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## Prominent names among partners list

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San Bernardino County Sun

In its patronage of the arts, the Colonies Partners LP has given away a substantial amount of money and a bit of its privacy.

Although most of the partners' identities have remained confidential in the four years since they sued San Bernardino County for as much as \$300 million in damages, at least 29 of them were publicly thanked in an Aug. 18 pamphlet for the partnership's financial support of the Victoria Gardens Cultural Center in Rancho Cucamonga.

The partners listed include businessmen, attorneys, plastic surgeons and a former U.S. senator. And although some are admitted strangers in the world of county politics, others may be growing much more familiar: At least one appears to be a member of "Citizens Against Pay Raises for Politicians," a campaign committee seeking to defeat a ballot measure proposed by county Supervisor Paul Biane.

The Colonies dispute with the county dates back to flood-control changes made to accommodate the Interstate 210 extension. Because of the construction, a storm-water drain outlet was built on Colonies property, requiring the developer to expand flood-control facilities on a substantial portion of its land. When the county and the developers could not agree on how much the county should pay for the flood-control facilities, the Colonies filed suit.

Since that time, co-managing partner Jeff Burum has been the face of the group, although co-managing partner Dan Richards has occasionally spoken for it as well.

In the sixteen years since founding his real-estate development company, Diversified Pacific, Burum has built more than 2,000 homes and a million feet of commercial space, according to a biography posted by Claremont McKenna's Rose Institute, where he is on the faculty.

Outside of San Bernardino County, Burum is better known for charitable work. In 1992, he and fellow Colonies partner Andrew Wright founded the Southern California Housing Development Corporation, a nonprofit which has built or refurbished more than 4,500 affordable-housing units, some in San Bernardino County.

Burum declined to comment for this story.

Other members of the partnership have kept a lower profile. Most live in Upland or nearby, with a significant portion holding membership in the 400-member Red Hill Country Club, Biane said.

"Everybody knows that," he said.

On Wednesday, Biane said he learned of the list of partners a week ago and knows some of the individuals socially. Biane, as well as Supervisor Gary Ovitt, appear alongside the Colonies in the cultural center pamphlet for their assistance in fundraising and lining up public money for its construction.

Many of the partners appear to hold positions with local commissions, chambers of commerce, and charitable foundations.

"Certainly most of us, if not all do," said Tony Mize, owner of Native Builders. He serves on the Rancho Cucamonga Community Foundation and was one of two leaders for the Victoria Gardens Cultural Center's fundraising. The partnership as a whole donated \$250,000 to the effort, he said, with individual members also contributing. The partners had no qualms about putting their names in print in the cultural center pamphlet, he said.

Who the Colonies Partners are isn't relevant to their litigation, Biane said. In prior negotiations, he said, Burum and Richards have said they needed to go back to their general partners to discuss settlement possibilities.

"I don't believe that," Biane said. "It's Dan and Jeff."

Since filing their lawsuit, the Colonies Partners and Burum have earned a reputation as major donors in county politics, giving more than \$300,000 to supervisors and other campaign groups that contribute heavily to supervisors.

More covertly, however, members of the partnership apparently made a substantial push to unseat former Supervisor Jon Mikels, who had fiercely opposed settling the developers' suit. Campaign records show at least 17 of the partners chipped in more than \$75,000 to Biane's successful 2002 campaign to defeat Mikels.

Now, however, at least one partner may be working against a ballot initiative backed by Biane. Measure P, approved by the county Board of Supervisors in July, would gradually increase supervisors' salaries to \$150,696 - 80 percent of a Superior Court judge's. It would also impose a three-term limit on supervisors' service.

James Poppen is listed as a Colonies partner in the cultural center pamphlet. Jim Poppen is one of five members of the committee against Measure P. He did not return a call seeking comment.

Lorraine LeClear, a spokeswoman for the Colonies, said only that associating the two groups was an error.

Members of Citizens Against Pay Raises For Politicians have vigorously denounced the county's unwillingness to settle the Colonies case, with Chairman Sam Torres suggesting the county should settle the case for \$167 million - more than the Colonies' most recent settlement proposal. Torres said that proposal was his own, not that of his group.

But representatives of the group have denied having anything more than a social connection to Burum or the other partners.

"We're just a bunch of fed-up people," said Sean Brunske, a member, late last month.

"I'm kind of surprised about this Jim Poppen person," said Torres, the group's chairman, adding that Poppen's involvement in the Colonies would not affect the group's overall goal of not rewarding undeserving county leaders with a pay raise.

The group has stated it intends to raise as much as \$250,000 for the effort.

Biane said he was optimistic that Measure P would succeed on its merits.

"The county's current litigation with the Colonies has nothing to do with Measure P and the goals I hope Measure P will accomplish, to improve San Bernardino County and the type of candidates that run for office," Biane said.

Nor, Biane said, was he opposed to settling the Colonies dispute out of court. A prospective settlement, however, couldn't be made for "numbers that are out of the stratosphere," he said.

Several Colonies partners listed in the cultural center pamphlet said they fully backed the managing partners' judgment in handling the litigation.

"From my perspective, being a resident of Upland, it's a positive project and an asset to the city," said John Bunkers, a limited partner who also has a dental practice in Glendora. "I don't think any of us envisioned all the twists and turns that have taken place in the last ten years."

Members of the partnership all have a say in its decisions, Bunkers said, though the bulk of responsibilities - and the litigation's political side - are left to four general partners, he said.

"Too many voices only muddle things up."

Gary Cripe, another previously undisclosed partner, expressed confidence that his partnership would one day receive a large settlement or verdict in the case.

"It seems to me that what the county is doing is in effect creating a land bank for the Colonies," he said. "The longer they delay the inevitable, their damages will go up, and their expenses for keeping their fingers in the dike will go up as well."

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The Colonies Partners as presented in the Victoria Gardens Cultural Center dedication handbook:

Judy and Dan Richards

Kellie and Jeffrey Burum

Doug Gorgen

Blenda and Andrew Wright

John Bunkers

James Poppen

Nancy Cowie

Lonnie Priester

Sally and Raymond Crebs

Glenda and Jack Rech

Catherine and Gary Cripe

Kay and Carl Redlin

Julie Cunningham

John Seymour Jr.

Doug Froehlke

Robert Sorosky

Edward Hopson

Ken Sorosky

David Junkin

Ira Norris

Sebastiano Sterpa

Deloris and Larry Lipkowski

John Sultze

Matreyek Trust

Roland Troxel

Earl Minnis

Diane and Richard Tucci

Annabel and Tony Mize

Phillip Ulrich

Staff report