mayor Ritchie expressed during the meeting how hard it has been for him. I get it, because this has not been easy for me either. I too have faced public scrutiny and judgement, such as being called a bully and a liar by the very company he is supporting. The day after the LA Times article came out, I was harassed incessantly for three days and it stopped once I filed reports. The Vice-Mayor complaining about spending 2-1/2 hours with attorneys after I missed a day and a half of work and more than likely will miss more because of this.

I may have been naïve because I had no idea that post I made would have gone to this extreme. That is not an excuse, I own this, I know what I did, and I accept the consequences that have been and still are coming my way. There were times I regretted making that post and wanted to apologize to him, but I feel the lack of transparency and accountability the Vice-Mayor is displaying does not deserve an apology. I no longer have regrets about making that post.

Another thing I want to bring up about Tuesday's meeting is that I fully support and appreciate how Vice-Mayor Ritchie called attention to and expressed how hurtful the racist comments were to him. I am sorry that happened to him and caused hurt, no one deserves that. After taking the time to express his feelings in such a concise manner, ensuring he was understood, I truly hope Vice-Mayor Ritchie is somehow oblivious to the statements made about Solano County residents by Jan Sramek, CEO of California Forever. These comments made in a Business Insider article (https://www.businessinsider.com/california-forever-jan-sramek-goldman-sachs-silicon-valley-city-future-2024-4) caused community members to be hurt and angry, some feeling his comments were racist. I do feel that it is necessary to point out that the following comments could be perceived as hypocrisy:

Sramek tells Business Insider: "When you look at them," he says, "they all look the same."

Business Insider says: So who's that? Your basic white boomer NIMBY?

"Yeah, I mean, you said it," Sramek says. "I'll just say it's not a particularly diverse coalition in any measure. It's generally a 70-year-old Sierra Club type. The only thing they care about is the open space behind their house."

I understand that many of us have full schedules and as community leaders, your roles add more to your schedules on top of your normal day-to-day responsibilities. I appreciate how hard it is to add another task to your day and I am in no way trying to tell you how to do your jobs or passing judgement. I think that it is important that the feelings of those you serve in the community are taken into account before complaining about how hard things have been because of what someone did to you or how hurtful the comments made about you have been. A quick Social Media review seemingly would create a better understanding of how the community is feeling and responding to CF and the press. If so, maybe important issues like the upset the Business Insider article caused our community will be taken into consideration as opposed to the Vice-Mayor's personal agenda.

Finally, as we all know, when community members exercise their right to ask questions, there is an expectation their right to receive honest and transparent answers will be respected and honored. Whether the community member finds the answer favorable or not, is moot, their right was respected by providing the answer. I feel this is important to note because so far CF has not answered the questions a majority of the community is asking. There are expectations that Vice-Mayor Ritchie will answer these questions and explain his actions during Tuesday's meeting. In yesterday's Vacaville Reporter article, Vice-Mayor Ritchie says there have been "unintended perception issues" and acknowledges how "change and the unknown can evoke fear." How does Vice-Mayor Ritchie plan to rectify his "perception issues" and regain trust? Is he able to provide answers to the questions CF won't answer to help alleviate our fears of the unknown? This would be a good start to regaining trust.

I can be reached at 707-410-6670 if anyone has questions or would like to discuss this further.

Respectfully,

Michelle Trippi