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Déjà Vu: Tackling the Breach at Ocean Beach

By George Wooding

On January 11, 2010 Mayor Gavin Newsom declared “a state of local emergency to exist in connection with the severe erosion along the Great Highway, due to a series of large swells, windstorms and rain storms at Ocean Beach.” Parts of the Great Highway were slipping into the ocean, and parking lots at the bottom of Sloat Boulevard were disintegrating.

Yes, recent wind and rain storms eroded Ocean Beach, but this “emergency” was actually caused by years of City-deferred maintenance, inaction, and neglect. Much like what happened to the New Orleans levees, San Francisco has long known that parts of the Great Highway — especially the 3,000-foot section between Sloat Boulevard and Fort Funston — face being permanently washed away. It's embarrassing that City officials have once again been caught off guard by a known and often recurring problem. Can anyone say “déjà vu”?

San Francisco's problems with Ocean Beach are man-made problems.

San Francisco caused Ocean Beach's beach-erosion problem by repeatedly increasing its size using landfill, and then building on the landfill. The current shoreline is a man-made extension. Between 1895 and the 1930's the Ocean Beach shoreline was pushed at least two hundred feet seaward to promote urban development. Between the 1940's and 1960's, concrete debris, bricks, soil, and sand were used to increase the width of the beach and to form artificial bluffs. The City continued to increase the size of the beach through the 1980's. The Pacific Ocean is now simply reclaiming the man-made beach and in-fill that has been extended into the Ocean.

The Real Problem

The City built the massive 16-year-old Lake Merced Sewage Pipe directly underneath (40 feet below) the Great Highway; it was completed in 1994 as part of the San Francisco PUC's \$200 million Oceanside Water Pollution Control Plant. The Highway and parking lots were built on landfill the Ocean is now reclaiming. While the 14 foot diameter pipe was tunneled in harder native materials at elevations below the adjacent beach, it was located very close to the Ocean, below the southbound lanes of the highway. After ocean waves tore into the bluff that supports the Great Highway, the sewage pipe was just 10 yards — barely 30 feet! — from the ocean's edge. Over 10 million gallons of Westside raw sewage and wastewater flow through this pipe following rainy conditions. The pipe takes sewage to the Oceanside Treatment Plant where it is partially treated and then pumped through an underwater pipe for release four miles out into the sea. As the shoreline recedes, there is a very good chance that the Lake Merced Sewage Pipe will either end up buried under the ocean floor, or exposed to the ocean.

Cont. p. 6



May 8th Traffic Nightmare-Bus Cuts

MUNI Schedule Cuts Expect longer waits and more crowded buses. The SF Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) will begin MUNI schedule changes May 8th including reduced frequencies and shorter hours of operation on many bus routes and rail lines. “needed to bridge the Fiscal Year 2009-10 operating budget deficit,” according to official sources. For details on specific schedule changes please visit www.sfmta.com.

Construction Disruptions May 8th is also the beginning of preliminary work on the St. Francis Circle Rail Replacement Project. “The busiest intersection on the Westside,” it is expected to cause major traffic tie-ups. The M Ocean View and the K Ingleside lines will be suspended on May 8 and May 9 to allow for a temporary crossover to be installed on West Portal Avenue. Rail service will be restored from May 10 through May 16 and then suspended again on May 17 for the duration of construction. While construction is underway, rail service between West Portal Station and Balboa Park BART/Muni Station will be replaced by K and M line substitute bus service.

The project will include:

- New Muni tracks for a smoother ride
- Street base repairs and new asphalt pavement
- New Muni signals and traffic signal systems
- Low level Muni boarding islands including platforms for customers with disabilities
- Improved storm sewer system and curb ramps in coordination with the Department of Public Works
- Improved pedestrian islands
- New crosswalks and smoother sidewalk surfaces

The replacement of Muni tracks and other improvements at St. Francis Circle are scheduled to start on Monday, May 17 and conclude in late summer. Before then you will see preconstruction activity in the area including surveying, sewer work,

Cont. p. 15

RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR

Jig is up for SF Justice

By Quentin Kopp

These are not good times for San Francisco's justice system. Particularly troubling to law-abiding citizens who want honest, competent enforcement of laws against criminal conduct is the state of the administration of criminal justice in San Francisco Superior Court. By now, readers know of weaknesses, plain misconduct and even disregard of standard procedures in the narcotics laboratory of the San Francisco Police Department

in 2009 and probably prior thereto which will eventually result in dismissal of over 1,500 criminal cases for possession, sale, trafficking and associated criminal behavior regarding unlawful drugs. Many narcotics arrests don't even now result of filing of penal charges in Superior Court by a miscast District Attorney.

It isn't simply attributable to a one-time laboratory technician who has admitted personally using cocaine from evidence samples in the crime laboratory or the Police Department that employed her; ultimate responsibility and failure to discharge

Cont. p. 6



By Will Durst

Hard to feel much sympathy for the Republicans and the sloppy pool of tizzy they high-dived into. Perplexed as how to combat financial regulatory legislation, they are bouncing back and forth between a filibuster and a compromise like a ping-pong ball in a stainless steel shower stall. Their banker buddies have pushed hard to oppose any and all restrictions, placing the GOP in the unenviable position of having to defend Wall Street during an election year. Might want to practice by going to Sea World and rooting for the sharks to eat the dolphins in front of your kids.

At first, the party-line strategy was to affirm a unified opposition to the bill because it helped Wall Street. By regulating it. Yeah. Okay. Well, nobody said it was going to be an easy sell. All 41 GOP Senators signed a letter proclaiming steadfast opposition to any overhaul and if they had to shut down the process,

Cont. p. 7



Prop 16-PG&E's Public Option Perplex

You've got to hand it to the ad boys over on Beale Street. The day they realized they could not compete in the marketplace against cheaper community rates must have been a sobering moment. Seems PG&E's monopoly is threatened by Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) in Marin and San Francisco counties. Since Sacramento's SMUD continues to provide cheaper power to the capitol building itself and provides money for community welfare as well, the CCA competition has befuddled the PG&E lobbyists in Sacramento. They were unable to wine and dine the elected representatives to get their anti-competition legislation passed the old-fashioned way.

While PG&E can't compete in the marketplace, they've proved they can outspend opponents at the ballot box. So, what they couldn't accomplish in the domed halls of Sacramento, the bright guys in the caverns of Beale Street's Madvertising Department seek to accomplish via a new multimillion-dollar campaign cloaked in the trappings of voter's rights, to assure that their monopoly continues in perpetuity, the real purpose of Proposition 16.

In a way the initiative has underscored the "public option" fight in Washington, where well-paid lobbyists squelched public demand for an alternative solution to health care outside the insurance lobby. In California, led by the venerable ratepayers rights organization TURN (Toward Utility Rate Normalization) the right of ratepayers to buy cheaper (and usually greener) power known as Community Choice Aggregation survived the legislative process. Additionally, this PG&E funded initiative casts an unflattering light on the recent Supreme Court decision to allow corporations to maintain their stranglehold on the public by spending unlimited amounts of money in elections. Recent reports estimate that PG&E has spent \$35 million for TV, mail and every other contrivance known to campaign consultants.

As a "Voters Rights" campaign, Prop 16 contradicts itself. The basic premise of "voters rights" is one man, one vote. By requiring a two-thirds majority Prop 16 seeks to impose the view of the minority of voters on the majority, rather than the majority rule usually associated with "voters rights." Hundreds of junk-mailers touting "voters rights" will soon be in our mailboxes aiming to gloss over that disparity, but it remains a fatal flaw in the legislation. There are better ways to protect the minority than making permanent changes to the state's constitution.

Community Choice Aggregation may or may not be the best alternative energy solution and we do not intend to tackle that complex question in this commentary. We think that is best left up to local governments assessing their available resources. Questions like this should be presented by elected officials at publicly noticed hearings, complete with public hearings that allow free flow of information from both sides and followed by a vote of representatives who will have to answer for their choice at the polls.

What is most troubling about this obviously misleading campaign is the use of the citizen initiative process. Originally conceived to break the railroad monopoly by the great Californian, Hiram Johnson at a time when the Assembly and Senate of California were in the grip of the moneyed interests, the right of citizens outside the legislature to originate legislation is sacrosanct—too important to be interfered with. Proposition 16 seeks to establish a monopoly, not by citizens without access to their elected officials, but by a corporation seeking to prevent competition. Here a multi-billion dollar corporation clearly subverts the process, pouring \$35 million into gathering signatures to place this initiative on the ballot, and to assure its passage.

PG&E should spend the millions they extract from the ratepayers to improve service and compete in the marketplace with alternative sources of energy, not at the ballot box. We join the Chronicle, Sacramento Bee, LA Times and most other newspapers in the state in questioning this unprecedented assault on voters. *No on Proposition 16.*

No on the Bloated Water Bond

By Jennifer Clary

The battle over California water has once again taken center stage. The Governor and State Legislature have placed an \$11.14 billion water bond on the November 2010 ballot. Don't let the name fool you! The so-called "Safe Clean and Reliable Drinking Water Act of 2010" provides funding to build new dams and mitigate some of the environmental damage caused by a Peripheral Canal.

You heard right – the Peripheral Canal! The debate over that boondoggle has resurfaced. South of Delta water agencies and irrigation districts have never given up hope for it. And now that a judge has ruled that the constantly increasing exports from the Delta (now over 6 million acre feet – that's roughly 1.96 trillion gallons per year) are hurting fish and have to be scaled back, they feel that this is the time to push for it.

For those of you who don't recall the 1982 ballot fight, the Peripheral Canal would draw water out of the Sacramento River north of the Delta and send it via a canal around the Delta to the huge state and federal pumps at the southern end of the Delta. This would presumably allow the pumps to take less water (and kill fewer fish) from the Delta. In 2007, California's Department of Water Resources conducted a feasibility study showing that such a canal could be built and operated to allow increased water exports. Now we're being told that exports would be no greater than the recent high level of pumping. Unfortunately, building a canal is like building a new highway – once the capacity exists, it is eventually used.

The bond also contains \$3 billion in subsidies for new dams and provides up to \$1 billion for desalination projects. The entire \$11 billion in bonds will cost the General Fund \$800 million per year in repayment—that's money taken away from environmental programs, social services, and county coffers.

It really is time for us to start thinking differently about how we use (and waste) water. San Francisco is taking steps; the SFPUC has committed to replacing about 10% of its Hetch Hetchy water supply with local resources (groundwater, conservation, recycled water).

Jennifer Clary is President of San Francisco Tomorrow, more info: nowaterbond.com.

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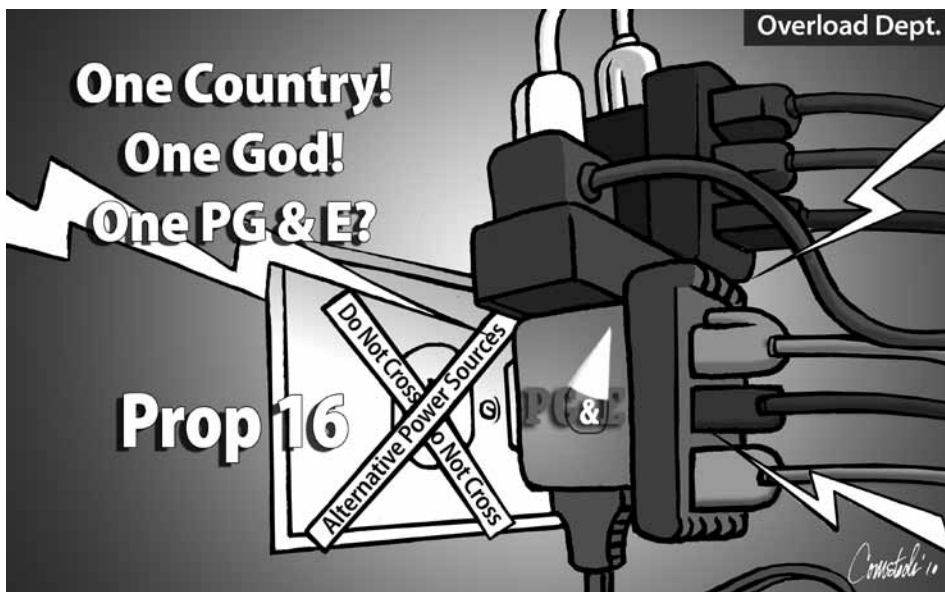
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A full Environmental Impact Report for the proposed soccer fields needs to be conducted. Golden Gate Park is a cultural, environmental and historical landmark for the city of San Francisco; the proposed GGP/Beach Chalet Soccer Fields significantly and seriously threatens its integrity.

I live and work at Ocean Beach, one block south of the park. I walk at least two hours of each day, seven days a week, in the park. At night I go outside to view the stars. I have lived my entire life in San Francisco (41 years); growing up near the Piers I never knew the sky could be what it is here at Lands End.

I've been living in the Sunset for nearly 10 years and have already been very negatively affected by the use of the park to generate funds to meet budget deficits. The Team In Training groups, the sundry Marathons, and the Outside Lands Concerts have only meant fecal matter and urine on my doorstep, excess trash in the neighborhood, physical pushing and shoving on the paths and in the park, and obnoxious drivers blocking my driveway or nearly running me over while I am walking.

When I heard they were planning a sports center I was, and am, horrified.

Supervisor Chu has expressed the idea that this proposed sports center will answer a budget need. I find that short sighted and negligent.

I am desperately concerned for the wildlife that live in the park. On my daily walks I have come to know the birds especially. The proposed lighting alone is of great concern. What is this light pollution going to do the nocturnal creatures and their habitat? And what about the unique place the western edge of the city holds for night skies? The fog, for which my neighborhood is notorious, will only amplify the light pollution. We need to foster habitats not destroy them.

I am also incensed that the city could even be considering artificial turf which has been shown to raise ground level temperatures an average of 20 degrees. This goes against its goal to reduce environmental destruction caused by urban life.

As I understand it, there isn't even a plan for what to do with the turf once it ages and becomes unattractive for further play; given the rough estimate of its ten-year life span, I find this unbelievable. Nor is there any plan for disinfecting this turf, a fact the GGP gardeners, have expressed concern about. The rains will wash this into our ground waters and Ocean.

Golden Gate Park is a park. The Master Plan (1998) stated the need to keep the western edge pastoral. The district just gave a grant to Surfrider to increase permeable surface and promote the land stewardship; this proposed soccer field project, while it may increase city funds, and alcohol sales at the Park and Beach Chalet, will also bring more cars and destruction to park vegetation. It makes no sense.

With an EIR other options, such as maintaining the trees, plant life and grass fields for play, can be explored.

Dr. Reid Gómez, Sunset District Resident

Thank you for your article Paving Over Golden Gate Park in the February issue.

I am a business owner and resident of the Sunset. I live one block away from the Murphy Windmill that is currently under renovation, and I use the park for several hours each day.

I am incensed and alarmed about the city plan to install artificial turf and 60 foot sports lights in the park without even performing an Environmental Impact Report; considering the destruction to wildlife habitats, vegetation and the known elevation in ground temperatures (an average of 20 degrees) that will result, this is negligent at best.

Artificial turf is not sustainable. There is no plan for how to clean (disinfect) or dispose of the turf once it is installed. The soccer community admits they have a high percentage of staph infection. What about the animals, the GGP staff, and local residents who live and work in the park? What is going to be done with the turf when it has outlived its life? What about San Francisco's proposed goal of decreasing garbage, increasing permeable surfaces, and the Secretary of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places (2004) support for keeping the western end of GGP as a "natural woodland?"

The proposed lights will generate pollution. I am concerned about their affect on park wildlife. I use the park to walk and to watch and study the birds and twilight creatures. These lights will alter their habitat, and result in their destruction. What trees will be displaced for their construction? What will the light pollution do to the night skies and neighborhoods?

The proposed soccer fields will likely draw players from outside the area. In my experience with the sports events already generating income for the city and held at the western edge, this means more cars and more illegal parkers. They see the park and beach as a playground, not a home, and they leave trash and urine in their wake. And they certainly don't ride MUNI.

My primary concern is for the soil. We must protect our topsoil. The dunes are a fragile ecosphere. The proposed artificial turf is not permeable. Trees will likely be uprooted and further weaken an already delicate soil environment. Damage to plant life is guaranteed.

People come to the western edge to see the sea, to see the windmills and tulip gardens. As I understand this age, and the city, we have made a declaration to foster care for the natural world, and to curb our role in the environmental destruction that results from city construction. At the least a full EIR should be conducted and legitimate alternatives should be introduced and pursued before any forward movement with this artificial non-permeable surface and light pollution project.

Niki Lee

West of Twin Peaks Central Council News & Views

Help to “Fix Muni Now”

By Mitch Bull

The ballot initiative to restructure the City Charter as it relates to MUNI was the biggest focus at the April 26th meeting of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council meeting.

Council President George Wooding presided over an informative meeting that featured four “guest” speakers as well as the usual monthly information that is shared and discussed between the WOT-PCC board and the various neighborhood improvement association delegates.

