



**Parents Take On
Neighborhood
Schools**

—p. 3

Quentin Kopp
*It's election time, and
the Q has a
few opinions*

—p. 3



Pro and Con:
*CCA stands for
Community Choice
Aggregation—but
what is that?*

—p. 4

**West of Twin
Peaks Central
Council**

—p. 6



Will Durst
BP's best?

—p. 5

Warren Hinckle
*Targets the
Democratic County
Central Committee*

—p. 5



**Game ON for
City's Pension
Reform**

Jeff Adachi —p. 7

More INSIDE

Civil Sidewalks / Jed Lane	4
Letters to the Editor	4
Prop A / George Wooding	5
Ocean Beach Infrastructure	6
Tony Hall	7
Jack Kaye	8
Police Blotter	9
Hank Basayne	10
Sharon the Health	15
Calendar	16
Movies	16
Remember When	17
Phyllis' Findings	17
Theater	18
Money Matters / Chris Arnold	19
Real Estate / Jed Lane	19
Education / Carol Kocivar	20
Real Travel / Sergio Nibbi	20
Gardening with Hilary Gordon	21
Games & Fun	22
West Portal Merchants	23

Behind the Scenes at Laguna Honda Hospital

Raiding the Public's Trust

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

Why does Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) continue trampling on, and raiding, the public's trust? Trust once lost, is difficult to regain.

On May 20, ABC-TV "I-Team" investigative journalist Dan Noyes aired a story about Laguna Honda's Patient Gift Fund, setting off a firestorm of outrage. The investigation revealed LHH's Patient Gift Fund solicits donations for patients, then spends large sums on staff parties, but hasn't informed donors of this bait-and-switch.

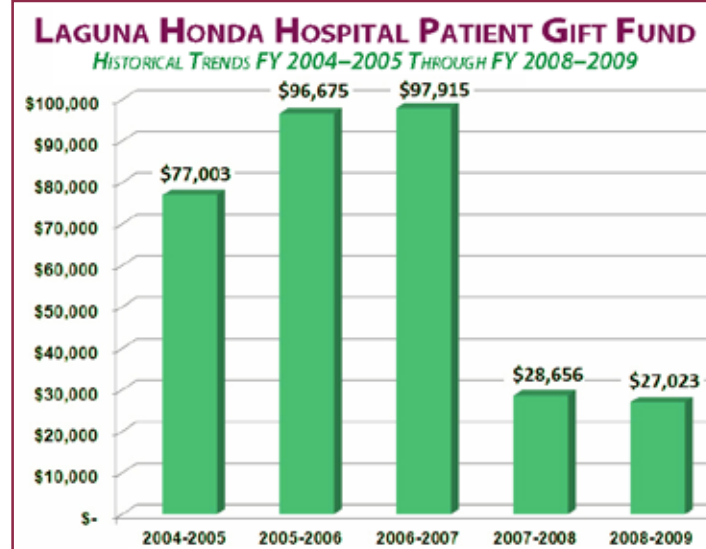
In an e-mail to staff the next day, LHH Executive Director Mivic Hirose claimed Noyes' broadcast "distorted facts"; in truth, it's Hirose and LHH public relations flack, Marc Slavin, distorting facts and deceiving the public, which is amazing since they're both public servants collecting six-figure City salaries.

Noyes learned California's Licensing and Certification Division (L&C) may investigate possible violations of the gift fund policy; his phone calls to Hirose went unreturned. Unsuccessful at reaching Hirose, Noyes attended a public meeting, but was accosted by Slavin, who refused to let Noyes ask Hirose any questions.

Slavin's on-camera performance was offensive, deeply troubling, and unprofessional.

Among the I-Team's revelations, Slavin claims Patient Gift Fund is "... not a gift fund for residents." If this new policy stands, why should donors continue making charitable contributions?

Last March, two LHH physicians—Maria Rivero, MD, a geriatrician and Derek Kerr, MD, CNA who developed the award-winning Hospice at Laguna Honda—submitted a detailed set of concerns regarding the Patient Gift Fund to the City's Whistleblower Program administered by the City Controller. Among irregularities they uncovered through Sunshine Requests as private citizens, over \$60,000 in questionable gift fund expenditures during fiscal year 2008–2009 had been made. They questioned



Gift Fund donations have declined 72.4% since the beginning of Slavin's tenure in mid-2007 payments to a non-existent organization, expensive catering of staff luncheons, reports that \$2 million in LHH Gift Fund assets intended for the "comfort, welfare, pleasure and happiness" of patients had been depleted, risking the solvency of the fund, and the composition of the Gift Fund Management Committee, among other issues.

They requested the Whistleblower Program audit the Patient Gift Fund, and sought restitution of potentially misspent funds. How much more money has been diverted from the Patient Gift Fund in previous and more recent years to fund staff perks?

Laguna Honda Reservoir:

Pristine Green Space To Industrial Lot

By Anthony Roy



Located at the corner of 7th Ave and Clarendon Ave, Laguna Honda Reservoir has long been one of the few remaining green spaces in The City. To the shock of area residents, the SF Public Utility Commission (PUC) has plans to permanently use this site for industrial purposes.

Just a few years ago, the area on the east end of the reservoir facing Clarendon was filled with flowering shrubs and blackberry bushes. When the PUC began the renovations of the neighborhood

Cont. p. 8



Failing to explain away the fraud charges away, Laguna Honda's Slavin goes for the old cover-up

They also documented curtailment of off-campus bus trips for dementia patients, which Slavin and Hirose deny has occurred; bus trips have been curtailed as LHH staff know. "Many residents can't speak for themselves, so that's why we're here — to speak for them and say this is wrong," said Dr. Rivero.

In 2008, Laguna Honda Hospital Volunteers, Inc—a separate entity from the Gift Fund—awarded the Gift Fund \$71,574, restricting the grant "to make resident outings possible."

LHH's gift fund policy #45-01, dated December 2, 2004, had gone unchanged for nearly six years before LHH completely rewrote it on April 15, 2010. The 2004 version, a three-page document, stated its "purpose" was "To ensure that LHH Gift Fund expenditures 'add comfort, welfare, pleasure and happiness' to the residents," and noted the gift fund was a "restricted" fund not intended to support the City's obligation to operate the hospital nor to fund routine City expenditures. Rather, the fund was established to benefit residents and enhance their quality of life.

The sudden April 15 policy rewrite, reduced to two-pages, completely eliminated the original purpose statement; the new "purpose" is merely to "ensure effective management" of the gift fund. The December 2004 version's "policy" section clearly established a "Gift Fund Management Committee" charged with coordinating, planning, and recommending approval of projects to be funded, including approving all expenditures over \$500. Kerr and Rivero had asked that the Committee be expanded to include a patient representative.

Instead, the April 2010 revision completely eliminated the Gift Fund Management Committee, leaving no oversight committee whatsoever and no patient representative. So much for LHH's claim of "resident-centered care."

Cont. p. 11

Taraval Medical Cannabis Approved



Editor's Note: Much has been written in these pages against the Medical Cannabis Dispensary on Taraval at 32nd Ave. and we are happy to provide space for the director of operations to reply.

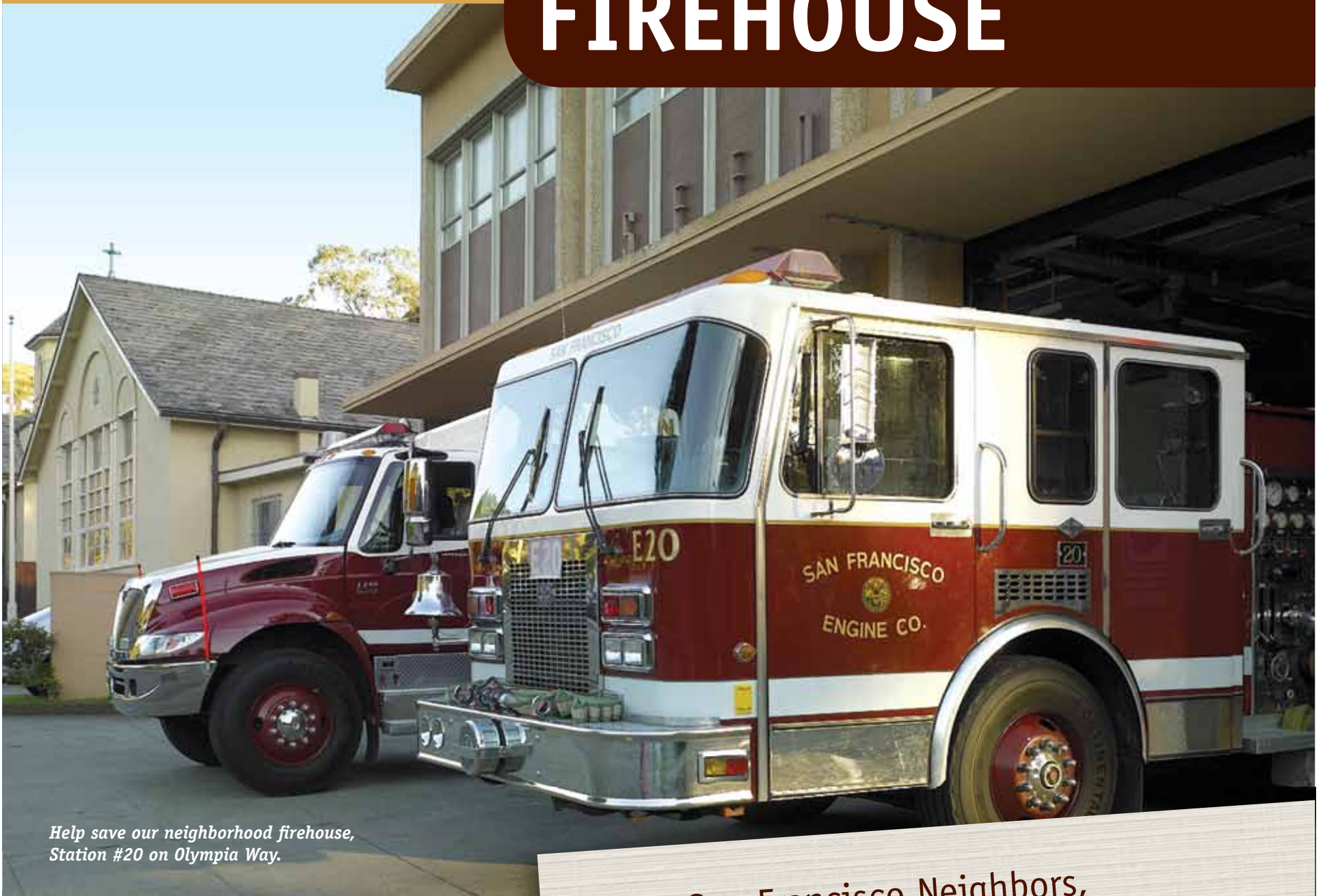
By Paul Hansbury

A lot of people were disappointed by the decision of the Planning Commission to approve our Permit at 2139 Taraval Street, but there are also a lot of people for whom the decision considerably improves access to their medication and who are very pleased. We appreciate the Planning Commission's members who carefully researched our proposal, we know there was a lot of pressure to vote against a site at this location but we know, after they studied the facts, they voted fairly and according to the State laws and San Francisco regulations. This was not something that they had on their calendar with no warning. I had the opportunity to meet with a few commissioners, and the commissioners met with many other people in the community as well. They found, as many people have, that once they took the time to listen to what we have to say and how we intend to operate, they are happy that we are opening and wish us luck.

We have been conducting outreach meetings every Wednesday evening since February and have had a chance to talk with many of the residents and neighbors in the surrounding community. Recently, people are telling us that they signed a petition "Carmen Chu's petition" (their words) due to some aggressive pressure from a petition gatherer. Many changed their minds

Cont. p. 8

SAVE OUR NEIGHBORHOOD FIREHOUSE



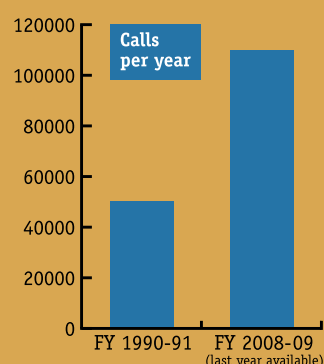
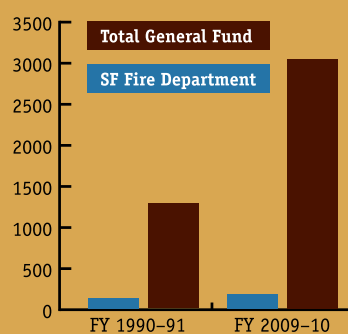
Help save our neighborhood firehouse,
Station #20 on Olympia Way.

CHECK THE FACTS:

While other parts of government have grown substantially in the last 20 years, the Fire Department has been getting more efficient. Firefighters and medics responded to more than twice as many calls in 2009 than in 1990.

That's why the last thing we should cut are vital services handled at our neighborhood firehouses.

General Fund Support for SF Fire Department
(amounts in millions of dollars)



Emergency Call Volume
(total fire, medical & rescue incidents per year)

Dear San Francisco Neighbors,

San Francisco's firefighters are working side-by-side with their fellow San Franciscans to meet the challenge of today's economic crisis.

We're cutting our budget at the Fire Department, improving efficiency and even digging into our own pockets and taking less pay to help close our city's half-billion dollar budget gap.

We're doing all this so we can preserve our neighborhood firehouses — your first line of defense in the event of fires, medical emergencies or any major disaster.

Please join the Save Our Neighborhood Firehouses coalition by signing up at www.SaveOurFirehouses.com or joining us on Facebook.

We're cutting the fat — but we shouldn't cut neighborhood firehouses that are your first line of defense against fires, medical emergencies and major disasters.

Thank you,

Tom O'Connor

TOM O'CONNOR
President, San Francisco Firefighters Local 798

Paid for by your San Francisco Firefighters Local 798.

Join our coalition at
www.SaveOurFirehouses.com



RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR

Election Season Observations

By Quentin Kopp

Since so many people have generously commented to me over the past several years about missing my ballot measure and voter recommendations, perhaps readers of this column will find of interest my predilection respecting state and local ballot measures and some public office preferences, with brief statements of reason. **I respectfully suggest support of State Propositions 13** (meaning that seismic reconstruction of a building will not cause property tax reassessment), and **14** (allowing all voters to choose a candidate for congressional and state elective offices irrespective of the candidate’s political party or the voter’s) **and 15** (creating a voluntary system only for Secretary of State candidates to qualify for a public campaign grant funded by a fee charged to lobbyists, lobbying firms and lobbyist employers, together with any voluntary contributions to such a fund, and conditional upon showing sufficient specified public support to justify receiving such public funding).

I suggest voting against Proposition 16, a remarkably brazen effort by Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas and Electric Co. to stop cities, counties, irrigation districts and any other local governmental entity from creating new public providers of electricity or expanding a publicly-owned utility to a new geographical area already served by an investor-owned utility. Proposition 16 requires any such local agency to obtain a 2/3 voter approval to do so. Now, I don’t know whether San Francisco’s proposed so-called “Community Choice Program” can save us ratepayers money; there has been a strong reasoned analysis by *SF Weekly* that it cannot, and that it will, in fact, cost us through higher rates. But that ought to be our local choice through duly elected public officials. It also should be the choice of ratepayers in other cities, counties and special districts. If Proposition 16 is approved, it will not be their choice as a practical matter—super-majority voter approval will rarely, if ever, occur.

I also suggest a vote against Proposition 17, another truly special-interest initiative by Mercury Insurance Co, that will enable automobile insurance companies to implement a surcharge on all of us who must buy automobile liability insurance. It insidiously permits insurance corporations to raise rates on automobile owners who cancelled automobile insurance for at least 91 days over the past five years, including someone in military service who cancels his/her automobile insurance while serving on active military duty. (Can you imagine doing that to a soldier or Marine?)

On local measures, I suggest support for Proposition B (the general obligation bond to repair and improve fire stations, water equipment and the emergency command center), **D** (which tempers taxpayer costs for the city employees’ retirement system), **E** (which provides clarity in the annual budget as to the money spent by the Police Department to protect City officials and asserted “dignitaries”), and a vote **against Proposition C** (another supervisory attempt to blur separation of powers by gaining authority to appoint members of an already unnecessary, expensive commission), **F** (another one-sided addition to rent control bureaucracy and red tape, intended to punish any landlord, be he, she, a large apartment owner or someone renting two modest flats) and **G** (yet another egoistic, unnecessary, non-binding, academic, infeasible nuisance by a supervisor who lives in Solano County but escapes attention from the same feckless District Attorney who delighted in prosecuting poor Ed Jew. (Remember him?) I leave Proposition A to your judgment, simply because I am over 65 and, thus, eligible for an exemption from this “school facilities special tax.” I note the existence of two contested judicial office elections about which I feel particularly qualified to recommend a position. That’s why **I commend current Superior Court Judge Richard Ulmer (Seat No. 15) and Assistant District Attorney Harry Dorfman (Seat No. 6). I also am confident in recommending my wonderful wife, Mara S. Kopp, Andrew Clark, Dan Dunnigan and John Shanley for the Democratic County Central Committee.** Please give each candidate your vote if you are a Democrat.

As a registered (since 1985) Independent voter, I can now, by California law, vote in any party primary. Candidates for statewide elective office are listed on pages 40-41 of the state voter information guide for the June 8, 2010 primary election in which all readers should participate. Please do so. By your leave, I invite those voting in the **Democratic Party Primary** to consider **my suggestion of Edmund G. Brown, Junior for governor** (he’s experienced and honest), **Assemblyman Pedro Nava for Attorney-General** (he’s an actual former criminal prosecutor and trial lawyer in Fresno and Santa Barbara Counties), **Assemblyman Hector De La Torre for Insurance Commissioner** (he’s a thoughtful, sound legislator who successfully led the recall of corrupt officials in Southgate, CA., his hometown), **Bill Lockyer for Treasurer** (an old friend who’s unopposed because he’s competent) and **Betty Yee for Board of Equalization** (she’s a product of a small laundry in San Francisco and a devoted Board member without apparent political guile).

If you are voting in the **Republican Party Primary, I recommend Professor and former Director of Finance Tom Campbell for U.S. Senate** (he’s the smartest person I’ve ever met in elective public office and a longtime friend from State Senate years), **Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner for Governor** (another bright, successful businessman who’s idealistic), **Damon Dunn for Secretary of State** (he’s a keenly-motivated young Stanford graduate with Harvard Business School training and administrative acuity) and **Steve Cooley for Attorney-General** (he’s been an outstanding career trial prosecutor and District Attorney for several years in Los Angeles, our largest county, and does not wear partisan political ambition on his sleeve, unlike our local aspirant).

Next month I’ll discuss more San Francisco City Hall history. Until then, be of good cheer—and be sure to vote!

Quentin Kopp is the former SF Supervisor, State Senator and Judge.



Neighborhood Schools

Parents Take On School District

Parents to hit the streets with a petition to bring “real” neighborhood schools to our neighborhoods

By Bayard Fong

A neighborhood schools policy is, by definition, a guarantee of student placement based on proximity to home. Seattle recently adopted a true neighborhood schools policy. Such a policy is based on the belief that children and the schools they attend are an integral part of every community, that children have a right be part of their community and that they will benefit from this relationship.

A group of parents organized as “Students First” and have taken action to put a measure on the November ballot. It is designed to pressure school leaders towards a true neighborhood schools student assignment system (SAS). The Board of Education in San Francisco voted to implement a new SAS starting in school year 2011-2012, but Students First believes that many neighborhood students will not be placed in their neighborhood schools under this new policy.

