



**SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

Department: City Manager

Prepared by: Lindsay Lara, City Clerk

City Manager Approval:  \_\_\_\_\_

**TOPIC: PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD 2024**

**SUBJECT: RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO RECIPIENT OF THE RICHARD P. O'BRIEN AND MARY FERRARIO O'BRIEN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD FOR 2024**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt Resolution of Appreciation to recipient of the Richard P. O'Brien and Mary Ferrario O'Brien Public Service Award for 2024.

**BACKGROUND:** In March 2001, J. Michael Mahoney established an endowment in honor of former Planning Commissioner Richard O'Brien and his wife, Mary Ferrario O'Brien. The endowment funds an annual Public Service Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual in the San Rafael community who has made exceptional contributions to the City, making it a better place to live or work. In addition to public recognition, the endowment provides a cash award to the recipient.

In September 2001, the City Council adopted procedures for the Public Service Award program and process. The procedures include the appointment of a Selection Committee to review nominations from the public and recommend an award recipient to the City Council. The Selection Committee includes two City Council members, two Planning Commissioners, a member of the O'Brien family, a representative from the San Rafael Chamber of Commerce, and neighborhood community representatives (e.g., Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods).

The call for nominations was initiated in November 2023. Once the current year nominations have been submitted, they are reviewed along with the nominations submitted over the past three years (in this case 2021, 2022 and 2023). Last year's award recipient (Melissa Prandi – 2023) was eliminated from the pool of eligible candidates.

This year, a total of 14 candidates were considered. Of this total, nominations were submitted for ten nominees this year and six were carried over from the past three years. On March 12,

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FOR CITY CLERK ONLY

Council Meeting:

Disposition:

2024, the Selection Committee met to review and consider the nominations. The Committee selected Tom Harrison as the twenty-fourth recipient of the award.

As summarized in the attached Resolution and nomination materials, Tom Harrison was selected as the recipient of the Public Service Award due to his consistent level of selflessness demonstrated in his volunteer work spanning over a decade. He single-handedly maintains the path between Bahia Vista Elementary School and Spinnaker Point. He weeds, prunes, takes out dead plant material, cleans up litter, and coordinates group activities when the City has an interested volunteer group. He ventures out far beyond the neighborhood though and does cleanups throughout the Canal and all the way into downtown San Rafael. He does weekly patrols throughout the downtown and removes graffiti, stickers, and flyers from public facilities such as light poles, signs, trash cans, and buildings. He is a map-maker and uses his skillset to map out trash cans throughout San Rafael, to map tree locations, and to map illegal dumping in the area.

Over the years, Tom has spent thousands of hours picking up litter and organizing clean ups around San Rafael. His efforts have prevented hundreds (potentially thousands) of pounds of garbage from ending up in our waterways, making San Rafael more beautiful and livable for all. He has also reduced Public Works staff time dramatically by single-handedly maintaining the City landscaping along the Spinnaker path, removing invasive plants and weeds, trimming, pruning, and fixing irrigation lines.

Tom's efforts to remove graffiti and stickers from trash cans, streetlights, fire hydrants, parking meters and traffic control boxes have beautified the downtown corridor, making it more attractive to shoppers and contributing to the economic vitality of local businesses. Through these efforts, Tom models civic duty and public service at its best – he sees a need, then takes initiative to meet that need for the benefit of the entire community.

Tom is the ultimate self-directed doer, not a self-promoter, the ultimate tireless and effective civic volunteer. He sets his own goals and always achieves them, working several hours each day on San Rafael civic projects. Tom's efforts and accomplishments have bettered our community in many ways, which has earned him the nomination and selection to be the recipient of the City of San Rafael's Public Service Award for 2024.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** The call for nominations for Public Service Award was advertised in Snapshot (the City Manager's e-newsletter), the City website, NextDoor social media, and with neighborhood associations.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** As the Public Service Award program is privately funded, there is no financial impact to the City of San Rafael. However, the recipient of this award receives a check in the amount of \$2,500 from the Richard P. O'Brien and Mary Ferrario O'Brien Citizen of the Year Fund, which is administered by the Marin Community Foundation.

**OPTIONS:**

1. Adopt the Resolution of Appreciation presenting the 2024 Public Service Award to Tom Harrison.

2. Return the recommendation to the Selection Committee for reconsideration.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Adopt the Resolution of Appreciation.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution of Appreciation
2. Nomination materials and letters of support for Tom Harrison.