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd spoke at length about the ballot initiative that he is sponsoring to change the City Charter to reform the procedures by which the Muni Transit Worker’s Union wage scales are set. He made the point that he is not against the union being able to collectively bargain with the City, but that by having the Charter mandate that the base wage of Muni operators MUST be no less than the average of the two highest-paid transit agencies in the country it gives the union no incentive to negotiate. The Muni union is the only union in the city that has its base wage tied to the City Charter.

The tying of the union scale to the City Charter came as a result of a General Transit strike that was carried out in 1968. Fear of future strikes provided the impetus to make changes to the City Charter to include the present Muni Base rate clause. Since 1974 the City and the Union have been bound by the agreement of each side to enter into binding interest arbitration with a neutral 3rd party arbitrator making the ruling that both sides have agreed to be bound to in the case of an impasse. This arbitration is designed to eliminate the possibility of a strike. Any workers who would choose to strike can be fired.

Elsbernd spoke on the importance of collecting enough signatures to get it onto the ballot in NOVEMBER.

To place an initiative on the ballot will require 47000 valid, audited signatures. To ensure a successful ballot campaign, the number of actual people necessary to sign is about 70,000. All signatures must be submitted prior to July 1 to ensure that the initiative is placed on the November ballot. If successful the measure can be passed with a margin of 50% + 1 vote.

The WOTPCC delegates proceeded to vote on a delegate resolution supporting Elsbernd’s ballot initiative. In a call vote the resolution supporting the Supervisor passed UNANIMOUSLY. Many of the delegate representatives have taken ballot signature paperwork to assist Elsbernd in getting the word out and collecting signatures. For more information on the ballot initiative contact your local delegate, Supervisor Elsbernd’s office, or go to the website, www.FixMuniNow.com. There is not a lot of time left to gather the necessary signatures.

District 5 Supervisor Carmen Chu also was on hand to address the crowd with an update on the proposed Medical Cannabis Dispensary (MCD) that has been proposed on Taraval Street. The facility is in the permit review process with a hearing scheduled in front of the Planning Commission on May 20th at 1:30 PM. In the update, Chu said that public sentiment and feedback is running 99% against the dispensary in the location proposed (32nd St @ Taraval). Although the location meets the law which required a 1000 foot set back from any schools, day care centers, etc., there are tutoring facilities, playgrounds and other important neighborhood sites that could be impacted by the Cannabis Dispensary. It is also on the transit corridor that serves Lincoln HS and St. Ignatius. In light of the public feedback the Supervisor said she would attend the meeting to speak against the issuance of an operating permit for the business. The WOTPCC will also be submitting a letter to the Planning Commission stating their opposition to the MCD in its proposed location.

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) also provided two speakers at the meeting as Deputy School Superintendent Myong Leigh spoke on behalf of Proposition A on the June ballot. Prop A will extend a parcel tax that has been in effect for 20 years, for another 20 years to continue to provide funding for seismic and safety related improvements and retrofits at SFUSD Schools and other buildings. He passed out literature that detailed how the funding would be used, as well as how the past funding has been used from 1990 to the present day in the school district schools and buildings. He was questioned about the rationale to extend the parcel tax citing areas where the \$7 million per year generated by the tax has not been put to its intended uses. Leigh acknowledged that the current team at SFUSD has a much better management and oversight on the funding than past officials and pressed the need for continued safety and seismic upgrades. He also explained that homeowners over the age of 65 can opt-out and be excluded from the levy. The approximate cost of the tax will be \$32.20 for single-family homes and commercial properties.

Orla O’Keefe, the Special Asst to the Superintendent of the SFUSD followed Leigh and spoke to the attendees about the new SFUSD “Student Assignment Policy” that will start for students entering kindergarten, sixth and ninth grade in the fall of 2011.

The timeline is for the SFUSD to create elementary school boundaries; create elementary to middle school feeder patterns; develop a new transportation policy and to complete a recruitment campaign and enrollment materials so that the new enrollment system can be launched on November 13, 2010.

Meetings will be held at the SFUSD Board Room, 555 Franklin Street (@McAllister) on May 10 from 6-8 PM.

For the general portion of the meeting, Wooding announced the Nominating Committee to recruit and submit names for the next WOTPCC meeting (May 24). Dave Bisho, George Linn and Paul Conroe will serve as the Nominating Committee. Candidates from the Committee, as well as those submitted from the floor, will be considered at the May meeting and voted on at the June 28 Annual Meeting.

In committee reports Matt Chamberlain informed the group that the proposed changes to the DR (Discretionary Review) process have been shelved by the Board of Supervisors, but that several of the “more agreeable” changes that the homeowner groups had proposed to the Planning Department are being discussed to be implemented. The Planning Department will hold meetings for public input on May 6 and May 10 at the office on 1640 Mission Street.

Avrum Shepard gave the Transportation report, focusing on the MTA “pilot project” to implement parking meter charges on Sundays on West Portal Avenue from 10-6,



Supervisor Carmen Chu talks pot

GG Park: The Peril to Our Parkland

By Gregory P. Miller

On April 15th, the SF Recreation and Park Commission (RPC) approved replacing the existing natural grass athletic fields at the west end of Golden Gate Park with over 6 acres of artificial turf. The area will be illuminated every night of the year until 10 p.m. with almost a quarter million watts of night sports lighting. The SF Planning Department paved the way with its earlier ruling that the proposal was a routine renovation and no Environmental Impact Report was required.

These decisions were made despite the written concerns of over 1500 residents and over 80 neighborhood, environmental, and historic preservation groups.

While the City’s decision is disappointing, the most depressing aspect is the predictability of that decision. In my prior article, I outlined institutional and attitudinal factors that undermine the preservation of our treasured parks (www.westsideobserver.com/special10/soccer.html).

Here are a few more factors:

6. Bureaucracy Abhors Public Discourse:

The soccer complex has been in the works since 2007, yet the general public learned of the proposal in late 2009. This was six months after the City Fields Foundation (SF’s private partner in this venture) alerted the Bay Area soccer community to the project. The few public outreach sessions have been combination sales presentations and pep rallies. There was no earnest discussion of alternatives or flaws in the plan. In one meeting, an innocent asked if new natural grass fields might be a better solution in the context of Golden Gate Park. City Fields replied that artificial turf and night lighting are non-negotiable. End of discussion.

We should not be surprised. 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!”

And that is why we have the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA can compel our public institutions to open up the process to a full public environmental review.

“Private donors are reluctant to endow operational staff. It’s only human for a donor to want to point to a substantial building with pride – pointing to a guy mowing a lawn has less psychic reward. And, many donors don’t trust the City. They can verify that a building was built, but how do they know that a department won’t find some clever way to move the money to some other pet project?”

7. Investment Analysis is for Sissies:

The Recreation and Park Department (RPD) claims that artificial turf is cost effective compared to grass fields. Their claim is not obvious from the information made available to the public. Field utilization may increase with plastic grass, but the proper base reference is not the current, poorly-maintained fields but, rather, new grass fields constructed using modern techniques. Both grass and artificial fields have maintenance costs – estimating these costs is rife with controversy. Other costs have not been factored in, for example, the City pays for the electric power, and stadium lights are not cheap. The City will have to maintain the plastic/tire crumb mat to the manufacturer’s specifications, and then replace everything in 10 years with public funds.

A detailed financial analysis of such issues is routine for any sizeable private company. If the City has done such a careful analysis, it remains carefully hidden. This is surprising, considering the SF/City Fields partnership has built a number of soccer fields over the past several years.

With the help of a sympathetic Supervisor, I asked RPD about a proper financial analysis, and received no response during the past two months.

8. Capital Projects Are Sexy (Operational budgets are so boooringggg):

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.

This concept is facilitated by Federal tax law and State law that prohibit using bond money to fund operational expenses. Private donors are reluctant to endow operational staff. It’s only human for a donor to want to point to a substantial building with pride – pointing to a guy mowing a lawn has less psychic reward. And, many donors don’t trust the City. They can verify that a building was built, but how do they know that a department won’t find some clever way to move the money to some other pet project?

As a result, existing facilities tend to be poorly maintained, decline, and are shunned. 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.”

9. A Flawed Process is a Denied Process:

So let’s walk the destruction of the west end of Golden Gate Park through the steps we have outlined:

Desperate for ‘free’ funding to shore up a department that is bleeding red ink, RPD forges ahead. No evidence of careful analysis of all the long-term costs is made public. The Planning Department EIR decision is released on a Friday. Six days later, the RPC meets. No real outreach takes place – as recently as four days before the RPC meeting to approve this project, many residents with homes overlooking the park had not even heard of it. The opinions of the Historic Preservation Commission and three major historic preservation organizations that the project would cause a significant negative impact on the most valuable historic park in SF are ignored by the RPC. The RPC praises the privately-funded and well-organized soccer leagues and states that the project opponents are close-minded and insensitive to the needs of the community. The RPC, which rarely disagrees with staff proposals, votes to approve the project.

RPC watchers are not surprised...but we are disappointed.

How can we fix a system that is so obviously broken? I have a few ideas, but send your suggestions in to the *Westside Observer*. Let’s get a dialogue going.

NOTE: SF Ocean Edge, environmental and neighborhood organizations are planning to appeal the CEQA ruling to the BOS. Contact www.sfoceanedge.org for more information on the appeal and how you can participate. The protection of our parkland is in the hands of the citizens of San Francisco.

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

Laguna Honda Hospital Rebuild: Overrun Lessons Impact All Bond-Financed Projects

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

Have any lessons been learned from the rebuild of Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH)? Or will the mistakes be repeated on SF General Hospital?

When LHH hosts its black-tie dinner and holds its gala ribbon cutting ceremony there will be plenty of ooh-ing and aahing over its new artwork, and the new digs.

But lurking inside is a sordid story of cost overruns and construction problems. The project is two years behind schedule and \$183.4 million (47%) over budget. What went wrong?

The answer involves “change orders” — changes introduced after construction plans and specifications were completed.

A public records request for LHH “change orders” reveals that LHH disingenuously claims only \$71.6 million (39%) of the \$183.4 million project budget overrun was caused by change orders.

- Of the \$71.6 million, \$7.9 million (11.1%) are to correct “errors” made during design. That’s a lot of errors by whoever drew the plans, or did the plan-checking.

- \$10.5 million (14.2%) of the \$71.6 million are to correct “omissions” during design. Between correcting design errors and omissions, this represents 25% — totaling \$18.4 million — by the City’s admission.

But 25% due to errors and omissions appears excessive, since the City hired an independent firm to review drawings for inconsistencies. A Commissioning Agent had been hired, contractors were to perform “constructability reviews” during bidding, and Turner Construction performed aggressive reviews to mitigate potential change orders projected in 2005 at \$11 million. How did we get to \$71.6 million in change orders, and an overall cost overrun of \$183.4 million, in just four short years?

In its response, the City attributes nearly \$44 million (61.4%) of the \$71.6 million in change orders to unforeseen site conditions discovered during construction. The City claimed \$30.3 million was due to “extended overhead costs for the contracting team related to the delays to the schedule.” When the \$30.3 million of overhead costs are correctly reallocated, changes due to actual site conditions drop to \$13.7 million, only 19.1% .

The City claims merely \$9.1 million (12.7%) of the \$71.6 million in change orders were requests made by the client. This is likely very under-estimated, since LHH is known to have placed a large number of changes.

Remarkably, the City showed zero change orders to incorporate cost savings. Did LHH’s “design-build” contracting approach really result in no cost-saving changes?

The City claimed cost savings related to so-called “value engineering” incorporated in 2004 was included in the project’s May 2005 revised budget. A report issued to the Citizen’s General Obligation Bond Oversight Committee (CBOBOC) five years ago acknowledges \$4.4 million savings due to value-engineering, then reports delays to the project’s schedule rapidly increased bids by \$3.4 million — a \$1 million savings, at best. “Value engineering” changes were eliminated by continuing project escalation costs that remain on-going.

So what does the City attribute the remaining \$111.8 million in “non-change order” budget increases to?

An increase of \$20.5 million to remodel administrative wings of the current main building is not part of change orders. Shouldn’t that have been charged to unforeseen site conditions, or design errors and omissions? Another \$19 million of the total overrun is due to “staffing increases.”

The City describes \$81.2 million (44%) as “initial escalation impacts,” but escalation had to be client-requested change orders. In December 2008, the City reported \$206.3 million in escalation; how did “initial escalation” drop to only \$81.2 million by March 2009?

Another \$9 million is attributed to scope deleted in March 2009 — but as a negative number that should have been added (pushing the overrun from \$183 million to \$192 million), which should probably be charged as a client-requested change order deletion.

As recently as March 2, 2010, the Health Commission was informed of additional owner-requested changes, including adding bed-pan washers in patient rooms, modifying nurse call units to accommodate bed-exit alarms, and converting 13 storage rooms into laundry rooms to accommodate patient’s laundry needs.

Since the Oversight Committee first began holding hearings on the replacement project, there has been no meaningful analysis of the change orders or cost overruns. Nor has the CBOBOC discussed whether LHH’s “design-build” contracting has actually increased change orders to correct design errors and omissions potentially



The Health Commission was told in June 2004 of a \$25 million cost overrun; in five short years, overruns skyrocketed to \$183.4 million, largely due to “change orders.”

introduced by subcontractors. How can anything be learned if the CBOBOC simply evades conducting change order reviews?

On April 8, the CBOBOC presented a skimpy 11-page annual report for 2009 to the Board of Supervisors Government Audit and Oversight Committee. All they could muster reporting was “[we’re] disappointed with the overall circumstances. ... and a cost nearly double the ... amount approved by the voters somewhat dampens enthusiasm for the new Laguna Hospital.”

That’s it? Disappointment and dampened enthusiasm?

There’s not one word anywhere in CBOBOC’s 11-page annual report about change orders affecting any other bond-financed projects, despite the fact that the Department of Public Works is thought to be tracking six or seven change order categories for capital improvement projects in an internal database. Why isn’t DPW sharing all change order analyses with CBOBOC?

Construction industry project-delivery tools like “construction-manager at risk,” “value engineering,” “design-build” contracting, “constructability reviews,” and “commissioning agents” — tools touted for bringing projects in on time and within budget — all appear to have failed miserably on the LHH Replacement Project.

As I asked in my February column, what is it going to take for City officials to provide accountability about the LHH rebuild — and other bond-financed projects — in a truly transparent and timely manner? How many other City-sponsored capital improvement projects face the same types of cost overruns because accountability lessons from the LHH rebuild haven’t been learned?

Monette-Shaw, an accountability watchdog, operates www.stopLHHdownsize.com. Unedited version is at www.westsideobserver.com. Feedback: Monette-Shaw@westsideobserver.com

Ocean Beach Breach (Cont. from p. 1)

Any rupture to the sewage pipe could cause a huge ecological disaster, involving millions of gallons of treated and effluent (partially-treated) sewage and liquid waste pouring into the ocean and onto the fragile coastline. Earthquake-induced liquefaction to the area may pose another distinct threat.

The president of the California Shore and Beach Preservation Association, Bob Battalio, who is a professional civil engineer, states, “The Ocean Beach landfill is not sustainable against the active shoreline. The real problem isn’t erosion, it’s that the City built crucial infrastructure on landfill and too close to the ocean. We once thought the Lake Merced Sewage Pipe was safe for the near term because of its low elevation and strength. Based on the City’s assessment of vulnerability, we were wrong.”

According to the Department of Public Works (DPW), some sections of ocean bluffs south of Sloat Boulevard have eroded by up to 70 feet just within the last year. The rock crown of the Southwest Ocean Outfall Pipe — part of the plant that discharges partially-treated wastewater four miles off shore into the Pacific Ocean — is also threatened by erosion. A 2009 report filed by the Pacific Institute shows San Francisco’s sea level rose eight inches during the last 100 years, but is expected to rise an additional four-and-a-half feet — yes, feet — by 2100 due to increases in ocean temperatures and melting ice sheets. Report calculations project that Northern California’s sandy dunes could retreat an average of 558 feet (186 yards) and cliffs could recede an average of 217 feet by 2100. Higher sea levels, coupled with high tides and fierce storms, will cause storm waves to make increasingly deeper inroads into the receding shoreline.

The City has responded to the latest Ocean Beach “emergency” by placing a 425-foot-long rock wall — approximately 12,000 tons of rock — south of Sloat Boulevard below the San Francisco Zoo. This rock wall is alternatively called a revetment or coastal armoring. The revetment starts at the base of the eroded beach area and extends up the cliff’s face. Ideally, sand will be added on top of the rock to increase the width of the Bluff. The Army Corps of Engineers — the same folks involved with the New Orleans levees — is continuing to dump sand near the coastal armoring hoping to create a beach and changing the ocean’s littoral (sand transport) current, but this “beach nourishment” approach is limited at this location because the Ocean’s littoral current is taking sand away from this section of shore; as the surrounding

shores recede, this divergent zone is aimed directly at the Great Highway and the Lake Merced Sewage Pipe. This has the same effect as aiming water from a hose directly onto pavement 24/7.

The emergency Ocean Beach coastal armoring is a short-term, Band-Aid approach that will gradually fail. Coastal armoring can only be engineered to accommodate a certain storm size or rise in sea level. Coastal armoring of Ocean Beach requires regular monitoring and constant, expensive maintenance. Paradoxically, armoring is not as effective as natural shorelines at dissipating the energy from waves and tides. As a result, armored shorelines tend to be more vulnerable to erosion, causing increased erosion of adjacent beaches.