Students First wants the issues of neighborhood schools and the quality of those schools to be the focus of district efforts at increasing student achievement rather than the current practice of moving students from one neighborhood to another in a futile effort to chase performance. The current system of choice will still allow students to choose alternative placements as space allows.

A neighborhood-based policy must put neighborhood students first on any list of preferences. Below is a portion of the new SAS voted in by the BOE on March 9, 2010 and, as you can see, the neighborhood students are far from the top of the list.



“SFUSD conducted numerous meetings to get community input and the communities spoke loud and clear in favor of neighborhood schools. But the SFUSD has made no such policy commitment, despite encouraging the media to portray the new policy as one of neighborhood schools.”

New parameters

The proposed tweak to the school assignment system would give preference to students based upon these factors (listed in order of priority):

Elementary schools

- 1. Siblings already attend school
- 2. Students living in attendance area of school and are attending a district pre-K program in same attendance area
- 3. CTIP1 (test scores, demographics)
- 4. Students living in attendance area
- 5. Students living in attendance areas with insufficient capacity
- 6. All other students

Middle school

- 1. Students receive initial assignment to middle school based upon elementary school attended
- 2. Siblings
- 3. CTIP1 (test scores, demographics)
- 4. Attendance area
- 5. Students living in attendance areas with insufficient capacity
- 6. All other students

High schools

- 1. Siblings
- 2. CTIP1 (test scores, demographics)
- 3. All other students.

Under this preference scheme elementary and middle school students are given in 4th priority. And they have no priority whatsoever at the high school level.

SFUSD conducted numerous meetings to get community input and the communities spoke loud and clear in favor of neighborhood schools. But the SFUSD has made no such policy commitment, despite encouraging the media to portray the new policy as one of neighborhood schools. That is to say, what is most telling about the new policy is not so much what is stated as what is not stated. Any policy that truly intends to serve the neighborhoods students first would frankly say so.

SFUSD’s new policy reaffirms its primary goals as that of diversity rather than student achievement at quality neighborhood schools. Ironically, given the demographic changes among neighborhoods over the years, a neighborhood school policy would increase diversity compared to the heavy handed interventions that have failed in the past and resulted in too many parents leaving the public schools altogether.

Therefore, the Students First committee filed a Declaration of Policy to qualify for the November 2010 election ballot. If you would like to help contribute your time or make donations to support our cause, please access our website at www.sfstudentsfirst.org.

Bayard Fong is President of the PTSA at Thurgood Marshall Academic High School.

Where to find the Observer?

West Portal Avenue Area: Bookshop West Portal Century 21 - Scott Keys Realty Dubliner Irish Bar Greenhouse Café West Portal Books West Portal Music Store West Portal Library Zephyr Real Estate Office Pedistal News Boxes on West Portal Ave.	Stonestown Area: Stonestown Cinema (behind Shop Center) Stonestown YMCA Portola Ave Area: Creighton's Bakery - Portola Dr. Mollie Stone's Market – Portola Dr. Sloat Blvd Area: Aqua Surf Shop (Across from SF Zoo) Java Beach Cafe on Sloat John's Ocean Beach Café on Sloat	Taraval Street Area: Westside Observer Box-26th & Taraval SW Tennessee Grill (1128 Taraval) Trolley Cafe (1300 block of Taraval) Parkside Tavern (1940 Taraval) Parkside Library (1200 block of Taraval) Sunset Pet Supply – (2226 Taraval) Parkmerced Area: Park Place Market – Parkmerced Parkmerced Leasing Office	Noe Valley Area: Fresca Restaurant (24th & Noe) MRW Hairdresser Nail Chic on Castro at Noe Noe Valley Library Other Locations: Italian American Social Club – 25 Russia Ave. – Excelsior Dist Massage Envy – Westlake Shopping Center – Daly City Merced Library – 19th Ave @ Winston Sunset Library – 18th Street @ Irving Main Library – 100 Larkin St.
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Don't Miss Another Issue!

PRO & CON Community Choice Aggregation (CCAs) Coming To A Socket Near You

Is CleanPowerSF For You?

By Steve Lawrence

From the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission homeowners have received a mailer promoting CleanPowerSF: “I Choose Clean Energy.” The mailer promises that if the homeowner does nothing then he or she will receive energy that is “much cleaner than the energy currently provided by PG&E.”

Sound too good to be true? What is really going on here?

CleanPowerSF is San Francisco’s knife to stick into the back of PG&E. Elements within the City despise PG&E. Those who have ever read the Bay Guardian have probably seen it rant against PG&E and for public power. Also, “progressive” Supervisors love to hate PG&E.

In 2002, in the aftermath of the energy crisis, a state law passed allowing local agencies to form entities competing with the current electric utilities such as PG&E. The price of electricity had spiked after companies like Enron had gamed the deregulation system of the mid-Nineties. California found power scarce, and prices multiplied. PG&E went into bankruptcy. To legislators it looked like backup was needed. The 2002 law resulted.

Then the crisis abated.

Still, among those who despise PG&E and had long called for “public power” the 2002 enabling law was tempting. It allows “community choice aggregators” to organize, and to sell electric power in competition with the utility that had long had a monopoly (for good reasons widely accepted across the country). As environmentalists advocated for more renewable power generation, two forces combined: environmentalists and those who want public power. The result in SF is CleanPowerSF. Marin, too, has moved to create a competing public provider of electric power.



“San Francisco is scampering to beat the deadline by organizing and registering its competing company before June 8. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, the city department providing water, sewer, and power for public places, is carrying the ball.”

As San Francisco and Marin marshaled forces and support, PG&E decided to fight back to protect its turf—with Prop 16 on the June 8 ballot. Faced with the Prop 16 threat, which would require a two-thirds vote to spend public funds to create a competing public power provider, San Francisco is scampering to beat the deadline by organizing and registering its competing company before June 8. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, the city department providing water, sewer, and power for public places, is carrying the ball.

Lately the Commission authorized its general manager to enter into a contract necessary accomplish a competing electric power provider by June 8. Usually the Commission accepts contracts – with all terms and conditions written. But, given the urgency it was willing to perhaps play fast and loose with the law, and certainly with custom.

You the customer must act to reject CleanPowerSF, or otherwise you will be deemed to have accepted it as your new provider of electricity. If this strikes you as cheeky, well, you are beginning to get an education about how theses lefties work. The notice to you announcing your “choice” of CleanPowerSF as service provider unless you reject it has not gone out yet; that comes in the future. The recent mailer is just “outreach”. (Of course sent at ratepayer expense.)

You the consumer of electric power might ask a few questions (but don’t hold your breath awaiting answers).

Question one: will CleanPowerSF cost me more? Ah, that is one matter that is touched on only very lightly in the “outreach” mailer. “Your rates will be comparable,” the mailer says. What is “comparable”? The dictionary defines it as “worthy of comparison.” Is ten percent higher than PG&E rates worthy of comparison? Twenty percent? Fifty percent? No one knows.

Question two: much cleaner? CleanPowerSF promises to deliver electricity “that is much cleaner than the energy currently provided by PG&E.” Really? Does it have any track record? (No.) Does it have contracts with significant providers of solar power? (None known or mentioned.) With wind power providers? (Same.) With “other” renewable sources? (None mentioned; and what would they be?)

Question three: reliability. CleanPowerSF promises that “It’s Reliable;” there will be no difference in reliability. Really? Suppose you provide a service to a set of customers and they banded together to dump on you and deprive you of business; would your service continue to be as reliable? If so, you must be a saint.

When something looks too good to be true.... The City is spending public funds to stick a knife into PG&E. This will gratify PG&E haters. Greens will take some pleasure: Because of competition, PG&E will be less likely to meet renewable mandates, and then greens will then be able to beat up PG&E. Feels good. Meanwhile, the City will pay to organize a competing electricity provider, will send “outreach” and employ bureaucracy, and will engage in political theater. Well, what else is new?

Steve Lawrence is a PUC citizen activist.

Is Dirty Energy Good Enough For You?

By Michael Campbell

Did you know that the electricity that PG&E is delivering to residents and businesses in San Francisco is only 15% renewable and won’t meet the state’s 2010 goals for clean, renewable energy? Let me reiterate that point. It’s 2010 and the energy to power our homes and businesses is only 15% renewable.

CleanPowerSF is a simple solution to our dirty energy problem. CleanPowerSF’s goals are to deliver San Franciscans cleaner, more renewable energy that meets our state’s requirements. The program will rely on more renewable resources like solar and wind energy and aims to be 51% renewable by 2017.

Today, most energy customers must get their energy from PG&E; there is no choice in the matter. PG&E generates your electricity from nuclear, coal, natural gas, hydroelectric and other energy sources. PG&E then transmits and distributes this energy directly to San Francisco homes and businesses.

CleanPowerSF will change only the “generation” part of this equation by providing customers with energy from resources like solar and wind energy. And that’s it. PG&E will continue to transmit and distribute electricity directly to residences and businesses and provide billing services. If you have an electrical outage, customers will still call PG&E and they will still be responsible. The only difference will be the type of energy you are receiving; it’s going to be much cleaner.

With CleanPowerSF, energy customers finally get a choice. Instead of one energy supplier, residents and businesses will have a choice between two energy supplies and mixtures

“Participation in CleanPowerSF is also easy and completely voluntary. Do nothing and you will receive cleaner energy; it’s that simple. Energy customers who wish to remain with PG&E’s energy supply may opt-out of CleanPowerSF at any time. At the beginning of the program, CleanPowerSF will send out a total of four opt-out notices both before energy service begins and after the energy changeover.”

(CleanPowerSF’s clean energy or PG&E’s energy). Ultimately, the choice is yours; consumers benefit by finally having a real and meaningful choice in their electric energy supply. CleanPowerSF will put you in the driver’s seat of your energy needs. We hope you will consider choosing the energy provider that offers the most stable rates and the cleanest, most renewable energy.

Participation in CleanPowerSF is also easy and completely voluntary. Do nothing and you will receive cleaner energy; it’s that simple. Energy customers who wish to remain with PG&E’s energy supply may opt-out of CleanPowerSF at any time. At the beginning of the program, CleanPowerSF will send out a total of four opt-out notices both before energy service begins and after the energy changeover.

Contrary to claims by opponents, CleanPowerSF will not cost the City taxpayers anything. CleanPowerSF will be funded entirely by participating ratepayers. In fact, with more renewable energy pouring into San Francisco’s electrical grid, energy prices will be much more stable over the long-term and less subject to the wild price fluctuations of fossil-fuel energy sources. CleanPowerSF’s goal is to have rates that are competitive with PG&E, while significantly increasing the amount of green energy supplied to the San Francisco electrical grid.

Right now, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has certified the CleanPowerSF implementation plan. The SFPUC will also shortly sign a service agreement with PG&E in order to facilitate smooth program operations. Finally, once the SFPUC completes a draft contract with the energy service provider (the entity that provides the City with the cleaner energy) the SFPUC will present it for full public consideration by your elected officials. As is the City’s standard practice, your elected officials will seek the advice of both the City’s Budget Analyst’s Office and City Controller. The Board of Supervisors, the Rate Fairness Board, the SFPUC Commission and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) have held numerous hearings on the program already and will also hold public hearings on the contract. Once the legislative approval and transparent public review process concludes, shortly thereafter the City will begin finalizing the contract.

When CleanPowerSF begins serving energy customers, San Franciscans will see no change when they flip on a light switch or plug in their appliances. PG&E will continue to own and operate the electrical grid in the city and provide billing services for customers. However, CleanPowerSF will provide consumers with two things that PG&E currently lacks—long-term rate stability and a cleaner energy portfolio. CleanPowerSF is the best opportunity for our City to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make San Francisco a greener, cleaner place to live and work.

Michael Campbell is the CleanPowerSF Director

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I’d like to thank Quentin Kopp for his article, “Jig is Up for Justice.” I especially appreciated his comment on the newly appointed Superior Court Judge the Honorable Richard Ulmer - and the fact that his opponents in the up-coming election are weakly credentialed in comparison. I’ve come to admire Quentin Kopp’s judgment over the years, and because of his comments I plan to vote for Judge Ulmer. I only wish more information was provided every time there is an election that includes judges. I don’t know what other source there is for a person to inform themselves about the qualifications of judges running for office.

Virginia Hayes, Sunset District



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Civil Sidewalks - The Sit/Lie Ordinance

By Jed Lane

San Franciscans are headed for a debate and possible election on maintaining civility on our sidewalks. It’s too bad that it’s come to this, most San Franciscans would have loved to have not seen this day, but unbelievably, the situation has brought us to this point. Groups of street urchins traveling the country, living off the fat of the land and imagining themselves to be hippies, have descended upon the Haight Ashbury neighborhood over the years. In just the last few years the situation has gotten very ugly. Either a new style of anarchy is making its way through these travelers or these kids have an even larger sense of entitlement than previous generations.

If you are not familiar with this “tribe” please go experience them. All you need do is walk down Haight Street as if you are a shopper or tourist and have a right to walk on the sidewalk without impediment. Be careful though, these young adults can be violent and will resort to violence to get what they want and to deliver retribution for slights, disrespect or any assertive behaviour.

This group’s behavior is unacceptable to the residents of the Haight. If the extent of the intimidation, violence and retribution was experienced by other San Franciscans the call for action would be absolute. Most people in this City do not see intimidation and violence as a way of life and do not want to tolerate it in their neighborhoods.

The community has been demanding that the police take action to end this scourge, the police have done all they can to enforce existing laws. The extent of the violence and retribution are forcing the citizens to ask for a new law.

Cont. p. 15

The Third Gulf War

By Will Durst

The President may have wrestled Afghanistan and Iraq to shaky standoffs but the newest skirmish in the heads-up display of Air Force One shows him losing the third Gulf war and losing bad. Taking shots from both sides-from both sides. Republicans are yelling at Obama for holding BP responsible for the Deepwater Horizon disaster AND for not doing enough to clean it up. That man sure is a geographic oddity. On two wrong sides of the same issue. Which ain't easy.



Hijacking The Democratic Party

By Warren Hinckle

Voltaire said that when you hear the news, wait for the sacrament of confirmation. I have some news, and if it is confirmed in the June 8 election, the sacrament you will need is Extreme Unction because it will be the death of the Democratic Party as San Francisco has known it. This is the handiwork of the irrepressible Chris Daly, operating under the big wingspan of Aaron Peskin. The two Supervisors, one termed out and the other about-to-be, a few years ago decided it would be lonely out there in the cold, and conspired to create a permanent government – conspire is perhaps too weighty a word, it seem more that they more sort of drifted to the same power-hungry conclusion by doing what comes naturally like two whales in heat in sexual congress; what else did you expect them to do?



The idea was beautiful in its way – if they could no longer serve as members and keep the Board of Supervisors on the path of their self-styled “progressive-ism” they would do the next best, yea a neater thing, and control the Board of Supervisors by taking control of the Democratic Central Committee. What is that? It is a party organization largely ignored except by inside-baseball type political junkies but actually wields enormous power.

“On the flip side of that, over two decades—only 3 supervisorial candidates with the DCC endorsement have failed to be elected. In this lopsided Democratic-registration city, the coveted endorsement of the DCC makes being elected to the Board a dead cert thing.”

Witness: In the last 20 years, only 2 candidates, Ross Mirkarimi and, yes! Ed Jew, were elected to the Board of supervisors without the DCC endorsement. On the flip side of that, over two decades—only 3 supervisorial candidates with the DCC endorsement have failed to be elected. In this lopsided Democratic-registration city, the coveted endorsement of the DCC makes being elected to the Board a dead cert thing. I am still researching this matter for an election edition of the Argonaut, a venerable San Francisco title, b. 1877, for which Ambroce Bierce once toiled and which I publish periodically as the spirit moves. But I will share what I know now as it is of particular interest to the West Side of the city because the stealth artists who are planning to hijack the Democratic Party on June 8 (when they have fielded a slate of candidates to pack the DCC the way Roosevelt tried to pack the Supreme Court) intend, current DCC members who have knowledge of their plans say, to diminish the local influence of West Side, more moderate Democratic voters, by rewriting the DCC bylaws to give even more clout to East Side voters powered by the tenant-rights political cartel. If they succeed in their well-prepared plan by electing their candidates for the DCC, the result will be much sooner than later a mayoral veto-proof majority on the Board of Supervisors of left-ideologue, anti-business Supervisors of the flavor of Avalos and Mar. I am indebted in much of this ongoing research to longtime DCC member Arlo Hale Smith Jr., the son of the long-serving former District Attorney Arlo Smith. Smith Jr. got into the fray when he gained the ire of Supervisor Daly by even thinking about voting for the moderate, Feinstein-ite Scott Weiner for DCC chairman instead of Daly's partner-in-crime Aaron Peskin, who looms now to be Chairman-for-life much like Duvalier styled himself in Haiti of unfortunate memory. Daly threatened Smith in an e-mail in 2008 (of which I have a copy) that he would never eat political lunch in this town again if he voted for the offending Weiner because, if elected to the Chair Peskin was wanting to warm, (Weiner) “would be in a position to influence close endorsement votes” which “would make it less likely that our candidates would win the endorsement of the Party.” He wrote that “Aaron, Michael Bornstein (Peskin's chief FACILITATOR on the DCC) and I “not only had a slate for 2008” but were working on “fielding a progressive slate for the DCC in 2 years” (that would be the present 2010) that would pick up all the marbles. Daly told Smith that if he crossed Daly/Peskin he “would never receive the endorsement of the Guardian, Tenants Union, Sierra Club and Milk Club” – which are political appendages of, and provide the storm troopers for, the burgeoning new Machine which would be the rival of Tammany Hall, both in control of local political office and, as fire follows smoke, corruption.

After that last threat, Smith began digging into the record of past DCC endorsements which were on the more moderate side UNTIL the balance of left/moderate DCC members began to shift left under Peskin's tutelage in 2008. The present takeover plan-in-action in this election was formed in the year of our Lord, 2008, but Peskin laid the mechanical for it in 2006, by codifying in the DCC bylaws endorsements for Supervisor, et al., by the 50 percent, plus one vote rule. This makes controlling endorsements a breeze, compared to the former DCC standard—which is the practice of the state Democratic Party—requiring a 60 percent vote for endorsement. (Thus Gavin Newsom didn't get the party endorsement against his Southland rival for Lt. Governor—if that standard had been 50 percent, plus one, the Gav would have had it made. If Daly/Peskin makes its bones in the June 8 vote, Peskin will go from Ayatollah—the nickname which I, alas, gave him, because of his antics in North Beach under which he was elected to the Board—to Commissar of the Central Committee. And Daly will be enabled to pull the strings of “progressive” Supervisors from his swimming pool in the burbs. Thus the June 8 election could be a scary game changer in San Francisco politics. It depends on the votes, on the West Side, for DCC candidates in Assembly District 12. I have not got around to the Argonaut formulating its endorsements, but civic leader and general do-gooder Jim Haas has sent out a cry for help to a gazillion e-mail recipients where he lists the moderate or plain old fashioned independent, non-machine candidates for A.D. 12 and I have no present reason to quarrel with his picks, by name: Andy Clark, Ron Dudum, Dan Dunnigan, Bill Fazio, Tom Hsieh, Mary Jung, Meagan Levitan, Connie O'Connor, John Shanley, Arlo Hale Smith, Mike Sullivan, Matt Tuchow, Alex Volberding. So be alert to the consequences when you vote, but, this being San Francisco, you should of course do your own thing.

Warren Hinckle needs no explanation.



Miss Joe?
He'll be back for the next issue.

“(BP) ‘We’re trying our best.’ We are familiar with your best. Your best sucks.”