## City of San Rafael

Richard P. O'Brien and Mary Ferrario O'Brien

### Public Service Award for 2024

Presented to

**Tom Harrison**

WHEREAS, Tom Harrison was selected as the recipient of the Public Service Award due to his consistent level of selflessness demonstrated in his volunteer work spanning over a decade; and

WHEREAS, he single-handedly maintains the path between Bahia Vista Elementary School and Spinnaker Point. He weeds, prunes, takes out dead plant material, cleans up litter, and coordinates group activities when the City has an interested volunteer group; and

WHEREAS, he also ventures out far beyond the neighborhood and does cleanups throughout the Canal and all the way into downtown San Rafael. He does weekly patrols throughout the downtown and removes graffiti, stickers, and flyers from public facilities such as light poles, signs, trash cans, and buildings. He is a map-maker and uses his skillset to map out trash cans throughout San Rafael, to map tree locations, and to map illegal dumping in the area. His efforts have prevented hundreds (potentially thousands) of pounds of garbage from ending up in our waterways, making San Rafael more beautiful and livable for all; and

WHEREAS, Tom is the ultimate team player, participating in the San Rafael Clean campaign, contributing to the Downtown Business Improvement District, helping organize Earth Day and Coastal Cleanup Day, and often joins other groups and committees to offer a hand the most humble way. He brings so much insight to the groups he participates in and he is never 'too good' for any task, he is a great team player and offers his support however he can; and

WHEREAS, Tom's efforts to remove graffiti and stickers from trash cans, streetlights, fire hydrants, parking meters and traffic control boxes have beautified the downtown corridor, making it more attractive to shoppers and contributing to the economic vitality of local businesses. Through these efforts, Tom models civic duty and public service at its best – he sees a need, then takes initiative to meet than need for the benefit of the entire community; and

WHEREAS, Tom is the ultimate self-directed doer, not a self-promoter, the ultimate tireless and effective civic volunteer. He sets his own goals and always achieves them, working several hours each day on San Rafael civic projects. Tom's efforts and accomplishments have bettered our community in many ways, which has earned him the nomination and selection to be the recipient of the City of San Rafael's Public Service Award for 2024.

NOW, THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the San Rafael City Council expresses its appreciation to Tom Harrison on behalf of his community and hereby awards him the Richard O'Brien and the Mary Ferrario O'Brien Public Service Award for 2024 on Tuesday, April 2, 2024.

Kate Colin, Mayor

## New submission from Public Service Award

Forms Admin <notify@proudcity.com>

Thu 2/1/2024 5:46 PM

To:Lindsay Lara <lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org>

**Date**

02/01/2024

**Nominee for Public Service Award**

Tom Harrison

**Nominee's Home Address**

[Redacted]  
San Rafael 94901  
[Redacted]

**Does this nominee live within San Rafael City Limits?**

- Yes

**Nominee's Phone**

[Redacted]

**Nominee's Email**

[Redacted]

**Your Name**

Cory Bytof

**Your Address**

[Redacted]  
San Rafael 94901  
[Redacted]

**Your Phone**

[Redacted]

**Your Email**

[Redacted]

**What contributions has this individual made to the community that are beyond the scope of normal civic responsibilities?**

Tom does it all. He's volunteered for the City in a variety of ways every week for at least a decade. He single-handedly maintains the path between Bahia Vista Elementary School and Spinnaker Point. He weeds, prunes, takes out dead plant material, cleans up litter, and even coordinates group activities when the City has an interested volunteer group. Tom has also provided input into several of our programs and grant applications. He is a map-maker and uses his skill set to map our trash cans throughout San Rafael, to map tree locations, and to map illegal dumping in the area. He

ventures out far beyond the neighborhood though and does cleanups throughout the Canal and all the way into downtown San Rafael. He does weekly patrols throughout the downtown and removes graffiti, stickers, and flyers from public facilities such as light poles, signs, trash cans, and buildings. Tom also serves on the San Rafael Clean Campaign, a group of volunteers and the City working together to reduce litter and its impacts. He also is the site captain for Coastal Cleanup Day at Pickleweed Park.

**What impact on the community did this individual's activities make? How has this person made a difference?**

If Tom stopped we'd really notice a difference! Downtown would have a lot more graffiti, stickers and flyers all over. Tom knows everyone too. Sarah at the BID relies on him and is so grateful for his weekly service. Tom helps coordinate volunteers for the downtown Earth Day Cleanup and Shop Local event. He's supportive of the downtown merchants and merchants throughout the Canal as well. He knows and works well with all the neighborhood groups and community-based organizations. Tom's mapping of our trash cans was so helpful - nobody had ever done it before. He provided an editable google map with photos of each and he provides input to Public Works when he sees issues with cans that need some service. Truly, if Tom stopped doing his almost daily volunteer work in the community the City would get a lot more complaints and it would look much less attractive.

