



THE EL SOBRANTE

electronic

NEIGHBORHOOD

C O N N E C T I O N

“A fair and balanced look” at issues that affect our community

Volume 19, Number 4

March/April 2007

2007 Mayor’s Address

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin

It is my honor to deliver this State of the City address.

I want to share with you my impressions of how I found this City when I took office as Mayor two months ago. I will describe what I see as the City’s main challenges and resources, and I will put forward some ideas that are part of a plan to move us forward. This plan must be developed by all of us.

First the bad news:

- Although showing improvement, the state of the City of Richmond remains one of ill health
- Richmond is a city in a lot of pain with serious endemic violent crime;
- Our streets and infrastructure are “tired” and old and are known to be among the worst in the Bay Area.
- Our air is heavily burdened with pollutants, and we are often assaulted by industrial surges of toxins. Our minds and bodies are thirsty for learning, culture, sports and recreation but the venues for these opportunities are scarce or difficult to access.
- Our City often seems disjointed with special interests often slowing movement of the whole body

- And our City is still recovering from the 2004 \$35 million budget debacle, which forced us to cut services and to sell some of our public resources.

However, even though these conditions exist:

- The prognosis for our City is good.
- The challenges are immense but not insurmountable.
- Our City is focused on recovery.
- Our potential is incredibly strong.
- Fortunately, our city is now working under many new and qualified management staff.
- Our city’s grassroots capacity to respond to crises, to self-protect, and to heal is strong, as exemplified in the Tent Cities Movement, the recent mobilization of the Latino community against raids and abuses, the environmental justice movement, and our new small business expansion.
- Our City, at the Council level and at community meetings, is starting to have a more participatory and a more civil process of providing input, analyzing policies and receiving feedback.

Today I will put forward for your consideration some ideas and plans to achieve

“A Better Richmond” in the coming years.

Before I do that, however, I want to remind us all that the improvements we seek and deserve will not emerge purely, essentially, from the policies generated by the current City Council or any future city council. Progress will come only from the will and participation of Richmond residents. Ultimately, the State of the City depends upon you.

I was elected as Mayor to preside over the Richmond City Council. However, first and foremost, I consider myself the Mayor of the people of Richmond and as your Mayor my focus this year will be on

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Editor: Jeannette Mahoney

ANNOUNCEMENTS

El Sobrante Boys And Girls Club Open House/Reception
Saturday, March 31, 2007 1pm to 5pm

RSVP to BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB
4660 Appian Way El Sobrante 223-5253

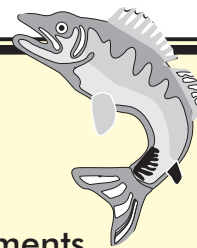
FREE TAX PREPARATION

for low and moderate income residents from February 1 to April 14.
See page 12.

SPAWNERS Restoration Days 9 am March 10, April 14 and Earth Day: April 21

Sign up at Boys and Girls Club or at the El Sobrante Library
Sign up for late March workshop and volunteer for late April assessments.

Call Julianna at 510 665-3538 or go to www.spawners.net



RichmondWORKS

Let Richmondworks help you with your hiring needs With your busy schedule these days, there is little to no time to interview and read every resume sent to you.

We also offer Enterprise Zone Tax Credit assistance that could result in \$30,000.00 per one employee please call for a packet of explanation and detail.

"Lock It Up: An Environmental Prevention Project"
is a new video in which Bay Point and Rodeo teens
describe their campaign to limit alcohol access for minors.
It makes its broadcast debut this month throughout Contra Costa County.

For dates and times of showings, see page 14

Bay area leadership to address climate change

By Contra Costa Supervisor John Gioia

The news on global warming is sobering, leaving communities small and large looking for ways to respond. The good news is that practical steps to reduce warming are emerging from the bleak predictions. I'm excited to be involved in some of the Bay Area's cutting edge initiatives to address what can be done now and soon, to halt the trend.

Two Bay Area regional agencies, on which I serve as a board member, have made climate protection a top priority. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) have launched new initiatives designed to study the impact of global warming, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to a recent study conducted by the Air District, half of the greenhouse gas emissions in the Bay Area are from transportation, one-quarter from industrial/commercial sources, 11% from residential, 7% from local electricity generation, and 6% from oil refineries.

Against this backdrop, the Air District's current initiatives include:

- A \$3 million grant program for climate protection activities in the Bay Area;
- funding a comprehensive study of greenhouse gas emission control technology which could be used to control emissions from industrial sources;
- and a green schools program to develop strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of schools, while educating students on climate protection.

BCDC is studying the impacts of climate change on S.F. Bay and developing a regional task force to work with local governments and stakeholders regarding the issue. While sea levels in S.F. Bay have risen 7 inches over the past 150 years, it is estimated they will rise between 12 and 36 inches by 2100. A 12 inch rise would cause the Bay Area to lose important real estate (including most of S.F. and Oakland Airports), public infrastructure, and natural resources, and would make 100-year flood events happen every 10 years.

Our regional initiatives are consistent with Californians' sentiments. In a statewide poll last year, two-thirds of Californians feel global warming is so important that they want the state to address this issue, independently of the federal government, a process that's begun. They also segue with the recent news of UC-Berkeley receiving a substantial grant from British Petroleum to establish a new Energy Biosciences Institute for the study of clean energy, making Berkeley a global leader in the field.

I'm energized by these home-front efforts to tackle this enormous problem, and look forward to working with local agencies, supporting and expanding their response.

If you are interested in learning more about these efforts, please contact my office at (510) 374-3231 or check out www.bcdc.ca.gov and www.baaqmd.gov.

John Gioia

Mayor's address, Cont'd

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violence prevention, environmental health and justice, and economic development. These three priorities will overlap greatly. Every part of the work ahead must be integrated with other parts. Building a better Richmond is an organic process and must be cultivated as such.

This will not be easy but as any gardener will tell you, there is joy in the cultivation process. As we work hard to solve our problems, we will also reap the benefits of a new culture of caring for ourselves, others and the environment that surrounds us.

Violent Crime

Our first and highest priority remains violent crime

Crime and violence must be understood as a social construct and must be addressed at the roots. In the next two years, as we bolster our police force, and continue to support the reorganization and community policing commitment on the part of the police department, I will also be working hard to advance the following efforts:

1. I will work on expanding and building on the Tent Cities Movement. As mayor, I am committed to providing a catalyst to the momentum started by this great effort.

Impacted youth within our high-crime neighborhoods must be made aware that we want to nurture this space that tent cities has opened up. I am currently working with the tent cities committee and other community groups to develop an exciting project to bring mini-farmers market events to the parks that were the birthplace of the Tent Cities movement. In conjunction with offering farm fresh produce to residents on these Saturday afternoons in the park, these events will also offer an opportunity for community groups and city and county service providers to set up tables and bring their efforts to those most in need. We cannot afford to conduct city business exclusively within the walls of city hall.

