

I asked Santa for a new police chief, a new chief of staff and a balanced budget

Richmond Lean in 2016?

2015 Year End Review and Predictions and Wishes for 2016

[Tom Butt, Richmond City Councilmember](#), January 1, 2016

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Introduction

About www.tombutt.com and the [E-FORUM](#)

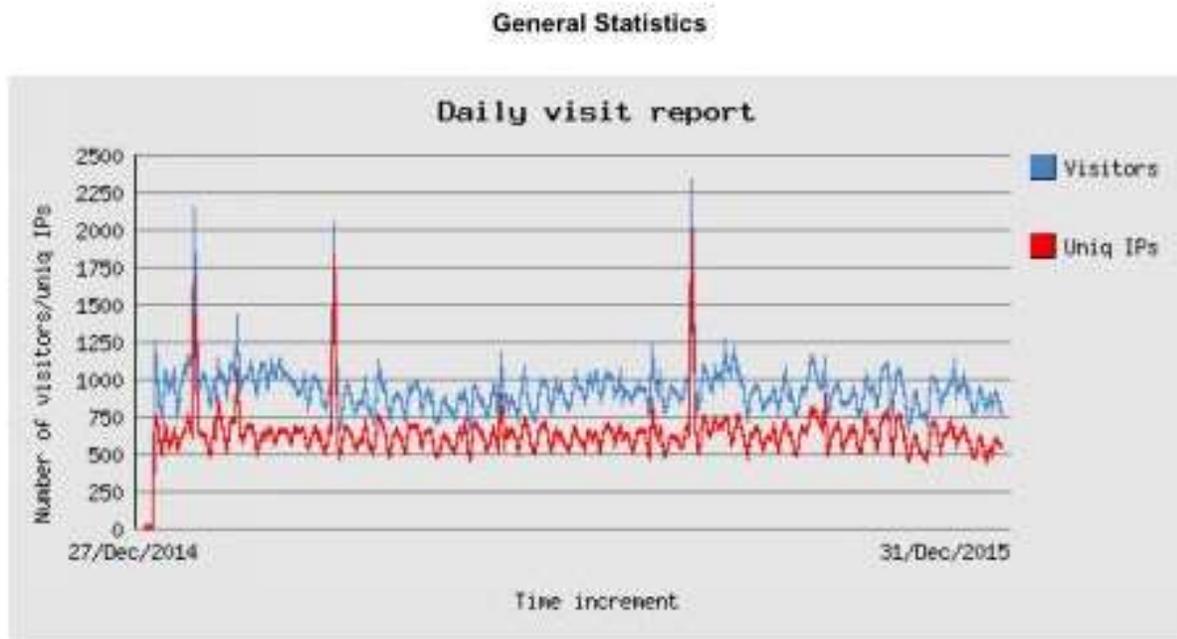
I started the E-FORUM 14 years ago in 2001, primarily to provide Richmond-related news, information and points of view not readily available in the mainstream media, although I have copied and shared a lot of articles from mainstream media over the years. Since then, Richmond news media sources have increased vastly and mainly via the Internet, including sponsored outlets, such as *Richmond Standard* and *Radio Free Richmond*, academically-connected sources such as *Richmond Confidential*, community sites such as *Richmond Pulse* and *El Cerrito Patch*, neighborhood sites such as *Point Richmond On Line* and *North and East*, and various political websites such as *Richmond Progressive Alliance*.

The first E-FORUM was dated January 13, 2001, and carried information about obtaining public records from the City of Richmond.

E-FORUMS typically fall into three categories:

1. Copies of content from other media, including emails from other people and organizations announcing events or providing information.
2. Copies of content from other media with some preliminary editorializing by me.
3. Pieces that are primarily editorial or personal reports.

I have over 4,000 people and about 40 media contacts on my current list, but I understand a lot more people get it through secondary distribution from primary addressees.



In addition to email distribution, all E-FORUMS beginning in 2001 are accessible on my website at <http://www.tombutt.com/e-forum/e-forum.htm> and <http://www.tombutt.com/archives.htm>.

The website, www.tombutt.com gets a lot of traffic. In the past 12 months, there were 336,660 visitors, up 32% from 2014, and 2,260,835 hits, up 12% from 2014.

Visitors average 909 a day with an average of 6,110 hits per day. The biggest day was August 20 with 14,761 hits from 2,316 visitors, for no particular reason that I can figure out.

The most popular E-FORUMs accessed in 2015 were:

1. [Fear and Loathing in Point Richmond](#)
1. [Good Video of Attorney General's Visit](#)
2. [Richmond Residents Overwhelmingly Reject LED Billboards](#)
3. [Third Business Roundtable Includes Optimism and Lots of Recommendations](#)
4. [Register Now for the Mayor's July Business Roundtable](#)
5. [Marin County Construction Company Owner Who Aided Richmond FBI Probe Commits Suicide](#)

At the website www.tombutt.com, the most popular pages in 2015 were:

1. <http://www.tombutt.com/biography.htm>
2. <http://www.tombutt.com/contact.htm>
3. <http://www.tombutt.com/default.htm>
4. <http://www.tombutt.com/endorsements.htm>
5. <http://www.tombutt.com/platform.htm>

The most downloaded files in 2015 were:

1. [Letters Home](#)
2. [State of the City](#)
3. [Down the Buffalo](#)
4. [Mapping Richmond's World War II Home Front](#)
5. [Capay Valley State Park](#)

The most active countries in 2015 were:

1. United States of America
2. Germany
3. France
4. Canada
5. United Kingdom

I get a lot of responses to E-FORUM postings, and I read and appreciate all of them. Sometimes on a controversial subject I will create and send a digest of responses. I respond to a few, but I just don't have time to respond to all of them all of the time.

I have no staff involved in the E-FORUM, other than two people in my architecture office who help me a lot, but only by entering and deleting email addresses and transferring E-FORUM's to my website. Since the E-FORUM is political, there is no involvement of the Mayor's staff or other City of Richmond employees.

Since 2002, I have prepared some kind of year-end evaluation of City of Richmond services, problems, challenges and wishes. Originally, these were conveyed to my City Council colleagues and the city manager as a way of providing input into the annual city manager performance evaluation and establishing my priorities and legislative objectives for the coming year. Since 2005, I have invited public participation, and I have shared the results on my E-FORUM.

- **2003**, I shared one of these priorities on the E-FORUM in [New Year's Resolution - A Full Court Press on Blight](#), January 3, 2003.
- **2004**, I went whimsical and authored [Out With The Old – In With The New](#), January 1, 2004, providing a number of awards and multiple choice predictions.