“As the sea rises, San Franciscans will be forced to decide: Should we adapt to the changing environment, or should we try to make it adapt to us?”

By the time the City actually develops a long-term plan for Ocean Beach, we may all be up to our knees in sea water filled with effluvium (odorous fumes given off by waste or decaying matter).

In July 1999, then-Supervisor Gavin Newsom voted with the unanimous Board of Supervisors by passing Resolution 698-99, which prohibited the expenditure of funds on the use of hard rock structures (such as rock revetment or seawalls) to stabilize conditions at Ocean Beach. This year, the City circumvented the Board’s 1999 Resolution by declaring an emergency and began expending funds on coastal armoring of Ocean Beach. The 1999 Board’s Resolution also called for the establishment of a long-term plan to address erosion at Ocean Beach.

In 2002, Mayor Willie Brown’s Ocean Beach Task Force issued Resolution 001-02-COE, which recommended supporting long-term solutions “through the planning partnership process.” The Mayor took three years before establishing, in 2005, the Ocean Beach Vision Council charged with developing a 30- to 50-year plan for Ocean Beach. The Vision Council must be wearing very dark sunglasses, since it blindly hasn’t even issued a draft report in the five years since being created. The DPW and the Recreation and Park Department are currently working on a plan with the Army Corps of Engineers. It is unclear how much of the Recreation and Park Department’s budget is funding the coastal armoring to protect City recreation and park land.

On April 19, 2010, Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, with the support of Supervisor Sean Elsbernd, drafted a new Board Resolution requesting a “comprehensive planning process be re-established to develop long-term solutions to the erosion problems at Ocean Beach.” None of these attempts at long-term plans are either drafted, followed, implemented, or completed. Nothing changes except the eroding shoreline’s increased risk to the 14-foot-diameter Lake Merced Sewage Pipe and the Great Highway above it, and risks to the Southwest Ocean Outfall Pipe.

It’s time for the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), the City’s private think tank, to bring all Ocean Beach stake-holders together to really draft a 30- to 50-year plan for Ocean Beach. SPUR has the connections, knowledge, experience, and vision to develop a realistic plan. SPUR’s stated mission is to promote good planning and good government for San Francisco. SPUR’s Executive Director, Gabriel Metcalf, states, “If SPUR is able to help with the master planning, our role will be to ensure that all the different viewpoints get heard and that the solutions are really working with the full technical information about the ecological processes.”

Coastal experts such as Mr. Battalio are recommending a gradual surrender of the coastline to the Ocean. They believe that: 1) Infrastructure such as the Great Highway and the Lake Merced Sewage Pipe may have to be moved away from coastal erosion hazard zones; 2) Coastal armoring and structural measures should be minimized, with all armoring and rubble to be removed as soon as practical; 3) A sand management plan needs to be developed where sand is placed to maintain the beach and dunes; 4) The natural ecology of Ocean Beach’s flora and fauna needs to be re-established; and 5) There should be extensive Ocean Beach monitoring and adaptive management. This should become the template for the City’s long overdue Ocean Beach management plan.

As the sea rises, San Franciscans will be forced to decide: Should we adapt to the changing environment, or should we try to make it adapt to us? No matter what we do, there will be consequences down the line. It’s time to decide the fate of Ocean Beach and San Francisco’s endangered infrastructure. San Francisco needs to immediately develop a realistic, long-term plan, before the 14-foot-diameter sewage pipe and the Great Highway only 40 feet above it collapse under the weight of inaction.

George Wooding is the President of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council. Feedback: wooding@westsideobserver.com. More info: www.sfsurfrider.org/

The Tail That’s Wagging the Dog!

By Former Supervisor Tony Hall



You know folks, this little newspaper, the *Westside Observer*, being circulated mainly in the southwestern segment of the City, is doing much more for the welfare of our residents than any of us realize. By printing the truth while exposing the lies, spin, and corruption so embedded in our local government, and then offering workable solutions, a real service is being performed.

How is this happening you ask? Well, If one were to count the number of articles that have appeared in our two local dailies that have had their genesis spring from the subject matter of columns first printed in the *Westside Observer*, you would be amazed. Whether this is due to the inert laziness of the writers of the two dailies, or the fact that they are just behind the eight ball as reporters, or the fact that they are part of a dying enterprise because the publications they write for are so slanted and biased, is anybody’s guess. Anyway, there is an old saying that imitation is the greatest form of flattery, and if that’s true, the *Westside Observer* is tops and it is great to be part of “the tail that’s wagging the dog.”

Just in the past few days, several articles have appeared in the Examiner by columnists who have rambled on about the Boathouse at Lake Merced as a result of my April 1, 2010 article in the Westside Observer, and on the topic of high-speed rail as written many times in this paper by Quentin Kopp. Neither of those columnists, and I will spare naming them so as not to have their obvious politics overshadow their integrity, took the time to do the necessary research to adequately understand the problems.

In the past few months, there have been numerous articles written in both dailies by columnists sympathetic to the current administration that have tried to offset the realities that I first exposed about Treasure Island, Harding Park, the parking meter scam, the excessive business permitting scheme, or the plight of small business. Indeed, there was even a rally held on the steps of City Hall by the mayor to highlight his concerns about developmental impact fees several weeks after I talked about such abuses in my March 2010 column. (Of course, we’ve heard nothing about reducing the fees since the event was merely for PR purposes.)

There have been feature articles in our dailies about our deteriorating infrastructure and pothole riddled streets first addressed in this paper by the talented and dedicated WSO contributor George Wooding, who also was the first to broach the subject of the MUNI operators and their salaries. As you know, a misleading version of that subject is now being circulated as a ballot initiative by one of the camp followers.

The fallacies, inconsistencies and downright misuse of public trust and monies involved in the Laguna Honda re-build project has been excellently chronicled by the persistent and courageous Patrick Monette-Shaw, who has paid dearly for speaking out in this paper for the past two years. The list goes on and on but I can assure you, you are getting your monies’ worth by patronizing the advertisers that make this publication possible. You may not always like what you read, but no one associated with this paper that I know of is trying to build a political career spinning you yarns. We are all thankful for the opportunity to be part of the initiating process that at least gets the ball rolling toward positive solutions.

As opposed to going into a great deal of detail on one subject as I usually do in my columns, and in the spirit of working with those who seek to justify the status quo, I will offer various short topics in this column as “Observations and Solutions” so as to really keep them busy.

Observation No.1 INFRASTRUCTURE and STREET REPAIR: Roger Boas correctly predicted in his ‘80s Chief Administrative Officers Infrastructure Report to the Board of Supervisors, that the City must take on a consistent and annual commitment of funds to maintain our streets and aging sub-structure. The annual cost of estimated maintenance then was about 10 to 20 million dollars per year. The City has been shirking this primary and basic responsibility for decades, choosing instead to fund questionable, expensive, and experimental social programs for political expediency, hoping that State or Federal Grants would come to the rescue. Today an infusion of \$250 million per year would not even improve the City’s overall street conditions because the sub-structure is old and breaking down as predicted. It is a classic example of why long-term deferred maintenance is always a bad idea as opposed to the annual cost for necessary upkeep and repairs. We are now at a critical stage and must take real action to keep the streets from incurring serious structural damage. This administration is now proposing asking the voters to approve a quarter-cent sales tax increase to generate up to \$36 million annually. In other words, they ignore the problem for years and are now asking you for the money to let them fix the problem? **The SOLUTION:** Since streets and infrastructure maintenance are prime responsibilities of the City, akin to fire and safety, take the necessary money the City needs to satisfy maintenance and repair on an annual basis, as part of a well thought-out 10-year long-term plan, from the monies that have been diverted from revenue producing departments into uses that have not benefited the City. Prioritize rather than set-aside. Surely in a 6.6 billion dollar budget for a city of less than 800,000 people the money is there! Try using it wisely.

Observation No. 2; The Golden Gate Park Stables: A unique San Francisco tradition since 1875, the stables in the park were shut down on “temporary basis for repair” in September of 2001. The last of 22 public stables in San Francisco, the park stables, during its 130 years of existence, had housed many public, private and polo ponies for equestrian enjoyment and had introduced dozens of generations of school children and adults to the joys of horseback-riding. As a Supervisor and 30-year City employee, I sensed that the so-called “temporary shut down” was nothing more than an excuse for the Dept. of Recreation and Parks to shed its responsibility of the maintenance of this time-treasured institution. I called for a series of public hearings and had received the assurances and guarantees from the then-General Manager of Rec. and Park, Elizabeth Goldstein, that monies were available for the reconstruction of the stables and that construction would commence as soon as architectural drawings and permits were produced. Seeing no action, on July 23rd of the following year, I introduced two resolutions that were passed at the Board of Supervisors. The first established a working group of experienced people to work with the Department to evaluate the most efficient and effective manner to repair and improve the stables. The second resolution which I introduced and passed, is still relevant today and is part of **THE SOLUTION:** It is based on the voter approved 1998’s Proposition J, It urged the Recreation and Park Department to allocate existing funds to repair and improve the stables and, if necessary, repay the monies expended by soliciting funds from the Golden Gate Park Concourse Authority. To date, the stables sit in abandonment due to the incompetence of city bureaucrats who have ignored the legislative mandates and no doubt misspent the monies that were once—and could again—be available.

Observation No 3: Hospice and Palliative Care at Laguna Honda: By now many of you have come to realize what is really happening at Laguna Honda Hospital.

Cont. p. 6

Plain Talk – Straight Talk Full Employment for Rasputins, Puppets & All Their Apparatchiks



By Joe O'Donoghue

For those of you hoping to see financial relief on the horizon due to the Financial Reform underway in Washington, forget it. This reform package will not ease up on present credit constrictions in play nor will it facilitate easier access to borrowing. This reform package is strictly a triple play that pits big banks, small banks and Wall Street firms against each other. However, rest assured that when the smoke clears and the dust settles, you and I, and the rest of middle class America will be straddled with new synthetic fees and charges for these changes.

Let us not forget the inevitable Value Added Tax (VAT) proposals that are already looming in the shadows. These new taxes come courtesy of the Derivative Manipulators who, by purveying their “financial instruments of mass destruction,” ubiquitously careened this country into financial ruin and chaos. Ironically, these carnivores held their annual International Derivative Convention here in San Francisco last week. We are told that the mantra of these carnivores, as they indulged themselves at the Supper Club, was “you slaves pay, so that we, the new Rasputins, can play,” and play they did. According to a NY Times report, these Rasputins, at the Supper Club, experienced new sensory palpitations—palpitations that allowed some, “while plopped on beds that covered the floor,” to be served, “scarf delivered” drinks by waiters in “denim short shorts,” while others of them retired to the S&M chamber to indulge, no doubt, in newly derivative sexual fantasies.

Now, while these derivative Rasputins of sexual perversities were getting it on through bodily secretions, compliments of taxpayer subsidies and government bureaucratic bailouts, apparatchiks at the State level in San Francisco were citing the manufacturers of rice noodles for not keeping their noodles refrigerated at 41 degrees or less. And so vigorous and relentless was the pursuit of these apparatchiks that they resorted to the ultimate decision—to close a manufacturing business resulting in the layoff of nine long-term Chinese workers.

“To do otherwise, such as refrigerating them, would make the noodles “yucky,” and hence unpalatable. So, this custom, which existed for over 5,000 years, was suddenly halted, by some process-oriented bureaucrat who insisted upon enforcing a rule of refrigerating rice noodles at 41 degrees or less.”

Now, one should know that never having cooked a meal in my life, I would not recognize—except those of the human kind—one noodle from another. But apparently, for over 5,000 years, rice noodles have been a very popular mainstay of Asian culture. Manufactured through blending a mixture of water, rice and flour, they are rolled and then cut into a variety of different widths, after which they are then kept at room temperature. To do otherwise, such as refrigerating them, would make the noodles “yucky,” and hence unpalatable. So, this custom, which existed for over 5,000 years, was suddenly halted, by some process-oriented bureaucrat who insisted upon enforcing a rule of refrigerating rice noodles at 41 degrees or less. No-one, incidentally, checked to see whether this regulation was a fixture from the anti-Chinese Dennis Kearny years.

My friend Joe Cassidy recently informed me of an incident where another government apparatchik—this time from the Department of the Environment—went into action. Apparently, a government compliance officer visited a construction framing work-site and upon noticing a carpenter with a skill saw cutting some 2 by 4s, immediately ordered a cease and desist from further cutting endeavors. Insisting that the sawdust particles were evolving into the air and the sky, the carpenter was informed that he needed to put an “air-catching particle bag” around the saw, which—as everyone knows —is an impossibility. Needless to say, this compliance bureaucrat was told—in a not very compliant fashion—where to put the air bag.

Another group you may encounter is from the Public Health department where compliance officers are now assigned to inspect garbage. Their job? To see whether you have any ants, cockroaches, rodents, or snails. Apparently, Dr. Mitch Katz must feel that property owners, or their tenants, are going to tolerate vermin and pests swarming around their households. Talk again about featherbedding and unnecessary costs — well, what the heck, it’s only money. Your money.

Finally, a note on why Mayor Newsom is running for Lt. Governor. It’s an obvious move by the powerful Democratic Party leadership who want compliance and not independence from a Democratic governor. And, compliance, if anything, is adverse to Jerry Brown’s personality. So, Newsom is the natural puppet. Although Newsom—contrary to political spins—is hardly a shoe-in, his loyal contributors will be angered when, should he be elected Lt. Governor, this City sets off a nuclear blast creating volatile policy and budget changes clearly antithetical to their interests. Who’s laughing now?

We share these short stories with you to bring awareness to the unnecessary ballooning of costly government employees whose functions are not only unnecessary, but also give rise to featherbedding. Unfortunately, we see these employees multiplying like locusts, and like locusts, they leave devastation in their path wherever they settle—not only does this raise the cost of doing business, it also forces many businesses to shut down completely.

Joe O'Donoghue is a longtime political combatant, former President of the Residential Builders Association (RBA) and acting President of the newly formed Condominium Owners, Builders, Remodelers Assn. (COBRA) Feedback: joeo@westsideobserver.com

Lake Merced Watershed Plan

Wednesday, May 12, 2010 - 3:30 pm – 7 pm

SF Public Library, Main Branch • Latino/Hispanic Meeting Rm.

You are invited to a Community Open House to:

- Review the Draft Lake Merced Watershed Plan
- Provide comments on part or all of the Draft
- Learn about the Watershed Planning Process and next steps

For more info: Suzanne Gautier • SFPUC (415)554-3204 sgautier@sfgwater.org

Lake Merced watershed planning process is available at <http://www.sfgwater.org>

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

Are We All Created Equal?

By Jack Kaye

In 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote what has become one of the most quoted American principles, that in this country we believe that “all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights that among these are of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”



What did it really mean?

When it was written it surely referred only to white men since women were not free to vote and people brought to our shores as slaves were certainly given only a very limited freedom with which to pursue happiness. Until the middle of the 19th century, slaves were still considered to be property. And surely American Indians were not considered equal nor were Chinese Coolies who were brought in to work on the rail system.

Well, now even though there is still discrimination based on race, gender or national origin, most Americans would say that they believe that all Americans and perhaps even all people are equally human and should receive equal opportunity to excel (as long as it does not interfere with their own ambitions and those of their loved ones).

But are we all created equal?

Do we all have equal parents, equal genes, equal intelligence, equal attractiveness, equal health, equal education, equal experiences, equal financial security, equal integrity, equal talent, equal perseverance or equal faith? Are all doctors, or athletes, or lawyers, or teachers, or parents equal? Are all of our sub-cultures equal at least relatively? Do we all have equal opportunity to succeed in whatever we attempt? Do we all enjoy life to the same degree or even close to the same degree?

Is the illegitimate child of a junkie living in the projects really equal in any of these respects to the child of a loving, well educated and well-to-do family that can send their child to the best schools and share the most enriching environments? Do children raised around the worst possible role models really have an equal chance at the future?

And when the children born of advantage manage to succeed, is that success and all that goes with it really theirs alone? Should they feel free to look down at those who were much less fortunate for not turning their lives

around? Should the financially well-compensated resent having to give significant percentages of their generous incomes to help those who have not fared as well? Should they cite survival of the fittest as their battle cry against sharing the wealth?

I think that these questions are relevant because we are now forced to consider raising taxes very significantly on the rich in order to help those who have inadequate education, health insurance, housing, nutrition and/or opportunity. We must do it not only because it is the decent thing to do but because even if we do not really believe that each American citizen has an equal right to succeed, we each believe deep down that we are just as human as the next person.

We all have thoughts and feelings, we all have bodies that are mortal and vulnerable. We all need food, water and air to live, we all must sleep and eliminate our waste products and we all bleed when cut. We all feel pleasure and pain. We all want to survive and to live in relative comfort and security. We all want to love and be loved in return. We are all trying to maintain or improve our self-esteem - our reputation with ourselves.

I think that this is the cause of most crime. The inherent feeling in the criminal that he is somehow equal to those he preys upon even though their lives seem otherwise. The car thief may be thinking that he deserves that nice car just as much as its rightful owner does. The businessman who cheats his clients may believe deep down that they don't really deserve to have their money as much as he does. The suicide bomber, so common now in the Middle East, may figure that if he can't be equal in this lifetime, maybe he can get a leg up on the hereafter.