We have seen a reduction in violence this year. The truce advanced last year by

Tent Cities has had a lingering effect. This effect must be allowed to continue and expand. Long-term violence prevention will only be achieved when the solutions, the opportunities, and the programs are brought to the neighborhoods that are craving them.

And while we make helping-programs visible, and reach out with services, we must also simultaneously bring forward peacekeeping teams to quell violence that we know continues to brew apart from our service efforts. I see the Richmond Improvement Association (RIA) program "Zero Homicides" as one such peacekeeping team, this is networking with incarcerated individuals and helping prepare them for a positive re-entry into our community. New opportunities must replace recidivism, and guidance must replace neglect.

2. Our partnership with Richmond schools must be strengthened. I am making it a point to visit our schools throughout this year to have hands-on opportunities to engage with our teachers and students. In addition to this, in the coming months, my office will be holding a breakfast meeting with Richmond principals and our Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Bruce Harter, to sit down and explore ideas on how we can work to better advance after school programs, youth academies and summer sessions. In addition to our partnership with the school district it is important that the City advance independent efforts to help bring about a well-rounded education for our youth. It is exciting that the City Manager will be hiring a recreation director, someone to focus specifically on recreation. I believe this summer will be the summer that our community centers begin to flourish as never before.

Another upcoming effort will be an education forum that my office will be co-sponsoring, along with Progressive Teachers of Richmond and March4Education, to provide analysis and information about the problems with the No Child Left Behind policy. We need to take a good hard look at what can be done

on the local level to help with systemic problems we are facing based on ill-conceived policies made at the federal level.

3. And of course while we work to prevent violence with education efforts, we must move forward with job opportunities. I am committed to creating youth jobs every year for the next 4 years. In reviewing the mid-year budget, the Council made a commitment to increase funding for the Summer Youth Program. Having talked with our finance director about this, I will soon be bringing a request to the City Council to bring forward an additional \$100,000 for the youth program, bringing the City's allocation to \$300,000, up from the \$200,000 in 2006. This will allow the City to lead by example by increasing by 50% our last year's contribution with the hope and expectation that the business community will follow suit. Our Employment and Training Department has set a goal of providing 350 jobs this summer (50 jobs more than last year). But even more jobs can be created if we partner with non-profits to help provide work readiness training and case manage the youth.

While quantity of jobs is extremely important to meet the large number of applicants, so too is quality of jobs. I look forward to working with City Departments like Public Works and Parks and Recreation to help identify areas that our youth can work to help beautify our parks, streets and public spaces, and make our community centers more productive. I will also seek ways to advance young people into year-round City jobs that arise out of the Summer Youth Program.

We have the opportunity to nurture future city managers, recreation directors, public works directors, and yes even a future department of the environment director. These, among other things, are

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Mayor's address, Cont'd

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the aspirations that we must nurture and cultivate in our youth.

4. I am also researching another program that offers jobs and education opportunities for at-risk youth. We have an opportunity to partner with the East Bay Conservation Corps to establish a Richmond satellite program. Giving our youth a chance to advance our environmental conservation efforts here in Richmond and to advance themselves at the same time is a win-win situation.

Let me add that although we are building a new culture of financial and fiscal responsibility here at City Hall, we must also remember the fiscal responsibility that we as officials hold so as not to overspend or over commit to spending beyond our means.

While our needs run deep in Richmond, our budget will only stretch so far, which means regional funding must be accessed to fully and effectively keep violence prevention programs and job efforts up and running. I have met with Berkeley's Mayor Bates and Oakland's Mayor Dellums and we have committed to working together to develop and expand successful tools that will reduce crime in our region and to collectively seek funds for anti-violence measures. The major obstacle to regional work is hard dollars to fund our efforts.

I will be meeting with Senator Perata, who has outlined a peacekeeping team project for both Oakland and Richmond. This project has already begun in Oakland.

I will let Senator Perata know that we stand ready and willing to put funds to good use in Richmond to advance his project here.

Environment

And while we address street violence, we must be clear that any definition of violence foisted upon our community must also include the toxic pollution and chemical industrial legacy that our population is exposed to more than other communities. This is also a type of violence to our health; a burden on Richmond's chil-

dren and future generations. With that in mind, we must address the environment.

In terms of environmental health and pollution reduction, I'm working on several policies to bring to the City Council for consideration. For example, I'm working with our Planning Department on a recommendation to lower our solar permit fees from \$800 to \$200 or below, which will move us along to becoming a leading solar city in the Bay Area.

I will also be bringing forward a resolution to declare Richmond a Green Economy Development Area. In the last 8 weeks we have talked to 5 green businesses that want to locate in Richmond. This means jobs, leadership and increased money for City services. The City must vote to expand this development area and direct its energies accordingly.

Other initiatives

Other initiatives that I will be asking the Council to consider include:

1. an environmentally-preferable purchasing ordinance that will phase out the use of toxic chemicals in our parks, community spaces and neighborhood;
2. a policy requiring restaurants to eliminate Styrofoam take-out containers, such as Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco have enacted - requiring a move away from products that litter our streets and storm drains and a move toward more environmentally-safe products; and
3. the establishment of an Environmental Health and Environmental Justice Commission to focus on improving public health and a healthier environment in Richmond.

Let me also add that the Green Building Ordinance that some of us have been patiently waiting for is currently being developed by the City Attorney based on similar ordinances in the region.

On a final note regarding restoration of our natural environment, Richmond is taking the lead in pursuing emissions-free vehicles in its City operations. We have initiated an electric vehicle pilot project through our Public Works Department,

using emissions-free vehicles to do short-run transportation and park maintenance on the Bay Trail.

And when speaking of the environment, it is essential that we also speak of the conditions that continue to degrade our neighborhoods and surroundings. Improving our environment must include the cleanup of our streets, trash-filled lots, and removal of blight.

In terms of neighborhood revitalization efforts, we will be seeing 12 neighborhood cleanups paid for by the City in the next year, expanding on previous efforts and continuing to work with the Neighborhood Councils. In terms of our bigger engineering efforts, projects are moving along to improve our surroundings. For example: 1) our street paving program is in operation and on schedule; 2) work has been completed to close the Bay Trail gaps providing us currently with 17 miles of continuous bay trail along our City's shoreline; 3) the Safe Route to School Program has installed grade flashing lights at 8 crosswalk locations; and 4) Phase One of our very exciting Richmond Greenway Bicycle Trail should be completed by the end of March of this year.