- **2005**, I decided to expand the New Year's Day, [2004 Year-End Review](#), December 31, 2004, to become a broader evaluation of the City of Richmond and to give E-FORUM readers an opportunity not only to participate but to also play the principal role.
- **2006** was [What Can We Fix in 2006?](#), January 1, 2006.
- **2007**, it was [Will Richmond be Heaven in 2007?](#) January 1, 2007.
- At the beginning of 2008 I wrote [Year 2007 Review and Will Richmond be Great in 2008?](#)
- **2009**: [Will Richmond be Fine in 2009?](#)
- **2010**: [2009 Year End Review – Who Will Win in 2010?](#)
- **2011**: [2010 Year End Review – Will Richmond be Riven in 2011?](#)
- **2012**: [In What Will We Delve in 2012?](#)
- **2013**: [What is Foreseen in 2013?](#)
- **2014**: [New Year 2014 Edition - Richmond Serene in 2014?](#) January 1, 2014
- **2015**: [New Year 2015 - Richmond Keen in 2015?](#) December 31, 2014



Swearing-in by Lt. Governor Gavin Newsome in January 2015

I recommend you take a look at these previous E-FORUMs. You will be amazed at how many challenges have persisted unabated, how many predictions have been fulfilled and how one year's top stories became distant memories a year later.

What follows is not based on a scientific poll or survey by any standard. The only public input quoted herein is from readers of the E-FORUM, which is a self-limiting sample. *Comments from E-FORUM readers are in italics to distinguish them from my own.*

This year-end summary is uncensored. This is an equal opportunity forum, and I welcome responses, comments, arguments and debates. I especially solicit corrections.

I extend special thanks to all those citizens and City employees who keep me informed of both problems and solutions all year long. Your input is invaluable. Please keep it up. My [E-FORUM](#) is my best tool for dispensing with my own frustrations, and I hope it provides useful information for those who subscribe.

On Being Mayor

Those of you who know me also know that I was a reluctant candidate for mayor, but having been elected, I have embraced the job with enthusiasm, and I am glad that I persevered. But I can't say truly that it's a great job or that I love it. It's hard work and full of frustrations and disappointments along with a few triumphs.

As a City councilmember, I could choose my priorities, show up at events I favor and control my schedule. I never realized how simple and easy it was until I became mayor. The worst part about it is the demand for my time. I realize that ribbon cutting, presentations, proclamations, dedications, and meetings are part of the job the Charter

describes as being “ceremonial head of the City,” but much of this is just not what turns me on. In spite of myself, I believe that I have risen to the occasion. Everyone who has a problem, a complaint, an idea to pitch, a request for money or just someone to listen to them, the mayor is where they start, even though the mayor has little actual power to do anything.

That brings me to the best part, which has been having three full-time staff members and an intern who are smart, dedicated and hard working. We meet weekly to divvy up the demands and the opportunities that come into the Mayor’s Office to make sure everything is covered and gets the appropriate level of attention. The mayor’s staff also works closely and often seamlessly with the City Manager’s Office and other City departments on programs, initiatives, projects and grant opportunities.

For a glimpse about how a typical week goes, see [A Week of Being Mayor](#), July 28, 2015.

In January, I rolled out my first [State of the City 2015](#), January 28, 2015, which set out the things I hoped to accomplish. On April 23, 2015, ([The First 100 Days](#)) I reviewed what had been [accomplished in the first 100 days](#), and I felt pretty good about it.

Along with a great staff, the other good part are the opportunities, access and recognition that goes with being mayor and is significantly different than that of a councilmember. There is no greater example than my recent participation in Paris at the UN Climate Change talks. As a mayor, I didn’t negotiate the agreement, but I was invited to events, like the all-day [Compact of Mayors](#) event hosted by the mayor of Paris at Paris City Hall (*Hotel de Ville*), the State Department briefing and reception at the U.S. Ambassador’s residence, and the soiree hosted by the mayor of Paris at the Eiffel Tower. As a councilmember, none of this would have come my way.

I was one of only three mayors from California, a high-profile state in the sustainability world, in Paris (the other two were Libby Schaaf of Oakland and Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles), and being able to represent Richmond and MCE (Marin Clean Energy) as an eyewitness to perhaps the most important international agreement ever made was an honor and a privilege.



Chatting with Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo at Eiffel Tower reception for mayors

You can read about the Paris trip on the following four E-FORUM posts:

- [Report from Paris - Part 1](#), December 1, 2015
- [Report from Paris - Part 2](#), December 1, 2015
- [Report from Paris - Part 3](#), December 7, 2015
- [Report from Paris - Part 4](#), December 11, 2015

I also appreciate the deference and respect given to the mayor by state, regional and federal officials. I made a successful trip to Washington DC to finalize funding for the Hacienda Section 8 vouchers, and I participated in

multiple meetings and conference calls with HUD officials, California Department of Finance Officials, bond rating agencies, bond buyers, grantors, Caltrans and other agencies to push Richmond's interests. These have been both rewarding and satisfying, but entirely out of the public eye.

2015 Year in Review Summary – From Mind Control to Rent Control

With [Corky Booze gone](#), the Richmond City Council settled into a [version of civility](#) not seen for several years. It was not just Corky but also the audience attendees he attracted and encouraged who, with a couple of exceptions, mercifully melted away from the City Council Chamber concurrent with his departure.



*The elation of the 2014 election victory barely survived
January of 2015*

In 2016, overall, meetings were shorter and debates more succinct. [But there were still many contentious issues, with one RPA initiative after another](#), mostly rent control, dominating most of the year's agenda.

Flush with the 2014 victory, the RPA flexed their muscles. Failing to elect one of their own to replace me on the City Council, they doubled down on other agendas, from rent control to [mind control](#).

Rent control was never mentioned during the 2014 election campaign, but the RPA rolled it out with a vengeance in early 2015, pausing only briefly to add some items to an already stressed budget and pass a space weapons resolution. It is truly ironic that the space weapons

resolution passed May 19, 2015, [the same week](#) that [Moody's downgraded Richmond's bonds six days earlier](#). That made the list of [Tom Barnidge's list of memorable column topics of 2015](#).

As Richmond City Council members listened with quizzical expressions on May 19, a dozen public speakers told of being "targeted by technology" from space weaponry hovering in the skies. They said they lived in fear of chemtrails, particle beams and electromagnetic radiation, and wanted the city to pass a resolution "in support of the Space Preservation Act and the Space Preservation Treaty to permanently ban spaced-based weapons." The only thing weirder is that the council actually did so by a 5-2 vote. Said Mayor Tom Butt, one of the dissenters: "I'm just a dumb City Council person, and this is way, way over my head. I frankly think it's way out of the purview of what this City Council should be taking up." It seemed more like a job for Flash Gordon.