**Discuss the time and energy this person has devoted to community projects or efforts.**

Tom volunteers almost daily all throughout San Rafael. When someone needs some insights into what is happening around town, we call Tom. He provides equal service physically and intellectually. He proposes new projects regularly and always tackles them with good planning, compassion, and conscientiousness. If another person steps up to volunteer in any capacity Tom is an enthusiastic supporter and though he's done so much, he never imposes his will or is ego-attached to things. He offers his insight with humility and an open mind then asks "how can I help?"

**Discuss the challenges met and overcome by this individual.**

The thing about Tom is he doesn't complain and focuses his time and energy on finding solutions. Sometimes he has to wait for City staff to respond or runs into obstacles to doing good service but he's always ready to pivot and make the best of it and focus on what he can do, not what is prohibitive. That said, he's not afraid to tackle tough projects and offer support.

**To what extent has this individual's efforts been previously recognized by the community?**

He's been recognized publicly by the BID during meetings and in their newsletter I think. There was an article on him in the Marin IJ - maybe even suggested to the IJ by the BID. The City's Volunteer Program has recognized him in their email newsletter and social media.

## New submission from Public Service Award

Forms Admin <notify@proudcity.com>

Sat 12/16/2023 11:09 AM

To:Lindsay Lara <lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org>

**Date**

12/16/2023

**Nominee for Public Service Award**

Tom Harrison

**Nominee's Home Address**

[REDACTED]  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
United States

**Does this nominee live within San Rafael City Limits?**

- Yes

**Nominee's Phone**

[REDACTED]

**Nominee's Email**

[REDACTED]

**Your Name**

Kay Law

**Your Address**

[REDACTED]  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
United States

**Your Phone**

[REDACTED]

**Your Email**

[REDACTED]

**What contributions has this individual made to the community that are beyond the scope of normal civic responsibilities?**

Tom, a retired map maker, works several hours every day and has done so over many years to keep his neighborhood (Canal) and our city, clean and free from litter, stickers and graffiti on public property. He has done this work singlehandedly, without direction or having been asked. He has taken on this civic responsibility mostly under the

radar. Apart from his daily local litter pick up, he has recently removed all ad stickers and graffiti from all downtown lampposts.

**What impact on the community did this individual's activities make? How has this person made a difference?**

I met Tom who I joined the volunteer San Rafael Clean Group pre-Covid. He is inspiring to other volunteers. He is tireless in his efforts. Probably you would only notice what he does if he stopped doing it! Just recently I spied him on West Francisco, patiently removing stickers from lamp posts.

**Discuss the time and energy this person has devoted to community projects or efforts.**

Daily consistent volunteer.

**Discuss the challenges met and overcome by this individual.**

The tasks Tom takes on never end but he keeps up his efforts to make a difference.

**To what extent has this individual's efforts been previously recognized by the community?**

Tom was nominated for this award last year. He richly deserves it following another year of outstanding individual contribution to the City of San Rafael.

<https://downtownsanrafael.org/tackling-graffiti/>

## New submission from Public Service Award

Forms Admin <notify@proudcity.com>

Fri 1/13/2023 1:13 PM

To: Lindsay Lara <lindsay.lara@cityofsanrafael.org>

**Date**

01/13/2023

**Nominee for Public Service Award**

Tom Harrison

**Nominee's Home Address**

[REDACTED]  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
United States  
[REDACTED]

**Does this nominee live within San Rafael City Limits?**

- Yes

**Nominee's Phone**

[REDACTED]

**Nominee's Email**

[REDACTED]

**Your Name**

Kara Klinge

**Your Address**

[REDACTED]  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
United States  
[REDACTED]

**Your Phone**

[REDACTED]

**Your Email**

[REDACTED]

**What contributions has this individual made to the community that are beyond the scope of normal civic responsibilities?**

Tom has been volunteering for the City of San Rafael and the greater Canal and Spinnaker Point neighborhoods since at least 2015 when he first came to the City to coordinate litter cleanup events and landscape maintenance activities.

For years he has done daily litter cleanups in the area and weekly landscape maintenance along the pathway between

Spinnaker Point and Bahia Vista Elementary School.

A mapmaker by trade, Tom generously mapped the location and quality of all the public trash can locations throughout San Rafael. He routinely assists with the City's illegal dumping program, providing insights, gathering data, taking photos and mapping hot spots.