Economic development

Okay . . . We need to reduce violence, and we need to enhance to enhance our environment. The last need I want to address today is economic development.

It is imperative to examine economic development in the context of social equity and environmental protection

And in moving that effort forward, I have met with the Council of Industries and Chamber of Commerce and they have agreed to do more than they have ever done to making business practice in Richmond greener, cleaner and safer. I am looking forward to regular visits to Richmond businesses throughout the year to learn about their services, products and good practices underway.

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Mayor's Address, Cont'd

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I have also been engaged in discussion with the Richmond Economic Development Initiative (REDI), a coalition focusing on economic development with social equity. We must support REDI and other efforts to increase truly affordable housing, encourage healthy walkable development, preserve open space and create public gathering spaces within our City to meet real needs of Richmond residents.

And when we look at our big development projects like the Civic Center project and the MacDonald Avenue project, it is absolutely necessary to continuously examine and reexamine what is in the best interest of our City and our residents.

—Healthy buildings and responsible design must define our Civic Center project, as this project will define our City in many ways.

—In revitalizing downtown, we must constantly go back to community visioning efforts to seek out what specifics will take shape. Retaining current local businesses and creating opportunities for prospective Richmond business startups, will be key to promoting a Richmond local economy and a distinct local character, in contrast to a franchise-dominated downtown.

And as we plan our downtown in terms of bricks and mortar, we must simultaneously begin to culturally frame this revitalization effort. And who better than our Arts and Culture Division and Arts and Culture Commissioners. We need to work hand in hand with artists and cultural workers to bring forward a permanent artist community for our downtown to build a thriving and exciting downtown area.

As mayor, for two months now I have invested, and I will continue throughout the year to invest, all my hours and all my capacity in working for that Better Richmond that is peaceful, healthy and prosperous.

Yet it remains to be said that none of our hopes for a better Richmond can come about without promoting strong community leadership. As mayor, I will

continue to be a staunch advocate for further community connections coming from City Hall and City Government.

Community groups like the General Plan Advisory Committee, the Zeneca Community Advisory Group, Solar Richmond, and the North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance are the heart and soul of our city. These great community efforts will allow for Richmond's destiny to be defined of, by and for its residents.

And to engage and enhance citizen involvement in reviewing our 100 year old city charter, I will be asking the Council to approve a citizens committee and process to examine and advise us on preparations for a revised 2008 charter.

It is clear to me that community collaborative efforts are the greatest engine the city has to enact change. I will work with the City Manager on a new idea for Richmond of creating a collaboration of businesses, residents, and government to improve neighborhoods, strengthen families, and support youth development creating a safe, healthy, and thriving community. This collaboration has been effective in Vallejo and other cities across the nation.

And last but not least, when speaking about community, our Neighborhood Councils are integral agents for change. As mayor, I will make my regular visits to the Neighborhood Councils a high priority, and facilitate their great work however I can.

Meet with the Mayor

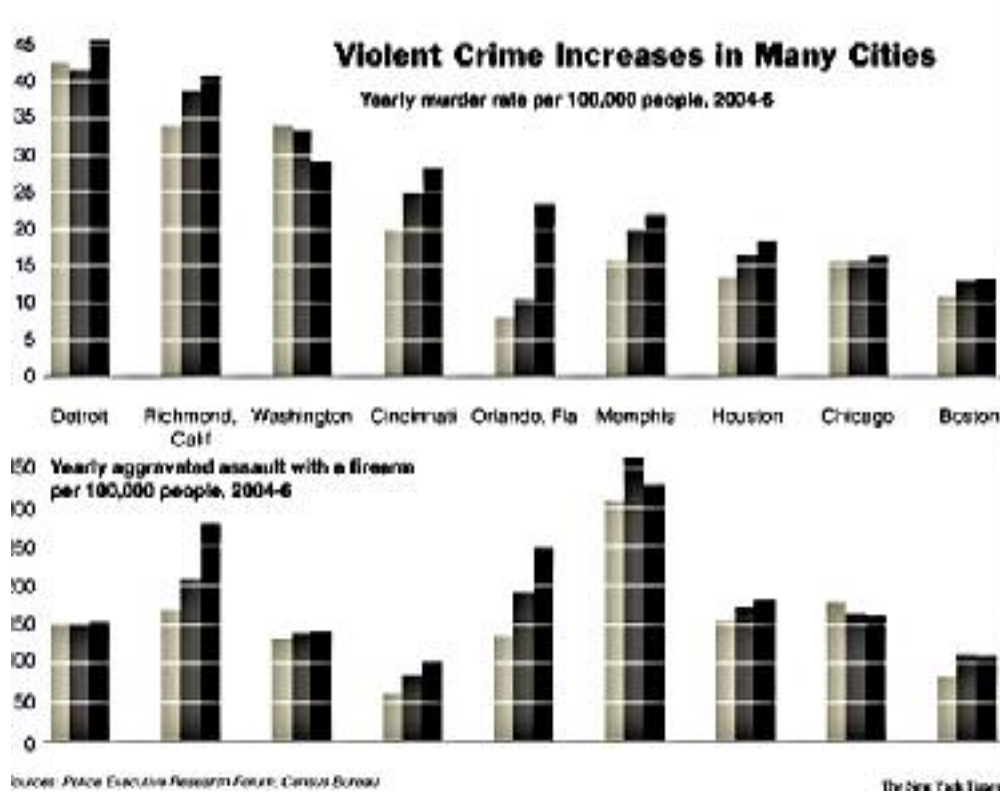
I invite our Richmond residents to come to my first "Meet with the Mayor," on Thursday evening, March 29th, from 5:30 to 7:30 in the Whittlesey Community Room next to the library. This is an open invitation to residents to talk with me and share concerns. My hope is that these meetings will be avenues for both problem-solving and community suggestions for furthering progress in the city. I will ask various department heads to join me at different meetings to allow for department updates and presentations.

In conclusion

- ▲ The state of the City of Richmond is still one of ill health but signs of improvement are on the horizon
- ▲ The challenges are immense but not insurmountable
- ▲ Our City is focused on recovery
- ▲ Our potential is incredibly strong
- ▲ The solutions to our problems will only come from the will and participation of Richmond residents.
- ▲ Our lives, our families, our children require each of us to go the extra mile, invest the extra time, and put forward the next community initiative: Talk to your neighbors, discuss the issues and ask yourselves and your neighbors: "What can we do (with or without the support of the City) to make Richmond better?"
- ▲ Whatever the answer may be, whatever idea or initiative you and your neighbors come up with to improve your lives, let me know. I want the City, as an organization and service provider, to help and I want to help.

A Better Richmond is Possible . . . and with your commitment, it is already in the making!