On August 4, 2015, [Moody's announced a second downgrade](#), ironically [one day before the ill-fated rent control ordinance passed](#) on a second reading.

The RPA and Me

Beginning with Gayle McLaughlin's election in 2004, she and other RPA City Council members have been critical allies of mine. Together, we created a level playing field to engage Chevron, adopted numerous health and environmental policies and ordinances (pesticides, smoking, plastics, to name a few), joined MCE (saving Richmond ratepayers over \$2 million) and adopted a cutting edge smart growth General Plan 2030. We stuck together on hugely controversial issues like the Riggers Loft and complete streets. Richmond thrived. Crime went down and the quality of life went up. Richmond was recognized nationally as a contender. Life was good.

In 2015, that relationship changed. Instead of working collaboratively, the RPA struck out on their own with an aggressive social agenda catering to a limited group of constituents in concert with a small number of aggressive special interest "affiliate organizations," including ACCE, SEIU Local 1021 and the CNA. They exhibited little interest in Richmond's financial stability or in the nuts and bolts of everyday city government. That strained our relationship and frustrated me immensely. For three City Council members to be officially "affiliated" with one of the City of Richmond's public employee bargaining units seems to me to be a clear conflict of interest.

My New Year's resolution is to work on a more productive relationship with the RPA in 2016, and I will do my part to make it work

On March 17, 2015, the [RPA flexed its muscles by proposing to add three items to the budget](#):

On Tuesday's council agenda, however, spending items up for a vote included a new bathroom at Shields-Reid park, \$50,000 for a program aimed at encouraging youth participation in government and a memorial bench at Nevin Community Center that was initially estimated to cost \$4,000, but reduced after the dais decided in just a few seconds that it could be done far less expensively.

The items, all pitched by RPA members, had not been presented to, nor approved, by City Manager Bill Lindsay and his staff, who have been busy trying to balance the city's most pressing needs as it struggles to close the deficit.

Mayor Tom Butt said spending measures on the council agenda appear to be a new tactic being used by RPA members to get the group's pet projects passed. As part of an apparent strategy to secure votes, the RPA is attempting to make councilmembers "look bad" for voting against children or certain community groups, Butt said. (*Richmond Standard, March 19, 2015*)

On August 1, 2015, Tom Barnidge wrote:

The animus and dysfunction that so often have characterized Richmond City Council meetings were supposed to dissipate when Corky Boozé was denied re-election in November. Tom Butt predicted as much during his successful mayoral campaign, noting Boozé's singular flare for flamboyance and disruption.

Apparently, dysfunctionectomies are not quite that simple.

In the first seven months of Butt's administration, which have seen tempers flare, council members have:

Outgoing Councilmember Corky Booze speaks during a swearing-in ceremony for new Mayor Tom Butt at the Richmond Memorial Auditorium and Convention Center in Richmond, Calif., on Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2015.

1) Bowed their backs for three weeks arguing over a replacement to fill the seat Butt vacated when elected mayor before compromising on Vinay Pimplé; 2) Swapped social media daggers over the disputed relocation site of SS Red Oak Victory ship at Rosie the Riveter National Park; 3) Exchanged barbs over the curious endorsement of the Space Preservation Treaty in symbolic opposition to chemtrails and particle beams overhead; 4) Staked out intractable positions on opposite sides of a rent control ordinance before the measure passed in a bitterly divided 4-3 vote.

The warring factions are predictably separated by ideology -- Richmond Progressive Alliance members Gayle McLaughlin, Jovanka Beckles and Eduardo Martinez on one side; Butt, Pimplé and Nat Bates on the other -- with Jael Myrick awkwardly straddling the swing vote.

A case in point: Myrick was against rent control before he was for it, earning a "flip-flopper" label from the mayor.

The tension recently reached new levels when Butt lobbed a political hand grenade in an email blast: "The RPA3 plus Myrick have continued to violate the Brown Act, communicating with each other in private to arrange and schedule a pair of special City Council meetings for a first and second reading of the rent control and just cause ordinance." That charge is sure to bring return fire. Corky Boozé must be having a good chuckle.

Summary of Memorable Richmond Events of 2015

- A rent control ordinance was finally passed in a special City Council meeting in early August but subsequently suspended by a referendum signature drive that netted some 7,000 signatures. The City Council chose to repeal rather than hold a special election, but the RPA has vowed to put a new rent control measure on the November 2016 ballot.
- In 2015, the City of Richmond completed three important public works projects with a combined cost of over \$50 million.

- [Family Justice Center](#) - \$2,000,000
- [Brad Moody Underpass](#) - \$39,000,000
- [Wet Weather Storage Facility](#) - \$16,500,000
- [Bay Trail Ferry Point Loop](#) and [Plunge Section of Bay Trail](#) – \$369,000
- [Santa Fe Union Park](#) - \$100,000



Bay Trail Plunge Section Dedication

Moody Underpass Dedication

- December saw groundbreaking for the [10.5 megawatt solar project located on a Chevron Brownfield](#). The solar farm will provide energy to MCE and will be the largest publicly-owned solar farm in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Police Chief Chris Magnus, largely credited for reducing crime and bringing true community policing to Richmond, has left for a career change as police chief of Tucson, AZ.
- Richmond City Manager Bill Lindsay's contract at was extended for another four years.
- Scrutiny and criticism of Richmond's fiscal practices increased following bond rating downgrades by Moody's and S&P.
- Richmond's homicide rate that has been dropping dramatically for several years bounced back with a 91% increase from last year's record low of 11 to 21 in 2015.
- The City Council adopted balanced budget for 2015-16, although whether or not it is structurally balanced continues to be a subject of debate.
- Richmond's [unemployment rate dipped to levels seldom seen since WWII](#).
- The City of Richmond continued to win significant grants for improvement projects and programs:
 - [Cities of Service](#): \$30,000
 - [Affordable Housing and Creek Restoration](#): \$5.1 million
 - [Yellow Brick Road](#): \$6.2 million
- The Richmond Ferry was [fully funded and approved](#), scheduled to begin service in 2018.
- The [politically contentious](#) Riggers Loft was completed and [occupied by the Port of Richmond](#) and [R&B Cellars](#), a winery, amid a clash over relocation of the [Red Oak Victory](#). The Red Oak Victory is scheduled to be moved (once) in February 2016.
- The drive to erect an LED billboard at Hilltop failed, and it was confirmed that the [Mall will be offered for sale in January 2016](#).
- Design for [Unity Park](#) on the Richmond Greenway, using a \$5 million grant, continues to move along.
- [Kennedy Park was renovated](#) by volunteers organized by the City of Richmond and the Trust for Public Land.
- We raised funds from the business community to launch the Richmond Branding and Marketing Study to improve the image of the city and market the City as a place to live, work and play.
- Sponsored an adopted City resolution that banned the use of pesticides in municipal operations for 12 months as a pilot program.