The main burst of charges that Obama is scapegoating British Petroleum are oozing from the newest Republican Senate candidate from Kentucky, Rand Paul. A man naturally disposed to disturbing people with both his views and his coif. Please, someone, have the simple common human decency to tell him that 1985 is calling and it wants its hair back. Not even Lyle Lovett wears it like that anymore. Anthony Geary maybe. But I digress. Calls are streaming across the aisle for the President to ignore BP's jurisdictional claims and have the military take over. Because people suspect BP cannot be trusted. About anything. If they smile and say “hello,” check your back for shards of a malfunctioning Blowout Protector. “We’re trying our best.” We are familiar with your best. Your best sucks. Top Kill was supposed to take 12 hours, then 24, 48 and now 96. You don't have to be Stephen Hawking to spot a mathematical progression here. 12,288 is a mere 7 press conferences spewed down the line. They didn't want the video feed to go public because even you and me and your five year old helper-monkey would see the ferocious gushing and realize, “whoa, that's more than 5,000 gallons a day. That's 5,000 gallons a frame. Where's my banana?” BP's sole object is protecting profit. Covering corporate butt. In the last six weeks, not a single word that has leaked out of their mouths has been true. Eventually they will divest themselves of all US assets, change their name and seep offshore to escape financial culpability in the courts but until then, the main object is to deflect blame keeping responsibility to a minimum. And when I say responsibility, I mean- money. The ultimate lubricant. BP is not concerned with plugging or cleaning or stopping or fixing or reimbursing, except for how it affects the quarterly dividend. To that end they will lie and deny and incomply and do whatever it takes. They will lie about what happened, what is happening and what will happen. They will lie because that is the culture in which corporations live. They will lie because it is their nature. They will lie because they're good at it. They will lie to stay in practice. They will lie about lying. Offer up proof. They will lie. They will claim it was their evil twin. Remember when this all started on Earth Day and they said there was no leak. Why? Because they hoping to get it under control and nobody would be the wiser. Some people are calling for a boycott of BP. Not enough. Don't just boycott British Petroleum; ride a bicycle to one of their stations, seize their toilet paper assets and send them to the Gulf. To help clean up. If Obama and the Oil Flushers can't do the right thing, we'll do it for them. Then stay on that bicycle for as long as you can. Will Durst is a San Francisco based political comic who often writes. This being an indignant example. Catch his one man show, “The Lieutenant Governor from the State of Confusion” at the Vallejo Naval Museum, June 3, 8-10 @ 142 Throckmorton June 5. His new CD, “Raging Moderate” from Stand Up! Records, now available on both iTunes and Amazon. Will Durst is a San Francisco based political comic who often writes. This being an incendiary example. Catch him at the Punch Line, May 27- 29, www.punchlinecomedyclub.com His new CD, “Raging Moderate” from Stand Up! Records, is available on both iTunes and Amazon.

Vote NO on A On June 8

Your vote is important, and matters.



By George Wooding

Proposition A — San Francisco School Board's “School Facilities Special Tax” — is the most destructive and divisive measure on the June 8 ballot. This Proposition is only “special” because it forces property owners to subsidize the public education costs of City renters. Quietly snuggled among Statewide energy measures, politician and judge races, and controversial City propositions, Proposition A is almost guaranteed to be overlooked by San Francisco voters. Proposition A is a 20-year parcel tax that will cost homeowners \$32.20 and landlords \$16.10 per unit annually. City renters who comprise 65% of the population and have at least 36,500 of the 56,200 children attending public schools will not pay a penny. This new Prop A bond will fund unspecified school maintenance projects and seismic upgrades; without specificity, why should voters approve it? Approximately \$7 million will be collected annually, but it will take a two-thirds majority (66.3%) vote to pass Proposition A. Is this taxation without representation? Everyone loves children and wants all kids to have a wonderful education, even empty-nester homeowners. But why should property owners be asked to pay everyone else's school tax bill? The 2008 Quality Teacher & Education Act (QTEA), another recent parcel tax that helps pay for school teacher's salaries, will cost each property owner \$205.51 this year. Once again, the 65% of San Francisco's population who rent and have many more school children will not pay a penny. Please note the QTEA parcel tax was passed by exactly 70% of the voters. This year's Proposition A parcel tax WILL also probably be passed by approximately 70% of voters. Property owners will likely end up paying at least \$237.71 more annually than renters for city schools. San Francisco cannot stop the School Board from issuing bonds or taxes. Ever since the passage in 2001 of State Proposition 39, school boards have been allowed to place their own parcel taxes and school bond measures on the ballot. San Francisco's School Board no longer needs the City's permission to add school taxes and bonds onto City municipal election ballots. School board bonds only need a 55% approval from the electorate, not the usual two-thirds majority. Proposition 39 dictates that school bonds will only be used for repairs, construction, or replacement of school facilities and classrooms. Proposition 39 also stipulates no property tax limits, and has no provision to pass property tax increases onto renters. Additionally, school bonds cannot be used to pay salaries or operating expenses. By adding Proposition A to the ballot, the School Board is severely hurting the chances of the passage of San Francisco's Proposition B, a \$412.3 million Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response Bond also on the June 8 ballot. Proposition B has been planned by the City for at least the last five years and is part of San Francisco's scheduled capital improvement plan. San Francisco's financially strapped voters are not in the mood to approve two separate revenue-generating measures. In the mind of voters, schools and children's

Cont. p. 20

News & Views

West of Twin Peaks Central Council

By Mitch Bull

Transit, Cleaner Energy and new officers were the main discussion topics at the WOTPCC meeting on May 24th. In the absence of both President George Wooding and Vice President Don Dutil, Treasurer Carolyn Squeri opened the meeting at 7:40 PM. Secretary Rae Doyle called the roll and a quorum was reached before a group of approximately 24 attendees.

With one change (adding George Linn to the Nominating Committee) the minutes from April were approved, followed by the Treasurer's report. Half of the organizations have paid dues and Squeri asked that the remainder try to get their dues paid by the end of June. The goal is to improve communication outreach to reach as many homeowners as possible, not just the delegates.

Matt Chamberlain gave a short report on Planning and Land Use, stating that the Planning Department is moving ahead with the recommended changes to the **Discretionary Review process (DR)** but that some of the homeowner and neighborhood groups are still concerned. He pointed out the CSFN (Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods) was concerned about the possibility of DRs being separated into "Type 1 and Type 2, with the fear that one or the other of the DR types could get less review. More on that in future meetings.

With no Taraval Police officers present, the meeting moved to the Nominating Committee Report. Dave Bisho, on behalf of Paul Conroy and George Linn, thanked the officers and board members at the meeting who have served for the past year, and announced some changes for the upcoming year. Vice President Dutil has decided to not be represented as a nominated officer for 2011, and, after nine years, Secretary Rae Doyle is stepping away from the position to take a break. With that said, Bisho read the slate of nominees for the September 2010 – June 2011 term: **President – George Wooding ; Vice President – Matt Chamberlain ; Treasurer - Carolyn Squeri : Recording Secretary – Blue Mudbhary, and Avrum Shepard as Parliamentarian.** Nominations from the floor can still be made up to and including the time before the vote at the June 28th annual meeting. Bisho moved for the approval of the slate of candidates and the motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Bond Yee, Director of Parking for SF MUNI, followed with a discussion of (overall) **transit and parking issues**. He started by giving a short scope of the Transportation agency's reach: With over 700,000 boardings per day, SF MUNI is twice the size of BART and runs such diverse transit types as streetcars, cable cars, buses, trolleys and the historic. The agency also oversees all transit flow of cars, bicycles, taxis and pedestrians throughout the city, as well as being tasked with the management of street striping, traffic signage, traffic lights, and 24000 parking meters.

Yee next addressed the proposed cuts to balance the 2011-12 **MUNI budget**, explaining that the proposal is before the Board of Supervisors and a hearing to discuss will be held on June 2nd. He explained that while ridership is 'up' and costs are dropping MUNI had "No Choice" but to initiate fee increases and service cuts on December 5th. Many of the changes were in line with a recently completed "Transit Efficiency Report." The report was the first one in the city in over 20 years. Another 10% in service cutbacks were initiated on May 8 to try and balance the budget for this year. With the proposed two-year budget MUNI is hoping that the revenue in year 2 (2012) will be substantial enough to restore the service cuts.

MUNI has also benefited from the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**, which allocated \$9 billion dollars to create jobs and stimulate the economy. California received \$1.6 billion and of that **San Francisco received \$67 million dollars** to assist with the rehabilitation of buses and rolling stock throughout the system. Yee commented that "last week" the first bus that was rebuilt under the program was returned to service after just 9 months; "lightning speed by government standards" the MUNI official stated.

He continued addressing the programs that DPT and MUNI are working on to regulate and measure traffic flow, parking space usage and the city's conversion of crosswalk indicators to the "**Pedestrian Countdown Signals**". SF is the first city to completely convert the crosswalk signals to ones that show the time remaining before the signal changes. This has resulted in many fewer pedestrians being caught in middle of the streets as the lights change, "It is the most popular thing I (we) have ever done."

The city has also converted **traffic signals to LED** (Light Emitting Diode) lighting that consumes 87% less electricity than standard incandescent lighting. It also lasts 7X longer but costs 3X more. The reduced maintenance and electrical savings offset the increased cost of installation.

Yee closed with a discussion of the **bicycle plan** for the city. Currently the EIR for the plan is being challenged in court and has been resubmitted and is under review. With 45 projects lined up to be completed, the presiding judge has already approved some of the ones that were not being challenged. The engineer closed by taking questions and answers from the group.

Jason Fried of CleanPowerSF followed with a presentation on the SFPUC-run organization and its bid to deliver "cleaner power" to the residents of the city. **CleanPowerSF** is a program run by the SFPUC to bring energy choice to SF residents. The PUC and Board of Supervisors are working to finalize and ratify a contract with PowerChoice Inc.,



SF MUNI's Bond Yee addresses the WOTPCC assembly.

to provide an alternative supplier of electricity to PG&E.

The goal is to generate up to 51% of power from renewable resources by 2017. If the initiative is successful, residents will be placed in the CleanPowerSF program and have a 120-day window (60 days before / 60 days after startup) to "OPT-OUT" of the program and return to PG&E as a generation provider. It is important to note that the billing for the program and the delivery of the power will still be handled by PG&E.

The presentation was short on specifics, such as pricing, as the contracts are not signed and firm pricing will fluctuate somewhat with the markets. Detailed information was also not available from the speaker on the history and background for the power provider, PowerChoice, Inc.

PG&E is countering this initiative with Prop 16, which would require a 2/3-majority vote for municipalities to enter the market as energy suppliers. Marin and Palo Alto have already entered the market as suppliers of power under the CCA (Consumer Choice Aggregation) guidelines. For more information on CleanpowerSF, check them out on the web or contact the SFPUC.

The next meeting of the WOTPCC will be the annual meeting on Monday, June 28th at 7:30 in the Forest Hill Clubhouse.

Infrastructure Along Ocean Beach Needs Repair

By Jonathan Farrell

As summer approaches, even in foggy weather, Ocean Beach and the Great Highway is an attraction for traffic and visitors from everywhere. This is why San Francisco Dept. of Public Works and a collaboration of other agencies want to work quickly to repair the bluff section near the Great Highway and south of Sloat Blvd from erosion in last year's winter storm.

DPW hosted a community meeting to over 30 people on May 6, at the Janet Pomeroy Recreation Center for the Handicapped on Sylene Blvd not far from Great Highway and Ocean Beach.

The purpose of the meeting that Thursday evening was to alert the public that the erosion that occurred in that stretch was extensive, affecting more than 900 feet. During the past winter storms, in some spots along the bluff of the Great Highway up to 70 feet had receded.

With the assistance of the National Park Service, California Coastal Commission and the CA Dept. of Fish & Game, over 1,000 tons of debris were removed from the beach and a 425 foot rock revetment or embankment was installed.

Repair work has been in progress since January, getting the most critical portions stabilized at a cost of 1.5 million. These urgent repairs from the winter storms of 2009 were completed this past April and are considered "Phase I."

Yet Ed Reiskin, director of DPW, told the audience that this erosion repair is only a short-term fix. "We don't want to just throw up barricades," he said. "We will need more detailed, long term planning."

Ocean Beach and the surrounding coastline are vital to the environmental health of the City and Bay Area. Steady population growth and ever-changing demographics continue to make an impact on the entire coastal area.

The City's infrastructure is of great concern, especially since the waste water tunnel and sewage treatment plant are at Ocean Beach. If that sewage treatment plant was to be disrupted or broken by further erosion, the consequences would be chaotic citywide.

"The City is in a difficult situation because it has spent millions of dollars on the sewage treatment plant," said George

Cont. p. 18



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Oh The Games People Play

By Former Supervisor Tony Hall



By now many of you have read or heard about the tremendous deficit that our City is facing this year projected for the next few years to come. How does all of this happen so rapidly, especially in a City like ours that has such a solid and far reaching tax base, that is a tourist destination for people from all over the World, is headquarters to some of the wealthiest corporations in the country, and is encompassed in a land-locked 47 square miles with only approximately 800,000 residents?

No doubt, these cash strapped days are due to the economic realities that have befallen our country and indeed the world is forcing us all to realign our priorities. But my question is, does it have to be this

bad, and are we truly addressing the underlying causes of over-spending that have contributed to our current predicament.

Could it be that what we pay for our municipal services is higher on a per capita basis by some 2 to 4 times when compared to any city in America because San Franciscans just like paying more for local government in order to live up to our humanitarian image?

Could it be that people who live here are just too busy to really look into the issues that affect costs and therefore just can't be bothered because after all, this is really a pretty good place to live?

Could it be that the issues presented to the public are deliberately obscured and complicated by politicians who curry political favor and expediency as opposed to providing basic services in the most efficient manner?

I certainly don't know all of the answers to the above questions other than to say that it could a bit of each. Before I present some facts to you so that you can make up your own mind, let me forewarn those of you, including most of the members on the Board of Supervisors, who believe that the only way to balance our budget and reduce the deficit is by additional taxes on the wealthy, this column may present some disturbing facts that undermine your theories on just whose "ox should be gored" or whose income should be redistributed.

A couple disclosure facts might be in order for those who like to cast dispersions...

1. I have never been considered wealthy in monetary terms by any standard and the pursuit money has always been secondary to me in favor of other achievements.
2. As a career civil servant for thirty years, I never made more than \$80,000 in one year and that was only in my last position, although I served as an executive in seven different City departments in all three branches of government.
3. My reasons for seeking employment in the public sector in the sixties were much different than what I suspect motivates people to do so today.
4. I am not really concerned about how much money anyone makes... good for them, as long as they have not made it by exploiting others or "gaming the system" in such a way that the end result suffers. That being said, considers the following facts:

Our city work force consists of 27,852 fulltime and an additional 9,425 part time employees for a total of 37,277 serving a population of approximately 810,000 residents.

That's a ratio of approx. 1: 22, easily the highest in the country.

More than 1 in 3 workers makes in excess of \$100,000 in base salary and when overtime is factored in almost 10,000 workers make well over \$100,000 per year. These figures do not reflect the additional costs to the City for health care and pensions.

"Are we getting our monies worth from our local "municipal service providers?" If not, why not and what can we do about it. As a person who is against discrimination of any kind, I just don't think we can continually go back and ask those who got it, to pay for those that don't have it, because those who are supposed to deliver it don't know how!"

There are currently over 9,587 employees earning over \$100,000 annually amounting to an increased cost of \$1.5 billion dollars to the City budget. This is an increase of 800 % in the number of City employees earning over \$100,000 in the last decade

In fiscal year 2009 salaries accounted for 2.5 billion of the 6.6 billion dollar budget. The amount we are now spending for salaries is well over 3 times what Frank Jordan allowed for salaries when Mayor and twice that allowed by Willie Brown.

The population of the City has not changed and it would be very hard to find anyone who would attest that essential City services delivered are better now than in prior years.

In 2007, as Newsom was running for a second term, he gave a 23% pay increase to police and firefighters. In the following two years, the amount paid for salaries of City workers increased by 207.4 million dollars.

Of the 100 highest paid city employees, 71 of them are police and fire and the majority of them earn between \$250,000 and \$350,000 per year with overtime.

In fiscal year 2008-2009, 1,637 city positions, many of them vacant, at a salary range of less than \$80,000 annually were slashed from the budget in a much ballyhooed report claiming to save \$55 million. 90% the 1637 positions eliminated earned less than \$60,000 per year. (So much for our low income wage earners and the dwindling blue collar sector!)

In later 2009, pay raises were given across the board to all City employees making over \$80,000 per year, and ironically, just as the Mayor's designs for higher political office started to surface, 616 new employees were hired by appointment and without civil service examination to earn over \$80,000 per year. These raises and appointments are now costing the City \$91.3 million more annually. (As a result, we now have a new type of mid to high level civil servant whose only qualifications appear to be his talent as a political operative. Hopefully, pension and benefit reform will discourage these new appointments from taking root in the City and they will move on to their next assignment.)

California Employment Development Department data shows that San Francisco City workers make an average of at least 20% more than their counterparts in the private sector.

Today, our budget comes in at 6.7 billion and is projected to go to 7.2 billion next year. Compare that to the 5.1 billion budget that reflected Willie Browns last budget or that of the 2.9 billion for the Frank Jordan budget.

Anyway you slice it, dice it or cut it, the question remains for you to ponder. Are we getting our monies' worth from our local "municipal service providers?" If not, why not and what can we do about it. As a person who is against discrimination of any kind, I just don't think we can continually go back and ask those who got it, to pay for those that don't have it, because those who are supposed to deliver it don't know how!

OBSERVATIONS: Patrick Monette -Shaw is a one-man marvel when it comes to fact-finding, number crunching, corruption watchdog and telling it like it is. He has paid dearly for his talent and his avocation by those who want to silence him on what is really going on at Laguna Honda Hospital. He has written at length about very important and complicated issues that affect us all, so to you Patrick, I say congratulations!

His latest observation about the muni driver's reform petition that you are being asked to sign is interesting. He notes that not just bus drivers salaries are set by cross-jurisdictional salary surveys, but also the salaries of police and nurses are pegged to the highest paid in other jurisdictions. Of course bus drivers are the easiest to pick on because of non-salary related issues that this administration and the sponsoring supervisor are too weak to address.

Cont. p. 18

Time To Take Action: SF's Broken Pension System Is Breaking Us!

By Jeff Adachi

San Francisco is at a crossroads. There's a fiscal train wreck just around the corner. In fact, it's already here. With our city's failing infrastructure and roads, a \$787 million deficit next year, \$1.2 billion in city employee pension costs that are projected to double in five years, the term "go for broke" takes on a new meaning. Will San Francisco become the next Vallejo?

Not if San Franciscans for SMART Reform is successful in getting San Francisco's finances back on track. SF SMART Reform is a a coalition of community, neighborhood and business leaders committed to Sustainable, Measured, Accountable, Result-oriented and Transparent (SMART) reform.



"In order to put this measure on the ballot, SMART Reform needs to gather 46,000 signatures of San Francisco voters by July 1, 2010. Because we do not have thousands of dollars to spend, we must rely on citizens like you to help gather the signatures. We are asking each concerned citizen to help fill out just one petition, signed by you and 10 of your friends."

Last month, SF SMART Reform embarked on its first project: putting a measure on the November ballot to reform the city's retiree and health care benefits for city employees. The proposed charter amendment, known as the "Sustainable City Employees' Benefits Reform Act," would require all city employees to pay 9-10% into their pension funds, without changing their pension benefits. It also requires city employees to pay 50% of their family's health care cost instead of 25%.