Richmond makes the big time

New York Times March 9, 2007, excerpts. Complete text at nytimes.com

Violent Crime in Cities Shows Sharp Surge

By *Kate Zernike*

Violent crime rose by double-digit percentages in cities across the country over the last two years, reversing the declines of the mid-to-late 1990s, according to a new report by a prominent national law enforcement association.

While overall crime has been declining nationwide, police officials have been warning of a rise in murder, robbery and gun assaults since late 2005, particularly in midsize cities and the Midwest. Now, they say, two years of data indicates that the spike is more than an aberration. . . .

But the biggest theme, they say, is easy access to guns and a willingness, even an eagerness, to settle disputes with them, particularly among young people.

"There's a mentality among some people that they're living some really violent video game," said Chris Magnus, the police chief in Richmond, Calif., north of San Francisco, where homicides rose 20 percent and gun assaults 65 percent from 2004 to 2006. "What's disturbing is that you see that the blood's real, the deaths real."

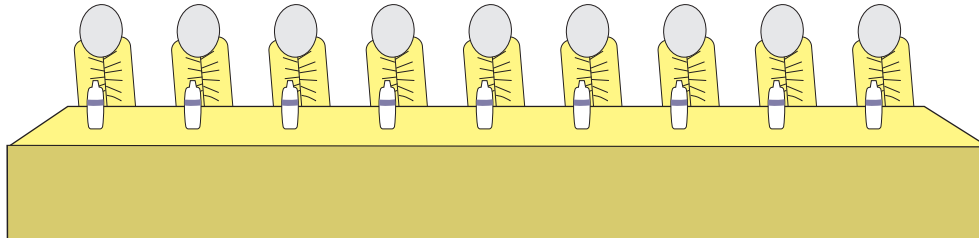
The research forum surveyed 56 cities and sheriff's departments. The group collected similar numbers last year, and those numbers were largely borne out by the data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Police chiefs say the trends in aggravated assaults are particularly alarming. They are often considered a better gauge of violence than homicides; the difference between the two is often poor marksmanship or good medical care. . . .

In Richmond, Chief Magnus said he would often go to the scene of a crime and discover that 30 to 75 rounds had been fired. "It speaks to the level of anger, the indiscriminate nature of the violence," he said. "I go to meetings, and you start talking to some of the people in the neighborhoods about who's been a victim of violence, and people can start reciting: One of my sons was killed, one of my nephews," he said. "It's hard to find people who haven't been touched by this kind of violence."

Many chiefs blame the federal government for reducing police programs that they say helped cut crime in the 1990s. But they also say the problem is economic and social.

"We seem to be dealing with an awful lot of people who have zero conflict-resolution skills," Chief Magnus said.

COUNCIL PAGE



Chevron Speaks

At a special meeting on February 27, the City Council examined the recent Chevron fire that took an hour to alert the public and for which the telephone warning system failed entirely.

Chevron representatives showed a seemingly endless series of viewgraphs to show how well they were running the company, bolstered later by 12 speakers who gave glowing accounts of their performance.

Supervisor John Gioia appeared with two county staffmembers to assess their own actions in dealing with the mess. The safety officer stepped up and took responsibility for failures on the part of the county and gave specifics on how to avoid a repetition.

This is what Chevron should have done, instead of droning on with graphs and charts endlessly as part of their strategy to present the company as a good neighbor. And the usual suspects came up to the mike for the public input portion to reinforce that image.

Unfortunately, nobody thought to gather up a similar body of speakers to criticize the company. Out of 17 speakers, only 4 or 5 were critical of Chevron.

In the meantime, Chevron's profits continue to rise, as do California's gas prices. See page 15.



West County Times, February 25

SPEAKING OF BIZARRE:

Lisa Vorderbrueggen, Politics Columnist

RICHMOND VICE MAYOR NATHAN-IEL BATES sent out a fundraising solicitation letter earlier this month.

That's not unusual.

But the reason why he's asking for the money has raised a few eyebrows: He needs the cash to pay a \$7,000 fine from the state's Fair Political Practices Commission.

Bates wrote in his letter that the penalty originates from a post-Sept. 11, 2001, "condolence" mailer the Black Men & Women political action committee sent to Richmond residents after the World Trade Center attack. The flier featured Bates standing next to an American flag and an inspirational message.

He also wrote that his lawyer believes they could win in court but that the legal fees would surpass the fine. What Bates failed to mention was that he helped start the Black Men & Women [BMW] PAC and though he resigned from the group prior to his 1999 election, the state found that had remained active in its operations. After a five-year investigation, the state concluded that Bates failed to report nearly \$14,000 in expenditures made on his behalf in his 1999 council race — two years before the Trade Center attack — and his failed mayoral bid in 2001. The state also fined the PAC's treasurer.

The disclosure of a candidate's source of campaign contributions shines light on our democracy. Bates' letter leaves his contributors in the dark.

Reach Lisa Vorderbrueggen at 925-945-4773 or lvorderbrueggen@cctimes.com.

From the Tom Butt Forum (partial)

On February 20, 2007, the Richmond City Council adopted five policy directives related to the review of construction projects in the City of Richmond, including merging the Design Review Board and Planning Commission.

The item was placed on the agenda by Councilmember Viramontes and Vice-Mayor Bates without any previous discussion, publicity or notice, other than an agenda description that read: "Discuss and recommend amendments to ordinances regulating Planning and Design Review governing policy, staff administrative review process and authorize a stipend to commissioners."

There was no mention in the agenda item of a proposed merger of the Design Review Board and Planning Commission, and it caught the public completely by surprise. Neither the Planning Commission nor the Design Review Board was consulted. [The directives adopted are:]

1. Complete Design Review Guidelines for Central Richmond by March 31, 2007, and provide a schedule and budget for completion of Design Review Guidelines for other areas of Richmond.
2. Provide a staff recommendation for Administrative Design Review of small projects and any budget requirements.
3. Merge the Design Review Board and Planning Commission into a nine-member single body by July 1, 2007.
4. Provide a stipend of \$50 per meeting (maximum \$200/month) for members of the merged Design Review/Planning Commission.
5. Include funding for training members of the new Design Review/Planning Commission in the 2007/2008 budget.

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Turkeys on the Roof



From Michael C. Martin, Volunteer and Membership Development Coordinator
Golden Gate Audubon Society, via Bruce Beyaert, TRAC Chair

Upcoming bird walks in Richmond

Landfill Loop, Richmond Friday, April 13, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001, RLewis0727@aol.com

Level trail, about one mile

We'll walk the trail extending about 1.5 miles west into the marsh area that is adjacent to a waste processing area that attracts garbage trucks and many gulls. We should see shorebirds, perhaps some in breeding plumage, as well as other marsh and water birds. High tide may result in some wet areas. This area is one of the proposed census areas for our forthcoming Richmond Shoreline Census.