Not that this is any excuse for improper behavior, but it is an explanation.

Is it then our society's responsibility to level the playing field so that people in our country can have some real hope for success in this land of presumed equality?

To this end, should those fortunate enough to be able to earn and control tremendous amounts of money be obliged to share more of their wealth with the less fortunate to make up for disadvantages in health care coverage, education, housing and nutrition access? Would this discourage hard work, creativity and risk-taking among the advantaged while only making the unfortunates more dependent and less likely to succeed on their own in the future? Should we let nature work its evolutionary magic on the future of our people? Or should we institute a caste system allowing a certain segment of our society to remain above the rest and another that will forever be at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid?

We could then say that we are all equal but that some are more so than others as they did in Animal Farm.

Tony Hall (Cont. from p. 5)

Under this administration, it is slowly and deliberately being transformed into a facility that increasingly treats people in need of homeless health care as opposed to senior health care. For 145 years, Laguna Honda Home has been doing a marvelous job treating indigent, frail, handicapped and patients with various debilitating diseases such as Alzheimer, dementia, Parkinson's, advanced AIDS, dementia, etc., patients who require specialized round-the-clock care and who have not been fortunate enough to have a family to care for them, or the resources to live in a private nursing home. But now, the City Hall geniuses have decided the facility should house younger people with primary psychiatric conditions in their effort to try to salvage a failed homeless program. Being ignored in this process is what you voted for in 1999, instructing the City how you wished your tax dollars to be spent, and the physical welfare of the elderly vulnerable patients who are routinely and increasingly exposed to the violence being committed by younger patients and are being abandoned. The latest tragedy associated with LHH transformation is the dismantling of the nationally recognized model of "Hospice/Palliative Care" that has, for over 20 years, provided a 25 bed service for both terminally ill and progressively/incurable ill longer-term patients that emphasized quality of life. Now, the administration has deleted "Hospice" as a listed program in the hospital's mission statement, and fired the former Hospice Chaplain, the beloved Sr. Miriam Walsh, before her passing. Now, amid the hiring of dozens of new consultants and outside specialists for different and "experimental" programs, the administration has terminated the nationally recognized Board Certified Hospice physician Dr. Derek Kerr. Dr. Kerr has been the most professional, knowledgeable, patient-centered and generous doctor associated with the entire Laguna Honda re-build. His work was legendary and essential to the survival of the Hospice program and the spiritual component, which it encompassed. **THE SOLUTION:** Stop getting rid of home grown and local talent that have proven worth and dedication to the welfare of San Franciscans and replacing them with appointees that only further a political agenda.

Observation No: 4: The MUNI Operators Salary Measure for the November Ballot: Those of you, who are being asked to sign this misleading measure, think back

to the spin behind "care not cash" and ask yourselves what good that measure did for the City. This is the same type of effort, designed to capitalize on voters' disenchantment with the level of service currently being provided by MUNI, but the real intention here is to hype a bland political career for future office. No doubt the Municipal Transportation Agency could provide better service, and there are ways to go about ensuring that happens. **The SOLUTION** is to propose incremental measures at the Board of Supervisor level that can be vetted publicly that really attack the causes of bad service such as timetables, route frequency, personnel attendance, attentiveness, attitudes, etc. If the Board fails to act on any measures, then go to the public with an initiative that will achieve positive results and correct the true causes of bad service. I fail to see how employing operators at a lesser and questionably lower salary will result in anything other than less qualified drivers. The marginal savings that the proposed measure claims to achieve will certainly not balance an MTA budget that is seriously out of whack, and will do nothing to solve the real causes of bad service.

Observation No. 5: The San Francisco Ethics Commission: The San Francisco Ethics Commission is nothing more than a body of political appointees that are used in the most despicable and "unethical" ways to witch-hunt and tarnish the reputations of any person who questions the policies of this administration. This commission is responsible for millions of taxpayer dollars being wasted on baseless and fraudulent hearings under the guise of good government. The members of the commission who are attorneys should be disbarred and publicly prosecuted for their unscrupulous behavior. **The SOLUTION:** eliminate the entire Ethics Commission and staff and refer all ethics matters to the State Fair Political Practices Commission for an honest and fair adjudication. This would save the City millions every year and bring new hope to aspiring candidates who otherwise are discouraged from engaging in the democratic system.

I could cite many more Observations and Solutions, but I think I have given the daily "paparazzi" enough fodder to keep them busy for the next few weeks. As for you and your concerns, they are paramount to us here at the *Westside Observer*. Stay sharp!

If interested my Blog is tonyhallsf.wordpress.com or twitter.com/TonyHallSF or [feedback: hall@westsideobserver.com](mailto:hall@westsideobserver.com).

I think that I have an answer for these questions. Today, in America, its 300 million citizens, be they male or female, young or old, black, white, yellow, brown or red, rich or poor should be able to pursue life, liberty and happiness to their maximum potential and no American should be homeless, hungry, ignorant or without medical attention when needed. Every American is at least equally deserving of these basic rights.

While each individual is responsible for his or her actions, it falls on society to seek concurrence about what the society should be like and what each member is expected to do toward that end. While parents must teach their children, the parents must have a guide, a lesson plan. That plan should come from the consensus and it should be taught in our schools and reinforced in the workplace and offices of government.

Without taking a nationwide poll, it is possible to come up with certain values that members of our society can agree on. We can agree that while business has the right to make a profit, it does not have a right to become greedy or gluttonous. The profit a business makes must be a result of completely honest business practices. Companies and individuals should be held accountable for maintaining high standards of integrity.

While we all can agree that some people deserve greater compensation for their work than others, the degree of difference must be within reason. One person's work product may be worth ten or twenty times that of another, it should not be thousands of times greater as it is now for movie stars, super athletes, financiers, CEO's and opinionators (like Glenn, Sean, Rush, Bill O. and Savage).

Could we realize that while we each are different, excelling in some areas but not in others, we each are here for a reason and we are necessary parts of an infinite whole? Just as the nose is better at smelling, the foot is better for walking and our eyes are better for seeing. Each part of the human body is different but necessary for the functioning of the entire body. Every part deserves to get blood and oxygen even though some parts seem to be bigger consumers than others.

In our human drama, it seems that even the people with the least to offer have an important role to play. If we were equal physically, there would be no cause for compassion. If we were all equally gifted, there would be no cause for kindness. If we all acted equally there would be no cause for tolerance.

Let us strive to ensure that all Americans receive at least the basic ingredients for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Surely we are all equal to that much human dignity.

Feedback: Kaye@westsideobserver.com

WOTPCC (Cont. from p. 3)

as well as a traffic pattern an use project that uses micro-chip enabled "white dots" that have been cemented onto West Portal Avenue. These dots are supposed to measure traffic flow to chart use to adjust meter rates in the future. Several people wondered how much the results would be skewed due to the upcoming large construction project at St Francisco Circle that will disrupt normal traffic on West Portal Ave. for most of the summer.

Several people stated they had heard conflicting views on how Supervisor Elsbernd felt about the Sunday metering. It was cleared up minutes later when he affirmed that he was against the metering on Sunday, as it could drive patrons to Stonestown where there is free parking, and possibly hurt the Business District.

To close the meeting Wooding announced that both he and Vice President Dutil would not be in attendance next month. Treasurer Carolyn Squeri will chair the meeting.

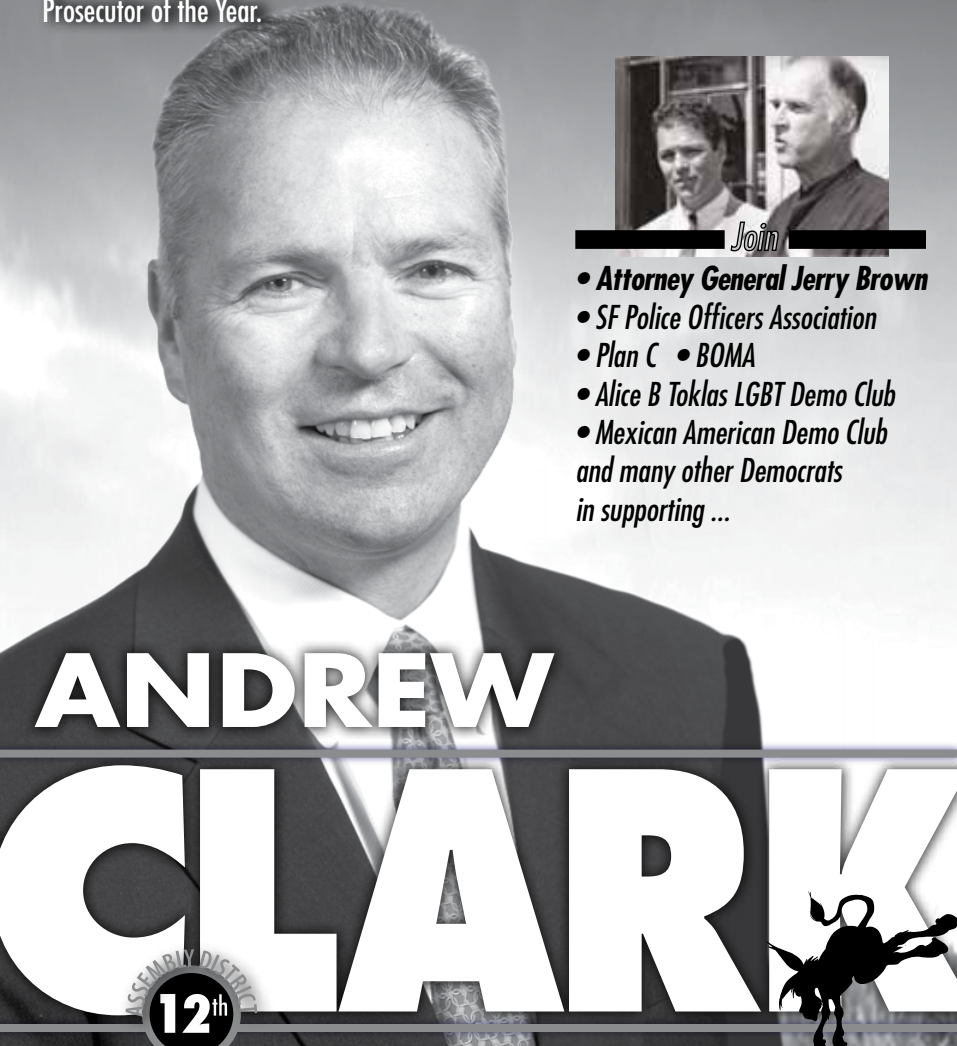
The next meeting of the WOTPCC will be on Monday, May 24th at 7:30 in the Forest Hill Clubhouse.


ParkMerced Hearing At Planning Commission

Thursday, May 6th at 3:30 PM

PARKMERCED MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT
The proposed project includes those lots owned by Parkmerced Investors, LLC, Parkmerced is a rental housing complex consisting of two-story garden apartments and mid-rise apartment towers with a total of approximately 3,500 existing residential units, of which approximately 3,200 are owned by Parkmerced Investors, LLC. Informational Hearing to provide an overview of the proposed project, which includes the addition of approximately 5,700 net new residential units in a combination of new and existing buildings, possibly re-routing the M Ocean View and the J Church MUNI light rail lines, the addition of new neighborhood serving retail and office space. 2008.0021E (S. Hayward: (415) 558-6372)

Andrew Clark is a progressive champion for public safety, representing the people of San Francisco as **Assistant District Attorney** for the past 20 years. Andrew's work on behalf of victims of violent crime has earned recognition as Prosecutor of the Year.






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The Democratic County Central Committee works to elect Democrats and influences important issues for the Party. Andrew can be counted on to be a reasonable voice for common sense. He has served on the DCCC and has expertise in affordable housing issues as Commissioner for the Housing Authority. He lives with his wife and children in West Portal.

Durst (Cont. from p. 1)

they were prepared to do so. It was going to be Health Care II, pertaining to something that distressed their constituents even more than their health. This was about money.

The banking industry then engaged in a full frontal assault: "It'll hurt the economy." You know what, if self- delusion were sand, these guys would be the Gobi Desert. What planet have they been living on for the last two years? Boys, do yourselves a favor; put down the Financial Times, pick up a local newspaper, and read about communities forced to cut such non- essential services as fire and police while you're racking up bonuses larger than those communities' shortfalls. Science has yet to develop instruments capable of measuring this kind of arrogance. We need a new scale.

Mitch McConnell and his ilk continued to give it the old college try; the Senator from Kentucky was locked in a "bailout" loop, muttering, shouting, whispering it into Mrs. Senate Minority Leader McConnell's ear. One unofficial estimate has him repeating the word "bailout" 3,847 times on April 19, 2010. A blatant attempt to tie into the GOP's revisionist history of Wall Street's bailout being just another example of Obama's socialist agenda: conveniently forgetting that a Republican Administration proposed the bailout and Mr. McConnell and all his friends voted for it. Great, something new to worry about- a collective senior moment.

The game changer award goes to the SEC, jumping into the ring like a wrestling cohort in street clothes, charging Goldman Sachs with bilking investors out of a billion dollars via a CDO designed to fail. This scattered the arm- locked ranks like a keg of tequila with a leaky spigot rolled into an AA meeting. We, the vast unwashed public wondered, if they're willing to screw their own customers, what untold horrors were held in store for us? The Commission's commissioners claim the timing was purely co- incidental. Unh- hunh. And chlorine soaked wood splinters make for excellent eye swabs.

The original idea for the New Obstructionists was to keep repeating the mantra that "guvmint is bad" and hope the voters never notice they have become their own best argument. Yeah, sure, Washington is broken. You bang on a monument with sledge- hammers long enough, eventually everyone becomes blind from marble dust. But now the GOP has to stumble back into those ruins and somehow look supportive doing it. Hope they brought their swim goggles.

Will Durst is a San Francisco based political comic who often writes. This being a conspicuous example.

Catch him hosting The Green Collar Comedy Show on Showtime all this month.

Rooster T. Feathers April 20- 23, 2010. 157 West El Camino Real- Sunnyvale, Cal. 408.736.0921. roostertfeathers.com.

Funnyfest. Calgary, Alberta. April 29- May 2. Funnyfest.com. 403.228.7888

New CD, "Raging Moderate" from Stand- Up Records now available on both iTunes and Amazon. Feedback: Durst@westsideobserver.com



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Will You Help Save Our City?

Sustainable City Employees' Benefits Reform Measure Slated for November Ballot

By Jeff Adachi

In the February issue of the Westside Observer, I wrote about the need for San Francisco to reform its pension system. I noted that while our City is facing a \$522 million dollar budget deficit, we are paying \$525 million in retiree pension and health care costs. According to projections by the City's retirement board, the city's annual pension costs will balloon to \$818 million in 2016.

At the same time, the City currently has an unfunded liability for retiree health insurance of \$4 billion. The City's retiree health care liability grew by over \$300 million in the past year alone, and is likely to grow by even larger amounts in the future.

It won't be easy to confront this problem. There is a reason why most politicians won't touch pension reform. But the reality is that if we don't figure out how to sustain our city's pension system without bankrupting the City, San Francisco is in danger of becoming the next Vallejo or Los Angeles. In declaring that his city's "pension system is no longer sustainable," Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa vowed to support pension reform after announcing that city services would be closed two days a week, thousands of city employees would face layoffs and that his city could face bankruptcy.

The City's pension system is like a reserve tank that has to be filled every year. If you work in the private sector, and are fortunate to have a 401k plan and your investments are down 30%, your retirement takes a 30% hit. When the City employees' pension fund suffers a loss, under the City Charter, the taxpayers have to fill up the tank every year so that the fund is funded. So, this year, the taxpayers will pay \$525 million. Next year, the bill is \$625 million, and the year after the bill will be \$675 million.



"The Charter Amendment does not change or modify the benefits the employee receives upon retirement. It only changes the amount that existing city employees are required to contribute. And it will ensure that when employees do retire, there are sufficient funds in the pension fund to fund their pensions."

All City employees receive a defined guaranteed benefit upon retirement, and the City is obligated to pay whatever it costs to meet that obligation. Employees contribute between 0-7.5% to their pension funds, and the City's share is now 13.5%. By 2016, the City's share will be 25%.

City departments have already been slashed and are facing more cuts because the City doesn't have enough money to run its basic operations. Spending set-asides, another needed reform that I have written about, require the city to spend about 4/5 of its budget according to spending formulas decided by the voters in better times. This leaves only 1/5 of our city's \$6.6 billion dollars available for critical services, such as public health, public safety and public defense.

It is for this reason that I am joining with others to place a Charter Amendment on the ballot in November. This Charter Amendment is called the "Sustainable City Employee Benefits Reform Measure." This measure will require city employees to contribute 9-10% to the pension fund to make it sustainable, and prevent pensions costs from bankrupting San Francisco or forcing additional cuts in essential public services. The measure also requires a 50/50 share for health care costs for dependents. City employees now receive 100% city-paid coverage but pay 25% of the cost for any dependents. Under the proposed Charter Amendment, employees still receive 100% coverage, but will pay 50% for dependents.