In order to put this measure on the ballot, SMART Reform needs to gather 46,000 signatures of San Francisco voters by July 1, 2010. Because we do not have thousands of dollars to spend, we must rely on citizens like you to help gather the signatures. We are asking each concerned citizen to help fill out just one petition, signed by you and 10 of your friends. You can request a petition by visiting our website or can download a petition at www.sf.smartreform.com. There is also a copy of the petition included in the home delivered Westside Observers.

As the author of the measure, I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with many voters about why this measure should be passed. Here are the common questions that people have about the measure:

Why Is It Necessary To Put A Pension Reform Charter Amendment On The Ballot?

San Francisco's pension and health care costs for its city employees has been rising exponentially. From \$175 million just five years ago, the city must pay \$525 million this year. Within two years, the city will be paying \$675 million. This is because whenever the city's pension system loses money, taxpayers must make up the difference.

I'm Not A City Employee. Why Should I Care About The Cost Of Employee Pensions?

The rising cost of city employee pensions should be of concerned to anyone who lives or works in San Francisco. The quality of life in our city is directly tied to funding that is available to pay for essential city services, such as street cleaning, parks, health care and schools.

What Will Happen If Pension Costs Continue To Rise?

If the City's revenues remain stable, the costs of pensions will eventually rise to the point that the city is unable to pay. Currently, the costs the city must pay towards pensions are about 13.5% of salaries (\$525 million); by 2015, the city will be paying 25% (\$812 million).

What Would This Charter Amendment Accomplish?

This Charter Amendment would require that city employees make additional contributions to their pensions. Most employees now pay between 0 and 7.5% of their pay into the pension fund. This would require police and fire employees to pay 10% and all other employees to pay 9%. It would also require employees to pay 50% of the cost of health care for any dependents. Currently, the City pays 75%. 100% of the health care costs of the employee would still be covered.

How Much Would This Measure Save Taxpayers?

This measure will help save approximately \$170 million annually. The Controller, who is in charge of overseeing the City's finances, will provide a cost-savings analysis in the ballot statement.

Would This Charter Amendment Reduce A City Employee's Pension Upon Retirement?

No. City employees would still receive the pension benefits they were promised when employment was accepted. However, the amount that employees contribute to their own pensions would be increased to help off-set the city's pension costs.

What Type Of Pension Do City Employees Receive?

City employees receive a defined pension benefit. Upon retirement, they receive a guaranteed income based on the number of years of service. Most receive lifetime health benefits, based on the years of service.

Should City Employees Be Supportive Of This Measure?

Yes. Currently 40% of the City's workforce is eligible to retire. If the City's pension costs continue to rise, the City will eventually be unable to pay its pension costs. At this point, the City can declare bankruptcy, as Vallejo did, and attempt to renegotiate its contracts and pension obligations with its employees. This is a preventative measure that will help San Francisco avoid Vallejo's fate.

What Can I Do To Help?

We need your help to collect the signatures necessary to place this measure on the ballot and to contribute to our efforts. If you receive the Westside Observer at home, there is a copy included with your paper. Visit our website at www.sfsmartreform.com to find out how you can help. Completed petitions should be sent no later than June 30, 2010 to: SF SMART Reform, PO Box 77313, SF, CA 94107. Thank you!

Jeff Adachi is the elected Public Defender.

Laguna Honda Hospital Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

Saturday, June 26th • 1 PM • 375 Laguna Honda Blvd.

Opening Night Gala Honorary Co-Chair Charlotte Mailliard Shultz and Co-Chairs Supervisor Sean Elsbernd and Louise Renne Cordially invite you to attend the for

The New Laguna Honda • Thursday, June 24, 2010 • 375 Laguna Honda Blvd.

6:00pm VIP Reception • 7:00pm Black Tie Gala

INFO: 415.522.7410 or email info@lagunahondagala.com

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

Requesting Moderation

I no longer consider myself a Democrat or a Republican, a conservative or a liberal. Both parties have moved toward the extremes spewing demagoguery and misinformation from their misguided positions and have turned me away from their false rhetoric and make me yearn for moderation—for heartfelt reason over mindless passion.

I am tired of hearing from the Right as represented by Rush, Sean, Glenn, Sarah, Karl and their tea party groupies. They still say that our President was not born here, is a Muslim, is an elitist, a communist, a socialist and a Nazi. They are mad about increased taxes even though taxes have gone down under Obama. They complain about the bailout for the banks even though it was needed because of and initiated by the previous administration. They also complain about our deficit that also was produced by previous Republican administrations. They accuse the administration of taking over the banks and the car companies even though these industries were almost destroyed by poor management and a corrupt culture and were saved by the government so that they could stay in business and pay huge bonuses to their undeserving staff. They call the new health care reform bill a form of socialism or communism, though its most offensive parts like mandatory coverage, were originally recommended by the Republicans. They say that the free market should be left to correct itself and avoid abuses, even though as we all recently saw, it hasn't, doesn't and won't. Their team claims that high compensations are needed to attract and keep the best talent and encourage the greatest productivity though management studies show the opposite to be true. They say the cure for our economy's ills is lower taxes forgetting that it certainly did not work under Bush.

I am also tired of hearing from the Left. They tell us that the earth is warming up and that it could mean the end for the planet. The principal spokesperson is the former Vice President of the United States who won a Nobel Prize and an Oscar for his efforts to publicize this man-made disaster in-the-making. But he himself owns two enormous mansions which consume massive amounts of energy. He flies around in a private jet and drives in a very large gas guzzling car. He does not live like a man concerned about the “inconvenient truth.” Why not just say that we are polluting our earth, air, water and minds and that we need to change our behavior and clean up our mess?

The other big liberal movement is for the legalization of 12-20 million document-free immigrants. Regardless of the fact that 15 million Americans are out of work, another nine million are underemployed and almost 36 million Americans live in poverty, 13 million of them children; ignoring the fact that our schools are overcrowded and underachieving; and without regard to our country's financial crisis, the Left wants us to add 20 million people to our country's growing underclass. The Left feels that there should be no borders keeping people from enjoying a better life by exploiting and

Marijuana (Cont. from p. 1)

because they found out later that what they were told just isn't true. Opponents of the Medical Cannabis Dispensary may have prejudged that “marijuana is a bad thing” and associate it with crime, and that is understandable considering the relatively short history of its use in this country. I has been proven, time and again, however, that cannabis is a useful medicine and I see it in practice every day. As medicine, cannabis provides important relief to the sick and suffering. Having a location that is convenient, safe and legal to those individuals who need this relief is why we are here.

“there has been no spike in thefts or violent crime-or even DUI arrests in the areas surrounding the city’s dispensaries: “It’s just the opposite,... people are taking ownership. Now they’re stakeholders in the community. If we do our job right and they do theirs, crime should go down.”

Our Wednesday outreach participants usually say, after they learn who we are, what we are about, and the way we intend to run the dispensary, that they are glad we are coming to the community and often wished us luck at the Planning Commission hearing on May 20th. For those who wish to learn about our mission and our commitment to serving the patients as well as the community, we again extend the invitation to feel free to ask us the what, how, and why. They are usually impressed that the information, statistics, and references we supply are from unbiased organizations.

One of the most frequent areas of misinformation used consistently by opponents, is that crime increases around Medical Cannabis Dispensaries; in reality, crime statistics are the same as for any other business.

San Francisco Police Department's Public Information Officer, Boaz Mariles said “The police culture has changed in terms of understanding that [for some people] it's not just weed, it's medicine.” Mariles says there has been no spike in thefts or violent crime-or even DUI arrests in the areas surrounding the city's dispensaries: “It's just the opposite,” he says. “People are taking ownership. Now they're stakeholders in the community. If we do our job right and they do theirs, crime should go down.” He adds that dispensary owners and employees have “done their part” by keeping the sidewalks

being exploited by a different, richer country than their own forgetting perhaps that there are billions of people wanting to leave their lives of abject poverty. We can't even help our own poor.

I'm tired of hearing that American imperialism is the cause of every country's failure. We allegedly ruined all the countries in Latin America, all of sub-Sahara Africa, Haiti and Iran just as Israel has allegedly disrupted the once charmingly peaceful Middle-East. The Left seems to feel that not only are individuals never responsible for their own actions, but neither are other countries and their cultures. Only top dogs like America can bear any responsibility for their own actions and those of everyone around them. And I don't want to hear the mantra of cultural relativism that every country and culture has equally egregious problems. I don't buy it, I won't even rent it.

And now that the Left has a very moderate President, the extremists complain that he has not done enough, quickly enough. They are mad that he has not made gay marriage the law of the land even though he always said that he opposed gay marriage as does the majority of the general population. They complain that his health care reform bill, the most progressive legislation since Medicare, did not go far enough disregarding the fact that the Congress barely passed this more modest version.

I am pleading here for a return to reason, a quest for moderation, the golden mean and, for heaven sake, some integrity.

To the Right I say get over the fact that Barack Obama is our President. He is a lot better than the one we had before him and he is really trying his best to cure a badly injured country. He is a native-born American, he is a capitalist and he is probably neither Muslim nor Christian. He is not anti-Semitic. He did not take over the car companies or banks, he saved them. His \$787 billion stimulus bill probably prevented a national depression. The health care bill he sponsored is a type of socialism but so is having the government subsidize farmers or giving tax breaks to oil companies and so is Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, and welfare. In America, we do not live as though survival is only for the fittest. Surely, the richest country in the world can ensure basic survival services to all of its citizens including medical coverage, a good education, sufficient nutrition, a clean environment and decent housing, even if it is called socialistic.

I also challenge the principal motivational theory of the Right that the more you get paid the better your work product. It is simply not true. Bonuses are not and should not be the basis for productivity. Wall Street traders, star athletes, CEOs, opinionators and actors can do just as good work for a lot less pay.

To the Left I say stop calling anyone who disagrees with you a racist or a moron. A country has a right and obligation to protect its borders. America allows more legal immigrants to enter the country each year than all the other countries on earth do combined. Enough is enough. Please let us make sure that our own people have jobs and needed

outside their businesses clean, discouraging loitering, and generally acting as friendly neighbors.

Similar remarks have been quoted by police chiefs throughout the state and in other states with Medical Marijuana laws that have done studies and get the facts.

People are impressed with our attitude and willingness to impose more stringent rules on ourselves —not content to merely observe whatever the law will allow. Patients must show their ID. and we will check their doctor's recommendation by physically calling the doctor. If the doctor is not available, we will tell the patient that we will call them when their doctor has been contacted and ask them to return at that time. After verifying the recommendation with the doctor, we check the AMA web site to make sure he/she is a doctor in good standing. There will be absolutely no medicating in or around the dispensary. Only those who are 21 years of age or older may enter the dispensary (unless accompanied by an adult (parent/guardian).

We are proud of our collaborative alliances with some of the most prominent researchers in the world in the field of Medical Cannabis. We will be supplying valuable information to them for their research as well.

We are now and will continue to work closely with lawmakers and law enforcement officers to help clarify existing laws and assist with establishing procedures for dealing with any unclear portions of the law. We have nothing to do with illegal activities of any kind, we are registered with the state as a Non-Profit Mutual Benefit Corporation.

We are confident that, after we have been in practice for a sufficient length of time, those neighbors and others who have suspicions will be reassured and realize that there really is a useful thing here for those who need it.

The Planning Commission could not find any fault with our application or with our organization. We are determined to demonstrate to the whole community that they were right in approving our permit. Sometimes it is difficult to understand until you see or experience the beneficial effects of Medical Cannabis first hand or by a loved one. It is our hope and wish that you or your loved ones never need our services. We are glad to be her for those that do and will. We look forward to a long and peaceful association with the community.

services before inviting others to share the economic pie.

And please do not make political extremism your god-less religion.

We have record deficits and our people are inadequately educated and live unhealthy lifestyles. The rich are much too rich and the poor are too poor. Perhaps our tax code should be adjusted. In addition to raising the marginal tax rate for income in excess of \$250,000 to 40%, perhaps additional brackets should be re-created to 50%, 70% and, finally, 90% for incomes in excess of \$1 million, \$5 million and \$10 million, respectively.

I predict that this would not only raise needed revenue, it would also discourage companies from paying out such huge sums and would thus change our mind set to one that appreciates the more intrinsic rewards like pride in your work, loyalty, doing for others, using your talents and helping your country's less fortunate.

And while considering reducing our budget deficit, serious thought should be given to significantly downsizing military spending by closing many of the 1,000 bases we have all over the world from South Korea to Germany to Turkey to Iraq and Afghanistan employing more than 2.5 million people abroad. Our country's policy regarding foreign aid should also be scrutinized. Why are we, who are ourselves deep in debt and borrowing from other countries, giving money to other countries, some of whom don't even like us?

Farm subsidies should also be reviewed. Must large agribusinesses be bribed into doing what is in their best interest and that of our country? And can American companies be encouraged to give jobs to Americans rather than outsourcing them?

And why do our large oil companies pay taxes to other countries but not to ours?

Maybe marijuana with all of its medical and spiritual benefits should be legalized nationwide freeing up law enforcement, downsizing prison populations, decriminalizing consumers and distributors, and drying up the illegal and dangerous trafficking by drug cartels while raising taxes as well as consciousness.

And finally as government is involved in providing goods and services to the public, it should do so with the highest level of efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity. All government employees should work a full day, every day regardless of their job security.

Doesn't this sound a lot more reasonable than what we're hearing from both ends of our political spectrum? Can't we exercise a moderate amount of moderation?

Or is that asking too much?

Feedback: Kaye@westsideobserver.com



PUC Dump (Cont. from p. 1)

pump stations, they removed all of the plants in order to use the site as a staging area for equipment and supplies for the pump station renovations. The PUC has reneged on its assurances that this was a temporary until the pump station construction projects were complete—it would return to its previous state, they said.

Without public notice or input, the PUC has decided to use Laguna Honda Reservoir for industrial purposes, instead of returning it to the green, open space it once was. It's now slated to be a distribution center for fill material used in construction projects. This means large piles of sand, dirt and gravel will be stored at Laguna Honda Reservoir along Clarendon Ave, even though the PUC's Newscomb yard is currently providing this service.

To add insult to injury, the PUC has also decided to construct a building at the Reservoir which will contain office space and storage areas. The electrical service is installed and the building is scheduled to go up later this year.

Not only will these plans permanently destroy open, green space in a residential setting, but the PUC has existing facilities that can be used for these purposes. This is a waste of our tax dollars and completely contradictory to The City's efforts to retain what little green space remains in San Francisco. While parking spaces and street corners are being turned into mini parks, the PUC is paving over green spaces. It's not good for the environment. It's not good for the budget. It's not good for the neighborhoods.

Let your voice be heard!

- Attend the next public hearing regarding Laguna Honda Reservoir on Tuesday June 8th at 6:00PM in the auditorium of Clarendon School, 500 Clarendon Ave (cross street Panorama). The PUC plans to present detailed plans for the site.

- Ask your Supervisor to preserve the Reservoir.
- Contact Ed Harrington, PUC's General Manager at (415) 554-1600. Tell them what you think about these short sighted plans.

Join our Facebook group: “Preserve Laguna Honda Reservoir” and visit www.LagunaHondaReservoir.org for more information and updates.

Anthony Roy lives by his new neighbor, a new noisy dirt, sand and gravel dump.

POLICE BLOTTER/TARAVAL STATION

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM PERSISTENT HUSTLERS

We continue to take reports of schemers working various confidence games on our residents. Though their success rate is mixed, their persistence is cause for concern. These thieves prey on the good nature of their potential victims, often asking for a “small favor” to get a benefit.

On May 3rd, a local resident saw an ad on Craig’s List for a person seeking a tutor. After exchanging some e-mails, a deal was struck to provide the needed educational assistance. The suspect sent the payment to his tutor via UPS in the form of three money orders. The tutor was somewhat surprised that the money orders added up to more than the agreed upon fee. Apologizing for the overpayment, the suspect instructed his tutor to deposit the money orders in her account and then wire the difference into a checking account of a friend in Texas; a “small favor” to help settle his financial affairs. Surely the tutor could help him out? Too smart for the thief, the tutor instead filed a report.

This tactic of sending too much money for an item or service after an agreed upon price is common. A similar scam, seen routinely on the Internet, is a job offer which involves processing checks and payments for a company located out of State or Internationally. Working from home, the victim receives dozens of money orders or checks for the employer’s products. The victim dutifully deposits these into his personal account, keeps a small amount as salary, and then sends the rest off to the home office account. This bank is generally out of the State or Country. Soon it comes to light that all of the checks and money orders coming in to the employee are fake. By that time, the victim’s bank account has been drained.

On May 12th, another resident of the Taraval was approached on San Jose Avenue by a 45-50 year old black male who stated he had a dilemma. The suspect explained that he had inherited \$300,000 dollars from his father, but the money came with the requirement that the suspect give the cash away to people in need. After some discussion about whether the resident needed some cash himself, the suspect asked the resident to take him to a worthy church where he could donate the cash. The resident obliged with a ride, but became more wary as the suspect started asking him to demonstrate he was solvent and wouldn’t steal the inherited fortune. (This request to show the suspect your own cash as “good faith” is how they get ‘cha.) The suspect then asked the victim to pull into a gas station so he could use the restroom. At the gas station, a second man approached and the suspect offered to include him in the charitable act. The second man readily provided some “good faith” money in a bank bag. At this point, our Taraval resident thought better of his involvement and left the two suspects. The scam that was attempted is commonly known as a “Jamaican Switch”.

Thankfully, both of these residents were spared financial loss in these two incidents. Even better, both of them made Police Reports. Officer Michelle Spears was alerted to the Jamaican Switch incident the next day. She spent time with the almost victim from San Jose Avenue, showing him a warning flyer outlining the various scams that are around. These flyers and information on how to protect yourself are available at www.Taraval.org.

PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY AS WELL

#1 and #2 on the property crimes we are combating in the District are Burglaries and Auto Break-ins. Knowing that these thieves are roving through our area, please ensure you are doing everything you can to protect your property and that of your neighbors.

For Auto Break-ins, it is essential to remove valuable property from sight and not make your vehicle the most attractive target. Over the last week, backpacks, purses, I-pods, a laptop, a GPS device and mountain climbing clothing and gear were all taken from vehicles parked on the public streets, along with the cash and credit cards they contained. Visible property quickly disappears if a thief is lurking. We have made tremendous strides in reducing Auto Burglaries in the Taraval over the last 6 months, with a steady decline each month. We are experiencing of 30% fewer break-ins of vehicles compared to last year at this time. We need the vigilance of our residents to keep up these reductions.

Reducing home burglaries is another area we need to fight together on. If you are to be away from your home for an extended number of days, make arrangements for mail and newspapers to be removed from the property. Several days of papers on a driveway can be a tip off to a burglar looking for a target. Consider getting a timer which turns on and off lights or a radio inside the house. Motion detector activated lighting on the exterior of your home is also an excellent deterrent.

A burglar alarm can be a wise investment as it may deter criminals who see signage indicating a home has an alarm, or trip an audible alarm when attempting entry. Daytime burglaries often feature entry made by kicking in tradesman, backyard or alleyway doors that lead to the garage. Oftentimes these doors are not even regularly used by the residents. Inexpensive alarms are available which rest in the door jamb and will begin shrieking if the door is pushed open. If you have a door you are not using regularly, consider putting one of these magnetic contact alarms on that door.

Being an alert neighbor is essential to defending our community. Burglars will canvas a neighborhood looking for a good target. If you are home for the day and see something suspicious, e.g.: a person loitering, looking in windows or mailboxes, or wandering down an alleyway between buildings, please call the non-emergency line (553-0123) and ask for an officer to come out and investigate. Clothing descriptions, vehicle descriptions, and a description of the observed activity are helpful for our officers.