Reach Regional Park entrance by turning west on Parr Blvd. from the Richmond [Parkway], and continuing to the end of the Bay Trail Parking Area.

Point Pinole Richmond Saturday, April 21, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001, RLewis0727@aol.com

About a three mile walk, partly along the beach

We'll meet in the parking lot and walk along the shoreline trail at low tide, out to the point, and we'll return inland.

This is a chance to see some shorebirds along the coastline, as well as early migrants in the trees on the return. Bring lunch to eat upon our return. Point Pinole is one of the proposed census areas for our forthcoming Richmond Shoreline Census.

Reach the East Bay Regional Park from I-80 by exiting at Richmond Parkway and turning right onto Giant Highway. Proceed to park entrance and parking lot; parking fee is \$5.

Golden Gate Audubon Society 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G Berkeley, California 94702 Phone: 510.843.7295

Mobile: 510.919.5873 FAX: 510.843.5351 Email: mmartin@goldengateaudubon.org Web:

<http://www.goldengateaudubon.org>



Looking for ways to celebrate Spring with healthy, fun and educational outdoor activities during March and April?

TRAC, the Trails for Richmond Action Committee, invites you to get out and enjoy the San Francisco Bay Trail in Richmond. Visit <http://www.poinrichmond.com/baytrail/calendar.htm> to learn about a dozen guided San Francisco Bay Trail outings available in Richmond, including walks to learn about birds and rocky shoreline habitat, celebrate shoreline Herstories for International Women's Day, visit lower Wildcat Creek, restore habitat for Black Rails (<http://www.poinrichmond.com/baytrail/signage/BlackRailHab3.pdf>) and explore Brooks Island Regional Preserve.

TRAC Steering Committee, tracbaytrail@earthlink.net, phone/fax 510-235-2835, <http://www.poinrichmond.com/baytrail/>
<http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/TRAC>, <http://www.explorerichmondca.com/baytrail.htm>

SF Chronicle February 18, 2007

The real cost of bottled water

Jared Blumenfeld, Susan Leal

San Franciscans and other Bay Area residents enjoy some of the nation's highest quality drinking water, with pristine Sierra snowmelt from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir as our primary source. Every year, our water is tested more than 100,000 times to ensure that it meets or exceeds every standard for safe drinking water. And yet we still buy bottled water. Why?

Maybe it's because we think bottled water is cleaner and somehow better, but that's not true. The federal standards for tap water are higher than those for bottled water.

The Environmental Law Foundation has sued eight bottlers for using words such as "pure" to market water that contains bacteria, arsenic and chlorine. Bottled water is no bargain either: It costs 240 to 10,000 times more than tap water. For the price of one bottle of Evian, a San Franciscan can receive 1,000 gallons of tap water. Forty percent of bottled water should be labeled bottled tap water because that is exactly what it is. But even that doesn't dampen the demand.

Clearly, the popularity of bottled water is the result of huge marketing efforts. The global consumption of bottled water reached 41 billion gallons in 2004, up 57 percent in just five years. Even in areas where tap water is clean and safe to drink, such as in San Francisco, demand for bottled water is increasing — producing unnecessary garbage and consuming vast quantities of energy. So what is the real cost of bottled water?

Most of the price of a bottle of water goes for its bottling, packaging, shipping, marketing, retailing and profit. Transporting bottled water by boat, truck and train involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels. More than 5 trillion gallons of bottled water is shipped internationally each year. Here in San Francisco, we can buy water from Fiji (5,455

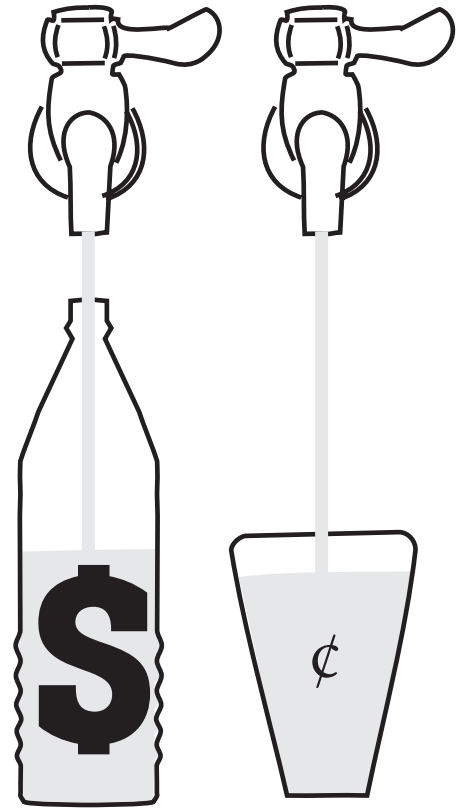
miles away) or Norway (5,194 miles away) and many other faraway places to satisfy our demand for the chic and exotic. These are truly the Hummers of our bottled-water generation. As further proof that the bottle is worth more than the water in it, starting in 2007, the state of California will give 5 cents for recycling a small water bottle and 10 cents for a large one.

Just supplying Americans with plastic water bottles for one year consumes more than 47 million gallons of oil, enough to take 100,000 cars off the road and 1 billion pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, according to the Container Recycling Institute. In contrast, San Francisco tap water is distributed through an existing zero-carbon infrastructure: plumbing and gravity. Our water generates clean energy on its way to our tap — powering our streetcars, fire stations, the airport and schools.

More than 1 billion plastic water bottles end up in the California's trash each year, taking up valuable landfill space, leaking toxic additives, such as phthalates, into the groundwater and taking 1,000 years to biodegrade. That means bottled water may be harming our future water supply.

The rapid growth in the bottled water industry means that water extraction is concentrated in communities where bottling plants are located. This can have a huge strain on the surrounding ecosystem. Near Mount Shasta, the world's largest food company, Nestle, is proposing to extract billions of gallons of spring water, which could have devastating impacts on the McCloud River.

So it is clear that bottled water directly adds to environmental degrada-



tion, global warming and a large amount of unnecessary waste and litter. All this for a product that is often inferior to San Francisco's tap water. Luckily, there are better, less expensive alternatives:

- In the office, use a water dispenser that taps into tap water. The only difference your company will notice is that you're saving a lot of money.
- At home and in your car, switch to a stainless steel water bottle and use it for the rest of your life knowing that you are drinking some of the nation's best water and making the planet a better place.

Although this column is about Hetch Hetchy water supplying San Francisco, it is equally applicable to our EBMUD water. Ed.

Tom Butt

Continued from page 8

All . . . except number 3 were supported unanimously by the City Council.