- Started the process of considering annexation of North Richmond, beginning with a supporting resolution by the North Richmond MAC and a feasibility study by the City of Richmond.
- Provided leadership in the successful effort to plan and fund a bike and pedestrian path to safely cross I-580, access Point Molate and the San Pablo Peninsula and the upper level of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.



In November 2104, the Richmond unemployment rate was 6.6%. By November of 2015, it had fallen to 5.3%, a 19.70% reduction. In September 2015, it was 5.1%. The California rate was 5.7% in November 2015

- Richmond was visited by two Obama Administration cabinet officers in 2015, [Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell](#) in March and [Attorney General Loretta Lynch](#) in September.



Attorney General Loretta Lynch

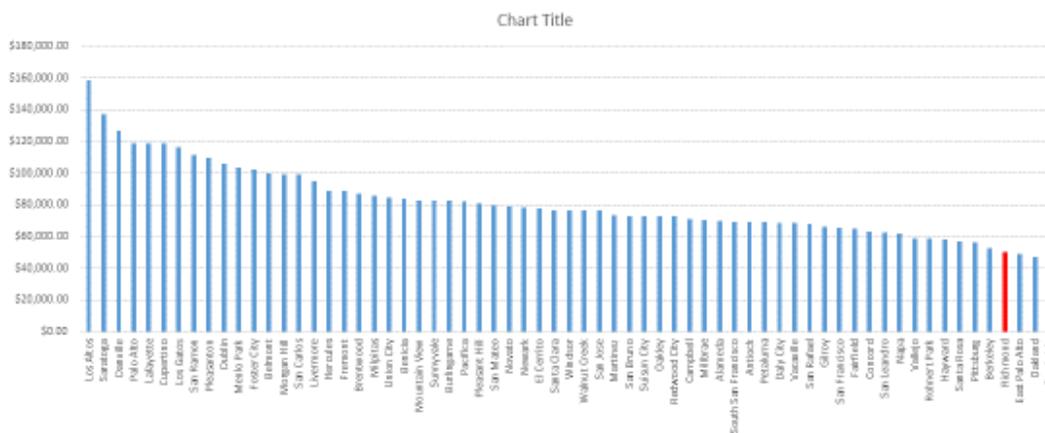
Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell

- The Mayor's Office launched a [branding and marketing study](#) for Richmond, entirely funded by donations.

- Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front Park Ranger [Betty Soskin](#) continues to garner national publicity, capping 2015 by [introducing President Obama at the National Christmas Tree Lighting](#) Ceremony.
- The EPA recognized Richmond as a [Green Power Community](#).
- The draft [Richmond Bay Specific Plan](#) was completed with public comment due in December 2015, and the [South Richmond Transportation Connectivity Plan](#) was adopted.

Richmond remains a challenging and complex City to manage and govern. Trying to maintain an acceptable level of services and quality of life while balancing the budget is the most challenging part of all.

Median Household Income – Bay Area Cities



Richmond is a poor city but with greater needs, compared to others in the Bay Area, ranking fourth from the bottom in median household income. This translates into comparatively low disposable incomes, low retail sales and low property values, both major sources of municipal revenue

Top Richmond Stories of 2015

Vacant City Council Seat

Choosing my replacement set the tone for what proved to be the beginning of a politically contentious year. Fresh from a triple victory in the November 2014 election that vanquished Chevron’s \$3 million campaign, the RPA entered 2015 with a sense of mandate and entitlement to choose the new member.

The rest of the City Council, however, was looking for a little more balance.

With a field of 18 contenders to choose from, the RPA Councilmembers at first refused to vote for anyone other than Marilyn Langlois, their first choice, and Claudia Jimenez, their second choice, even though the handwriting was on the wall that neither would be successful. Both are RPA stalwarts.

On February 10, 2015, *Chronicle* columnist Chip Johnson wrote:

Richmond Progressive Alliance members, who carry forward decisions made by a steering committee, don’t have the authority to compromise on proposals without checking with their membership first. That’s not a good arrangement, and it smacks of trouble down the line.

If that group gained a majority, there would be nothing to stop it from deciding public policy from behind the doors of their offices on Macdonald Avenue, taking it to the council and simply dictating city policy.

While it may serve the interests of politicians and their supporters, it doesn't do much to advance the idea of an open democratic process.

On February 18, 2015, John Geluardi wrote in the *East Bay Express*:

Richmond city councilmembers again failed to appoint a seventh member to the council last night. The council meeting, at times, resembled an awkward power grab by the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA). The council now has three more meetings to reach agreement on a seventh member or the decision goes to the voters in what promises to become a very expensive election.

The first vote was taken February 10, and the second February 17, both without a winner.

	McLaughlin	Martinez	Beckles	Myrick	Butt	Bates
Langlois	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Abstain	Abstain
Lane	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Yes	Yes	Abstain
Donoso	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jimenez	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain
Sibley	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Yes	Yes	Abstain
Corbin	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Yes	Yes	Abstain
Choi	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Yes	Yes	Abstain
King				Motion		

February 10, 2015, City Council Vote
Distribution

	McLaughlin	Martinez	Beckles	Myrick	Butt	Bates
Lane	Abstain	Abstain	No	Yes	Yes	Abstain
Pimple	Abstain	Yes	No	Abstain	Abstain	Yes

February 17, 2015 City Council Vote
Distribution

The third time was charmed. On February 24, nominations for Raquel Donoso, Marilyn Langlois and Claudia Jimenez failed, but Council Member Eduardo Martinez broke the impasse by nominating Vinay Pimplé, seconded by Councilmember Bates. In a surprise that left the entire City Council speechless, [the motion passed](#) with Bates, Martinez, Myrick and Butt voting yes and Councilmembers Beckles and McLaughlin abstaining.

The result was both a [shock and a surprise](#) for everyone, including Pimplé.

The irony is that the RPA probably could have gained an ally if they had not been so intransigent. Instead, they got Pimplé, who seldom, if ever, sided with the RPA on anything controversial.

Rent Control

Rent Control became a roller coaster issue that dominated City Council discourse and ate up a huge amount of staff time in 2015, all of which eventually came to naught. Nothing [polarized the City Council](#) more than rent control.

Only a week after Pimplé was sworn on March 10, the RPA rolled out their flagship issue for 2015, rent control and just cause. Members of the RPA “affiliate organization,” ACCE packed the City Council chamber, “calling on the City Council to pass Rent Control and a Just Cause Eviction ordinance.”