During a recent daytime burglary on 26th avenue, 3 neighbors who were home enjoying the afternoon sunshine saw the two burglars climbing a fence, walking down an alleyway, and running to a vehicle. During the 20 minutes the burglars were moving around, two neighbors talked to them, but no one called the police. Unfortunately, a family is without some of their property because of these thieves who were given very little reason not to return to the neighborhood. Your neighbors rely on you to create a community that discourages criminals. Your officers rely on your observations being phoned in while they are going on to put us in the right place at the right time. Working together we can reduce these crimes.



GG Park: The Peril to Our Parkland

By Gregory P. Miller

In my first two articles, I explored some of the problems threatening our parkland today and what has caused them. Here are some ideas for solving them. I encourage readers to look closely at these ideas and come up with some of your own – if you wish to see parkland continue as open space in San Francisco, your parks need you to become involved!

1. San Francisco lacks a clear and sustained public vision for its parkland

There is a public statement of this vision for our premier city park. It’s called the Golden Gate Park Master Plan, and it outlines a detailed plan for the protection of the Park. There is a need for a

broader vision for all of our parkland. This vision should be formed through outreach to all communities in San Francisco, and should take place over at least a few years, so that the short-term needs of the moment are not over-riding in its formation.

2. It is difficult to maintain citizen interest in protecting open space.

Without a John McLaren or other leading citizen who has the prestige and power to protect our parkland, the next best solution is to turn to an institution to protect our parkland. This institution should be the Department of Recreation and Park. Yet the RPD is intent on selling our parks. How can we have more oversight, so that RPD focuses on preservation instead of cashing in on our open space?

One solution is to change the make-up of the Recreation and Park Commission. Since the Commission is currently appointed by the Mayor and the General Manger is appointed by the Mayor, the decisions of both are often in lock step. A more balanced division of powers needs to be instituted so that the Commission can do what commissions are supposed to do – provide citizen oversight for City departments.

3. ‘Recreation’ and ‘parks’ are not the same.

The needs of our specialized recreational communities and the needs of our general citizenry for healthy parkland are both legitimate. They deserve separate and independent public advocates; this option should be studied carefully, but it would have to be done by someone outside the Department who did not report to RPD. A government agency or private firm from outside of Recreation and Park and reporting to the Board of Supervisors would be more likely to be responsive to public comment as well as less likely to slant the report towards the current RPD management preferences.

4. Donated projects are not necessarily “free” projects— Park land is not “free” land.

Any time we carve off another piece of our public parks for a single purpose use, the taxpayers are making a very valuable gift to a small user community. Park land is NOT free! We need to realize this and stop this practice of accepting projects that respond to a small community just because someone has the money to finance them. The correct process would be for the Recreation and Park Department in conjunction with the Commission and with due process and public input, to decide on what projects are needed. Only after the projects have been decided, should gifts be sought to support those projects.



Sue Bierman Park – This parkland has been rented for a low amount of money and with minimal public discourse. Is the selling of our parks the prototype for future funding by RPD and the Commission?

5. Bureaucracy Abhors Public Discourse:

Public institutions instinctively avoid an open public discussion of their plans. It is easier to work quietly with carefully-chosen “stakeholders”, develop detailed plans, organize support, and finally roll out the results. The message to the public is, ‘We worked really hard on this – we hope you like it -- because this is what you are going to get!’

We need Sunshine laws with real teeth in them, so that if a project does not go through a comprehensive, open process, it can be rescinded AT ANY TIME. This should include an appeals process that goes outside of RPD.

6. Capital Projects Are Sexy (Operational budgets are so booooringggg):

Living, green parks are labor intensive. There is a strong temptation to shift park costs from the “operating budget” that pays gardeners to the “capital budget” that builds things. It becomes increasingly tempting to convert our labor-intensive parks into hardened sites that need less care - a process also known as “paving the park”.

To reverse this process, each new capital project must also have an endowed maintenance budget to keep it going in future years. This money should be untouchable – it can’t be pillaged the way the Open Space Fund is now. This will prevent expensive, non-maintainable projects from being built and also save the RPD budget for our existing parkland from being robbed.

These are just a few of my ideas for changes that would help to better protect our parkland. Perhaps the readers would also like to submit ideas!

UPDATE ON POINT #2 and WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO EFFECT CHANGE: A charter amendment has been submitted at the Board of Supervisors to change the way appointments are made to the Recreation and Park Commission. Under this balanced proposal, the Mayor will appoint 3 commissioners, the BOS will appoint 3 commissioners, and 1 additional commissioner will be selected jointly by the Mayor and the President of the BOS. With a Commission reflective of a variety of viewpoints, there is hope for more accountability from RPD to the citizens of San Francisco.

Please contact the Supervisors in support of this charter amendment for a balanced Recreation and Park Commission. Encourage them to put this issue before the voters, and let the voters decide!

Gregory P. Miller, 36 year SF resident, retired senior financial analyst, US Navy veteran. Feedback: miller@westsideobserver.com

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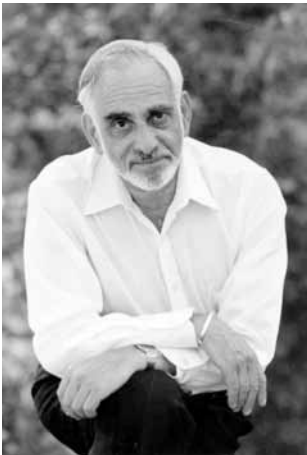
ON THE PLUS SIDE

Hope Springs Internal!

By Hank Basayne

I know how busy you are. We all have far too much to do. (So how come you're reading this? Is this really the best use of your time right now? Don't you have better things to do than to sit around, hoping I'm going to provide the answer to all your life's problems? But I digress....)

Let it be said at the outset that I, like many, was absent the day they taught Humility 101. As the only son of a doting mother I came to believe that I was a precious sphere among mere circles—in the words of Nabokov, “a crystal among glass”. Never doubting the successful conclusion of any enterprise I began, I somehow remain a shining example of Hope over Experience. That arrogance and pomposity has served me well at times; not so well at other times. Oh yes, I've run into plenty of concrete walls, stumbled here and there, suffered more than the requisite number of collapsed relationships,



landed on my nose. Often, I've fallen short of my envisioned goal. Yet I stubbornly remain unreasonably optimistic.

Young people expect that those of us who have somehow survived into Old Age become wise and moderate. Ha! Only we who are actually there know how ill-founded that surmise is. I still make decisions grounded in unproved assumptions, am still often plagued by doubt. Much of what I try to do is based on guesses and hopes. Amazingly, I'm still surprised when things don't always turn out as I want them to. Like you, I travel with an incomzzzplete map that doesn't reveal the pitfalls and barriers that lurk ahead, waiting to frustrate my plans. Too many of the cards I need to see are still face down on the table.

Is the Universe friendly or hostile? Are other people basically good or evil? As I pursue the ever-elusive goal of happiness I find that my life is more enjoyable if I come down on the side of optimism. Fantasy, you say? All of my life's best realities began with fantasy. All vacation trips begin with fantasy. Were I to build a dream house, it would have to start with a dream. Beginning a new job, moving to a new location, starting a new relationship—or re-tooling an old

one—everything that I hope to find valuable begins with fantasy.

Do I realize it's fantasy? I've managed to stay out of the hands of therapists so far by being able to recognize the difference between reality and the dream. Applying magical thinking to the real world most often ends in disappointment, failure or disaster. But unshackling my mind, allowing it to roam freely, it makes up things. It imagines what is not yet. That's the first step to creating something new. If I can visualize an outcome and identify the obstacles to achieving it, plot the campaign, plan the steps, I'm well on my way to making it happen.

When something I desire seems possible to me, I feel a resurgence of energy. Boredom is banished and my creativity is engaged once again. Who doesn't like new beginnings? Imagining something new rekindles my courage, my confidence, my sense of aliveness. If I choose to pursue that fantasy I know I'm closing other options, but I'm also starting on my next adventure.

The thirteen steps up to my flat get steeper. Computer type sizes get smaller. My fingers have lost some of their dexterity. My aging body continues to surprise me with unanticipated twinges. But my body is older than me! Internally I can still find enthusiasm, curiosity, rich memories and plans

Cont. p. 11



Yuvonne Miller.
Senior Clerk,
San Francisco Unified School District
Member, SEIU Local 1021.

MY JOB: balancing the books for public schools
MY CONCERN: how about a **balanced** approach for a balanced city budget?

“ I’ve worked for the schools since 1979 and I’ve lived in San Francisco all my life. I love being able to make a difference in the education of our children, but I’m concerned about our future because these huge budget deficits keep taking a toll.

City employees are helping out by taking pay cuts, contributing over \$115 million in this year alone. And I’m not one of those city employees who makes a lot—in fact, I earn less than \$50,000 a year.

But these budget cuts don’t just hurt workers—they hurt our schools, MUNI, health care—all of us. That’s why I’m supporting a balanced approach to balancing the budget. That means not just cuts, but increasing revenue by closing corporate loopholes and asking banks, insurance companies, city visitors and downtown corporations to pay a fair share.

Please join the broad range of community and neighborhood groups and city labor unions that have come together to Stand Up for San Francisco, by funding positive solutions to keep our neighborhoods and city vibrant. Join us at www.standupSF.org. Join us in saying enough is enough. Together we can make a difference.”

Yuvonne Miller,
Senior Clerk, San Francisco Unified School District



Laguna Honda (Cont. from p. 1)

The December 2004 version specified various subaccounts, each restricted; none included “staff support.” The April 15 revision — thought possibly to be a plan-of-correction response to State L&C — suddenly created three new subaccounts for nursing, physician, and administrator education. For decades, educational reimbursement was built into the nurse, physician, and management executive’s union contracts, requiring the City to set aside education funds for

Laguna Honda Hospital employee Marc Slavin claims the Patient Gift Fund is “... not a gift fund for residents.” If this new bait-and-switch policy stands, why should donors continue making charitable contributions to Laguna Honda’s gift fund?

each of these three professions. But the Whistleblower complaint and Noyes’ investigation exposed the Patient Gift Fund is being used to fund expensive meals for highly-compensated staff who in 2009 earned, on average, \$91,165 (physicians), \$126,234 (administrators), \$135,825 (clinical nurse specialists), or \$152,280 (nurse managers). They apparently feel entitled to free meals. The April 2010 gift fund policy revision suddenly removed the “Authority” section included in the December 2004 version, which referenced San Francisco’s Administrative Code Section 10.100-201, Public Health Gift Funds, that clearly states the “LHH Gift Fund, a public trust, is intended for the general benefit and comfort of patients of Laguna Honda Hospital.” This section of the Administrative Code hasn’t been revised since December 2000; it provides no authority to use these restricted funds for staff education or staff meals.

The day after the gift fund policy revisions were approved on April 15, Dr. Kerr was reportedly instructed to transition his Hospice patients to another doctor and conclude administrative issues within two weeks. He was relieved of clinical duties well before being permanently laid off, in possible violation of Whistleblower Program protections. The timing of gift fund policy revisions and Kerr’s lay-off appear related.

While Slavin and Hirose may have intimidated LHH’s staff into changing policy #45-01, it appears they’ve done so without legal authority, since it’s unlikely the Board of Supervisors will risk changing Admin Code 10.100-201; what politician would dare to remove the exclusive use of the Patient Gift Fund for the benefit of patients by adding new provisions to permit food expenditures for highly-paid City employees?

Sherrie Matza, a donor to the Gift Fund and an expert Alzheimer’s patient advocate said, “I want to know whether or not funds were misspent, and if they were misspent, I want them replenished.” Like many, she expects funds she contributes will directly benefit patients, not Laguna Honda’s staff.

In an earlier, unrelated Whistleblower complaint, Rivero and Kerr raised questions about potential conflict-of-interest problems with a contract the Department of Public Health awarded to Davis Ja and Associates to assess LHH substance abuse and mental health services. The Controller’s Whistleblower Program reportedly forwarded their complaint to both San Francisco’s Ethics Department and San Francisco’s District Attorney’s office for investigation.

It’s clear that gift fund expenditures for non-patient expenses violate the public’s trust. Reportedly, the Whistleblower Program similarly forwarded Rivero’s and Kerr’s gift fund concerns to both San Francisco’s Ethics Department and San Francisco’s District Attorney’s office for follow-up. “People who try to address these

problems get marginalized; sometimes they get terminated,” Kerr said. Considering the public trust, where is San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris in this mess? On May 23, ABC-TV/Channel 7 aired a debate of candidates for Attorney General, in which Harris participated. She noted citizens have a duty to step forward to report crimes, public officials’ oaths of office mandate that the most vulnerable should be protected, and that she

had created a Public Integrity Unit in the DA’s office to investigate violations of the public trust.

If it were an in-home healthcare caregiver bilking money from an elderly homebound, disabled woman, Harris would be all over prosecuting the caregiver for elder financial abuse, and interrelated elder neglect caused by patients losing their quality of life—reducing their “comfort, welfare, pleasure, and happiness.” Why would Harris hold caregiver-administrators to a different standard over the Patient Gift Fund intended to benefit its patients? Why hasn’t Harris’ Public Integrity Unit initiated an investigation?

Harris is seeking to become California’s Attorney General yet she won’t investigate potential white-collar mismanagement of restricted Patient Gift Funds intended for the City’s most vulnerable patients, after receiving a well-documented complaint forwarded by the Whistleblower Program to her office?

Harris should investigate, at minimum, whether donations made by Volunteers, Inc and others that contained “restricted” uses have been diverted to “unrestricted” uses, potentially illegally. After all, the Attorney General administers California’s Registry of Charitable Trusts, which is charged with investigating allegations that restricted funds are misspent improperly for unrestricted purposes.

If, as Slavin asserts, the Patient Gift Fund isn’t for patients anymore, why should donors continue generously supporting the fund? Please contact Volunteers, Inc’s board of directors, Laguna Honda Hospital Foundation’s board members, the Board of Supervisors, and Mayor Newsom to demand that the Patient Gift Fund policy be reinstated to its December 2004 version, and that Slavin be fired immediately. Donors should tell them they’re suspending gift fund and Volunteer, Inc contributions until this matter is resolved.

Until they get hit in the pocketbook, it’s unlikely the Patient Gift Fund will be restored exclusively for patient benefit, or that Slavin’s policy will be overturned returning the gift fund to the residents.

At a minimum, an independent audit, or an audit by the State Attorney General, whose purview includes non-profit fraud, should be conducted on behalf of the Patient Gift Fund.

When Laguna Honda holds its ribbon-cutting ceremony on Saturday, June 26 at 1:00 pm, either boycott the event (telling the Mayor why you did), or attend and ask him and other dignitaries about this unethical raid of Patient Gift Funds, and the raid of the public’s trust.

Monette-Shaw, an accountability advocate and a contributor at Examiner.com, operates www.stopLHHdownsize.com. Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.

Photo courtesy of ABC-TV/Channel 7’s “I-Team”; used with permission. <http://ite-amblog.abc7news.com>

collecting grievances—these all seem like lesser choices to me. Expecting things will get better, that I’ll still find some of the joys I’m seeking, that the sun will rise tomorrow—these seem like a better path. I choose Hope.

Hank Basayne is a San Franciscan, a minister and an author who revels in connection with like-minded others. Feedback: basayne@westsideobserver.com

The Last Heroes: Laguna Honda’s Patient Advocates



Whistleblowers: Dr. Maria Rivero and Dr. Derek Kerr, join a long list of former-employees who have been fired or have resigned in protest of patients rights issues..

Statements of concern filed by Doctors Rivero and Kerr to the Controller’s Whistleblower Program and SF Ethics Commission between 9/09 and 3/10:

1. **LHH Patient Gift Fund** in 3/10 (also reported to California State Department of Health Services). The issue was a departure from the City Charter provisions governing the Gift Fund as well as LHH’s own Policy both of which stipulated that expenditures from the Gift Fund were restricted to the benefit and comfort of patients.
2. **Dr. Mitchell Katz’s potential conflict of interest** due to his employment as a paid consultant by Health Management Associates who were awarded a contract by the City (approved by the Health Commission) in 2009. This case was referred by the SF Ethics Commission to the SF District Attorney’s Office where it is under investigation.
3. **Dr. Bob Cabaj, Director of Community Behavioral Health Services for potential conflict of interest.** Cabaj hired Davis Ja & Associates on a \$25,000 contract later increased to \$49,000 to do a study of behavioral health services at LHH in 2009. Davis Ja resided with Deborah Sherwood, Director of Research, Evaluation and Quality Management for CBHS who reports directly to Dr. Cabaj. Ms Sherwood also co-owned the Davis Ja & Associates office on Victoria Street in San Francisco. This case was referred by the SF Ethics Commission to the SF District Attorney’s Office where it is under investigation.

Employment status with the DPH and LHH:

Dr. Derek Kerr was given a “permanent layoff” that was not able to be reversed despite negotiations and appeals by the Union of Physicians and Dentists (UAPD) to both the DPH and the Mayor’s Office (Steve Kawa, Mayor’s Chief of Staff).
Dr. Maria Rivero resigned in protest and under pressure.

Editor’s note: Our contributing writer, Patrick Monette-Shaw, a patient advocate who has authored many articles about LHH was transfered from his position at Laguna Honda six months ago, then terminated at Rec-Park in April in retaliation. His termination followed the protest resignation of staunch patient advocate Sister Miriam Walsh, who died shortly thereafter. Laguna Honda’s remaining staff serve in fear of retribution, except for Marc Slavin.

Andrew Clark is a progressive champion for public safety — representing the people of San Francisco as Assistant District Attorney for the past 20 years.