The recommendation to merge the Design Review Board and Planning Commission did not receive a unanimous vote, but it did pass with a majority. The proposed merger generated substantial debate because it represented a radical departure from current practice.

The stated motivation by Council member Viramontes was to correct unspecified flaws in the current entitlement process that result in unacceptable delays for project applicants. While I have both acknowledged and vigorously criticized for a long time delays in processing entitlements and permits in Richmond, I felt it was premature to craft a solution without understanding the cause.

Last year, the city manager engaged Zucker Systems to analyze the operation and service levels in the Building and Planning Services Department and recommend changes that will improve customer service and efficiency. The report was released to staff on December 5, 2006, but held back from the City Council, despite repeated requests, until February 24, 2007.

It is understandable why the city manager did not want to release it because of the bleak picture it provided of a department almost unbelievably dysfunctional. Although the report made 127 recommendations for improvements, it was not so much critical of individuals as it was of practices, lack of training, insufficient staffing and a culture that has evolved over many years without the leadership and experience necessary to organize a modern service organization.

In an optimistic mode, the report described Planning Director Richard Mitchell as "...visionary and has the ability to bring people together." Mitchell reports that he has already

been making changes in the organization based on the report and that staff training is increasing, and processing times have been reduced.

The report also made recommendations for several additional positions, which will require additional funding. Since Planning and Building are intended to be self-funded from fees, such improvements would not affect the general fund but would require increased fees for processing applications. Zucker emphasized a point that is abundantly clear to the building industry, that the cost of delays in applications is far more expensive than any modest increase in processing fees.

Time is money, and getting applicants through the system as efficiently as possible is the most cost-effective thing the City can do. For those of us (architects) who have used the services of Planning and Building for years or who have listened to complaints from other who do, few of the 127 recommendations are surprising. In fact, three of the five recommendations proposed by Council member Viramontes (see above) are included in the 127 recommendations of Zucker Systems. Nowhere in the report, however, was there a recommendation for merging the Design Review Board and the Planning Commission. For Zucker Systems, there were at least 124 other, higher priority, ways to improve the Planning and Building Regulations operation to provide better and faster service. Viramontes' proposal for merging the Design Review Board and the Planning Commission is strangely "retro."

In the 1970s, the city of Richmond had no design review process, but in response to repeated complaints about blocking views with new homes, a zoning overlay district called "controlled development" was implemented for Point Richmond only. Under this process, the Planning Commission started doing design reviews of projects in Point Richmond.

Within a few years a couple of things happened. Other neighborhoods in Richmond felt shortchanged because they didn't have controlled development overlays. Also, the Planning Commission was not particularly happy serving as an arbiter of building design. So, in the 1980s, design review was extended to the rest of Richmond, and, in order not to overload the Planning Commission, the Public Development Review Board (PDRB) was formed and took over design review.

The PDRB was required to have at least some of its members experienced in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and construction. In the 1990s, design review was once again reorganized with the PDRB morphing into what is now the Design Review Board. Administrative review of small projects by staff was implemented to reduce processing time for typically non-controversial items.

As the number of projects and applications increased, however, the Design Review Board became busier than the Planning Commission, meeting regularly two evenings a month, while the Planning Commission was reduced to one evening a month.

Now, the City Council wants to go back to what we were doing in the 1970s, assigning a combination Planning Commission and Design Review Board with not only conditional use permits, subdivisions, lot line adjustments, EIR certifications, general plan and zoning changes and variances, but also design review.

To handle the workload of both bodies, the new commission/board may have to meet three times a month, which may also dissuade some good people from serving. One interesting thing about this is that if the merger actually happens, Mayor McLaughlin will have the authority to appoint all nine members of the new organization, an unanticipated outcome that may dampen the advocates' fervor.

The El Sobrante Connection gives notices for apprenticeship opportunities whenever we receive them, but classes are also available to help aspiring applicants to prepare for the exams.

Pre apprenticeship tutoring classes are held Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Serra school 6028 Ralston Ave. Richmond. You will be trained on how to pass the apprenticeship tests and interview. The next test coming up is plumbers local #159.

The class and materials are free. For more info call Mike Mahoney at 223-1647 or SGI at 412-5657.

For release January 19, 2007 Contact: Lloyd Madden 925-313-1736

Free Tax Preparation

Free tax preparation for low to moderate-income residents begins

An annual free tax preparation program helping hard-working, low to moderate-income residents file their taxes and claim refunds officially kicks off February 1, 2007 National EITC Day (Earned Income Tax Credit) and runs through April 14 in Contra Costa. Households earning \$39,000 or less can receive up to \$4,400 in tax refunds.

Campaign Manager Lloyd Madden urges workers to participate even if they don't make enough to be required to file with the IRS. Specially trained volunteers will provide the tax services at 12 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites throughout the county. Asset management information and language interpreters will be available at some sites.

VITA site locations, times and dates.

Antioch: Opportunity Junction (formerly OPTIC), 3102 Delta Fair Blvd., 9-4 Saturdays, 1/27-2/14 *

Bay Point: Bay Point Works, 3105 Willow Pass Road, 10-3 Mon's thru Fri's, 2/5-4/13*

Pittsburg: EBW Career Center, 415 Railroad Ave., 6pm to 9pm Tuesdays, Thursdays, 1/23-4/12.

Oakley: St. Anthony's Catholic Church, 971 O'Hara Ave., 10-3 Sat's, 2/3-4/14.

Brentwood: EBW Career Center, 281 Pine St., 6pm-9pm Mon's, Wed's, 2/3-4/9-noon Sat's, 2/10-3/3 and 3/31.

Concord: Independent Living Resource, 3200 Clayton Road, 9-3 Sat's, 5-8, Wed's, 2/3-4/14;

Catholic Charities Family Service Center, 3540 Chestnut Ave., 4-8 Mon's, Thur's, 2/5-4/12;

EBW Career Center, 4071 Port Chicago Hwy, 10-3 Sat's, 2/3-4/14.

RICHMOND: Community Housing Development Corp. of N. Richmond, Senior Community Room, 1555 Third St., 10-4 Sat's, 1/27-4/14; Police Activities League, 2200 Macdonald Ave., 10-1:30 Mon's thru Fri's, 2/5-4/14 *

Pullman Point Community Room, 2989 Pullman Ave., 6-9 Tue's, Thur's, 1/30-4/12*

SAN PABLO: San Pablo EBW Career Center, 2300 El Portal Drive, 6-9 Wed's, Fri's, 10-1 Sat's, 2/3-4/14.

*by appointment only

For more information or what documents to bring, visit: cchealth.org or call 800-358-8832.

Sponsored by the Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP), a public, private and nonprofit collaboration including Contra Costa Employment and Human Services Department, Contra Costa Health Services, United Way of the Bay Area, First Five Contra Costa, IRS, and East Bay Community Foundation.