[25 ACCE members and 15 of their kids turned out for the Richmond City Council Tuesday night calling on the City Council to pass Rent Control and a Just Cause Eviction ordinance. 7 new community leaders spoke about the 20% rent increase and bad conditions at their building, 1200 and 1300 Bissell Ave. One ACCE member asked the city council if they were going to side with the people or with the "abusers." The leaders gave really great testimonies especially about their health and safety concerns for their kids.](#)(Source: ACCE)

The RPA found a new ally and potential fourth vote in Vice-Mayor Myrick, who fired the first salvo [by pitching a 45-day moratorium](#):

Richmond Vice-mayor Jael Myrick says now is the time to discuss whether rent control is the right call for the city.

Today, Myrick confirmed to the *Richmond Standard* what he first told the [San Jose Mercury News](#), that he's planning to pitch a 45-day moratorium on rent increases and evictions in the city, saying a temporary freeze would inspire a more "sober, reflective" conversation on a heated topic.

The vice mayor said he's still hashing out the details of his proposal, but hopes to have it on the April 21 council agenda. "It's a very tough issue," he said.

However, a moratorium requires a super majority, and the required five votes were not there. On May 11, 2015, [Richmond Confidential Reporter Fabian Graber wrote](#):

Advocates for stronger tenant protections in Richmond received support last week when the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA) decided to join their efforts. The RPA is an influential political player in the city, with members—Jovanka Beckles, Eduardo Martinez, and Gayle McLaughlin—holding three of the seven seats on the city council.

The group's steering committee voted on Wednesday "to reaffirm and update its historical position" in support of just cause protections against eviction and a "fair rent" ordinance, said Marilyn Langlois, a coordinator with the organization. Just cause for eviction policies commonly list a set of conditions under which a tenant can be rightfully evicted, while fair rent policies, sometimes also referred to as rent control or rent stabilization, aim to limit yearly rent increases to a certain percentage.

Langlois said the RPA's steering committee also voted to join "a growing community" of organizations advocating these issues, spearheaded by the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), a non-profit community organization that recently [supported Richmond tenants in a partial rent strike](#).

RPA Coordinator Mike Parker wrote in *Beyond Chron* on April 27, 2015, "[Richmond Mayor Butt is Wrong on Rent Control](#)," "Richmond Mayor Tom Butt has set himself up to be the spokesman for landlords in a campaign against rent control in Richmond."

By July, the battle over rent control had [divided the City Council](#) on other issues as well and triggered personal attacks. On July 1, [Mike Aldax wrote](#):

The increasingly contentious relationship between Mayor Tom Butt and members of the Richmond Progressive Alliance on City Council boiled over Wednesday, with the mayor slamming the RPA for pandering to public employee unions in the city budget and for voting to move a vintage World War II cargo ship away from the national historical museum.

The vote to move the SS Red Oak Victory to Basin 5, away from the Rosie the Riveter National Historical Museum, “apparently signal(s) an end to a long and productive working relationship between me and the RPA whose support and votes could have turned the tide in a different direction,” the mayor wrote on his e-forum following the Tuesday night council meeting. “We have collaborated for years ... but it appears the RPA now wants to go a different direction.”

In mid-July, Vice-mayor Myrick, publicly stated that he would not support Option D (full rent control and just cause) but would support Option C (Mediation). Myrick contacted the press with his position on July 17, and the *Contra Costa Times* wrote, “It appears Richmond won't be joining the list of Bay Area cities that have enacted rent control after the swing City Council vote said Friday he would not support the proposal unless significant changes are made.” The presumption was that the RPA Councilmembers would not blink and compromise, but they did. On July 21, 2015, Myrick and McLaughlin agreed to changes and Myrick advised that he would be supporting Option D.

Eventually in a pair of special meetings called in August past the start of the scheduled annual vacation time for the City Council, the RPA Councilmembers and Vice-mayor Myrick powered through an ordinance, only to see it suspended a month later.

On September 3, 2015, [signatures for referendum on rent control were submitted to the city clerk](#). On November 3, 2015, the City Council [voted unanimously to repeal the rent control ordinance](#) rather than send it to an election.

Councilwoman Gayle McLaughlin, who supports rent control, said coalition groups are drafting a new policy with simpler and clearer language to be voted on by the city council in the near future. Once the ordinance is passed, it will be put up for a referendum for Richmond voters. (*Contra Costa Times*, 11/4/2015)

On December 22, 2015, Mike Parker said in a [Richmond Pulse interview](#):

So we felt that if we had to go to the ballot box, we should write it for the ballot box; that is, write a new ordinance, where you allow for certain things to be adjustable by the City Council. A coalition of groups is working on this, and the plan is to put rent control on the ballot in November. [City Council member] Jael Myrick has had a change of heart about whether to promote the rent control ordinance, so we may have to put it on the ballot by collecting signatures. But if that's what we have to do, it's what we have to do.

The good news is that whatever happens to the rent control initiative the RPA intends to petition for the November 2016 ballot, it will not consume City Council debate like it did in 2015.

Promise Program

On July 29, Chevron made the [first down payment of \\$8 million for the \\$35 million Promise Program](#), setting off a [feeding frenzy](#) that wasn't resolved until December when everyone got crumbs of what once looked like a large pie.

UC Berkeley Global Campus

With a dearth of funding for the originally conceived Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), UC Berkeley reimagined the site as the [UC Berkeley Global Campus](#).

Chancellor Nicholas Dirks has proposed that the Berkeley Global Campus at Richmond Bay will be “a new form of international hub” in which a group of leading foreign universities and technology companies will establish satellite locations on a 130-acre parcel of Berkeley-owned land located a mere 10 miles from the main campus. The plan is for foreign university partners to collaborate with Berkeley on research and the delivery of degree programs, and Dirks has laid out a broad [educational vision](#) for a “Global College,” to be developed with the partner universities, that would aim to equip students “with the tools to tackle global challenges through a curriculum centered on global governance, ethics, and political economy; cultural and international relations.”

The grand Global campus vision has yet to attract any money. It has no buildings under construction, no employees and no tangible future. But what it has [attracted is the attention of community activists and labor](#)

[unions](#) who are trying to use it as a fulcrum to pry resources and concessions from UC Berkeley to build affordable housing, guarantee local jobs, set minimum wages and accrue benefits for UC Berkeley unionized workers.