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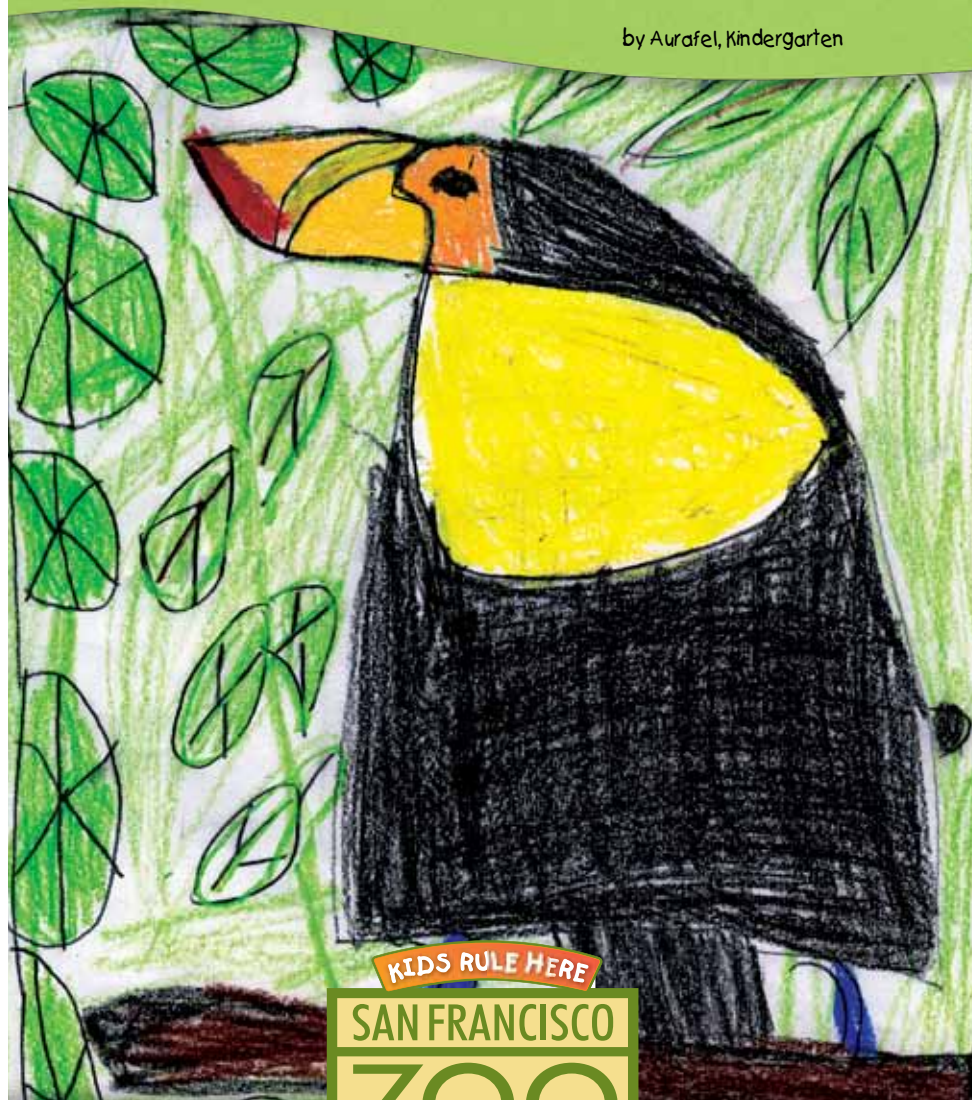
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Mara Kopp

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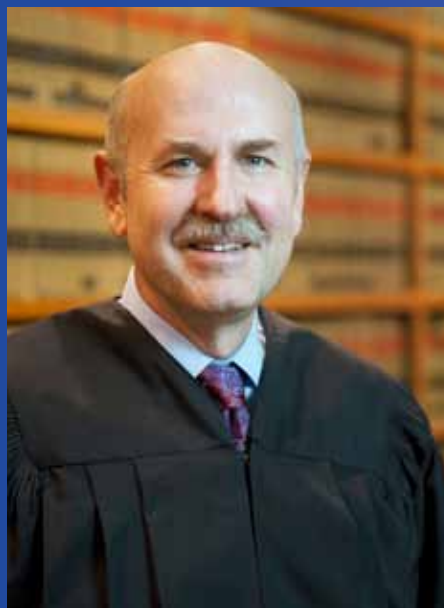
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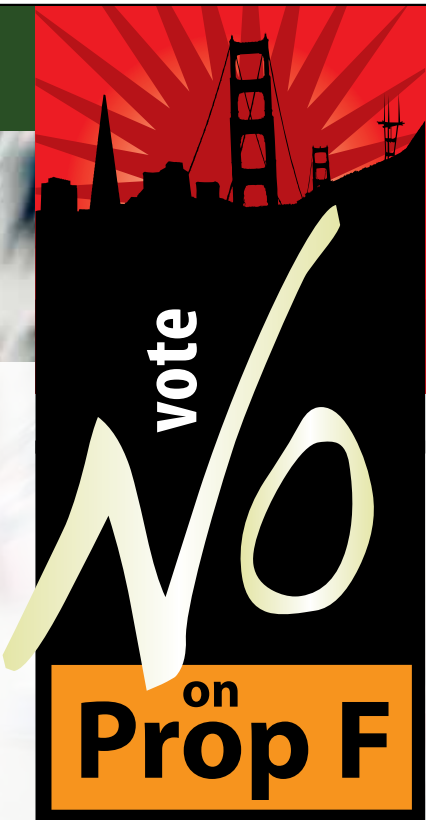
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SHARON THE HEALTH

Peaceful Touch Massage Program

By Sharon Caren

I had the pleasure of meeting Pam O'Dea in 1997 (a gifted massage therapist) who lives and works in San Francisco. She received extensive training in Canada and graduated in 1991 from a 2200 hour program. Canadian massage requirements are more comprehensive than the U.S.

Pam had a dream 8 years ago of teaching children to massage one another. Given her persistence and determination, that dream became reality. Given today's challenging times, I love sharing this great news about building strong bonds with the children of the community.

After much disappointment in failing to get this program into public schools, she had to think outside the box and get creative. Pam did much research and actually came in contact with Solveig Berggren, a Swedish massage therapist, who was instrumental in the development of massage programs for children in Sweden and the British Isles. Solveig's dream was to bring that model to America, but was unaware of the decree of "No Touching" the teachers in the U.S. must abide by.

Many teachers express sadness in having to restrain from giving a child a hug if they fall and are in need of comforting, or even a congratulatory squeeze. Unfortunately, the cases of inappropriate touch or abuse in the system caused a backlash of reforms that deprive children of healthy, nurturing touch.

In Sweden, students K through High School take a half hour break each morning to give and receive massage. The children, fully clothed, lean forward on their desk to receive back, neck, head, and arm massage. Teachers notice these children are calmer, more focused, empathetic and compassionate. They are less angry, aggressive, get along and care about fellow students.

International research done by The Touch Research Institute in Florida headed by Tiffany Fields, discovered that certain countries are high-touch, such as France,

Greece, Italy and others are low-touch, including the US, Britain, and Australia. They noted a direct correlation of higher depression, abuse, and suicide rates with low-touch countries. With the children, clearly the more social nurturing touch, the better adjusted the child. Children who do not receive sufficient touch as babies experience "failure to thrive" and fail to develop healthy interactive social behaviors.

Since the public school system was out of the question, Pam found another avenue through friends in which to create her platform. In spring of 2009, the first MASSAGE FOR PEACE PROGRAM was launched at The Thrive House for Youth. It's a small community based home providing opportunities to learn life skills for under-served urban youth in The Fillmore. Classes are about 6 to 12 students, ranging from 5 to 15 years and a melting pot of ethnic backgrounds. There have been 7 massage training classes to date.

Here's some feedback from the classes; Children are using what they learned to massage family members at home. They're feeling more confident, relaxed, peaceful and modeling this behavior to their peers. They are also asking about and considering career possibilities in massage and bodywork. These kids are excited.

Thank you Pam, you are an angel... and to quote her, "One by one we will see a large wave of people who are becoming the change we wish to see in the world."

To find out how you might help out with this program, contact Pam O'Dea via email: pamazon@earthlink.net and visit www.pamodea.com

Please contact me with comments, questions or information you'd like to share on health and wellness at sharoncaren@comcast.net Also, visit: www.sharoncaren.com



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Police Blotter (Cont. from p.9)

IT'S NOT RIGHT TO WRITE THERE Graffiti abatement is an on-going issue as well, especially on the many MUNI vehicles rolling through the District. On May 4th at approximately 3:10 in the afternoon, Officers Moli Finau and Rich Austria were in the area of Lincoln High School. These officers are assigned to work in and around the close to 40 schools which pepper the district. On this day the officers spotted a female juvenile with distinctively pink hair writing the tag "PINKY" on the windows of the MUNI bus as it proceeded north on 19th Avenue. The officers boarded the bus at its next stop and detained the young lady who had pink marker on her hands and a marker in her purse. The 17 year old admitted to the vandalism and was transported to CARC where she was cited for vandalism.

The next day Officers Pak and Gala were conducting a plainclothes operation at West Portal Station when they saw a young man in a hooded sweatshirt spray painting the wall with the tag "HC Dyer". The officers approached the youth as he was walking away, having placed his spray can in his sweatshirt pocket. The tagger ran from the officers tossing his spray can aside as he was mid-block on Forest Side. Responding backup quickly cut off the tagger who had spray paint on his clothing and hands. The 14 year old tagger also had multiple paint nozzles in his rear pocket. He was taken to CARC and cited for vandalism.

On Tuesday May 18th, Officer Chris Putz, the Department's Graffiti Officer will be the featured speaker at the Captain's meeting. Please join us at 7:00 at Taraval Station.

SFFD NERT TRAINING The San Francisco Fire Department is providing free NERT preparedness and response training. You may visit their website at sfgov.org/sffdnert to get other locations and times throughout the City.

This is a partial Police Report (as space permits) the complete report is available online:

www.westsideobserver.com/blotter.html

Sit-Lie Law (Cont. from p. 4)

The way it is now these urchins can sit on the sidewalk in circles or groups and block the entire access. Nothing can be done to them unless a citizen complains. As it is now when a complaint is made and the police take action, the person making the complaint is likely to be harassed, hurt or have their property damaged.

The new law will allow the police to ask these waifs to not sit or lie on the sidewalk. They can stand up, walk away, sit in the park, in a plaza or on a bench but not on the sidewalk in front of stores, businesses or homes. No citizen has to complain for the police to take this action.

The objections to moving someone along without a complaint from a citizen are coming from advocates of the homeless, day laborers and youth. They fear a police force that can use laws to discriminate against people that the police "don't like". They speak of possible police abuse, but do not speak of actual citizen abuse by these wayfaring strangers.

Here lies the conundrum. The community employs a police force to deal with things and people that disrupt the social order. The very essence of police power is just that. Police power stems from the 10th Amendment and grants the states the power to regulate the conduct of its citizens in the interest of the common good. We ask the police to solve problems so that we, the citizens don't have to do it ourselves. Imagine the scene on Haight Street if the citizens were to take matters into their own hands! Mad Max hits the Haight.

In this situation, where there is retribution, the police can't stop the retribution. The arguments against the sit/lie law are based on the same conundrum; how can you take action against a person before they commit the crime? It's unfortunate that we've come to this but it seems that we have. It is better to take action against this group's anti-social behavior before they can

assault or threaten someone. This tribe of gypsies seems to believe that they can push their bad behavior to the limit. If they get caught or someone complains – just intimidate and come right back out. Fun times, for them, but not for you, me, our kids, the people that live or work there or the officers that patrol the area.

The police department is undergoing cultural changes as the community presses them to work under a "community-policing" model. In this instance the quality of life in the Haight Ashbury community is being destroyed by a group of non-residents. Simply put this group has gone way beyond acceptable social behavior. The community is exercising its police power by asking the police to stand between the thugs and the community. The thugs have forced the issue to the point where we have to enable the officers to be more aggressive to counter the transient hordes aggression. Unfortunate but this situation demands an escalation of action on our part.

The police department has a community advisory board in each of the ten districts. The Civil Sidewalks law is designed to meet a need of a neighborhood and has been debated by the citizens and the PD. Making this citywide will preclude the problem moving from the Haight Ashbury to Lower Haight, Hayes Valley, the Castro, 24th Street or West Portal. The residents and businesses can't work within the existing legal structure because of the retribution that happens. The fear that this will be a tool used against others is a straw argument. It has absolutely no merit under the existing conditions.

Again if you don't believe it's all that bad – take a walk down Haight Street from Stanyan to Masonic. Do it soon so you can reach out to the Board of Supervisors or vote correctly if this comes to the ballot.

Jed Lane is a Realtor, West Side native, civically engaged and current resident of Miraloma Park.

June-July Calendar

YMCA HEALTH SCREENINGS

First Fri each month | 10 am–12 pm | Free health screenings at the Mission YMCA, 4080 Mission St. Come every month for different screening: cholesterol, glucose, body mass index, blood pressure and bone density. (This month glucose.) Pre-register 923-3155 or cpmcchrc@sutterhealth.org. \$10 suggested.

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Every Sat | 10 am–2 pm | Parkmerced: at the corner of Arballo and Serrano.

Every Sun | 10 am– 3 pm | Stonestown: at Stonestown Galleria (19th Avenue @ Winston)

LAGUNA HONDA RESERVOIR

Tue 8 | 6 pm | The PUC plans to present detailed plans for the site at Laguna Honda Reservoir in the auditorium of Clarendon School, 500 Clarendon Ave (cross street Panorama).

AUTHOR C. W. GORTNER

Thu 10 | 7 pm | *The Confessions of Catherine de Medici*, one of the most powerful women in history. The author of *The Last Queen*, will read and discuss. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080

TAKE STEPS WALK FOR CROHN'S DISEASE

Sat 12 | 5 pm | Take Steps Walk is the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation's opportunity for everyone to participate in awareness about the diseases that affects over 140,000 in California alone. Justin Herman Plaza, Info: cctakesteps.org/sanfrancisco

AUTHOR SUSANNAH CHARLESON

Sun 13 | 2 pm | The author will discuss *Scent of the Missing*, details of the Dallas' elite Metro Area Rescue K9 Unit at Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080.

GIANTS-ZOO NIGHT AT THE BALLPARK

Mon 14 | 3–11 pm | Giants County Fair. AT&T Park Game time—7:05 pm. Special event ticketholders receive one-of-a-kind "Pandoval" bobblehead (infielder Pablo Sandoval alter ego, Kung Fu Panda) 5–7 pm only. Fans who purchase a ticket through the Zoo's exclusive ticket link at sfzoo.org. Ticket proceeds benefit the Zoo.

AUTHOR VANESSA WOODS

Tue 15 | 7 pm | Woods will discuss *Bonobo Handshake*. Her hasty marriage to a man she hardly knew led to a research trip to the war-ravaged Congo to study a rare ape that may be our closest relative species. It's at Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080.

TARAVAL POLICE DISTRICT COMMUNITY MTG

Tue 15 | 6 pm | Our monthly Taraval/Community meeting at Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave. (3rd Tues of each month).

AUTHOR LOUANN BRIZENDINE

Thu 17 | 7 pm | Discussing *The Male Brain*, Brizendine follows up her New York Times bestseller *The Female Brain* with this amazing and revealing book that overturns stereotypes about men and boys. It's at Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080.

NOE VALLEY MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL

Sat 19 | 3–6 pm | It all begins with a hayride at Walgreens on Castro at Jersey St. with various events along the 24th St. Corridor. Info: 401-5235.

AUTHOR ALAN FURST

Tue 22 | 7 pm | Furst will discuss *Spies of the Balkans*. Set in 1940 northern Greek port of Salonika, Hitler's first defeat. It's at Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080.

LEARN BALLROOM DANCING

Thu 24 | Bart and Judy Lewis teach Samba, Rhumba, Cha Cha Cha, Mambo, Tango, Waltz, Fox-trot, Swing and more! Couples classes Thu eves at Forest Hill Christian Church, Fellowship Hall, 250 Laguna Honda Blvd. 6 lessons \$70 per couple, Info: 661-2746.

LAGUNA HONDA RIBBON CUTTING

Sat 26 | 1 pm | New Laguna Honda, 375 Laguna Honda Blvd. Info: 415 522-7410x3 or email: info@lagunahondaribboncutting.com. Providing care for 780 residents in 15 person households.

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FINALS: JUNE 13, 4–7PM, KNUTH HALL, FROM \$10

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Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

BABIES

Four babies are followed in this documentary as they grow from birth to their initial steps, in four areas of the world: Mongolia, Namibia (Africa), Tokyo and San Francisco. The differences and similarities are moving, sometimes amusing, sometimes fascinating. The rural families are usually in contrast to the city toddlers, e.g., when a goat walks up and drinks the bathwater beside the baby. Bathing, weighing, eating, and cutting hair are as unique as each approach to playmates, pets, flies, and toys. Nudity, Breast-feeding.

DATE NIGHT

While a hilarious ensemble film, screenwriter Josh Klausner and director Shawn Levy never lose sight of the very funny leads, Phil and Claire Foster: Steve Carell and Tiny Fey, a New Jersey couple on a Manhattan date. They heist a reservation at a fancy restaurant of a no-show couple (Taste: James Franco and Whippit: Mila Kunis). Bad idea! The interesting people populating their evening include hunky Holbrooke: Mark Wahlberg; their best friends who are divorcing, the Sullivans: Kristen Wiig and Mark Ruffalo; Det. Arroyo: Taraji P. Henson; dishonest cop Collins: Common, who delivers them to the mob boss: Ray Liotta, who thinks they have his hard drive; and DA Crenshaw: William Fichtner for whom they do a joint striptease! Phil drives a cab into the river amid massive pileups of cabs and police cars! Profanity, Adult situations, Sexual situations, Male nudity.

HARRY BROWN

Mild Brit senior citizen, ex-Marine, widower Harry Brown: Michael Caine meets his bud for an afternoon game of chess, until his pal is violently killed one night in their neighborhood by a teen drug gang that is taking over to grow their pot, shoot up, kill one another, rape a woman they have captured and chained her to a bed. The investigating detectives: D.I. Alice Frampton: Emily Mortimer and D.S. Terry Hicock: Charlie Creed-Miles, are sympathetic toward Harry, little realizing he's turned vigilante and is going after the gang with a gun, dealing out his own justice. If the rest of this grim movie was on a par with the scene in the gang's scummy shack perhaps it would have been more enjoyable. Director Daniel Barber and screenwriter Gary Young can share the blame for creating this underworld. Violence!, Profanity!, Adult situations. Won the U.K. Empire Award: Best British Film, 2010; nominated Best Actor: M. Caine, Best Thriller.

HOW TO TRAIN A DRAGON

This animated yarn will please anyone under 12 and many who are older. A Nordic youth, Hiccup: voice of Jay Baruchel, of the 1100's can become a hero without developing a muscle. His father, the village leader, Stoik the Vast: v.o. Gerard Butler, is ashamed that his inventive son doesn't want to kill dragons. In their village, it's the manly thing to do; even some of the girls are tough enough. Astrid: v.o. America Ferrera qualifies for the dragon-slayer training. When Hiccup wounds a dragon so it can't fly, he must repair the damage by building the missing tailpiece. He names it Toothless. While a friendship develops, both have a long road ahead before the villagers will accept that not all dragons only want to eat them and must be killed. 3-D. Violence.

IRON MAN 2

Marvel comics are back with a sequel that's not quite as good as the original with Tony Stark: Robert Downey Jr. as the narcissistic billionaire industrialist-superhero with his fab Malibu lair. The bum start features Stark on international TV peeing in his suit and doesn't rise too far above that as complications abound, even with the U.S. government wanting to use his armor suit as a military weapon. Good guy Nick Fury: Samuel L. Jackson assists Stark when he needs a new mechanical heart replacement. Thinking he's dying, Stark promotes his assistant Pepper: Gwyneth Paltrow, to C.E.O. of Stark Industries, and in her old job, her assistant Natalie/Natasha: Scarlett Johansson, who has

one spectacular scene when she gets to show her stuff, defending Stark. In an armor suit, "Rhodey" Rhodes: Don Cheadle protects a weakened Stark in the showdown at the Stark Expo against Russian villain Ivan Vanko: Mickey Rourke and traitor industrialist Justin Hammer: Sam Rockwell (Daly City native). Vanko's suit has special electrical whips that cut a car door in half with one flick! Director Jon Favreau also plays assistant Happy Hogan; Justin Theroux wrote the screenplay from Stan Lee's comic book. Violence, Profanity, Adult situations.

JUST WRIGHT

Physical therapist Leslie Wright: Queen Latifah has just one problem: her best friend since childhood is

a knockout. When Leslie's client-superstar basketball player, Scott McKnight: Common sees trim Morgan: Paula Patton, it's "Hello, Morgan." "Goodbye, Leslie Who?" How long can Morgan be good and stop shooting arrows for the trophy wife seat? How much shopping with no limit can a girl take? This enjoyable romantic comedy written by Michael Elliott and directed by Sanaa Hamri sensibly brings in the parents: Lloyd and Janice Wright: James Pickens, Jr., Pam Grier; and Ella McKnight: Phylicia Rashad to spread the viewpoint. Suddenly, Morgan doesn't look quite so appetizing and Leslie's hefty qualities shine through. Adult situations.