The Charter Amendment does not change or modify the benefits the employee receives upon retirement. It only changes the amount that existing city employees are required to contribute. And it will ensure that when employees do retire, there are sufficient funds in the pension fund to fund their pensions.

The issue of pension reform is one of city-wide, state-wide and national importance. The City's pension problem can be fixed, but we need to take preventative action now. If we wait any longer, we will join Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, Contra Costa County and other counties teetering on the brink of bankruptcy due to out-of-control pension costs.

The future of our city depends on your participation and support. To obtain a petition to help collect signatures for the proposed ballot measure by the July 1st deadline, please visit www.sfsmartreform.com, call 415 905-9100 or write to: San Franciscans for SMART Reform, POB 77313, SF, CA 94107.

Jeff Adachi is the city's elected Public Defender.

Neighborhood Schools?

SFUSD Hearing on "School Assignment"

Ad Hoc Committee on Student Assignment

SFUSD Board Room• 555 Franklin Street (@McAllister)

May 10 from 6-8 PM

The Board of Education unanimously approved a "Student Assignment" policy that will begin with students entering transitional grades (kindergarten, sixth and ninth) in the fall of 2011. Families retain the option to choose from all SFUSD schools.

When there is more demand than available seats, where a student lives will play a more prominent role. Where a child lives and which schools the family selects factored with a set of preferences, including a new Census Tract Integration Preference (CTIP), will determine a student's placement offer.

Next Steps To implement the new student assignment policy new elementary school boundaries; elementary to middle school feeder patterns and a new transportation policy will be developed. By the end of August 2010 the draft boundaries and recruitment information will be made public. September is set to gather feedback, and in October e the boundaries and enrollment materials will be finalized. The new enrollment system begins on November 13, 2010.

Learn More and Provide Input The public is invited to attend the Board of Education's Ad Hoc Committee on Student Assignment meetings.

Dates: May 10, August 9 (tentative), September 13, October 11, November 8. All meetings will be held at the SFUSD Board Room beginning at 6 pm.

ON THE PLUS SIDE

Getting To Know You

By Hank Basayne

Because you and I are now getting used to life in the Third Millennium, we won't be shocked by the possibility that the brain is a hologram. (Stay with me—this gets easier.)

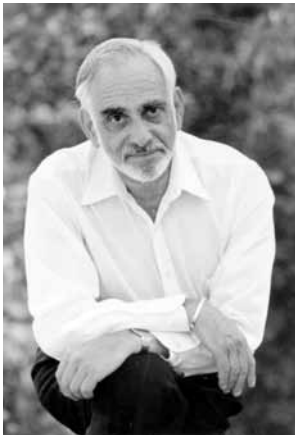
Remember what a hologram is? If you want to see one, you have only to look at one of the credit cards in your wallet—if you still carry any of those dangerous 20th Century things. It's that little photographic image that seems to change as you tilt it this way and that. Earlier dictionaries don't include the word because it can only be created by coherent light—a laser—common now in CDs, DVDs and ID cards—but a relatively recent invention.

One of the curious, almost-Harry-Potter-magical properties of the hologram is that any part of it contains a lot of the information about all the rest of it.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we mere humans shared that characteristic? I'd have a much better sense of you—the whole picture—instead of just the particular face you're wearing when we encounter each other. I'd have a much better sense of myself, too—all of my attributes, instead of just my frame of mind at any given moment. I'd know myself in my entirety all the time instead of just the limited view filtered by my transient mood.

"... When the 'coster's finished jumping on his mother, he loves to lie a-basking in the sun..." Now if you're not conversant with the delicious 19th Century word-play of Gilbert and Sullivan, that quote is from their lament "A Policeman's Lot is Not a Happy One." It makes the point about how infernally complex each human being is and the almost hopeless task we face in trying to truly and completely understand each other.

The idiot in the oversized SUV who cuts in front



of me, making a right turn from the left lane, may also be the gourmet cook who prepares a delicate scaloppini to the mystical strains of music by Eric Satie. The shrew who snatched the last cashmere sweater from you at the Loehman's sale is possibly also the person who gave up a Saturday to help clean the beach and lovingly adopts orphaned animals.

Conversely, that generous, philanthropic psychiatrist who devotes his life to helping people with their problems of living may just also be the drunken lout at home who beats his kids. And we think we really know each other!

One of the joys of aging is the paradoxical gift of time. While I know that my future on the planet is much shorter than my past, there is also now a freedom from the clock that was not available when I was driven by attending classes, raising kids, holding a job, maintaining a household. And one of the possible uses of my discretionary time now is to try to reduce the perpetual sense of isolation and loneliness that I suspect all of us feel at our inner core. The nagging desire to feel more connected with others can be somewhat alleviated, but it takes effort and attention.

To try to get to really know you, you'd think I'd start by asking lots of questions, but my experience tells me that approach wouldn't accomplish the intimacy that I seek. Probing questions can make others feel invaded, attacked, defensive. But to the extent that I can disclose myself to you—become more transparent, reveal my passions, fears, hopes, and preferences—there is an inherent invitation for you to do the same. We discover our similarities and our differences, agreements and conflicts. We discover that we've shared many of the same sorrows and pleasures, and that, while we follow separate paths, our journeys have some experiences in common.

I don't know whether or not the brain is a hologram, but I do know that the part we show to each other does not make the whole known. I'd probably have more compassion for people who annoy me if it did. So if I am to narrow the gap between us I must try to understand who you really are. But I can only hope to open that door to you by unlocking and opening my own.

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

"Fix Muni Now"

By Supervisor Sean Elsbernd and Alex Volberding

San Franciscans have put up with late buses, fare increases and service cuts for too long. Now San Franciscans have the opportunity to stand up and say that enough is enough and we need to Fix Muni Now!

To improve Muni service and oppose unjust fare increases and unnecessary cuts, hardworking San Franciscans are joining the Fix Muni Now campaign and signing the petition to place a reform measure on the November 2010 ballot. The transit-first measure will prioritize the needs of riders by removing from the City Charter salary guarantees for bus drivers and reducing work rules that impair transit operations.

San Francisco is a world-class City that deserves a world-class transit agency. Unfortunately, the MTA has little ability to deliver an efficient transit system because the City Charter guarantees bus operators the second highest salary in the country and labor agreements restrict the MTA's ability to deploy bus operators in a manner that reflects riders' needs.

Currently, the MTA has no ability to negotiate Muni operator wages because the Muni operators' salaries are set in the City Charter. As a result, Muni drivers routinely receive raises when the transit agency is facing cutbacks. This year, Muni drivers will receive an \$8 million raise while the MTA management is forced to balance a \$50+ million deficit on the backs of Muni riders by raising fares and reducing service 10 percent citywide.

The measure will remove from the City Charter reference to Muni operators' wages, allowing the MTA the ability to negotiate salaries and benefits through the collective bargaining process used by all other employee bargaining groups. This change will prevent drivers from receiving huge pay increases in deficit years which will help to preserve Muni services when the budget situation is bleak.

The measure will also reduce outdated and inflexible work rules that have impaired transit operations for years. The measure will encourage new and improved work rules that will be responsive to riders' needs. Currently, there is no incentive for the Muni operators to change antiquated work rules that have proven to be counterproductive from a service and ridership perspective. Giving the MTA the ability to negotiate salaries and benefits will increase system-wide efficiency and effectiveness through improved work rules.

With the MTA facing record deficits and considering further reductions in services now is the time to fix Muni. We are asking the people of San Francisco to support the Fix Muni Now campaign, so that the MTA has the tools to provide world-class service to San Francisco.

For instructions on how to sign the petition or more information, please visit www.FixMuniNow or call (415) 640-7278.



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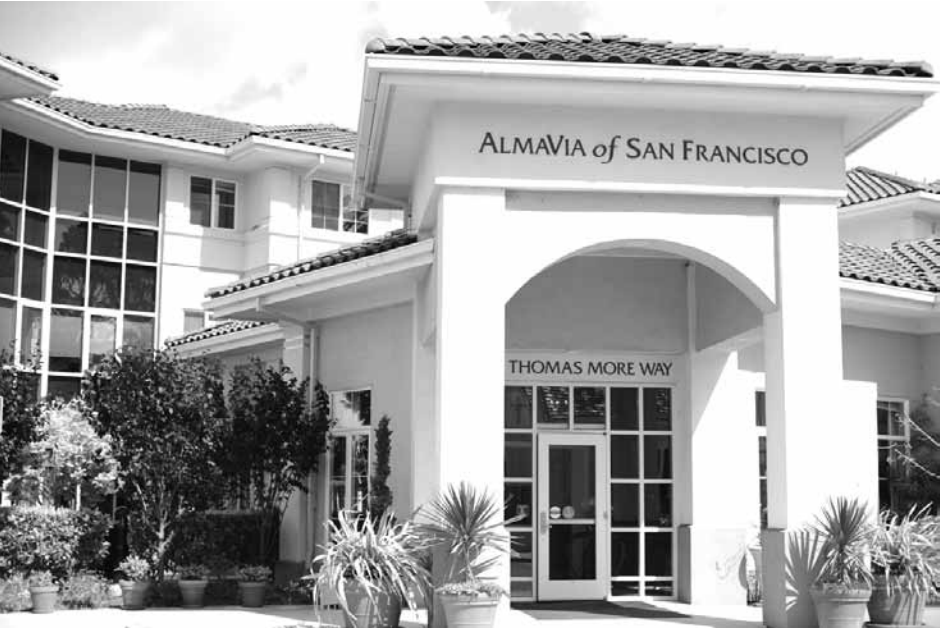
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- ★ Fourth-Generation San Franciscan and USF School of Law graduate.
- ★ Endorsed by San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council, UA Local 38, and others.
- ★ An accomplished attorney, Dan brings demonstrated experience ruling on cases as a Judge Pro Tem and an extensive record of community service.

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Westside Real Estate Report

Jumbo Loans for Westside Homes

By Jed Lane

Last month my article was on the lack of lenders for our market and the obstacles the Federal secondary mortgage markets are inserting into transactions. I think they read my article and mended their ways, hah! Whatever happened, the situation's improving. The sales figures for the month of March show a City-wide increase in volume and a rise in the median price.

On the Westside the median price is \$832,000, 4% higher than the SF median. There were 39 sales closed in March. 67 properties are in contract and 91 properties are actively for sale. With 39 sold and 91 active there's a 2.3 month supply of homes on the market now. Ostensibly that's a seller's market, but it's still a screwy market. March 1st there were 62 active properties and only 18 sales in February. The absorption rate decreased from 3.4 months to 2.3 months even with an increase in inventory. This is all good news for the start of the typical selling season.

One caveat for everyone to remember is when a seller gets an offer from a buyer who has a lender lined up, that buyer is worth more than a higher offer price. I always tell my clients that a seller wants two things: the most money possible and a buyer that will complete the transaction. The second part is still the hurdle these days.

In our neighborhoods, there was one sale for less than \$500,000 and two sales over \$2,000,000, while in the City as a whole there were 45 sales under \$500,000 and a huge jump in higher end sales, leading to an increase in the distribution and therefore an increase in median price. As the chart shows, the percentage of the sales in March on properties priced over one million had strong increases over sales in all of 2009.

Sale Price Range	2009	March 2010
\$0-500,000	21%	21.5%
\$500,000-1,000,000	59.3%	47.7%
\$1,000,000-2,000,000	15.2%	20.6%
\$2,000,000-3,000,000	2.8%	5.6%
\$3,000,000-up	1.7%	4.7%

This increase in sales in the higher end is probably the best news San Francisco sellers have received since our prices didn't fall through the basement floor over the past three years. These numbers show that jumbo loans, loans of more than the maximum \$729,500 federal conforming limit, have become more affordable. On March 13th RIS-Media reported the interest rate at 5.88%, a new low for "true jumbo" loans and a very attractive rate for a 30 year fixed loan.

If you are preparing to sell this season be sure to price the property correctly and don't be swayed by a high offer price. In these times it is very important to know who the buyer is and the "real" degree of approval before you stop marketing the property.

When homes are taken off the market for any period of time, momentum is lost. When a property is brought back onto the market, regardless of the reason, it's somehow tainted and removed from agents' and buyers' radar. Having to explain that the reason a buyer pulled out wasn't because of an inspection or other issue of the property always seems to put a damper on buyer enthusiasm. It's much better for the seller to have their agent investigate the buyer, talk to the buyer's lender before ratifying the contract and, in some cases, require the buyer to apply with a lender of the seller's choice as back-up.

This really is a good time to sell the house that you've outgrown and buy the large move-up home. But let me reiterate: be careful to price the house correctly, market it with lots of open homes and check out the buyer's money situation before you enter into a contract.

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

West Portal Merchants

"Sell and Tell" Returns on May 15

Grab a pen and mark your calendars. The annual West Portal Merchants "Sell and Tell" sidewalk event is returning to the street on May 15. Merchants from one end to the other of West Portal Avenue will be showing goods, doing demonstrations, and conducting educational workshops on or about their businesses.

Last year's event saw a good number of merchant participants and this year promises to be even bigger as more stores have signed on to participate in the Saturday event, which will run from 10-5.

With raffles, prizes, food giveaways and door prizes galore there should be something for everyone to have a good time to drop by and discover (or rediscover) the wonderful shops and merchants that we have right here in the neighborhood.

For more information go to the merchant's website at www.westportalmerchants.com



Alma Via of San Francisco proves that "Home" is where the heart is and where Caring comes first

By Mitch Bull

If asked, most people will have different ideas and memories when asked what constitutes the concept of "home" to them. From a Midwestern farmhouse to a bustling San Francisco neighborhood, all of us have experiences that help to define "home and family." As we gain in maturity we will have another shared experience, aging and the way that we choose to live. Some of us will live with adult children while others will keep the "family home, or apartment" until the physical or financial upkeep becomes too much.

I had the pleasure of walking through AlmaVia of San Francisco and speaking with their Director of Community Services, Therese Myzwinski, about "home" and the AlmaVia community.

To start, what is AlmaVia? Alma Via of San Francisco is an "eldercare" community of adults who have chosen to live in "apartment-like" units where they can be as active as they wish. Located at One Thomas More Way the building and grounds are convenient to San Francisco and the greater Bay Area.

Unlike many senior communities, AlmaVia of San Francisco is part of the Elder Care Alliance, which is a non-profit organization that works with the residents to provide enrichment of their physical, emotional and spiritual well being as they age. One of seven facilities in the Elder Care Alliance, AlmaVia of San Francisco can accommodate up to 130 residents in units that range from a studio to a 2-bedroom apartment.

Although the community is "faith-centered" it is non-denominational and has residents whose religious backgrounds are diverse. The "spirituality" component truly sets this facility apart from other senior-care facilities. The ElderCare Alliance was formed, as a non-profit organization by several faith-based groups: the Mercy Retirement Community, the Sisters of Mercy, the Salem Lutheran Home, and the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Lutheran Congregation.



The memory care component is another of the ways that AlmaVia of SF is different from other care facilities. The staff can assist with up to 43 "memory care," residents, those who have mild to severe symptoms of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. In most care facilities, memory care patients have to be relocated to a specialized treatment facility. At Alma Via there are two levels of memory care that the staff can provide, which helps the residents stay in their familiar surroundings for as long as possible, which really helps their quality of life. Residents can better "Age in Place" and be as active as they are able, or want to be.

The residents truly are a community and many are actively involved in volunteer programs, "Adopt A Family" programs, and "Sages through the Ages" a program where some of the residents volunteer their time to visit residents in the memory-care unit within Alma Via. Currently, Myzwinski has 25 people doing this volunteering, which helps to remove barriers and provides much needed contact for the acute memory care residents.

As you would expect, AlmaVia has a full list of amenities and events for the residents. The pricing for the "month to month" residences includes 3 meals per day, a healthy menu designed and prepared by Executive Chef Martin Sanchez. Their special "Supper Club" events feature fine dining, wine and musical entertainment in an atmosphere where the attendees and their guests can dress up and enjoy a special evening, not out on the town, but in the comfortable surrounding of the AlmaVia community.

Other amenities include exercise rooms, bingo, bridge, art programs, calligraphy and Chinese drawing programs and movie nights. In addition, residents can serve on Resident Council, and on Peace and Social Justice discussion groups.

Mobility is a big plus at Alma Via as Transportation is available to the residents 5 days per week for shopping days, baseball games, medical appointments and other outside events. With the close proximity to San Francisco, 15 minutes to downtown and 15 minutes to the airport, the facility offers a great location and a neighborhood lifestyle.

Myzwinski, who has been at the facility for four years, put it best, "We try to never say 'no' to our residents, who are like a big family to us. All of us are very close to each of our resident members and their families. It's a special environment where one can age in place with dignity."

As I was leaving, I noticed a sentence painted on a wall which reads, "Home is where your story begins." From the friendly faces at the front desk, to the caring staff and support teams, to the community residents that I saw, the community of "AlmaVia of San Francisco" certainly provides both "home" and "community" to its' residents. We should all be so fortunate.

AlmaVia/San Francisco is located at One Thomas More Way (off of Hwy 280 South immediately below Brotherhood Way). There are people on staff every day and they welcome visitors. To schedule a tour of the community or to request additional information please call Ms. Therese Myzwinski, Director of Community Relations at (415) 337-1339.



