



June 18, 2020



Dear City of Ventura Residents and Community Stakeholders,

In the last few days, we have seen a groundswell of support from some members of the community requesting that the City of Ventura remove the statue of Father Junipero Serra from its location near City Hall. To that end, Ventura Mayor Matt LaVere organized a meeting with representatives from the Barbareño/ Ventureño Band of Mission Indians (Chumash) and Father Tom Elewaut of Mission San Buenaventura. This meeting resulted in a friendly, collaborative, and honest dialogue where everyone recognized that the time for action is now.

The three of us are confident that a peaceful resolution regarding the Father Junipero Serra statue can be reached, without uncivil discourse and character assassination, much less vandalism of a designated landmark. As stated by Julie Tumamait Stenslie, the Tribal Chair of the Barbareño/ Ventureño Band of Mission Indians: *“True conversation starts with an open heart and mind. Change comes when there is no judgement or assumptions. To listen to and to be heard is crucial.”*

We have listened and we have heard the calls from those in the community and believe the time has come for the statue to be taken down and moved to a more appropriate non-public location. But a historic decision such as this must involve the Ventura City Council, the voices of the Chumash tribe and residents of Ventura. It is our priority to be receptive to community concerns and provide an environment where all voices are heard and respected. To honor the cultural heritage of Ventura and its earliest residents is our ultimate goal.

We all believe that the removal of the statue should be accomplished without force, without anger, and through a collaborative, peaceful process. This process has already commenced through our initial meeting and we look forward to continuing the discussion with the community to help guide further action on this.

The public will be invited to engage in this process and share their input. When a community discussion has been scheduled to discuss the Father Junipero Serra statue, this information will be shared openly and transparently by the City of Ventura.

Matt LaVere  
Mayor, City of Ventura

Father Tom Elewaut  
Pastor  
(805) 643-4318 ext.101

Julie Tumamait Stenslie  
Tribal Chair  
(805) 646-6214