Magnus Goes; Lindsay Stays

Since Police Chief Chris Magnus announced his acceptance of the police chief job in Tucson, his departure has dominated the news with praise and best wishes. Magnus is widely credited with the plummeting Richmond crime rate, especially homicides, during his nine-year tenure. His holding of a “Black Lives Matter” sign during a local demonstration brought him nationwide positive recognition as well as some criticism. Richmond’s enviable record of police encounters without violent or deadly outcomes, more effective community policing and increased trust in the Police Department by the community, recognized in a visit by Attorney General Loretta Lynch in September, has also been attributed to Magnus.

While Magnus’ departure leaves an enviable legacy, it is unfortunate that he was not able to leave at the top of his game. [Richmond homicides nearly doubled from 2014 to 2015, and violent crime rose 15%](#). The “Richmond Miracle” proved not to be as durable as we all wished, and whoever succeeds Magnus faces a tough job trying to reverse the recent trend.

On December 30, 2015, before Richmond’s 21st homicide, Chief Magnus wrote:

Although 2015 was a year of considerable progress in policing and public safety in Richmond, like many larger urban cities around the country, we had an increase in homicides this year. Unfortunately, there is no clear reason for this. Many of our homicides continue to be either gang related or a result of personal disputes between individuals who know each other.

The increase in homicides this year reinforces the need to provide more resources for the Ceasefire program and “double down” on community efforts to discourage retaliatory gun violence. A large number of Richmond homicide cases are extremely difficult to solve either because there were no witnesses or because the witnesses who know something about a case are unwilling to cooperate and provide information.

We are fortunate that the Contra Costa District Attorney’s Office, under the leadership of District Attorney Mark Peterson, devoted considerable resources towards homicide reduction in Richmond this year, including bringing regional and federal law enforcement partners together on a quarterly (or sometimes more frequent) basis to analyze each homicide case, strategize collectively on enforcement and prevention efforts, and make all possible efforts to solve these cases.

To date, we have had 20 homicides total. The clearances and status of the cases are as follows:

A/C (Arrest Complaint)—5

A/E (Arrest Exception)—1

O/E (Otherwise Exceptional)—1

PD (Pending)—12 (two of the 12 pending are double homicides/so actually one investigation but 2 victims on each)

I/A (Inactive)—1

7 of the 20 cases have been solved so far.

Crime numbers overall are still being compiled and final totals for the year will not be available for at least another month. The department experienced a major hardware and software failure involving its Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) in November that resulted in significant data loss from August forward. Significant efforts are underway to recover as much of this data as possible, but in the short-term, this system failure has impacted our ability to provide accurate crime numbers.

As of November, the Part I Crime data trends indicated that violent crime was up approximately 15% compared to 2014. Much of this was a result of significant increases in robberies that took place during the

spring and summer months. Large investments of enforcement and prevention work helped reduce the number of robberies in the fall, but much of the damage was already done.

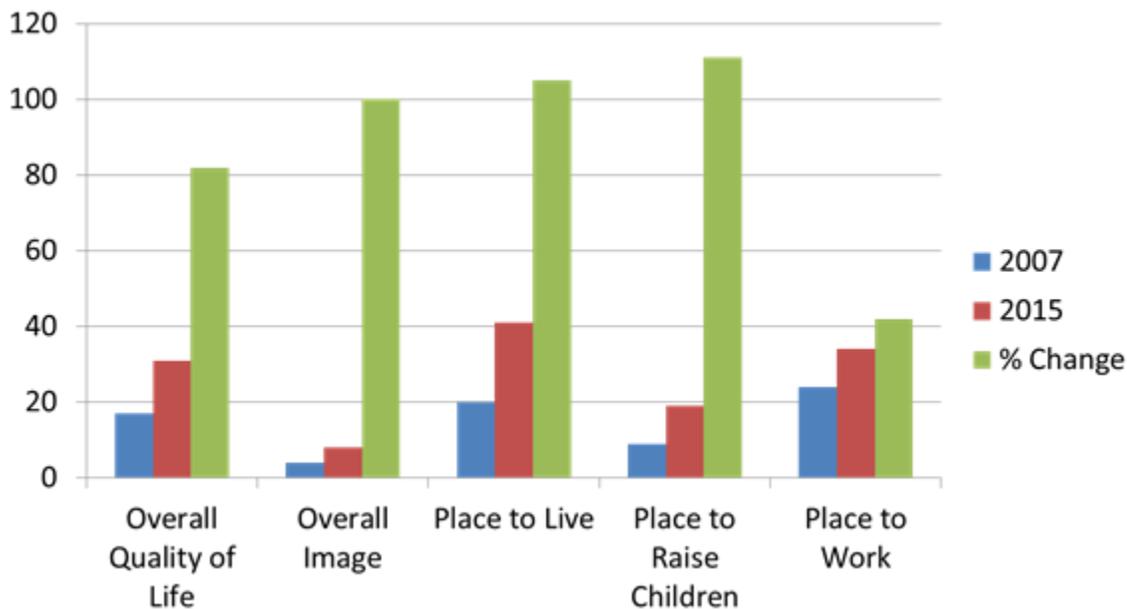
Property crime numbers appear to have leveled off after increases earlier in the year. As of November, there appears to be no net increase in property crimes compared to last year.

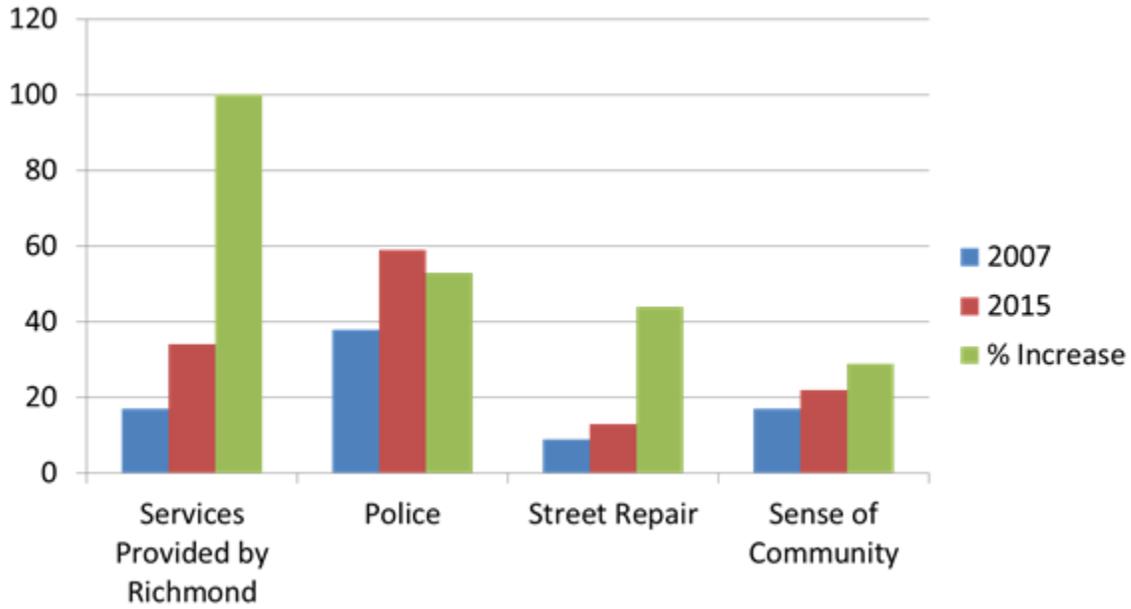
If there is an upside to Magnus' departure it is the changed culture in the Police Department and a cadre of senior leadership that evolved during Magnus' tenure. This year, to Magnus' credit, one of his former captains, [Manjit Sappal, was hired as chief of the Martinez Police Department.](#)