Another example of Tom going above and beyond happened in November 2021 when Marin Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP) was considering putting an umbrella grant application together on behalf of multiple volunteer groups and municipalities throughout Marin for the Clean California Local Grant Program. MCSTOPPP put out a request for any potential projects related to trash reduction, transit and pedestrian improvement, and/or community beautification that could qualify for the grant funds. Tom was the first person to get back to MCSTOPPP with not one, but three(!) well thought out projects in the Canal District that included maps, photos, and rough design concepts! The MCSTOPPP team is always so appreciative and impressed with Tom's level of dedication in offering his time and expertise to the community.

More recently Tom has taken on the enormous project of removing stickers and graffiti from public signs, newspaper stands and other public property downtown. He scrubs, scrapes, restores until they're good as new. Sarah Tipple, Executive Director of the Business Improvement District says that when she met Tom at the Downtown Clean and Green Day event on Earth Day, it was clear that Tom is a leader in San Rafael clean up and spruce up. "His knowledge of graffiti/sticker removal and passion for our town has made a huge difference in how our City shines. Downtown San Rafael is lucky to have him!" Sarah says.

Tom is the ultimate self-directed doer, not a self-promoter, the ultimate tireless and effective civic volunteer. He sets his own goals and always achieves them, working several hours each day on San Rafael civic projects.

Tom is also an active member of our San Rafael Clean campaign, an anti-litter coalition dedicated to preventing and abating litter citywide.

### **What impact on the community did this individual's activities make? How has this person made a difference?**

Over the years, Tom has spent thousands of hours picking up litter and organizing clean ups around San Rafael. His efforts have prevented hundreds (potentially thousands!) of pounds of garbage from ending up in our waterways, making San Rafael more beautiful and livable for all. He has also reduced Public Works staff time dramatically by single-handedly maintaining the City landscaping along the Spinnaker path, removing invasive plants and weeds, trimming, pruning, and fixing irrigation lines.

Tom's efforts to remove graffiti and stickers from trash cans, streetlights, fire hydrants, parking meters and traffic control boxes have beautified the downtown corridor, making it more attractive to shoppers and contributing to the economic vitality of local businesses. Through these efforts, Tom models civic duty and public service at its best – he sees a need, then takes initiative to meet that need for the benefit of the entire community.

In an era of 24-hour news cycles, constant crises and pressing social issues that deservedly require our action and attention, it's easy to for issues like litter clean-up, graffiti abatement and beautification to be overlooked. But perhaps that's what makes Tom's action on these items even more important and inspiring – he's addressing issues that few other people are willing to tackle and doing it with kindness, strategy, diligence and care. Simply put, we need more Tom Harrisons.

### **Discuss the time and energy this person has devoted to community projects or efforts.**

Since 2018, Tom has volunteered more than 2,500 hours, averaging about 500 hours of service per year! He has contributed several hours per day to our local community over many years.

Tom also attends community meetings, providing honest, balanced, and judicious input on issues of concern such as litter, neighborhood safety, and parking.

**Discuss the challenges met and overcome by this individual.**

The challenges that Tom tackles on can seem endless and thankless –unfortunately there always seems to be more litter, more graffiti, more neighborhoods to clean. It's easy to see how someone could become disheartened at the constant barrage of litter, graffiti, posters, stickers, etc. Yet Tom remains firm in his commitment to go above and beyond to keep San Rafael clean. He has spent his own money purchasing specific cleaning supplies for graffiti-removal, and quietly does what it takes to get the job done.

Tom tackles very large-scale projects with little help. While most other volunteers work in teams and share the load, Tom focuses on his chosen projects without assistance and unfailingly completes them. Nevertheless, Tom is the consummate team player and is always willing to step up and be the lead coordinator on group projects, such as being the Site Captain for Coastal Cleanup Day and lead for Earth Day.

**To what extent has this individual's efforts been previously recognized by the community?**

Aside from praise and thanks for the small San Rafael Clean group, Tom hasn't received public recognition that we're aware of.

Nominating team:

Cory Bytof, Sustainability Program Manager, City of San Rafael

Aaron Tubbs, Streets Maintenance Supervisor, City of San Rafael

Steve Mason, Senior Supervisor, Recreation Division, City of San Rafael

Howard Bunce, Engineering Assistant, MCSOPP

Kara Klinge, Volunteer Program Assistant, City of San Rafael

Sarah Tipple, Executive Director, San Rafael Business Improvement District

Alex Volmer, President, Spinnaker Point Neighborhood Association

Ross Bishop, Former President, Spinnaker Point Neighborhood Association

Kay Law, San Rafael Clean

Andree Jansheski, San Rafael Clean, Bellam Self Storage

Jen Chicherio, San Rafael Clean

Libby McQuiston, San Rafael Clean

Jeff Schriebman, San Rafael Clean

Buz Johanson, San Rafael Clean

Jim and Mary Holden, San Rafael residents