**Homeland Peace of Mind Department: S. F. Chronicle headline February 24
If an astronaut goes berserk in space, NASA is prepared**

Well, that's certainly a comfort.

Conservation Land Bank for Canyon Oaks Project II

THE CANYON OAKS II PROJECT in Richmond takes in about 400 acres with plans for 36 homes on 25 acres, a 300+ acre conservation land bank, and a separation of about 21 acres, possibly to be developed later.

Access to the property is at the intersection of San Pablo Dam Road and Castro Ranch Road. This conservation land bank for the Alameda whipsnake stretches from the intersection at Castro Ranch Road out to Tri Lane.

For your information, Volume 2 of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is due out in late March or April. Richmond will then set up a public hearing before the Planning Commission to determine if the EIR should be certified as complete. Many residents have questions about the Conservation Bank and how it works. This information was provided by Zentner & Zentner who are involved in this Project.

What are Conservation Banks

Conservation Banks are properties dedicated to the conservation of endangered species (in this case, the Alameda whipsnake) or their habitats in order to compensate for future losses of those same species or habitats.

Traditionally, public and private sector developers have been asked to preserve or restore on- or off-site lands as mitigation for their development impacts.

This led to scattered, small parcels of habitats with potentially less than successful outcomes. Now a developer can "credit" parts of the land set aside for its own development to other developers to mitigate for their tearing up land in other locations. So the 300+ acres, although in one land bank, can serve many developers.

Conservation banks were first authorized by the State of California in 1995 and by the Federal government in 2003. There are now more than three dozen operating in the Western States.

Conservation banks are, in essence, two-way agreements between the Federal and/or State regulatory agencies and a landowner. The agency certifies that the bank is operating under specific guidelines (permanent protection of the land, for example) and the conservation bank owners can then sell credits to third parties to mitigate the impact of their development projects.

Once established, the Conservation Bank or any part of the bank site cannot be transferred or assigned to another party without USFWS (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) approval. The owner is required to set up an interest bearing account to be funded with Endowment Deposits to help pay for the management of the Property.



May Valley Neighborhood Council

Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin will attend the next May Valley Neighborhood Council Meeting of Thursday, March 22. Meetings start at 7:15 p.m. in the May Valley Community Center, 3530 Morning-side Drive.

Stop by to meet the mayor and our new Richmond Police Department Beat Officer Joe Anderson. Officer Anderson join the RPD in 1986. He served as a detective for 6 years. He also was one of the RPD officers who rode a RPD horse around town. He will be at the meeting to share crime stats, answer questions, and collect comments.

National Women's History Month

Contra Costa College has now released its list of women in West County who have earned special recognition as the 2007 Women of History. Ruby Molinari is our El Sobrante neighbor who was chosen for this award. Ruby served for years as member and Chair of the El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council. She continues to serve as the Vice Chair of the El Sobrante Valley Planning & Zoning Advisory Committee. The Women of History will be recognized at Contra Costa College in the Knox Center on the corner of El Portal and Castro St. at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 17.

Richmond's General Plan Process

By Eleanor Loynd

Richmond is now working on updating its General Plan. The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) is made up of residents and business people. There is a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of city staff and consultants. These two groups meet and work separately. About 5 new members were recently added to the GPAC group, adding up to about 32 members. The recent GPAC meeting was Thurs., March 8 from 6-9 p.m. in the Harbormasters Building. I am a member of the GPAC.

Eleanor, George Schmidt and Harpreet Sandhu represent El Sobrante on the panel.

Editor

For release February 26, 2007

Teens take to the airwaves in new 'Lock It Up' video

Contact: Fatima Matal Sol, 925-313-6311

Bay Point and Rodeo teens describe their campaign to limit alcohol access for minors in a new video that made its broadcast debut this month throughout Contra Costa County.

"Lock It Up: An Environmental Prevention Project" combines in its title the slogan of the campaign and the type of approach the campaign used. It is an eight-minute mini-documentary playing currently on Contra Costa Television (CCTV), the county cable station. It can also be viewed online at cchealth.org, the Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) website, from the Alcohol and Other Drugs Services page.

"It made sense to have the youth tell their own story," said Fatima Matal Sol, a program director with CCHS' Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Division. "They chose the direction and theme of the campaign, and their voices deliver a strong message that every parent should hear."

Nearly all of the on- and off-camera narration of the video is by four teens in

two youth groups: Youth in Power, from Carquinez Middle School in Rodeo, and Beyond the Youth, from Riverview Middle School in Bay Point.

"Contra Costa Health Services worked with the Center for Human Development and Bay Area Community Resources to recruit and mentor the youth groups," said Matal Sol. "The teens were quite united in their selection of this particular message and logo."

"The students started by surveying more than 200 of their peers, and they found that 65% of them can access alcohol from their home environment, frequently with the help of older siblings and friends," said Anita Marquez, Site Director of the Center for Human Development resource center in East Contra Costa. "They decided to educate parents and raise awareness about monitoring liquor access in the home."

The video describes how the teens chose the slogan and helped design a lock-and-key logo to encourage adults to lock home liquor cabinets to prevent teen

access. That logo and message was displayed in high schools, buses, BART stations and movie theaters.

The County Office of Education agreed to have "Lock It Up" posters at each public high school, and Safe and Drug Free Schools grant money was used to purchase advertising in buses, stations and Pittsburg theaters as well as to produce the video, said Matal Sol.

The video will be airing on CCTV at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 2. For other airtimes, visit contracostatv.org on the web. Contra Costa Television is Channel 27 on all cable systems in Contra Costa except for Comcast subscribers in Walnut Creek, who watch on Channel 19, and Astound Cable subscribers who can watch on Channel 32.

For more information about AOD [Alcohol and Other Drug] Services in Contra Costa, visit the CCHS website at cchealth.org or call Gary Smith at 800-846-1652.

Video showings on CCTV (channel 27) in March

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| • Friday, March 9 | 4:30 pm and 7:30 pm |
| • Saturday, March 10 | 11 am and 7:30 pm |
| • Friday, March 23 | 4:30 pm |
| • Friday, March 30 | 6:30 pm |
| • Saturday, March 31 | 10 am and 6:30 pm |

Water alert ended

The water rationing alert system is green this week for the first time since the system was implemented last December. The earthquake repairs to the Claremont Tunnel are now completed.

Michelle Blackwell, Community Affairs Representative East Bay Municipal Utility District 510 287 2053

No crime stats because Manjit Sappal is out of the office in training until March 12

Excerpt from S.F. Chronicle March 9, 2007, complete text at sfgate.com

Refinery profit margins double in West

It's one reason price of gas in state is up 44 cents since Feb. 1

David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer

Profit margins at California's gasoline refineries are soaring. And they're taking pump prices along for the ride.