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36 Dellbrook Ave	1,556	03/19/10	699,000	710,000	775,000
80 Dellbrook Ave	1,237	03/03/10	699,000	742,000	1,088,000
481 Dellbrook Ave	0	04/16/10	729,000	772,000	715,000
507 Dellbrook Ave	1,558	03/05/10	829,000	790,000	750,000
1 Sunview Dr	0	04/06/10	799,000	793,000	849,000
256 Glenview Dr	1,213	03/30/10	845,500	800,000	885,000

Source: SFMLS

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AlmaVia, an Elder Care Alliance community, a nonprofit organization, is cosponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas West Midwest Community & the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. RCFE Lic # 385600270.

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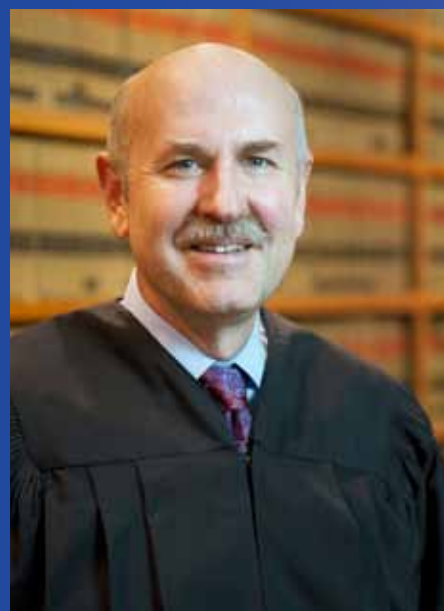
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Kopp (Cont. from p. 1)

duties as District Attorney of the City and County of San Francisco reposes in the current District Attorney, who despite an abysmally low record of prosecutorial success in her publicity-flecked tenure, now displays the unchecked ambition to succeed Attorney General Edmund G. Brown, Jr. as the state’s chief law enforcement officer.

Unassailable documents disclosed by the District Attorney’s office as part of pending illegal narcotics cases prove that as of November 19, 2009 the District Attorney knew the crime laboratory was not functioning properly. An Assistant District Attorney described the situation as “becoming ridiculous.” District Attorney Kamala Harris’ supervising lawyer in the Criminal Division was so notified. Not until February 22, 2010 was a criminal investigation instituted. By March 9, 2010 Chief of Police George Gascon had closed San Francisco’s crime laboratory, and by the end of March drug cases were being dismissed because the Superior Court concluded convictions were unlikely without reliable evidence concerning test findings on narcotics seized by San Francisco Police as part of lawful arrests.

The handling of illegal narcotics seized during the course of an arrest or an independent court-authorized search of premises or vehicles constitutes perhaps the most significant part of a criminal narcotic proceeding. Every prosecutor knows that to convince a jury or judge of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, maximum care must be conferred upon preservation of the seized narcotics, their consequent scientific testing in a laboratory, maintenance of an accurate record concerning the entire process and ultimate testimony in court by a qualified expert laboratory technician on the nature and quantity of the seized drugs. All such information must be provided to the defendant’s lawyer before trial. If infirmities exist in the process, an alert defense lawyer will utilize the opportunity to obtain a court-ordered dismissal of the case or a jury acquittal based upon insufficient evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. That is especially true in San Francisco’s Superior Court. Having served as an assigned judge at the Hall of Justice, and having observed and discussed the ability of lawyers in the Office of the Public Defender, led by a fiercely competitive, competent Jeff Adachi, I understand the observation of a former supervising criminal judge that the Public Defender’s office was the most effective agency at the Hall of Justice and the District Attorneys’ was the most ineffective. All of this is, however, at the expense of the public. Until and unless manufacturing, possession and sales of illegal narcotics are altered by the legislature and governor or a

voter-approved initiative to non-criminal conduct, such acts are penal in nature and it is the District Attorney’s duty to prosecute them with probity and integrity. The people of San Francisco deserve no less; they have not been well served. As a retired judge, I’m appalled.

Criminal justice also suffers because of thoughtless acts of prior Board of Supervisors members and Mayors in persuading voters to alter the composition of the Police Commission and reduce its jurisdiction. The 1932 Charter, which provided San Franciscans a government free from corruption and major inefficiency, established the Police Commission with three members appointed by the Mayor. That was consistent with the voter-desired concept of an executive branch managed chiefly by the Mayor, but with the six important departments such as Public Works, Health, Real Estate and Electricity administered by a non-elected Chief Administrative Officer, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Board of Supervisors. That gave San Franciscans admirable city service, highlighted for example by the eight-year tenure of Mayor George Christopher (1956-64), probably the most capable administrator in San Francisco’s long history. It also furnished San Franciscans a largely well-behaved Police Department, containing a Bureau of Internal Affairs charged with investigating police misconduct and recommending disciplinary action to the Chief of Police and Police Commission.

Then, beginning in 1982 some imprudent Board of Supervisors members tinkered. First they enlarged the Police Commission to five members, including a quota that at least one member be a woman. (Of course, prior thereto any Mayor could legally appoint all three members as a woman and the 1982 Mayor happened to be a woman.) About the same time, an Office of Citizen Complaints was established with detailed staffing requirements for purposes of investigating complaints of police misconduct and recommending consequent disciplinary action, replete with tax-supported hearing officers and preparation of bureaucratic quarterly reports to the President of the Board of Supervisors. The Bureau of Internal Affairs, which had been led honorably by such officers such as the late Captain Mortimer McInerny in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, was relegated to “dustbin” status.

Later, the Police Commission was enlarged two more members, both appointed by the Board of Supervisors, thus mixing the strictly legislative function of the Board with executive power, a practice conspicuously condemned by students of American government. (Suppose hypothetically the United States Constitution allowed the Congress to appoint three members of the U.S. Supreme Court.) Police Department authority over nightclub and similar entertainment permits was removed in favor of

in such areas as narcotics, robbery and rape. Similarly, because of the potential for criminal acts in the operation of a taxicab, the Police Department historically regulated issuance of permits to ensure distribution to people of good character, a safe driving record and the honest treatment of passengers.


Now, citizens are treated almost daily to stories of criminality in San Francisco nightclubs, including homicides. Moreover, the Charter clause establishing the Entertainment Commission limits the ability of city government to yank instantly the permits of a nightclub in which crimes occur or state, federal or local laws are violated. Why? Voters were induced to approve an Entertainment Commission consisting of members who are in that very “profession.” Talk about a conflict of interest. Apparently that never entered the mind of the progenitors of this invidious concept.

With all of San Francisco’s criminal justice problems, earnest men and women in the Police Department continue to execute their sworn duty to protect people and prevent crime. One, however, wonders whether a political “earthquake” will be required to restore authority to a Police Commission composed of true citizen volunteers who do not believe in using commission appointment as a political foundation, who do believe in maximizing law enforcement capacity and who are fully able to eliminate or penalize errant police officers. That “earthquake” also needs to restore Police Department (and Police Commission) jurisdiction over nightclubs and taxicab operations. Will it happen? Probably not. The hand-wringing of newspaper columnists will continue and, maybe, just maybe, the crime laboratory technician who admits the theft and use of cocaine from the laboratory may even be charged by our fighting District Attorney with the applicable legal violations. So far, even that manifest action hasn’t happened.

San Franciscans should also know that, using California Attorney General statistics, another candidate for Attorney General reveals San Francisco’s violent crime rate is 364.63 per 100,000 people compared to the statewide rate of 153.58 incidents per 100,000 population, 3.0 annual homicides per 100,000 people versus the statewide rate of 1.8 homicides per 100,000 people, 11.71 forcible rape incidents per 100,000 population versus statewide forcible rape occurrences of 7.22 annually per 100,000 population and 201.29 robberies per 100,000 people in San Francisco versus statewide robbery incidents of 58.86 annually per 100,000 people.

Meanwhile, yet another newly appointed Superior Court Judge, the Honorable Richard Ulmer, a candidate for election next month, must confront two weakly-credentialed opponents because a Republican governor selected him and Judge Ulmer was a registered Republican. (He has since re-registered as an Independent, which, as a long time Independent, I cannot criticize; it does, however, demonstrate ultimate political “correctness” in San Francisco that a non-partisan judicial office generates opposition only because of partisan registration.) The spectacle of Republican judicial appointees under attack in San Francisco is not new; just two years ago former Judge Tom Mellon was defeated by a Board of Supervisors member mostly because of the latter’s endorsement by the Democratic County Central Committee. (One of the worst events in California’s nearly 100 year old history of non-partisan County and City office holding occurred about 20 years ago with a California Supreme Court decision which enabled partisan county central committees to endorse candidates in non-partisan elections). San Francisco’s Superior Court has suffered from former Judge Mellon’s defeat. The District Attorney’s pursuit of politics over prosecution excellence doesn’t help the beleaguered Superior Court.


Quentin Kopp is the former SF Supervisor, State Senator and Judge. Feedback: quentin@westsideobserver.com



Vote for a Better Economic Future on June 8!

The June Primary Election Ballot contains critical initiatives that will impact San Francisco residents and businesses for years to come. Join your neighbors, local merchants and SF Forward in voting for jobs and government efficiency on June 8. Together we can create a better economic future!

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Prop 16

Prop 17

Measure A

Measure B

Measure D

Measure G

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SHARON THE HEALTH

SFPMG: Specialist in Natural Medicine

By Sharon Caren

While I was in Minneapolis last year for a natural health convention, I met Jeffrey David and Dr. Joel Lopez, who belong to the San Francisco Preventive Medical Group right here in our beautiful neighborhood at 345 West Portal Avenue! Last Friday, they invited me to lunch at the Clay Oven Indian Restaurant, 385 West Portal (loved it - great buffet). After, I received a personal tour of the clinic.

Integrative medicine has been at the heart of this medical clinic for more than 30 years. This makes them the first in the city. To receive the best clinical benefits, SFPMG uses effective and safe alternative medicine for a comprehensive approach to blending natural and conventional treatments, the best of both worlds. They provide an array of services in both Medical Practice and Natural Medicines. Check out their website for lists of these practices. You'll find it very extensive. I'm impressed. www.sfpmg.com or phone 415.566.1000.

Jeffrey David is the CMT you'll find there. He's devoted 15 years to learning the philosophies and practices of holistic health care. He's a great guy and so dedicated to each of his clients. Jeffrey has many certifications: First Line Therapy Lifestyle Educator, Licensed Massage Therapist and Advanced Bodyworker. He's a Certified Biofeedback Provider and has also created his own Ulan Therapy. This is a highly evolved whole body balancing bodywork technique that utilizes the

power of therapeutic grade essential oils in conjunction with advanced bodywork and energetic balancing techniques. Find out more by visiting www.Infinite-WellnessWorldwide.com or phone 415.513.9311.



Joel Lopez, MD, is one of six doctors on staff. He specializes in Nutrition, Supplementation, and has an Age Management/Anti-Aging practice as well. He uses functional testing to see if a person has nutrient deficiencies (no guess work) and has a great understanding of Hormone Replacement using Bio-identicals. He's full of knowledge and will make you feel very comfortable answering all your questions and health concerns. You're in good hands with Dr. Lopez. Please visit www.drjlopez.com or phone 415.377.4743.

I highly recommend you go by and check out this unique clinic for yourself. It's Local!

If you have health and well-being questions you'd like answered, please call 650.359.6579 or email sharoncaren@comcast.net. I'd like to promote a question and answer forum here in the column. Please write or call in with your concerns and/or questions. Let's interact personally. I want to know what interests you.

To find out more information on my natural healing services, I invite you to visit www.sharoncaren.com.

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May 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 cpmchrc@sutter-health.org. \$10 suggested.

FRIDAY NIGHT JAZZ EVERY FRIDAY

Every Fri | 7–11 pm | Cliff House – 1 Seal Rock.

HAPPY HOUR EVERY TUESDAY

Every Tues | 4–8 pm | Que Syrah. Take \$1 off each glass, 10% off of each bottle of wine consumed at the store. 230 West Portal Avenue 731.7000

FARMERS MARKET'S

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)

PARKMERCED HEARING-PLANNING COMMSN

Thu 6 | 3:30 pm | Informational Hearing to provide an overview of the proposed project, which includes the addition of approximately 5,700 net new residential units in a combination of new and existing buildings, possibly re-routing the M and J MUNI lines, the addition of new neighborhood serving retail and office space. Planning Commission, Rm 400, City Hall.

SOCIAL SECURITY PRE-PLANNING

Sat 8 | 10:30 am | Social Security benefits and pre-planning will be explained and discussed. Open to the community, refreshments and prizes. AlmaVia/SF, One Thomas More Way. Reservations suggested 508-5500.

STUDENT "ASSIGNMENT POLICY" AT SFUSD

Mon 10 | 6–8 pm | The new SFUSD "Student Assignment Policy" that will start for students entering kindergarten, sixth and ninth grade in the fall of 2011. SFUSD to create elementary school boundaries; create elementary to middle school feeder patterns; develop a new transportation policy and to complete a recruitment campaign and enrollment materials so that the new

enrollment system can be launched on November 13, 2010. SFUSD Board Room, 555 Franklin Street (@McAllister).

NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTTS

Tue 11 | 5:30–7 pm | Do you want to quit smoking? Intensive course focuses on managing withdrawal along with hypnosis, acupuncture and mindfulness to cope with the loss of the habit. Five Tues+one Thurs class. Info: 923-3155 and to preregister. \$50

LAKE MERCED WATERSHED PLAN

Wed 12 | 3:30–7 pm | Community Open House to review and comment on the Lake Merced Watershed Plan. SF Public Library, Main Branch, Grove & Larkin. Info: Suzanne Gautier, SFPUC 554-3204 or www.sfwater.org

WEST PORTAL MERCHANTS "SHOW & TELL"

Sat 15 | 10 am–5 pm | Raffles; Sidewalk Sales and Demonstrations—something for everyone on West Portal Avenue between 15th and Ulloa; Info: www.westportalmerchants.com.

BUILDING SAFETY TOWN HALL MEETING

Fri 14 | 1–5 pm | Ask Questions – Get Answers about Building Permits, Inspections, Code Enforcement and more! Koret Auditorium, Main Public Library, Larkin at Grove Streets Limited Space. First Come, First Seated. www.sfdbi.org.

TAKING TEA IN THE ENGLISH MANOR

Sun 16 | 1:30–3 pm | Our annual high tea event. Learn old English tea customs from art historian and lecturer Susan Leech while relaxing with a soothing cup of tea. Enjoy elegant pastries, finger sandwiches and good conversation with our residents. Please call 415-337-1339 AlmaVia/SF, One Thomas More Way.

CANNABIS DISPENSARY HEARING

Thu 20 | 1:30 pm | A Medical Cannabis Dispensary (MCD) that has been proposed for Taraval Street is in the permit review process. Hearing scheduled at the Planning Commission, Rm 400, City Hall.

TARAVAL POLICE DISTRICT COMMUNITY MTG

Tue 18 | 6 pm | Our monthly Taraval/Community meeting at Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave (3rd Tues of each month).

(Cont. on p. 16)

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VINEGAR TOM

Caryl Churchill's musical cleverly combines contemporary music and 17th century witchcraft trials of England to expose the ongoing discrimination and marginalization of women. Directed by Tony nominee Barbara Damashek. THROUGH MAY 9, LITTLE THEATRE, FROM \$10 IN ADVANCE

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FILM FINALS

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Guest speakers: Jonas Rivera, SF State alum and Academy Award-nominated producer of Pixar's *Up*, and Walter Murch, Academy Award-winning editor of *Apocalypse Now* and *The English Patient*.

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Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

CLASH OF THE TITANS

Director Louis Leterrier (*The Incredible Hulk*) depends upon CGI for his new 3-D remake of the 1981 Ray Harryhausen stop-motion trek. Born of a human mother and Zeus: Liam Neeson as his father, Perseus: Sam Worthington (fast becoming known as this year's Victor Mature) learns he must destroy the Kraken, an underwater beast about 100 feet tall. Using his three T's of acting: Terse, Tense and Tough, Perseus must rescue the damsel, Andromeda: Alexa Davalos, and her Greek city-state Argos from the son of Hades: Ralph Fiennes. Whenever the music increases in loudness, it's time for another journey across land to be attacked by yet another bunch of beasts. Despite the small army that Perseus has gathered, their foes are formidable. There are scorpions 20 feet across for the heroes to battle. The woman who's cursed to never age as she watches her loved ones die, Io: Gemma Arterton, protects Perseus and his men as best she can. The Medusa climax is well worth waiting for because then there is the Kraken to deal with. See it in 3-D: it's more moving. Profanity, Violence, Adult situations, Sexual situations.

DEATH AT A FUNERAL

A man has died. The wrong body is delivered for the at-home funeral service. The survivors include sons: Norman: Martin Lawrence and Aaron: Chris Rock; widow Cynthia: Loretta Devine; and Uncle Russell in his wheelchair with his bowel problems: Danny Glover. There's also Elaine: Zoe Saldana (fresh from *Avatar*) and her fiancé, Oscar, who's high from a pill: James Marsden; Norman: Tracy Morgan; Duncan: Ron Glass and his stockbroker Derek: Luke Wilson (who is Elaine's ex); and Michelle: Regina Hall. Throw in the deceased's lover Frank: Peter Dinklage. Director Neil LaBute and writer Dean Craig should have been able to come up with a funnier ensemble film rather than waste this much

talent. Profanity, Adult situations, Sexual situations, Male nudity.