MACGRUBER

MacGruber: Will Forte, star and co-writer with John Solomon, is summoned by Col. James Faith: Powers Boothe back into action when they learn industrialist Dieter Von Cunth: Val Kilmer has stolen a U.S. government nuclear warhead and has set his sights on Washington, D.C. MacGruber tries to round up his old team, but due to an explosion, he gets only Vicki St. Elmo: Kristen Wiig and recruit Lt. Dixon Piper: Ryan Philippe. MacG has an old score to settle with Cunth, who murdered his

(Cont. on p. 17)



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At the Theater • By Dr Annette Lust and Flora Lynn Isaacson

ALL MY SONS REVIVED AT S.F. ACTORS THEATRE

Arthur Miller's 1947 Tony Award winning play All My Sons, made into a popular film in 1948, opened on Friday May 15th at the S.F. Actors Theatre. The action takes place during World War II and centers around the Kellers and the Deever who are neighbors living side by side and whose fathers in both families were involved in knowingly selling faulty airplane cylinders that caused the deaths of twenty-one aviators. The father of the Deever family has been imprisoned while, due to supposed illness, Joe Keller avoided being incriminated and imprisoned when the probing took place. Meanwhile Ann Deever, engaged to Larry Keller, at war overseas and feared to be to have been killed in action, is being courted by brother Chris Keller. The members of both the Keller and Seever families suspect Joe Keller's guilt. Their probing of Joe Keller about not confessing and not making up for his act gradually unveils the playwright's intention to write a play entitled "All My Sons" that offers a strong message about human responsibility

Centered on guilt and blame, material pursuits, and moral liability to society and other humans, the protagonist is finally brought to admitting that his act was immoral. As he reads a last letter from his son at war about his involvement concerning the death of the twenty-one aviators Joe Keller cries out "They were all my sons!" The playwright has ingeniously shared with the audience the revelation of the hero's psychological and social condemnation that grabs and holds our interest throughout the dramatic action.

The actors in this production, directed by Joyce Henderson (who also plays Kate, Joe Keller's wife) and Jonathan Musser as assistant director, live up to the challenge of portraying this intricate psychological conflict. Tandy Hurst is highly convincing as the clever and cowardly business man Joe Keller, who attempts to rationalize his immoral act until the end. Joyce Henderson as Kate Keller is the dynamic force around which most of the action takes place. Nahry Tak as Ann Deever in love with Chris Keller is played as a gentle unassuming young girl who quietly makes everyone aware of their moral responsibilities. Nicholas Russell offers a strong portrayal of the heartbroken son persisting to make his father amend his deed. Vlad Sayenko's plays George Deever as a son embittered about his father's imprisonment. Sue Baylis' Larissa Archer is a cheerful, smiling young mother and the remainder of the cast, Eric Pederson as Dr. Jim Bayliss, and Phil Goleman and Linnae Caudy as Frank and Lydia Lubey create believable interpretations.

The Actor's Theatre production of All My Sons captivates the viewer through a powerful revelation of truths that bring about high levels of dramatic tension involving moral and social conduct . It also incites a self examination of one's own unethical actions that could affect others who are likewise "all one's sons." All My Sons continues through June 26th. For info and tickets call 415-345- 1287. Dr. Annette Lust

LAST GIRL STANDING AT SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

A hit at last year's Humana Festival, Allison Moore's Slasher, that opened earlier this month at the San Francisco Playhouse, is a comedy-thriller about an actress cast as the final girl in a slasher flick only to find her outraged mom determined to shut the exploitative production down.

According to Artistic Director Bill English, "There is something truly unique about Allison's feminist take on the 'low budget horror genre,' a field totally dominated by men and scandalously exploitive of women. By setting her protagonist's

coming of age story in the milieu of 'schlock horror' she puts a great spin on the struggle of a woman to forge an identity against impossible odds while skewering the macho world at the same time. Trapped between her mom's knee-jerk feminism and her director's lust for titillation, Sheena turns the tables on the power structure from within while being exploited by it."

Slasher is set in a small town and focuses on a sad family consisting of a bitter crippled mom in a wheelchair (Susie Damilano), a brainy younger sister Hildy (Melissa Quine) and the older sister, the beautiful Sheena (Tonya Glanz), who works as a waitress in a bar called Buster's for a minimum wage.

Set Designer Bill English cleverly moves the action back and forth from a construction area where low-rent filmmaker Mark Hunter (Robert Parsons) films his bloody scenes to the domestic living room where Sheena and Hildy are dominated by their mother, Frances, to the bar, and Mark's hotel.

Robert Parsons excels as a sleazy director finding his next big star, the "Last Girl" for the movie in a bar (the Last Girl is the woman who will be killed last, therefore the one with the most screen time).Tonya Glanz, as the seemingly innocent blonde teenager, Sheena, is hilarious and impressive. SF Playhouse co-Founder and Producing Director Susie Damilano plays Sheena's demented mother Frances to the hilt. Cole Alexander Smith is convincing as a young film student eager to work at any price. Melanie Sliwka's contributions are versatile as the other woman on the set, a cool t.v. reporter and a member of the Holy Shepherd League Church. Jon Tracy is the director of the many short scenes which happen instantly, one after another. This lively spoof on slasher films is both ambitious and brilliant.

Slasher runs through June 5 at the SF Playhouse (www.sfplayhouse.org or 677-9596). Also running at SF Playhouse, Stage 2 is the Apotheosis of Pig Husbandry by William Bivins, directed by Bill English through June 12.

Coming up next at SF Playhouse from June 11-September 4 will be The Fantasticks by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt and directed by Bill English. Flora Lynn Isaacson

A FEMINIST VIEW OF SUCCESS

Set in 1980's London, at the Top Girls Employment Agency, Top Girls by feminist playwright, Caryl Churchill, opened May 21st at Ross Valley Players. Top Girls tells the story of an ambitious career woman, Marlene (Loring Williams), who has just been appointed head of the firm. Her success moves between fantasy and realism, time and space, poverty and affluence as it reveals family secrets and sacrifice. Top Girls features a wonderful all female ensemble including Michelle Darby, Lina Makdisi, Carolyn Power, Susan Donnelly, Theresa Miller, Melissa Claire and Chelsea Stone. Director Cris Cassell has accomplished skillfully a difficult task of making these many characters come to life through their speech with a variety of dialects including upper class British, Scottish, Japanese, Italian, Dutch, Cockney, and Suffolk.

Top Girls will continue to play through June 6th. For tickets call (415) 456-9555 or go on line at http://www.rossvalleyplayers.com. On Sunday, June 27th from 2:00p.m.-5:p.m. at the Barn Theatre, Marin and Art and Garden Center, Ross Valley Players will be celebrating their 80th Anniversary. At \$28.80 a ticket, there will be a buffet with wine and scenes from RVP shows through the decades. Coming up next at Ross Valley Players from July 16th-August 15th will be The Middle Ages by A. R. Gurney directed by Billie Cox. Floralynn Isaacson



Tony Hall (Cont. from p. 7)

Nevertheless, both the mayor and the supervisor keep popping off about the 8 to 9 million in salary increases due the drivers in July while both politicians are on record as supporting the 207.4 million in raises for those other City employees already making over \$100,000 per year!

Police, firefighters, nurses, and yes, bus drivers and all of our civil servants should be paid well if they are performing well. There is no question about that, and like most other San Franciscans, I am proud of them and want the best for them when they are doing their best in an environment that they do not always control. I fail to see how paying the drivers less will result in anything other than less qualified drivers when the real corrections need to be addressed to Muni's 393 managers who are responsible for all aspects of Muni's performance. And, oh yes, who, by the way, are all members of the \$100,000 a year club as referred to in my above article.

What is really happening here is that lower income City workers are being thrown "Under the Bus" in order to insure that the high-end salary people continue to receive their raises as they have for the past 6 years.

Laguna Honda Hospital:

The Dan Noyes Ch. 7 I-Team investigation of the shenanigans going on at Laguna Honda Hospital at 6:30 pm Thursday evening May 20th was amazing. If you get a chance try to see it on the net. Dan Noyes is a real asset to San Francisco. http://iteamblog.abc7news.com/ or

http://abclocal.go.com/kgofchannel?section=news/iteam&id=7104859

Voter tip: For all of you Democrats out there who are tired of the Democratic County Central Committee being dominated by the far left activists, take a look at the candidacy of Andy Clark. He has served the interest of Democrats on the west side of town with his moderate politics and years of service as an Assistant District Attorney.

Feedback: hall@westsiedobserver.com.

Ocean Beach (Cont. from p. 7)

Durgerian, media rep for National Parks Service. "They have to protect their infrastructure, he told the Sunset Beacon, but they also know that you can't beat Mother Nature," added Durgerian.

Durgerian pointed out that "some of the techniques used in the erosion control project have met with mixed results," (such as soil nails and piling). "In our goal to preserve the environmental integrity of Ocean Beach and the surrounding coastline we prefer the most natural means and materials used for these projects," Durgerian said.

While the two hour presentation and discussion on May 6 was sweeping, covering many aspects, people listened and asked questions.

Representatives from several City, State and Federal agencies were present. Among them were Astrid Haryati of the Mayor's office, Gabriel Metcalf of the non-profit SF Planning & Urban Research (SPUR), the National Park Service and District 5 Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi.

DPW and other agencies like the State Coastal Conservancy are all working together hoping that "Phase II" of the repair work will be able to protect the Great Highway from further erosion damage. Cost estimates for the Phase II and then Phase III have not been tabulated yet.

City officials at the May 6 meeting mentioned that while estimates for Phase II and Phase III have not been tallied, there is over 2 million dollars secured for this project through previously

Cont. p. 19

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Money Matters

Politics and Personal Financial Planning

By Chris Arnold

You may be aware that the Senate recently passed bill s. 3217, known as the Restoring American Financial Stability Act bill (“RAFSA”), in a vote of 59-39 and renamed it H.R. 4173, the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Broadly speaking, this 1,500 page bill seeks to overhaul the financial markets in order to avert the next financial meltdown.

Do you really think this bloated behemoth of a bill is going to do that?

Where were the lawmakers before the mortgage meltdown? Before the fall of Lehman Brothers? Before Merrill Lynch was bought by Bank of America? Before Madoff?

The answer is: asleep at the wheel, completely ignoring their responsibility as elected officials to take steps to avoid problems, BIG problems, before they boiled over into a terrible mess.

This isn't a political party finger pointing exercise. The whole political system that seeks to protect citizens flat out failed us all. Why? Because status quo, business as usual reigns.

So in order to lock that barn door tightly as the parade of horses frolic and gallop freely in the pasture, the federal legislature now addresses the tremendous problems that permeate the financial markets by passing this obese monstrosity of a bill to once again fleece the American public into believing that they are doing something to make your financial markets safer. “That’ll never happen again!” is the refrain from Capitol Hill while the Senators seek to attach 300 (!) various pet amendments to the bill. Among the amendments attached to this blimp of a piece of legislature are such that seek to regulate certain transactions involving material mined in the Congo, to allow lead-paint removal by uncertified contractors, and to condemn Myanmar for human rights violations. And they question why the American public is fed up with our political system?

Granted, there is some good that will come out of this bill when it is signed into law. One amendment to the bill, proposed by our very own Dianne Feinstein, seeks to prevent social security numbers from getting into convicts’ hands when they handle paperwork in data entry positions while incarcerated. Another part of the legislation seeks to force banks to divest of their swap trading desks and hedge fund activities. But even these measures beg the question: Why have our politicians allowed this until now?!

In addition to this Johnny-come-lately approach to staving off the next financial crisis, our national debt stands at nearly \$13 Trillion at this time and it simply is not being addressed by our elected officials. (See www.usdebtclock.org as well as www.treas.gov). Not only did they do nothing to stop the financial crises that have gripped our nation but they continue to do nothing about this insane amount of money that we owe to the rest of the world, including \$895.2 Billion to China and \$784.9 Billion to Japan as of March 2010 (see <http://www.treas.gov/tic/mfh.txt>).

So what the heck does this have to do with you and your finances?

The crystal clear message is not to wait for government largesse to be there for you in your time of need. Not only is there a raging debate over the future of Social Security and unfunded entitlement programs such as Medicare, but the government can't stop the frauds it says it can as exemplified by the SEC snoozing while Madoff continued to rip folks off to the tune of billions of dollars. Legislators were asleep at the wheel while the mortgage crisis unraveled and financial markets crumbled. There is no viable plan to reduce the country's annual deficit much less the overwhelming debt our country faces.

Instead, the only way to avoid being subject to letdown in your time of need is to take your financial matters into your own hands.

Some of you may be saying to yourself that you already have. You have your investment brokerage account that contains your well thought out stock and bond portfolio, you have your house and investment property which thankfully has not tanked (much)in San Francisco, and you have your pension and/or Social Security credited to your bank account each month while having little or no debt. For those that have your financial house in order, good job.

One frequent oversight for this seemingly ‘made’ group is lack of an incapacity and estate plan. Without one, all you have worked for may evaporate at



the time you are least able to personally deal with it. There are strategies that exist for you to ensure that your wishes are upheld while you are incapacitated or dead, to minimize taxes in the process, and to cement your legacy in the way that you wish. If you have not taken the steps to implement these strategies, your ‘back end’ is seriously exposed.

For those with nice sums in their IRAs or other tax-deferred accounts, with the national debt as large as it is, do you think that income taxes will be higher or lower in the future than they are now? If you, like so many others, think that they will be higher, there are steps you can take now to minimize your future income tax exposure. Keeping your funds tied up in tax-deferred accounts will not reduce your taxes, but rather just push them out into the future when you have no control over what the tax rates will be. To avoid a potentially serious future income tax bite you can reposition your assets now, before any tax increases take effect.

For those of you who are not in financial nirvana, the first step is to climb out of debt. I believe some debt is OK when used strategically such as to purchase a house because you need a place to live or to buy a car which is needed to go to work and earn a living. It's advisable to keep spending under control to minimize unnecessary debt so it doesn't consume you.

When your debt is low so that your income is funding your living expenses and there is actually ‘extra’ left over each month, the next step is to take it and build up a rainy day account. Put some aside each month automatically via auto deposit to pay for those unexpected needs such as car repairs or new appliances when the old O’Keefe and Merritt breaks down. A rule of thumb is to aim for 3 to 6 months of living expenses set aside in a readily available liquid account such as a savings or money market account. Don't insist on a high interest rate on those funds – you just want it to be there when you need it.

But there are even bigger expenses to consider.

What happens if you have taken out a large home loan and become disabled to the point that you cannot go to work and earn your living? Other than losing your job due to downsizing or being fired, disability looms as a big reason why folks are unable to pay their loans back. It is advisable to have adequate disability insurance which you may be able to obtain through your employer. If that coverage does not cover enough of your living expenses, seek out a personal policy that once you obtain, you have as long as you pay your premiums when due. Then, you don't need to worry about whether your current employer will continue to offer a disability benefit or if your future employer even offers one.

If you are still in your wage earning years and have not yet built up your nest egg, life insurance is the way to leave something behind for the ones you love to provide for what you would have if you were still around. Broadly, there are 2 types of life insurance, term and permanent, and they both have their merits. Although nothing can ease the pain of loss of a loved one, if you are gone you will not be able to provide for your family and life insurance pays out to your loved ones to at least help with the financial loss.

Our politicians enact measures too late to address the problems wrought and put things in place with significant questions as to whether the new measures will do any good. Our country is in a mind-boggling amount of debt. You would be well-suited to take your financial matters into your own hands in a comprehensive manner instead of leaving them in the hands of Uncle Sam.

Christopher L. Arnold is a Certified Financial Planner® Professional, Chartered Financial Consultant®, and Chartered Advisor for Senior Living® as well as an Insurance Broker licensed in California, license# 0C73573. His offices are in San Francisco and Chris can be reached via email at Chris@ProperlyCovered.com or (415) 333-9700.

to holistically address issues and opportunities at Ocean Beach,”

“We are fortunate to be able to build off previous work by the Ocean Beach Vision Council,” said McEnespy. She is hopefully anticipating that funding will be approved from the conservancy and other sources.

Ocean Beach (Cont. from p. 3)

approved bond measure funds.

Speaking on behalf of the State Coastal Conservancy, Moira McEnespy, Deputy Program Manager for SF, said, “we are very much looking forward to working with the community, SPUR, the City, the National Parks Service/GGNRA, and others

Westside Real Estate Report

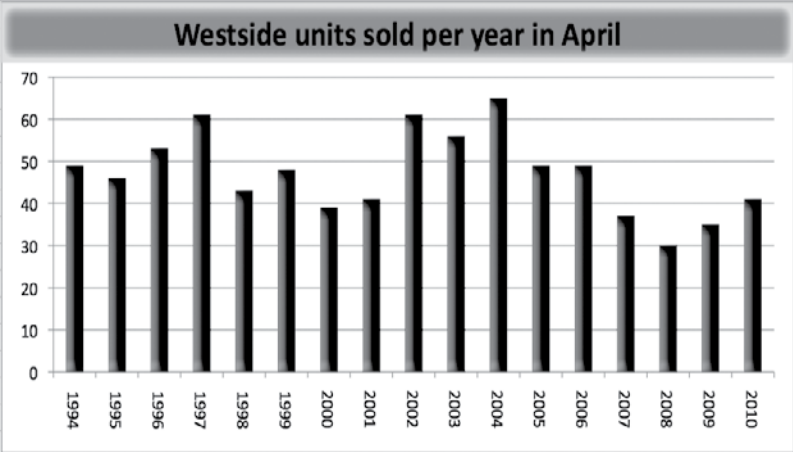
Is the Real Estate Storm Passing?

By Jed Lane



San Francisco's real estate market is again acting in an untypical way. Normally as spring builds so do sales. Right through August there is a month over month increase in activity. April 2010 sales volume decreased 17% from March's sales. For comparison, April 2010 was better than April 2009, ironically by 17%.

The inventory of residential property, condos and single-family homes is up 7.6% over March 2010, but there was a decline of 8% from April of 2009. With sales down and inventory up the time to absorb the current inventory has increased to 3.4 months for single family homes and 5.7 months for condos. This should be good news for buyers allowing them to get what they want, if they can

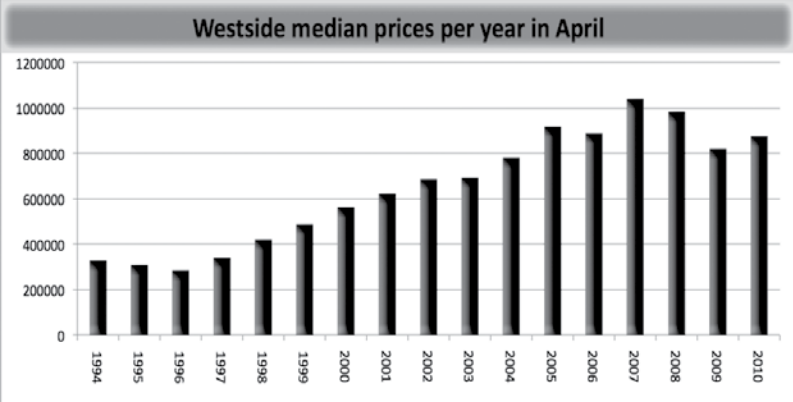


get financing.

With so many factors pointing to this being a great time to buy a home or condo, why aren't sales higher? Is it the lending situation? Is it consumer confidence? Is it the jobs forecast? Actually it is all of them. At the time of this writing , current lenders conditions for a thirty year fixed loan of 5.75% dictate that a borrower's maximum debt-to-income ratio be 40% or less, they must have a 740 FICO score (maximum FICO is 850) and more than 20% down to borrow between \$729,500 and \$1,000,000. Hundreds, if not thousands of buyers are removed from San Francisco's market. In fact no one can purchase a condo with that loan, just another condition and another problem with our market. When folks are aware that lenders are being very conservative on who can qualify for a loan, news of layoffs at the largest employers in the City confidence is likely in short supply.

Prognosticators are telling us that the storm is passing, The signs they point at are the closing of interest rates between the government sponsored lenders and the private equity lenders, the return of the stability of the stock market and the low inflation rate. If that is true it will be good news for Westside property owners. With homes typically above the median price, we should see more sales and a return to appreciation.