Refinery profit margins have more than doubled since last fall, according to one rough measurement, and now stand at \$39 per barrel on the West Coast. That's more than double their average of \$17 for the last five years.

Bulging refinery margins are one of the reasons Californians now pay \$2.96 for a gallon of regular, up 44 cents since the start of February. And they play a part in record multibillion-dollar profits of major oil companies.

Californians also pay far more than drivers in other states do. The state's average now is 45 cents higher than the national average. Usually, the difference is more like 25 cents.

Refineries don't release precise profit figures. But the margins can be tracked, roughly, by measuring the difference between the cost of the crude oil refineries use and the price they charge for their finished products. Why the jump?

The refineries that make California's unique, pollution-fighting blend of gas have cranked out 7.8 percent less gasoline since the start of February than they did in the same period last year. That smaller supply brings higher retail prices. Gasoline production always dips in February, when California refineries perform maintenance and switch from winter to summer blends of fuel. But this year's maintenance season has been plagued by unexpected, sometimes bizarre problems. Earlier this week, two Los Angeles-area refineries lost power when an opossum and a raccoon broke into separate electrical substations and electrocuted themselves. Consumer advo-

cates call many of the refinery problems a sham. The oil companies, they say, are limiting gasoline supplies to drive up prices and profit margins, just as power companies did during the state's electricity crisis six years ago.

"What this industry needs to make big profits and what consumers need to have reasonable prices are very different things," said Judy Dugan, research director for the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights. . . .

For example, San Ramon's Chevron Corp. recorded 2006 earnings of \$17.14 billion, its largest ever, boosted in part by refinery operations. Californians pay more than the national average for gasoline largely because they use their own special formula of gas, which is designed to fight air pollution. A limited number of refineries make California's gas. Those refineries, in turn, belong to a handful of companies.

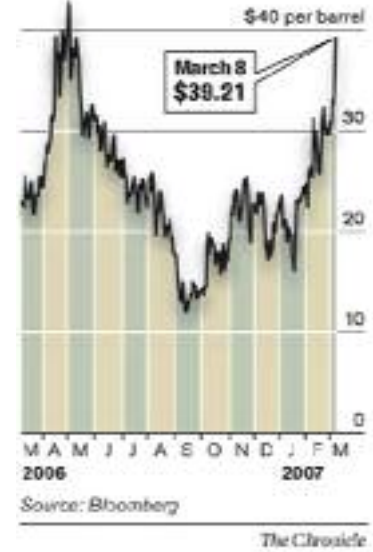
Chevron, for example, controls roughly one quarter of the gasoline refining within the state. With a tight balance between supply and demand, the state's gas prices tend to stay higher than the national average and suffer through more severe price swings. Not that the balance is much better elsewhere.

The whole country saw a wave of refinery closures in the 1980s and 1990s as companies shut down facilities with profit margins they considered too low. That, to oil company critics, proves the companies' intent to squeeze U.S. drivers. "As an industry, they made a decision in the early '90s to reduce capacity," Dugan said. "None of this is necessary." No refineries have been built since 1976.

But existing refineries have been slowly expanding their production. Bay Area refineries, for example, have plans to

Refinery margins

According to one rough measurement, West Coast refinery profit margins have more than doubled since last fall.



expand capacity by 1.1 million gallons of gas per day, about 2.5 percent of the 43.5 million gallons Californians use each day. The expansion, however, has not kept up with the growing U.S. demand for gasoline. Although gas sales dipped last year, they have grown this year, rising about 1.2 percent in the last month when compared with the same period last year.

The California Energy Commission keeps tabs on the state's refineries. Commission staffers talk with refinery executives on a weekly basis and receive updates on maintenance or unexpected production problems, said commission spokeswoman Susanne Garfield. But the commission has no policing power over the refineries and does not inspect them to make sure the refiners' information is correct, she said.

See who's pumping cash by making oil for \$13.21. And selling for \$59
www.investmentu.com

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

City Council Tuesdays, 7 pm City Hall 620-6513

City Council Meetings are broadcast live on KCRT, Channel 25,
and rebroadcast Wednesday at 1 pm, Thursday at 1 am, Saturday at 11 am, and Sunday at 7 pm .

Planning Commission 1st and 3rd Thursdays 7:30 pm City Hall

E.S. Planning & Zoning 2nd Thursday 6 pm E.S. Library

School District Call 234-3825.

Neighborhood Councils

El Sobrante Hills Call 223-2004

Greenbriar Call 222-5350

May Valley 4th Thursday
7:15 pm May Valley Community Center

State, City and District Offices

**Loni Hancock, Assemblymember
14th District, California State As-
sembly**

712 El Cerrito Plaza
El Cerrito, CA 94530
Phone: (510) 559-1406
Fax: (510) 559-1478

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Monday through Fridays, from 9 AM to
5 PM. **Ian Shin**

**John Gioia, Supervisor, District
One Contra Costa Board of Su-
pervisors**

11780 San Pablo Ave., Suite D
El Cerrito, CA 94530
Phone: (510) 374-3231
Fax: (510) 374-3429

Terrence Cheung, Chief of Staff, is
liaison for El Sobrante and is very
helpful and responsive.

**George Miller, Congressman,
House of Representatives, Dis-
trict 7**

3220 Blume Dr, Suite 281
Richmond 94806
Phone: (510) 262-6500

**State Senator Tom Torlakson,
Distr. 7**

(925) 602-6593 (916) 445-6083
<http://democrats.sen.ca.gov/senator/torlakson>

Useful Numbers

AC Transit

510 891-4700

Animal Services

510 374-3966

California Highway Patrol

510 450-3821

City of El Cerrito

215-4300

City of Richmond

620-6512

City of San Pablo

215-3000

El Sobrante Municipal Advisory

Council (MAC)

510 223-6091

Health Services Administration

925 370-5007

Homeless Programs

925 313-6736

Household Hazardous Waste

888 412-9277 or

510 215-3125

Mosquito & Vector Control

925 685-9301

Public Works

925 313-2000

Roads & Drainage Maintenance

925 313-7000

Richmond Sanitary Service

510 262-1600

Street Lights

925 313-2286

East Bay Municipal Utility District

Water emergencies, billing and general
inquiries (866) 403-2683.

Katy Foulkes, Board of Directors

(510) 287-0404

www.ebmud.com

AC Transit

Joe Wallace - Board of Directors

(510) 891-7143

<http://www.actransit.org>

Sheriff's Department

Dispatch (toll free, non-emergency)

877 308-5248

Dispatch (non-emergency)

510 215-0540

Vehicle Abatement

925-313-2659