HOT TUB TIME MACHINE

Despite its crudity and guilty pleasures, this is a hilarious film! Three guys in their 40's are transported via an electrical short in their hot tub back to their college days of 1986: Adam: John Cusack, Nick: Craig Robinson, and Lou: Rob Corddry, plus nephew Jacob: Clark Duke, a teen dork. Bellboy Phil: Crispin Glover is going to lose an arm before the evening is over. Jennie: Lyndsy Fonseca supplies the bikini allure. Chevy Chase does a funny cameo as the hot tub repairman. Violence, Profanity, Adult situations, Sexual situations, Male nudity.

THE JONESES

Steve: David Duchovny and Kate: Demi Moore are the perfect couple moving into a gated upper-class Atlanta neighborhood with their two teens: Mick: Ben Hollingsworth and Jenn: Amber Heard. Their next door neighbors, Larry: Gary Cole and Summer: Glynne Headly have difficulty trying to keep up with the Joneses. The Joneses' dirty little secret is that they are selling products, from golf clubs to cars. They report to KC: Lauren Hutton and need to meet their quotas to keep the family together. Director/co-writer Derrick Borte keeps the audience guessing which direction the plot may next turn as family problems arise that complicate everything in their too posh world. Profanity, Adult situations.

KICK-ASS

A teenage comic-reading nerd, Dave Lizewski: Aaron Johnson, buys a superhero costume/Kick-Ass, only to learn he needs some knowledge of how to fight. He's still no match for the bullies who take his lunch money. He is rescued by cartoonist Damon Macready/Big Daddy: Nicolas Cage with

his weapon-laden arsenal and his 12-year old martial arts daughter, Mindy/Hit-Girl with her fuchsia hair: Chloe Grace Moretz. Dave still hangs out with Todd: Evan Peters and Marty: Clark Duke, trying to impress the girl of his dreams, Katie: Lyndsy Fonseca (Was this the same casting director as *Hot Tub?*). Dave doesn't know that the rich kid in his class, Chris D'Amico/Red Mist: Christopher Mintz-Plasse, has a father who's a gangster, Frank D'Amico: Mark Strong. Director/co-writer Matthew Vaughn will reveal that soon enough when *Kick-Ass* becomes a threat to Frank's business. Very original, with no clichés here, this is a fun flick, even with a setup for a sequel! Violence, Profanity, Adult situations.

THE PERFECT GAME

Who would have thunk that Cheech Marin would wind up in Monterey, Mexico as a Catholic padre in this true tale of a rag tag bunch of 12-year old baseball amateurs whom Cesar: Clifton Collins, Jr. coaches to major Little League status in 1957? Once they cross the border into Texas they can't lose. It helps that Frankie: Emilie de Ravin is a reporter assigned to cover their rise to glory. She also exposes the prejudices towards the Mexicans: separate restrooms; restaurants and hotels that refuse admittance. Cool Papa Bell: Louis Gossett Jr. is around for the finale. The ensemble players are a great bunch of kids! Written by W. William Winokur from his book and directed by William Dear with the occasional tip of the hat to Hollywood in this movie for the whole family. Mild profanity.



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

BERKELEY REP'S NEW MINIMALIST MUSICAL: GIRLFRIEND

The catchy title of Girlfriend in the recent world premiere of composer, lyricist, and playwright Todd Almond and Matthew Sweet (music and lyrics) directed by Les Waters sparks our curiosity early in the dramatic action and even more as the action continues and only two male students remain on stage to go see the same movie night after night.



And as the action continues there is little mention nor any appearance of a girlfriend except when Mike mentions that he has broken up with her. And aside from the songs both males sing and their dances there is a paucity of dramatic action and dialogue that when present is sparse. Yet it is that very paucity that feeds our curiosity and retains our interest throughout.

This minimalist dramatic action and dialogue is also what gives the music and lyrics their due. The music and lyrics of such pieces as "I've Been Waiting," "We're the Same," "Your Sweet Voice," "You Don't Love Me," "I Wanted to Tell You" from the 1991 album "Girlfriend" suit the youthful naiveté and the timid sweetness of these two young students in the early stages of their love affair.

Ryder Bach creates an irresistible, innocent, lovable child-like student waiting for an invitation from Mike (Jason Hite), a sports loving, conventional type student who surprises himself becoming attracted to Will.

Joe Goode's youthfully vivacious choreography brings variety and dynamic movement to the more static moments of the characters' fearful hesitation to approach one another.

David Zinn's set likewise is minimalist. A sofa also represents seats in a car and a pull out bed.

Finally it may just be this minimalist dramatic action and dialogue and the banal simplicity of the lyrics that provide the very refreshing originality of Girlfriend.

Girlfriend plays until May 9th. For info call 510-647-2949. Or visit berkeleyrep.org Dr. Annette Lust

IBSEN'S JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN A RELEVANT MELODRAMA

Directed by Aurora's Barbara Oliver in the melodramatic style of the late nineteenth century, this new challenging version created by David Eldridge, retains the flavor of this genre and period.

The play opens with Borkman's wife Ella (Karen Lewis) and sister-in-law Gunhild (Karen Grassle), twin sisters, exposing the dramatic action in the salon while former prisoner Borkman (James Carpenter) is pacing the floor above the living the room. We learn that former rich banker Borkman has spent eight years in prison and five on the upper floor, like a sick wolf in a cage, estranged from his embittered wife after embezzling funds a la Bernie Medoff from his clients. To clear the family name Ella will engage their young son Erhart (Aaron Wilton) while the lonely and ill Gunhild also wants to lure the young man to live with her. But Erhart wants to free himself from their claws to live his own life and find happiness with the divorcée Fanny Wilton (Pamela Gaye Walker).

This character based, next to the last of Ibsen's dramas, is considered one of his most fierce or barbarous. It offers a number of high voltage scenes such as the one in which a frail elderly Borkman angrily storms out of the house into the wind and snow to find the path to freedom. Each character is dynamically portrayed. James Carpenter's Borkman is the stubborn, power hungry, self serving male who has sacrificed love in order to continue ruling over an imaginary empire of wealth. His wife Ella is the moral strong-willed spouse and his sister-in-law, the woman he once loved and gave up for power who is hardened because of losing Borkman, still finds compassion for him and has directed her love to his son Erhart. Jack Powell's interpretation of Borkman's sole friend Vilhelm brings some comic relief to the action as the eccentric poet. Aaron Wilton's Erhart plays the youthful male in search of passion and happiness. Lizzie Calogaro interprets the simple minded maid and the naïve violinist daughter of Vilhelm .

Despite the use of an exaggerated theatricality in some parts of the production, the cast rises to the challenge to make the action relevant and the emotions believable and dramatically compelling.

Sets by John Lacovelli make use of every inch of the playing space and costumes by Anna Oliver lend period splendor to the ensemble.

John Gabriel Borkman continues through May 9th. For information call 510-843-4822 or visit aurorathatre.org Dr. Annette Lust

34TH ANNUAL BAY AREA AND BEYOND THEATRE AWARDS CEREMONY

On Monday, May 3, 2010, the SF Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle proudly hosts their 34th Annual Awards Ceremony to celebrate Bay Area theatre excellence during 2009. Awards will be given at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre Lobby for outstanding achievement during 2009 in: Touring, Over 300 Seat Theatres (Drama and Musical), 100-300 Seat Theatres (Drama and Musical) and Under 99 Seat Theatres (Drama and Musical).

The complete list of Nominees is at theatrebayarea.org/programs.

Representing the print and electronic media, the Circle will announce the winners of 37 Drama awards and 38 Musical awards from 250+ nominated actors, designers, productions, and more reviewed in 2009. Over 400 productions were seen in 2009 by the 23 Circle critics reviewing theatre from San Jose to Santa Rosa, San Francisco to Concord.

Following the economic disasters of 2002, the Circle's corporate donations disappeared. And the theatre galas that had been an eagerly-anticipated annual event with 400-plus attendees became small invitation-only affairs for award winners only. But this year with the generous support of the Actors' Equity Association (sponsor of this year's event), the Circle once again invites the public to gather and celebrate! These parties are tremendous fun and feature an electric atmosphere of award hopefuls and appreciative theatre-goers. For one fun night only, the fourth wall is stripped away, and those amazing actors are up close and personal for elbow-rubbing and/or admiring from afar.

Actors' Equity is the proud sponsor of the SFBATCC Awards. Actors' Equity, which represents over 1000 professional stage actors and stage managers in the Bay Area, shares with the Critics Circle a common goal to support professional Equity theatres in order to improve the livelihood of the artists who work in those theatres.

All are invited to join the Circle in applauding the talented theatre folk who make magic on our local stages. In addition to presenting the Awards, there will be light refreshments and entertainment. Dress is business casual to formal. And, hey, there's free parking.

34th Annual Awards Ceremony on May 3 (Monday, doors open at 6pm, awards begin at 7:30pm) at Palace of Fine Arts Theatre Lobby, 3301 Lyon Street, San Francisco. Tickets (\$20) are available at brownpapertickets.com or may be purchased at the door the night of the event (\$20 cash only). Tom Kelly and Dr. Annette Lust

JUNE 8, 2010 STATEWIDE PRIMARY ELECTION

This June, San Francisco voters will nominate candidates for partisan offices in a statewide primary election, as well as vote on 5 state and 7 local ballot measures.

San Francisco, your vote is your voice!
Register, get informed, and make your voice be heard!

Visit sfelections.org for useful election resources, including:

- Voter registration forms
- Vote-by-mail applications
- Candidate statements
- Ballot measure summaries

Traffic Circle (Cont. from p. 1)
underground electrical conduit work, curb, gutter and sidewalk work.

Expect construction dust and noise seven days a week, from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends, construction equipment and crews, periodic traffic lane closures and detours, temporary removal of some street parking, slower traffic, substitution of K Ingleside and M Ocean View buses operating on residential streets, increased traffic on side streets, longer transit travel times and some stop changes.

For details on the bus substitute service please visit www.sfmta.com/stfranciscircle.
For assistance in other languages, riders are encouraged to call 311. For bus and rail schedules and arrival/departure times by transit stop location, dial 511.



The Art of Closing the Achievement Gap

By Carol Kocivar©2010

My husband always kids me when I look for something.

The joke in our house is that I have to ask him for help in finding something that is right in front of my eyes. For some reason, my mind creates a picture of where something *should* be...and it is not open to actually seeing where it is.

So what does this have to do with closing the achievement gap? Lots. In all our efforts to help students do better in school we may be overlooking the obvious--something that is right before our eyes.

Take a mind trip back to kindergarten.

How do you remember the alphabet?

My bet is that you still sing the alphabet song you learned when you were about 5 years old. It is embedded in your mind—just like the sound you hear when you see Y-M-C-A or R-E-S-P-E-C-T. (Sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me.)

Boom Boom Pow. Hey I love the Blacked Eye Peas.

Just in case you need something more scientific than the personal experience of millions of kids, take a look at a study just completed in the New York public schools:

Analyzing data from more than 200 New York City schools over a two-year period, this report—*Staying in School—Art Education and New York City Gradation Rates*-- shows that schools in the

top third in graduation rates offered their students the most access to arts education and the most resources that support arts education.

Guess what? It also showed that schools in the bottom third in graduation rates consistently offer *the least access and fewest resources* in the arts.

Other national studies show that students who are most at risk of dropping out cite participation in the arts as their reason for staying in school.

Which kids get the most arts? If you guessed poor, black, and Latino students, BZZZZZZ. Try again.

Staying in School—Art Education and New York City Gradation Rates-- has significant national implications, especially for California.

Our most recent studies on arts education show that almost nine out of 10 California schools (89 percent) fail to offer a standards-based course of study in dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

More than one in four schools (29 percent) do not offer a standards-based course of study in any of the arts disciplines.

What can we do about the achievement gap?

It's right before our eyes. More Arts...for ALL students.

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com



POLICE BLOTTER/TARAVAL STATION

POLICE COMMISSION TO MEET IN THE TARAVAL STATION

Next week we will have the honor of hosting the San Francisco Police Commission as it holds one of its weekly meetings in the Community. I will be presenting an overview of the District and discussing the great strides the officers have made in reducing crime over the last 4 months. The Commissioners want to hear from members of the community regarding their public safety concerns and ways Taraval Station can best serve the District. There is time for members of the public to speak. Mark your calendar for Wednesday, April 28th and be sure to come out to A.P. Gianini Middle School located at 3151 Ortega. The meeting starts at 6:00 PM and will run until it's done.

Planning Commission Sets Hearing Date For Medical Cannabis Dispensary on Taraval

The Planning Commission is scheduled to discuss the application for the opening of a Medical Cannabis Dispensary at 2139 Taraval at their May 20th regular meeting which begins at 1:30 in the afternoon. This is your opportunity to speak out on whether you believe this is an appropriate business for your neighborhood. Members of the Public are allowed to speak at these meetings for 2 minutes regarding topics on calendar. It is very important that neighbors who will be impacted by this business speak up now. The latest information I have from Supervisor Chu's Office is that the report produced by the Planning Department found no violation in the law which specifically would prohibit the opening. This means that the Commissioners must hear from the members of the Public regarding what they want in their neighborhood. Now is the time to write or e-mail your concerns and those of your neighbors to the Commissioners. Also, please make every effort to attend the meeting itself. The hearing date at the Planning Commission is always subject to change – I will update the Taraval.Org website and e-mail any changes that come to our attention. You may also call Supervisor Chu's office at (415) 554-7460 for information about speaking at the meeting or becoming more involved.

Community Relations Unit to Hold Meeting on CED's

Last night, the Department's Community Relations Unit hosted an informational meeting on the benefits and risks of equipping San Francisco Police Officers with conducted energy devices, commonly referred to by the trade name Taser, as a Force Option. These devices are used by Law Enforcement throughout the country to control resisting, violent suspects who need to be arrested or detained. The San Francisco Sheriff's Department and California Highway Patrol are among the Agencies whose officers carry the devices. With proper training, they are an effective means for ending a violent situation with an appropriate level of force. The meeting was well attended and gave a good opportunity to gain insight into the workings of these tools. If you missed our meeting here at Taraval, the Department's Community Relations Unit will be holding additional meetings throughout the City. On April 22nd they will be at Richmond Station, 461 – 6th Avenue at 5:30 PM and on April 27th they will be at Park Station located at 1899 Waller Street behind Kezar Stadium in Golden Gate Park.

Please plan to attend so that you might be fully informed of the risks and benefits of a policy which incorporates the use of Tasers.

Strawberry Season Continues

On April 9th at approximately 10:30 am, Officers Laxman Dharmani and Jonathan Ozul were on patrol when they spotted a young man at 20th and Ortega displaying flats of strawberries and mangoes for sale. The officers noted that the salesman was holding up crates to display the fruit to passing motorists and engaging in conversation with pedestrians. They circled around and watched as the salesman exchanged money for strawberries with a bicyclist and pedestrians. The officers approached the salesman who stated he did not have a valid permit for sales nor did he have any identification. The resident of San Jose also told the officers that his uncle had dropped him off with the cases of mangoes and strawberries directing him to sell them.

(Continued www.westsideobserver.com/blotter.html)

This is a partial report; for a complete posting of news from the Taraval Police Station, go to:

www.westsideobserver.com/blotter.html

Calendar (Cont. from p. 14)

HONKY-TONK SHOWDOWN

Sat 22 | 7–8 pm Free Dance Lessons | 8–11 pm music | Classic country music and dance with The Whisky Richards, Mississippi Rider, the Bootcuts and Toshio Hirano. Lots of hillbilly fun! Cafe du Nord, 2170 Market St. Info: 861-5016; \$10/\$13.

AUTHOR JOSIE ISELIN

Fri 21 | 7 pm | Local author Josie Iselin will discuss *Beach: A Book of Treasures* at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080

WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL

Mon 24 | 7:30 pm | A resource for neighborhood organizations. Listen and comment on issues? The 4th Monday each month. 381 Magellan Ave.

AUTHOR CHARLES WONG

Sat 29 | 1–3 pm | Signing copies of *Black & White/Sweet & Sour Ebenezer* Lutheran Church, 678 Portola Dr (purple church across Tower Market). Free

REAL TRAVEL FOR REAL PEOPLE



Oh Dear!

By Sergio Nibbi

In Italian, cervo means deer. After visiting the shops of Porto Cervo all we could say was "Oh, Dear!" Bright and early we pulled into Porto Cervo, our stop on the island of Sardinia. The tender ride in was bumpier than usual due to all the large yachts crisscrossing between our ship and the open water.

The town, about three blocks long, starts and ends just a few hundred feet from the tender landing. From there it's one beautiful shop after another, and not the souvenir stand type selling hats and T-shirts. I'm talking about Madison Avenue types like Brioni, Rolex, Ferragamo and Zegna, just to name a few, and no one's embarrassed with their prices.