In the interim selling a home will require aggressive market pricing and aggressive negotiation to reach the highest possible price that the market will bear. Multiple offers and quick sales are happening for those sellers that work with knowledgeable agents and understand this fact. Homes that are languishing on the market present a great opportunity for buyers. A phenomenon that we are seeing is a house that attracts an offer shortly after it



hits the market and for some reason the offer doesn't go through. It would seem that the price was right and the home desirable, but then for weeks and weeks nothing happens. The open houses are sparsely attended and there are no showings. These homes have gone begging for buyers but no one comes forward.

San Francisco's agents and buyers have historically been reluctant to offer less than asking prices for property. This is one reason why agents priced below market. It has been clear that if the property is priced above comparables nothing will happen. Now it seems that if a property sits on the market buyers are acting like – no one else wants it; there must be something wrong with it.

Some buyers tell us that they are waiting for a price reduction. Good agents advise that to wait is useless. Make the offer and see where it takes you. When you can negotiate a price below asking there is no one else in the market place that knows the price the seller has countered with. You have no competition and the decision to buy is in your hands, unlike every transaction where there are multiple offers and the decision is in the seller's hands.

The selling price for any property is determined by a ready, willing and capable buyer. To determine that number takes communication, sensitivity and good to great negotiation skill. The market price is a means to the hopeful successful sale.

This is a great time for move up buyers and a good time for sellers with lots of equity to sell and move to a larger or smaller home.

Jed Lane is a Realtor, West Side native and current resident of Miraloma Park. If you have questions contact me at jed@westsideobserver.com

State Budget Crisis Hits Local Schools and Children

By Carol Kocivar©2010

As you walk into Dianne Feinstein elementary school in San Francisco, there are 13 empty chairs near the front door. Each chair has a pink heart and the name of the teacher.

Each chair represents a staff member scheduled to be laid off.

At nearby Lowell High School, parents are holding emergency PTA meetings in response to a proposed school budget that cuts more than 19 full and part-time positions.

These are schools in our neighborhood, responding to the impact of state cuts to education funding. The story is the same in neighborhoods throughout California.

Currently, the California ranks 47th among all states in its per-pupil spending-- \$2,856 less per pupil than the national average.

In the past two years, the state has cut \$17 billion from schools, and deep cuts to social services have added to the burden borne by children and families. An additional approximately \$2.4 billion is now being proposed in new cuts to schools.

Most Californians, according to a recent poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, believe there is not enough state funding going to public schools, and a majority single out K-12 education as the area that they most want to protect from spending cuts.

The California legislative analyst has consistently recommended that additional revenues are needed to close the state's \$20 billion budget gap. These recommendations include a menu of tax changes, such as:

- *"The alcohol tax rates have not been updated since 1991. Given the significant societal costs associated with drinking, we think it is reasonable to maintain the real value of these taxes."*
- *"We also suggest aligning the vehicle license fee with local property tax rates, as it represents a tax on property—with the proceeds going into the General Fund."*

For more information on these recommendations, go to <http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/FO/2010/>

Revenues 201011 Budget 051110.pdf

For parents and teachers who have watched this budget scenario play out year after year, California seems to have invented déjà vu all over again.

But this time, not only is there advocacy by many organizations including the PTA for a balanced approach to the budget that includes additional revenue, a law suit was just filed.

A press conference—at AP Giannini Middle School in San Francisco—announced the filing of this historic lawsuit against the State of California requesting that the current education finance system be declared unconstitutional and that the state be required to establish a school finance system that provides all students an equal opportunity to meet the academic goals set by the State.

The lawsuit was filed by a broad coalition, including more than 60 individual students and their families, nine school districts from throughout the State, the California School Boards Association (CSBA), California State PTA, and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

The suit asks the court to compel the State to align its school finance system—its funding policies and mechanisms—with the educational program that the State has put in place.

To do this, plaintiffs allege, the State must scrap its existing finance system; do the work to determine how much it actually costs to fund public education to meet the state's own program requirements and the needs of California's school children; and develop and implement a new finance system consistent with Constitutional requirements.

"We require students to meet high education standards and then deny them the resources they need to meet those standards," said Jo A.S. Loss, president of the California State PTA. "We must have a system that allows schools to deliver a high-quality education for all children – in good times and in tough times."

For more information about the school finance lawsuit, please visit www.fixschoolfinance.org.

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com



REAL TRAVEL FOR REAL PEOPLE



By Sergio Nibbi

Every day should be Sunday in London. It was so nice being able to walk around Green Park, to Buckingham Palace, cross the streets around the Mall without "looking left" and taking the tube to Leicester Square without the usual mass of humanity. No "Changing of the Guards," in fact, no guards at all. Even the terrorists took a day off.

Monday was great also because this weekend it's a bank holiday (May Day) and everything is in slow motion. Most places are closed but the trains are running and so we headed off to Bath bright and early. Nice train and on the minute — so much so that we missed the returning train by about 30 seconds but fortunately they have one every 30 minutes — that's what I get for stopping for an ice cream but the Rum Raisin cone was worth the wait.

Our dear friends Jan and Ellis are staying in Bath for a couple of days so we let them do the tour guiding. We visited the old Roman baths and what an engineering wonder they are. Not only were the Romans great engineers, they also left behind these great little gadgets you put up to your ear in order to hear all about the amazing work they did: Hot water, cold water, dry heat, wet heat. Too bad the lead pipes they used wiped out the whole empire. They had a ball while it was going on. The lazy ones took only one bath a day and spas were all the rage. Maybe I should find myself a slave to shave my entire body after getting out of the water just as they did.

We did, however, drink the water and suddenly we looked and felt years younger — after the first glass we went skipping down the street just like Dick and Jane.

The Abbey church in Bath is a wonder in itself, very light and airy and the ceiling looks like it's made of Murano lace.

Bath is a beautiful city and much larger than I had expected, certainly worth a few days' stay next time around. There's a lot of work going on in the center of town and that's great, but seeing Fisher Development doing a GAP store in Bath was like a splash of cold water in the face. Do they really need one more store, and in Bath of all places? Are they planning to sell Levi togas there?

London woke up Tuesday morning with a vengeance, like a hungry bear waiting to devour us all. The quiet of the long weekend was shattered by the sound of taxis, jackhammers, flower vendors and cell phones. After our usual \$60 breakfast at the hotel buffet, we walked eight or nine blocks to the Halcyon Days store so Karen could add to her collection of porcelain boxes. On our way back to the Green Park tube station, we passed endless store windows that looked like something out of GQ magazine — great if you have a size 4 figure or you want to dress like a prince.

We took the new Jubilee tube line, which cost 30 billion to build, but worth every penny of it. The engineering and architecture are fitting of a James Bond movie. We went down two, long, steep escalators to the never-ending supply of trains where in just minutes we arrived at the Waterloo Station. All very modern, but somehow we miss the old escalators with the wooden steps.

After a few zigs and zags, we found our way to the new "Eye," which is British Airlines' version of a Ferris wheel. No tickets until late in the afternoon, so we sat and

watched as 20 or more people stepped in and out of each gondola while the wheel continued to turn. It's a 30 minute round trip that takes you 400 feet up with spectacular views of the city. Lots of tourists and locals and many teenagers with body piercing — a little bit goes a long way, and a few were absolutely disgusting.

We crossed Westminster Bridge, passed Big Ben, and actually saw the first handicapped bathrooms in days. Title 24

definitely does not exist here. Someday I would love to do a series on the bathrooms of London. They are all very clean, some even have scented hand soap, but you had better be pretty agile to get in and out of most of them. Steep stairs, narrow corridors and tight spaces are the norm.

We tried to get into Parliament but they were out to lunch, literally. No disrespect intended. Having looked left, then right we finally made it across the street to Westminster Abbey. Ten pounds allowed us access to 2,000 years of history and we got it in spades. The ceiling in the side chapel is even more beautiful than the church in Bath. Fortunately, they have a large table covered with a mirror so you can look down and see the detail of the ceiling — it keeps us old geezers from looking up too long and falling flat on our asses.

We saw the chair where most of the kings had been crowned and I could not believe my eyes — the back of the chair was full of carved initials. Those kings were really



School Vote (Cont. from p. 5)

education are much more important than seismic retrofitting of fire stations. If Proposition B fails, the School Board will be largely responsible.

The SFUSD is also contemplating a much larger parcel tax for the November election based on the passage of the 2004 Proposition H Public Education Fund. The November parcel tax is rumored to be as high as \$400 annually per homeowner. The SFUSD has neither confirmed nor denied this amount. Per Proposition H, The City agreed to an annual \$60 million General Fund school set-aside in fiscal years 2009 through 2015. San Francisco had lots of money in 2004, but has a \$483 million deficit today. When the Proposition H fund was created, its language stated that the last five years of General Fund contributions would be adjusted for the estimated decrease in the City's discretionary funds. Needless to say, the SFUSD will not be receiving \$60 million annually for each of the next five years. So, once again, the SFUSD will be placing another parcel tax on November's ballot aimed directly at property owners. Not only will the November school board parcel tax fail, it will cause every other City revenue measure requiring a two-thirds vote on the November ballot to fail.

It's hard to say if the San Francisco School Board is foolish, desperate, or both. The SFUSD has an anticipated \$113 million deficit over the next two years and will receive only limited State funds. On May 21, the SFUSD even sued the State of California claiming that the State had failed in its constitutional obligation to support public schools. California currently has minimum education funding levels at about 40% of the State budget. There are multiple reasons that the SFUSD's parcel tax model is no longer viable:

- We are living in a bad economy.
- Contrary to popular belief, homeowners are not wealthy. Many homeowners are either under-employed or unemployed. There are over 47,000 unemployed people in San Francisco (nobody knows what the real number is).
- Most retirement funds are down approximately 30%.
- Property owners are helping elderly parents and have kids in private schools or college.
- People who purchased a house within the last three years are paying extremely high property taxes, while their homes have often declined in value by over 15%.
- Homeowners are aging. Any homeowner over the age of 65 is exempt from paying the school parcel tax. This means that actually less than one third of the population will end up supporting the entire population by passing Proposition A.
- San Francisco's renter population does not pay its fair share of public education.

• Proposition A will not provide enough money to solve problems it is intended to address. Does anyone really believe that \$7 million a year will fix the SFUSD's infrastructure?

• Proposition A does not specifically stipulate how, where, or when this new parcel tax money will be used, or what accountability measures will be utilized.

• It is unlikely that homeowners will approve two separate school parcel taxes in one year.

• A poor track record of oversight: This new Proposition A is replacing a 1990 infrastructure parcel tax that just expired. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, approximately \$38 million of the \$150 million collected over twenty years was misappropriated and spent on administrative and non-teaching salaries.

The traditional parcel tax model that the SFUSD has relied upon is near collapse. Proposition A is the last parcel tax that homeowners and property owners can reasonably be expected to approve to continually pay. San Francisco renters — apparently the SFUSD's sacred cow — need to step up and pay their fair share of the school budget.

No City revenue measures requiring two-thirds majority passage will likely pass, while having to compete with a school parcel tax in either June or November. The SFUSD needs to create a fair model to generate revenue from the entire city and ... San Francisco needs to figure out a way to stop the SFUSD from contributing to the defeat of its revenue generating measures on the ballot.

George Wooding, President, West of Twin Peaks Central Council.
Feedback: wooding@westsideobserver.com

funny guys! After a quick lunch of fish and chips, we found our way to the Cabinet War Rooms where Churchill and his ministers continued governing during the bombing raids. It brought back many memories of the air raids and black-outs that they endured during the war years. Fortunately for us the bombs never made it to Union Street in San Francisco.

Our next stop was at the National Gallery where we spent three hours looking at priceless artwork. The thing that impressed me the most was the number of grammar school kids visiting the gallery, all of them in nice shirts, ties and jackets. Many of them were lying on the floor with paper and pencil trying to copy the works of art. There is hope. That evening we headed for the Comedy Theater where we saw "Peggy for You," a very well done typical British comedy.

After yet another gouging at breakfast on Thursday morning we proceeded to zip up our bags and get mentally prepared for our upcoming Mediterranean cruise. Travel days are always long and tiring, but because of Karen's meticulous planning everything has moved as smoothly as a German Panzer battalion. Who needs Rommel - we have the best to lead us in battle. Bon Voyage.

Feedback: sergio@westsideobserver.com

FROM THE BORDER

The San Francisco Peninsula From Long Ago

By Hilary Gordon/Photos Blair Randall, ©2010

Deer grass, Coyote bush, Hummingbird sage, Sandhill sage, Sea thrift, even the names of our native plants sound like a poem. They conjure up a time not so long ago when the San Franciscan peninsula was a mix of dunes, low hills and valleys, where seasonal creeks threaded between shrubby, wind-swept slopes until they fed into the few year-round creeks running to the bay. The plants which thrived in this coastal landscape still can be seen today by hikers on Mt. Tamalpais, San Bruno Mt., and Pt. Reyes. The best time to see them blooming is right now, when a generous rainy season, followed by the first really warm days of the year, has brought everything into bloom. (Photo: Sea Thrift at GFE)



For those who want a taste of our native plants in their spring bloom, the native backyard in the Garden for the Environment may be a more accessible spot. Out native backyard is located right next to the Victory garden backyard demonstration, near the compost area at the heart of our garden. We're very proud of the native garden this spring. It is full of flowers and the hard work we've put into this garden in the last year or so has paid off with a neat and charming display of our native plants.

There are many different reasons why gardeners might choose to plant native plants. One of the most important reasons is that natives have evolved over thousands of years to be able to adapt and thrive in our local soils and weather patterns. The annual summer drought is



built into our native plants timetable, and they grow and bloom in the rhythms of our climate. They don't just tolerate a summer drought, they actually prefer it. While they may be able to grow in a watered garden setting, most of them are short-lived when they receive much summer water. (Photo: Coral Bells)

Another reason to plant natives is that native plants are the historic, evolutionary partners of native wildlife. California native bees and butterflies rely on certain native plants for forage and for egg-laying, while our native birds are adapted to their historic habitat as well. Years ago California quail were a common sight in Golden Gate park, and current attempts to restore the population focus on replanting California native shrubs which offer the quail nesting opportunities and cover from their predators.

Some of my favorite plants in bloom now in the native backyard include Hummingbird Sage, Fringe cups, California Hedgenettle (not a stinging nettle), and Checkerbloom. Hummingbird Sage, or Salvia Spathacea, combines flowers of a vivid, burgundy red with dark stems and calyxes to produce a dramatic, erect flower which is blooming in profusion above the retaining wall in the native backyard. True to its name, its red, tubular flowers attract hummingbirds which can often be seen nectaring busily among its spikes. Spreading among the sage and hanging gracefully over the wall the Beach Strawberry, or Fragaria chiloensis looks sweet and tender, although it is one of the toughest plants for challenging spots in Bay Area gardens. (Photo: Fringe Cups)



Fringe cups, or Tellima grandiflora, is a charming plant for that very difficult spot in the garden, dry shade. These graceful natives form a rosette of scalloped basal leaves rather like the familiar garden favorite, Coral Bells. Then in springtime, tall arching flowering stems rise above the leaves, and each flower stalk is covered with tiny pale cups. If you look closely, you can even see the elaborate fringe on each cup, like a tiny veil.

Stachys bullata, or California hedgenettle, is covered now with pink, long throated flowers, which look rather like mint in bloom. Winding among the tall, graceful Fringe Cups, backed by a Western Sword Fern, this planting is one worth copying in that dry shade location at home where you've never been able to get anything to grow.

And finally, our Checkerbloom (Sidalcea malviflora) is heavy with wonderful flowers this spring. This plant lives over our dry season as a small rosette of heavily divided leaves, but in spring it expands its long flowering stems covered with large pink hollyhock shaped flowers. It's amazing that something so fragile and lovely can grow from our sandy, summer-dry soils. (Photo: Checkerbloom at GFE)

Come on over to the Garden for the Environment (at the corner of 7th and Lawton) and see for yourself that saving irrigation water and supporting wildlife by growing California natives can also give you a garden that is sweet and beautiful. See you in the Garden!

Hilary Gordon is Perennial Plants Collection Manager at the GFE. A life-long gardener, trained at the City College Horticulture program, she has worked as a professional landscape gardener from 1984 until the present.



Have a question for Hilary? Meet her in the garden Wed. 10-2 and Sat. 10-4. Feedback: hilary@westsideobserver.com

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Checkerbloom at Garden for the Environment

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					6		3	
	9	6						2
				5	1		9	
						7		1
5	3						6	8
2				8				
		1		4	5			
3							1	2
	5			9				

Rules: Each puzzle is a 9 by 9 grid of squares divided into nine 3 by 3 square blocks, with some of the numbers filled in for you.

The Object: Fill in the blank squares in such a way that each of the numbers 1 to 9 appears exactly once in each row, column and block.

Answer: The answer appears aside.

4	8	4	1	3	6	2	5	9
5	2	1	8	7	9	6	4	3
3	6	9	5	4	2	1	7	8
6	5	3	4	9	8	7	1	2
8	9	7	6	2	1	4	3	5
1	4	2	7	5	3	8	9	6
9	7	6	2	1	5	3	8	4
2	1	5	3	8	4	9	6	7
4	3	8	9	6	7	5	2	1

BRAIN FUD

Based on the clue in parentheses, find a four-letter word that can be inserted backwards into the blank to complete a longer word.

Example: di____ve (a defeat)
Answer: dissolve ("A defeat" gives you LOSS, which is placed backwards in the blank: di_SSOL_ve.)

1. mu____ds (rodents)

2. fro____g (young lice)

3. con____s (flightless bird)

4. ta____le (flying mammals)

Answer
1. mustards + (RATS - mu_STAR_ds)
2. frosting + (NITS - fro_STIN_g)
3. consumes + (MUS - con_SUME_s)
4. tastable + (BATS - ta_STAB_le)

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Open spaces, clean lines, and functionality are threaded throughout this wonderful four bedroom, three bathroom mid-century home. Located in Forest Knolls, 217 Warren Drive accommodates a modern lifestyle.

Designer remodeled two-story home meticulously renovated to include all of today's technological amenities from top-of-the-line stainless steel kitchen appliances to marble finished bathrooms. Beyond a gentle flight of stairs the entrance of the home comes into focus. Once inside, enjoy solid oak and maple flooring, custom-built cabinetry, granite counters, deep soaking tubs and wall-to-wall windows with garden and forest views. The entire home draws from a rich palette.

Forest view living room, solid oak hardwood floors, definitive moldings, recessed lighting and a handsome granite flagstone covered wood-burning fireplace. The adjacent dining room is a light filled space with views of the ever-changing colors of Cypress and pine treetops through expansive picture windows. The gourmet kitchen is designed for the true gourmet. Handsome custom wood cabinetry, granite counters, Bosch appliances and a wine cooler combine functionality and versatility to create a chef's delight and an entertainer's dream space. Completing the overall appeal of this level are two ample bedrooms two remodeled luxurious full bathrooms, and a gracious reception area.

Designed with privacy and flexibility in mind, the lower level also features maple floors, warm and comfortable living spaces of a spacious family or media room, two full bedrooms, large full bathroom, ample closets, modern lighting, additional utility and laundry area and access to tranquil, landscaped garden. The lot is comprised of over 4,000 square feet of lushly landscaped woodlands. A wide span deck opens to the ever changing views of sunlight glowing through large Italian Cypresses.

Completing this comfortable city retreat is the added convenience of two car side-by-side parking; plus generous street parking in a preferred neighborhood. 217 Warren Drive is a fully detached home with a considerable side patio area perhaps accommodating additional parking.



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