The *Contra Costa Times* was [effusive in its praise of Magnus](#) while at the same time vilifying and calling for the termination of Bill Lindsay who made the visionary and controversial decision to hire Magnus in 2006. It's ironic that the *Contra Costa Times* continues to criticize Lindsay for overspending when more than half (45%) of the General Fund budget is for police. The [NRN presentation of December 15, 2015](#), noted that Richmond spends more than any comparator city for police. Magnus has acknowledged more than once that one of the key reasons for his success has been the willingness of the city manager and City Council to sustain full funding of the Police Department during the recession.

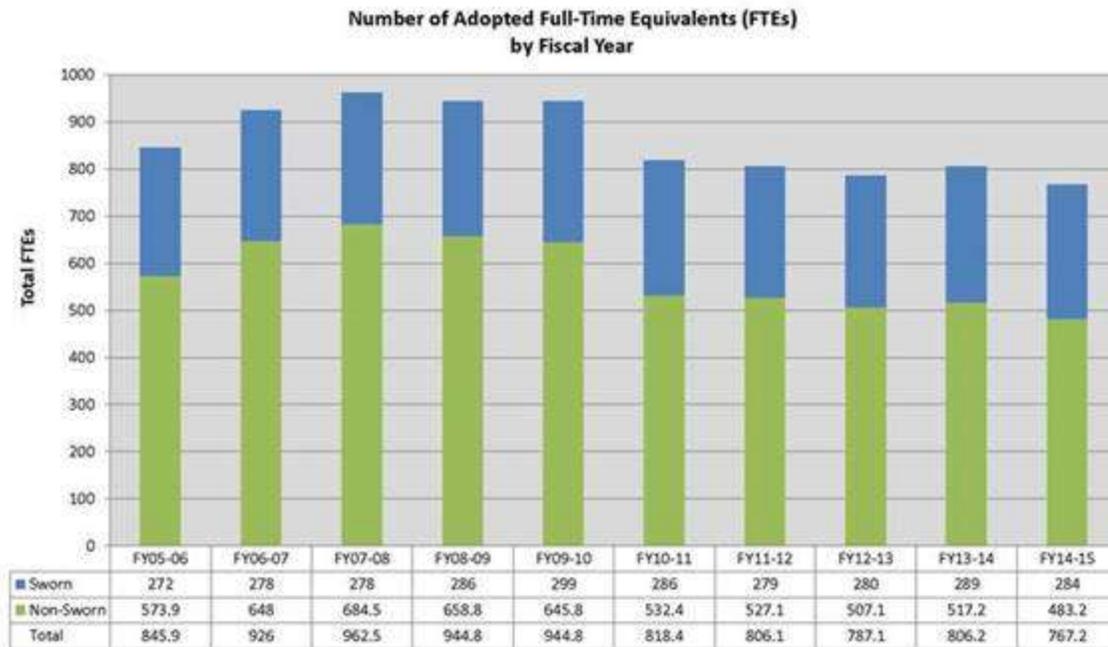
On November 17, 2015, the [City Council voted 5-2 to extend Bill Lindsay's contract for another four years](#), with Bates and Pimple opposing. Bates said his opposition was based on Lindsay's failure to fire department heads such as Richmond Housing Authority Director Tim Jones and former Human Resources Director/Assistant City Manager Leslie Knight. He also said four years was too long. Pimple said his concerns were the amount of compensation and the City's bond rating downgrades. I think both of them were terribly wrong. Bill Lindsay [is largely responsible for turning around Richmond](#), and we are lucky to have him.

In 2007 Richmond began participating in the semi-annual [National Citizen Surveys](#), which measure dozens of metrics related to city conditions, perceptions and services. Richmond has made dramatic improvement during Lindsay's ten-year term as city manager with the support of a progressive city council. See the charts below with examples of metrics from the National Citizen Survey that cover just the last eight years in Richmond.





Lindsay has accomplished all this with a 27% reduction in the City’s workforce, which stands at 700 today compared to 962 in 2007-08.



Today, virtually of the statistics relating to Richmond’s financial health are trending upward.

Hacienda

The Hacienda is remarkable this year only for the news it didn't generate.

In 2014, after the Center for Investigative Reporting's Amy Julia Harris wrote sensational yellow press exposes of Richmond's Housing Authority, the Hacienda was the rallying cry for anyone and everyone critical of anything in Richmond, with the Hacienda becoming much more than a building long past its prime. It morphed into a political symbol embraced by both the RPA and their arch enemies, Bates and Booze, as a measure of how much compassion they had for the elderly, the infirm and people of color. Without thinking through the consequences, they both rallied for immediate relocation of the residents and demolition of the offending structure.

In January 2015, the Richmond Housing Authority received approval from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the disposition of the Hacienda public housing development and approval of Tenant Protection Section 8 Vouchers to assist in the relocation of the residents. The Housing Authority retained the professional firm of Autotemp to provide relocation assistance for the residents. As of the Week ending December 18, 2015, the following relocation activity has occurred:

Total # of units 101	11-13-2015	11-20-2015	11-27-2015	12-4-2015	12-11-2015	12-18-2015
Tenants interviewed	98	98	98	98	98	98
Vouchers Issued	97	97	97	97	97	97
Inspections Conducted	59	62	62	62	62	62
Req. to port out of RHA	22	22	22	22	22	22
Applications Submitted	93	93	93	93	93	93
Relocations completed	47	50	54	55	56	58

In addition to the 58 completed relocations, 37 Hacienda households have been accepted with approved applications and unit assignments at the newly constructed Harbor View Senior Apartments, with Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections pending issuance of Certificates of Occupancy, bringing the total number of Hacienda residents that have found replacement housing to 95. Of the completed relocations, eleven households have successfully leased-up outside Richmond Housing Authority jurisdiction from Sacramento to Los Angeles and throughout the Bay Area; two of them have successfully leased-up outside the State of California (New Jersey and Arizona).