Yes, this is Aga Khan's playground, but what about us poor tourists? I guess some were not so poor after all. We saw women with dozens of bags over their shoulders heading back to the ship. I settled for a lapel pin, but skipped the cap.

We took a taxi tour of the area and brought back stories of gorgeous resorts and lovely beaches. The custom now seems to be to quote hotel prices by the person, rather than by the room. I guess it sounds better to quote \$500 per person rather than \$1,000 per night.

Judging by the number of mega yachts and beautiful women, which seem to go hand in hand, filling those rooms is a slam dunk. Unfortunately, we didn't have anywhere near enough time to truly enjoy this beautiful island. Better start saving up, because we're coming back, and it ain't gonna be cheap.

The popular Italian song says "Come back to Sorrento," and as we did, so did about half of Europe. Up early again, we thought we would beat the crowds, get to shore, take the high speed ferry to Capri and see the sights before exploring Sorrento later in the day. This was our first time here and we wanted to see it all.

The boat ride was easy enough, and we did

manage to snag a good seat out in the open. That's the good news. The bad news is that Capri looked like Portofino on steroids. People all over the place. So, where was this beautiful, romantic, idyllic island that we had heard so much about? Capri, the Isle of Dreams, was more like a nightmare.

Luckily for us, we found a nice taxi driver by the name of Vincenzo who would take us for a two hour tour that, according to him, was going to be the best tour we had ever taken. We didn't even flinch at his fee -- all we wanted to do was to get out of this sea of humanity.

We sat comfortably in Vincenzo's convertible taxi with a stretched canvas top, and enjoyed the breeze and the views which were absolutely stunning. The thing that surprised us the most was how rocky and

steep the entire area is. Beautiful to see, but someone had to build all of this, and at times, as a builder, I get lost in the details rather than the beauty.

The one main road winds up to Capri and Anacapri, which is the town on the upper part of the island. The driver stopped a few times along the road

that literally hangs on the side of the cliffs, to show us the panoramic views. Truly stunning and certainly not for anyone uncomfortable with heights. The road is barely large enough for two vehicles and not an inch more. On a couple of occasions the car's side mirror had to be bent back so the other car could pass — all skillfully happening over one thousand feet above the glistening Mediterranean below.

Going off the beaten path, Vincenzo showed us homes that were too beautiful for even Architectural Digest. I had never seen anything like it — so much wealth, so much natural beauty. The ride down was just as much fun, and with horns blaring and brakes burning, we hit bottom with a great big sigh of relief. Karen and I split a Margherita pizza as we watched the locals right below us worshipping the sun while sitting on the rocky beaches. Not just pebbles mind you, but three to four inch white rocks. I guess what they didn't use up in building, landed on the beach. Truly an amazing place, had it not been for the hordes of people trying to destroy three thousand years of history in a single season.

As you might expect, Sorrento was anticlimactic after returning from Capri. It was mid-afternoon and most of the stores were closed. The city is famous for its carved music boxes and lovely inlaid furniture as well as cameos and linens. The last thing I needed was a music box but after taking up 20 minutes of Andrea's time, I felt obligated to buy something. For an easy 25 Euro, I now have my own music box that very appropriately plays "Come Back to Sorrento." It's going to have to play long and hard before we're lured back. I'd rather be in Sardinia.

Feedback: sergio@westsideobserver.com.



FROM THE BORDER

Newborn Spring Meadow Lawn Replacement

By Hilary Gordon/Photos Blair Randall, ©2010

February’s plum blossoms have given way to March’s cherry blossoms and the streets and parks of San Francisco have put on their new spring outfits. Here at the GFE, we have something to celebrate for the season; a beautiful new meadow installed in the outdoor classroom.

Last fall during the GCETP program (Garden and Compost Educator Training, fondly referred to as Get-Up), one of the class projects was the removal of our small turf lawn. Although only 9’X12’, our lawn demonstration has become obsolete in the 21st century. When originally installed, the lawn was a way to show San Franciscans that large lawns could be replaced with a small lawn and a combination of water-wise border plantings and patio areas for a big savings on irrigation requirements. Now however, as climate change and population growth pressure our water resources, even a small turf lawn requires more water than we want to commit.

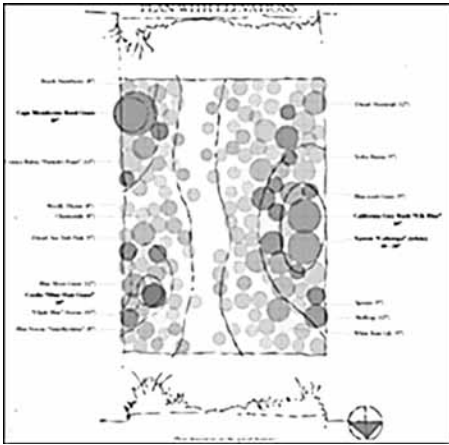


Gopher Wire We built a new raised bed for food production with the old turf which had been cut up into squares for removal. First we excavated the new raised bed and installed gopher wire at the very bottom to prevent these rascals from stealing our crops. Next we laid the turf pieces upside down in the bottom of the bed to provide soil nutrients as they decomposed. These were

covered with a sheet mulch of cardboard pieces with the edges well overlapping, to prevent the grasses from trying to grow again. The cardboard would also add to the decomposition process, adding nutrients to the bed. Finally we replaced the excavated garden soil, and covered everything with a thick layer of aged manure. This bed will provide a deep, fertile, and protected spot for growing edibles in the future.

Meanwhile, after some experimentation, we decided on a water-wise meadow as a replacement for the lawn area. The meadow would be created out of plants that could stand up to light foot traffic, and would include a pathway through the most walked-on route. We envisioned a combination of native bunch grasses, other grass-like plants, and a few tough groundcovers that would provide a sequence of bloom and color interest throughout the year.

Meadow Design Two of the students in the Get-Up class volunteered to follow through with the project, and the designing began. Renata Robinson and Sabina Nieto worked countless hours over the course of the winter, researching plants, attending lectures, poring over books, organizing brainstorming meetings with experienced designers, and talking to everyone who would be using the space to determine their needs and concerns. All that hard work resulted in a spectacular design for our space. With a budget of \$300, Renata and Sabina went plant shopping, organized an installation date, and made the magic happen.



On the last weekend in March, as Renata and Sabina were putting the finishing touches on the new meadow, I had a chance to ask them about the experience. Here are some of the inspirational words I heard. “It’s a living design that you traverse.” “We’re trying to be smart about water and native plants.” “Birds and insects and wind move through it as well as people, so we tried to find a balance.” “We created multiple layers with different colors prevalent at different times of year, all in a very small space.”

Meadow Done Over the next few months, as the new meadow grows and knits together, it will receive regular watering and some protection from foot-traffic. By summertime, we hope that it will be able to stand up to light foot traffic, and less frequent watering. But by next year, most of the plants will need no additional summer water. To keep the whole meadow looking its best, and to help it thrive with the high usage it will get in the outdoor classroom, we will probably irrigate it on a schedule, perhaps once every two weeks.

Grass This will be a huge water savings from a turf lawn that required much more frequent watering. It won’t need regular mowing and edging, nor will it require the constant fertilization that a turf lawn prefers. It will be sustainable for us and for the environment in a way that turf never could be. And it will add charm and seasonal beauties that turf never provides. It will inspire us by referring to the lovely meadows of Mt. Tamalpais and other nearby wild areas, and remind us that on our busy urban street corner, we are part of a much bigger web of natural life.

Many thanks to all the awesome students and volunteers who worked on different parts of this project, but especially to Renata and Sabina for an amazing new climate-appropriate, inspirational demonstration of what the GFE is all about.

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 Wednesdays 10-2 and Saturdays 10-4. Feedback: hilary@westsideobserver.com



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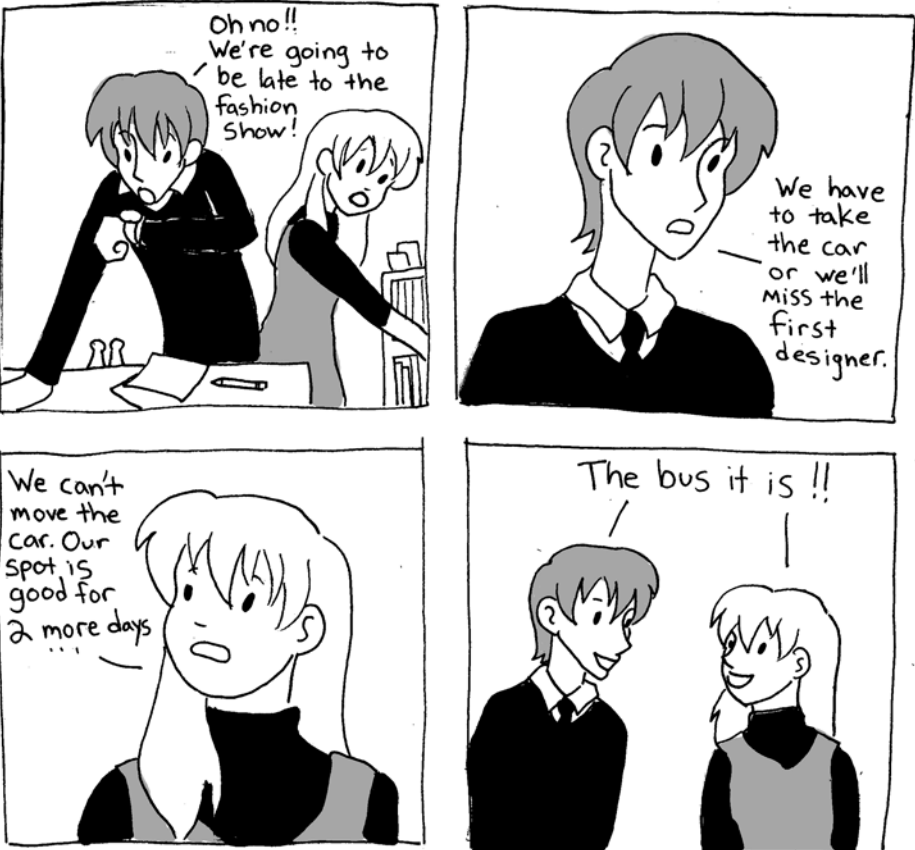
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Open Late



By Julie Behn
www.JulieBehn.com

Sudoku-fun!

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

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.

8	E	b	S	6	L	T	Z	9
L	T	9	Z	b	E	S	6	8
S	Z	6	8	9	T	b	L	E
b	L	E	T	8	S	Z	9	6
6	8	T	L	Z	9	E	S	b
Z	9	S	b	E	6	L	8	T
E	6	L	9	S	b	8	T	Z
T	b	8	6	L	Z	9	E	S
9	S	Z	E	T	8	6	b	L

BRAIN FUD

A man is sitting in a bar feeling rather poor. He sees the man next to him pull a wad of \$50 notes out of his wallet. He turns to the rich man and says to him, "I have an amazing talent; I know almost every song that has ever existed." The rich man laughs. The poor man says, "I am willing to bet you all the money you have in your wallet that I can sing a genuine song with a lady's name of your choice in it." The rich man laughs again and says, "OK, how about my daughter's name, Joanna Armstrong-Miller?" The rich man goes home poor. The poor man goes home rich. What song did he sing?

Answer

"Happy Birthday"
[This song can be sung with anyone's name in it.]

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"Home Building following completion of Twin Peaks Tunnel," Date uncertain.

PHYLLIS' FINDINGS

By Phyllis Sherman

As you can tell I'm fond of humor. Of course the truth can be sometimes quite painful. Freud once said that all humor is based on pain. Note Laurel & Hardy, poor Laurel always being knocked out by Hardy. Moving the piano and both getting creamed. Groucho Marx:



"I wouldn't belong to a club that allowed me in as a member." or "My children are only half Jewish, so can't they get into the pool up to their navels?" Mel Brooks, John Cleese with Monty Python or Woody Allen, about people in the old folks home... "the food is horrible. And the portions are so small!" Then there's the one about the old folks talking about their aches and pains... "My shoulder is killing me." "You know... "I can't move my neck to the right." and "My glasses don't fit right any more." And finally, "What 'cha all complaining about? At least we can all still drive." And the one about the 80 year old guy marrying the 20 year old gal....someone asks... "At your age that could be fatal." The old man says, "She dies, she dies." Or the classic Borsch Belt line;Q. "Why did God create gentiles?" A. "Someone has to buy retail."

Then there are the old moron jokes.. "What did the moron say when he found a head on the railroad tracks?" ("Joe, Joe, are you all right?) Why did the moron throw the clock out the window?" "He wanted to see time fly." Now it's not okay to poke fun at anyone anymore, so we have blondes...who are at least cute (most of the time...so they're sort of protected.) I remember a Norwegian joke that made the Norwegians the stupid ones... Q: How does a Norwegian tie his shoes? A: This guy put his left foot on the chair and mimed tying the shoe that was on the floor.

Milton Berle once wrote, "Ethnic jokes won't go away. If only one or two groups were picked on, the discrimination would be unfair and probably immoral. The fact is that no ethnic group has escaped comedy probing.

In parts of China, jokes are made about the "whites." "Browns in Malaysia make fun of the Chinese. The rich go after the poor, and the poor after the rich. Canada picks on Newfoundlanders, Louisianians on Cajuns and the Southwest on Chicanos. My litmus test for my personal use of ethnic jokes is a simple one. Use only if you're not angry, seeking revenge, or trying to inflict pain. And you aren't immune to fun at your own expense.

My one credo...and I think it's a good one: "HE WHO LAUGHS, LASTS!"

Interesting statistics from all over. A new study from Australia suggests that couch potatoes live shorter lives. The study followed 8,800 adults ages 25 and older for six and half years and found that each daily hour of T.V. viewing was associated with an 18 percent increase in deaths from heart disease and an 11 percent increase in overall mortality. Those who watched TV four hours or more a day were 80 percent more likely to die of cardiovascular disease than those who watched two hours or less, and 46 percent more likely to die of any cause. And it didn't matter whether they were overweight according to the study which appeared in January in the online edition of Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association. Although it's possible that people who were already ill watched more TV than those who were healthy, the researchers tried to rule that out by excluding subjects who already had heart disease and by adjusting for differences in risk factors like diet and smoking. While the benefits of physical activity have been well studied, there is growing interest among researchers in assessing the effects of being sedentary. "For many people, on a daily basis, they simply shift from one chair to another—from the chair in the car to the chair in the office to the chair in front of the TV, said the study's lead author, David Dunstan of the Heart and Diabetes Institute in Victoria, Australia. "Even if someone has a healthy body weight, sitting for long periods still has an unhealthy influence on blood sugar and blood fats." Soooo...get up and take a l-o-o-ng walk!

According to other statistics, 25 of the nation's leading newspapers have lost circulation...the only one that's still gaining advertising (and thus circulation) was the Wall Street Journal.

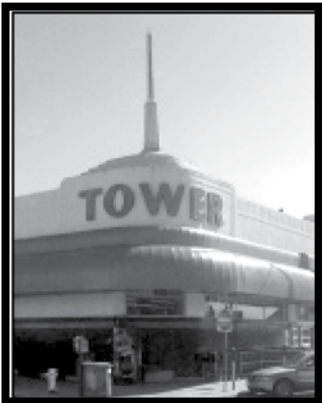
The newspaper that has lost the MOST circulation, is guess which?.....The SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE. Surprise! Surprise!

Now for a bit about film and food....plays, movies and restaurants....First off...THE JONESES...is a satire of modern consumerism. The Joneses--Demi Moore and David Duchovny are the mom and dad with winsome teenage children..are not a family at all, but rather a team of marketers dispatched to a wealthy subdivision to seduce the natives into buying more stuff. The mysterious company they work for is happy with their successful productivity. They induce the neighbors to keep up with them. The more golf clubs, track suits, cellphonesand high-end prepared dinners that are sold, the happier the company. If you're into compulsive materialism and you're even minimally aware of Amway.com types of businesses...this film might appeal as an exercise in phoniness...and it's good looking, to boot.

I like Steve Carrell and Tina Fey on Saturday Night Live...but couldn't get enthused about them in the film DATE NIGHT .Not very funny.

In the theaters...Went to a preview performance of AN ACCIDENT by Lydia Stryk at the Magic Theater The entire show takes place in a hospital room and while not really sick it's pretty mediocre. At the 42nd Street Moon --Eureka Theater, Klea Blackhurst performed the songs of Ethel Merman...she was only there for five days... but she was terrific If you're old enough to remember Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm", "You're an Old Smoothie" or Irving Berlin's "Hey, Good Lookin'"...you'd have loved it. Eureka hosts old Broadway musicals and well worth seeing. Still around and getting standing ovations is Dan Hoyle's magnificent solo show THE REAL AMERICANS. Wonderful performance. His dad, Geoff Hoyle, from Pickle Family Circus is opening soon in "GEEZER." A don't miss!!!

You like restaurants? Try THE RAMP for brunch on the waterfront. NICK'S SEAFOOD in Pacifica. SUSHI ZONE at 1815 Market at Pearl, PEGAN...a Burmese restaurant on Clement Street in the Richmond. All four stars! And if you've a few hours to spare, don't miss the Cartier Exhibit at the Legion of Honor
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