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NEWSLINES

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nately be represented better on City Council,” Goldstein said, adding: “They should have tried to make sure the people they appointed have similar backgrounds and viewpoints to the people who were serving [previously]. They don’t have to be exactly the same, but similar.”

The choices

Of the two appointees, O’Brien is the more prominent, having served as police chief during a string of Butte County emergencies collaterally impacting the city—most notably the Camp Fire—and the fatal shootings of Desmond Phillips, Tyler Rushing and Stephen Vest by Chico PD officers. Five days ahead of the council appointment, Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey announced O’Brien as head of the Butte Inter-agency Narcotics Task Force.

Bennett is an industrial and commercial property manager who, along with his city service, has been on the boards of the Chico Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Chico Business Association.

In their appointment applications (available via chico.ca.us/city-council within the July 20 agenda), O’Brien and Bennett listed similar priorities: primarily, addressing homelessness and safety. O’Brien, citing his work with the Jesus Center board as well as Chico PD, discussed his “unique perspective” toward homelessness that “involves both compassion and accountability,” which he reiterated at last Tuesday’s meeting. Bennett wrote of the city’s need to resolve the *Warren v. Chico* federal lawsuit (see “Court order: Stay” on chico.newsreview.com) and told the council last Tuesday that “people are moving to Chico for their minimal survival,” echoing a conservative talking point of homeless people as transients.

Former Planning Commissioner John Howlett, who served with Bennett, said the architectural review board “seemed to me to be a very good fit for him. I don’t necessarily see him as someone who’s ever [been] perceived as being very interested to be on the council, so I think he was hand-picked to kind of go along with how the conservative majority is going to vote.” □

MORE NEWSLINES ON PAGE 16

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