In addition to resolving the Hacienda issue, Housing Authority Director Tim Jones has taken over the responsibilities of the former redevelopment agency related to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and [HOME](#) funds and resolved issues with HUD by participating in the Contra Costa CDBG Urban County program.

Mr. Jones has also been successful in securing HUD approval for transition of all [remaining Richmond public housing](#) to the [HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration \(RAD\) program](#), and getting Richmond out of the underfunded management responsibility for public housing.

How Did my Predictions for 2015 Turn Out?

It looks like I got four out of nine. In baseball, that would be a good batting average.

Vacant Seat

Prediction: The City Council will not be able to agree on a replacement for the vacant seat, and an election will occur, which Jim Rogers will win.

What Happened: After weeks of posturing, the City Council selected Vinay Pimple.

Chevron

Prediction: The Chevron Refinery Hydrogen project will be permitted, and construction will resume.

What Happened: Permits have been issued, and any construction delays are internal to Chevron

Point Molate

Prediction: The Point Molate Litigation with Upstream and Guidiville will be resolved, and Point Molate will begin to be developed using the “Presidio Trust” model.

What Happened: No significant change, but the City has prevailed on several important points and motions. The litigation with Upstream is on appeal.

Crime

Prediction: Crime, including homicides will continue to drop.

What Happened: Crime, including homicides, rose.

Eminent Domain

Prediction: The eminent domain initiative will not be implemented.

What Happened: The eminent domain initiative is dead

Quiet Zones

Prediction: Quiet Zones will be expanded.

What Happened: While not technically a quiet zone issue, the completion of the North Richmond Interconnect has taken almost all the long trains off the south Richmond rail system, almost eliminating nighttime horn blowing at grade crossings.

Property Tax Revenue

Prediction: Property tax revenue will rise.

What Happened: Property tax revenue rose substantially in 2015.

Hacienda

Prediction: Residents of The Hacienda will be relocated.

What Happened: While still in progress, all relocations have been funded and are in progress. 58 of 98 residents have been relocated.

FORUM Readers' Choices

E-FORUM Readers – The Best of 2015

(Uncensored comments from E-FORUM readers)

Chief Magnus

- *Outstanding City Employee: Chief Chris Magnus. He, along with his comrades, have made such a positive impact upon the community. Changed the way many view RPD.*
- *Worst thing to happen to Richmond: Chief Magnus is leaving. This is going to leave some very large shoes to fill. Hopefully our next Chief will be as progressive.*
- *I think the worst thing to happen to Richmond this year is losing our fine Chief of Police and the best thing is keeping our fine City Manager.*
- *Bill Lindsay, and Chris Magnus are the best, possibly in the whole country.*

Lina Velasco

- *I will focus on the Terminal One project. My comments are my own personal opinions, and I am not speaking for People for a Healthy Shoreline.*

Lina Velasco has done an outstanding job under what I suspect have been very difficult circumstances. She is head and shoulders above anyone else I have seen from Planning. She would make a very good replacement for Richard Mitchel, who I believe distorts the facts on a regular basis. Please get rid of him.

I consider the lack of reply to an email to the City Clerk regarding City Council Resolution 114, which I presume was on the advice of the City Attorney to be taking the easy way out, and to be unprofessional and disrespectful. I don't think you would have to look too hard to find a better City Attorney.

I have also had several emails to Planning not responded to, again presumably on legal advice. Again, I find this to be unprofessional and disrespectful. James, the attorney for Planning is, in my opinion, a total lightweight.

Pogo Park

- *Another great thing is Pogo Park*

Ferry

- *The ferry will be another fine thing*

Bill Lindsay

- *Bill Lindsay, and Chris Magnus are the best, possibly in the whole country.*
- *City Council renewing contract with City Manager Bill Lindsay*
- *Bill Lindsay is a treasure; we are lucky to have such an intelligent, patient, competent, innovative thinking city manager. Curbing fire department and police overtime and funding municipal pension liability are*

modern urban problems that are not unique to Richmond.

Vinay Pimple

- *Oh - and ONE GOOD THING happened: Vinay Pimple. The ONLY voice of sanity.*
- *On a separate subject, I think the selection of Vinay Pimple was very good, and hope you will do all you can to help him get elected at the next election.*

Nat Bates

- *One more thing: I actually like and respect Nat Bates more and more.*

RPA

- *Some of the best and worst of what's happening in Richmond politics is the RPA. In the best corner is the RPA's ability to forge a coalition of Richmond voters to win a sizable election victory, against almost unlimited money, to finally wrest control of the City Council away from the clutches of Chevron for the first time in memory. It feels great to be in a town not 'owned' by Chevron!*

Tom Butt

- *In the best corner I have Mayor Tom Butt. I appreciate his straight shooting, sometimes humorous, no nonsense talk about City issues.*
- *Overall, I think you are doing a good job. Thanks for all your hard work.*

Richmond Art Center

- *I want to give kudos to the Richmond Art Center, one of the truly great organizations in Richmond. I went to the Holiday Arts Festival last Saturday... it was merry, full of good cheer with wonderful art to look at with plenty of bargains for holiday gifts. Kids took home creations they had made and everyone was welcome. The Art Center is celebrating its 80th year in 2016... it's the largest visual center in the East Bay and truly a Richmond gem.*
- *When I bring someone to the Richmond Art Center for the first time, they usually say something like, "Wow, this is really an impressive place... what a wonderful free exhibition space, and look at the well-equipped studios, and oh, the Art in the Community program is in schools all over Richmond?... I never knew it was here!" Yes, for the last 80 years. And yes, it's right in the Civic Center!*

Warren Williams

- *Streets Superintendent Warren Williams for accomplishing so much with a limited budget*

My Predictions for 2016

1. The City Council will pass a structurally balanced budget for FY 2015-16, and the City's bond ratings will be restored.
2. All incumbents will be reelected to the Richmond City Council.
3. The City's crime rate, including homicides, will go back down.
4. None of the ballot initiatives, including rent control, city manager compensation and Richmond Riviera, will succeed in the November elections.
5. The City of Richmond litigation against Chevron will be settled.
6. The Point Molate litigation with Upstream and Guidiville will be resolved, and Point Molate will begin to be developed using the "Presidio Trust" model.
7. The Global campus will continue to languish.
8. The City Council will have a much less contentious year than 2015.
9. A Climate Action Plan and new Zoning Ordinance will be adopted
10. Richmond will have a Branding and Marketing Plan.

Happy New Year!

Tom Butt