



The Cotati Independent

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City Tax Overcharges May Approach \$1 Million

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker

(Cotati, CA) - Last month, this newspaper followed a story first reported in The Press Democrat that the City of Cotati overcharged home sellers \$171,924 in the past five years by imposing an illegal document transfer fee. **But a recent city document suggests the real amount taken illegally could be close to one million dollars.**

On Feb 15, we filed a Public Records Act Request with the city, which asked how the

city intends to repay its victims, how long this theft has been going on, and who noticed there was a problem. Instead of telling us they are working hard to right the wrong they have done, the city sounds like felons who are hiding behind their lawyer. Here is their response, verbatim: **"Your letter appears to be premised on the assumption that home buyers are entitled to refunds for documentary transfer tax payments which may not be the case based on state law. That having been said, although it is difficult to respond to**

your inquiries in a vacuum, please be advised that any claim brought to the City will be considered and analyzed on a case by case basis and the city will respond accordingly."

Note: The City's answer mentions home buyers, when this paper's request mentioned home sellers, who are typically the ones charged document transfer taxes. But let's look at a bigger question. If a friend accidentally left a \$20 bill at your house, and called to ask if you found it, would you say "Your

call appears to be premised on the assumption that I should give your money back which may not be the case based on state law." ?

The other answer that the City provided was equally surprising. They told this newspaper that the illegal overcharges went into effect on October 24, 1990, and were not returned to the legal percentage until October 26, 2011. **They overcharged citizens for 21 years, so the real crime could be close to a million dollars.** -Continued on Page 8

Cotati Man Receives Surprise Love Letter from Michelle Obama

A hard to believe story by Greg Karraker



Greg --

I see this happen a lot: Someone in a crowd yells at my husband, "We love you, Barack." That's when he interrupts himself, smiles really big, and says, "I love you back." And he does.

That's why Barack's dinners with supporters mean so much to him -- because they give him a chance to show it and to say thanks.

I can say from experience you won't want to miss out on the next dinner. I hope you'll consider donating \$3 -- or whatever you can to support the campaign -- and be automatically entered today: <https://donate.barackobama.com/Dinners-with-Barack>

Thank you,
Michelle

I'm sure those dinners are swell affairs, hardly different from the \$38,500 a plate dinners Barack usually has with his Pacific Heights pals. I'll bet there's lots of Baby Back Ribs, Bacon Cheeseburgers, Beer Summit Beers, and even a cigarette or two on the porch, while Barack talks about how well Michelle's anti-obesity campaign is going.

But I'm sorry to say that I won't be sending Michelle \$3 no matter how much the First Family loves me back. Cotati is the only place I know where \$3 bills are accepted currency, and I think they're all part of the city's budget surplus, locked up in a vault somewhere in City Hall.

It was a typical March Friday in Cotati. The weeds in the empty lots of the Northern Gateway were limp with drizzle. City Hall was closed up tighter than Jimmy Hoffa's mouth taking the Fifth. City staff were well into their weekly three-day weekends, snug and cozy in their Santa Rosa and Sebastopol homes.

But suddenly, the clouds opened and this reporter experienced a miracle. Standing in the Express Line at Oliver's Market as I often do — never seeing city council members or staff there in my daily visits — I used my iPhone to check my email and found a note from Michelle Obama. Its subject line boldly stated, "I love you back." The full text of her letter appears here:

New Taxes May Be Needed to Fund Downtown Roundabouts and More

Story, photo, and opinion by George Barich



Cotati City Manager Diane Thompson advocates more taxes and fees

(Cotati,CA) City Hall is scrambling to find new and creative ways to fill holes in its budget after the recent loss of state redevelopment funds, courtesy of the State of California which is currently financially underwater itself. Since thinking outside the box is a scarce commodity at City Hall, word is they are going back to the tried and true idea of pushing the community into raising the sales tax rate again and raising the city fee schedule which is already among the highest in the county.

Now that the state has hit the wall and run out of money with little chance of passing any new tax measures this June, the city is taking this fact into consideration coupled with the fact that President Obama won't be bailing out any cities in America anytime soon.

This leaves Cotati in a perilous situation with a \$73 million Downtown Specific Plan which is full of roundabout designs, much narrower streets than before, four-story building requirements in the downtown area, and absolutely no money to pay for any of it.

So, according to our sources, the city is considering raising sales taxes to a whopping 9.5% with the idea the community has already paid this amount before and shouldn't really feel the pain. The State of California reduced its sales tax rate by 1% last year, bringing our current sales tax down from 9.5% to 8.5%. City Hall knows that Cotati citizens and businesses passed Measure A which raised the sales taxes to 9.5%, so why not try it again and

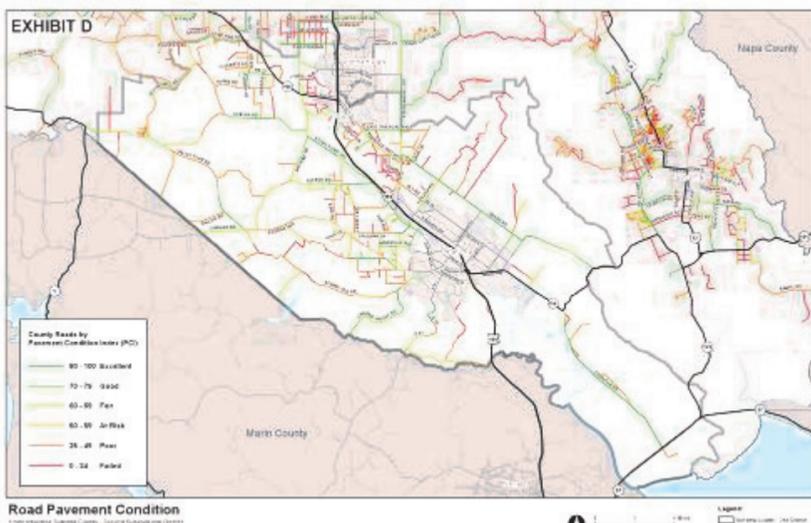
simply return the sales tax rate back up to where it was, which would be a complete windfall for City Hall?

Rumor is that calls are being made to the same consulting firm Cotati used last time for a mere \$28,000 to consider using them again to survey the community and prepare for another propaganda campaign in hopes that the majority of residents will approve raising sales taxes again.

Measure A, the half cent increase in sales tax passed three years ago, sunsets and goes bye-bye in two more years. Another increase in sales tax of 0.5 – 1.5% over the next five years would do one of a few possible things: It could raise city revenue projections considerably and help fund a multimillion dollar bond measure which would be needed to pay for the public sector portion of the DSP, since the city has no money for such a project. The other option is that Cotati shoppers would begin spending more of their money outside the city to avoid the higher tax rate. Another possibility is that to be competitive, more Cotati businesses would simply throw in the towel and move their operations down the road to friendlier cities. Another possibility is that Cotati's reputation as being the most business unfriendly in the county and the most difficult town to work with would send a crushing blow to land developers who might be looking at Cotati's large inventory of undeveloped property to build on. -Continued on Page 9

Sonoma County Roads and Cotati Streets Failing While Millions of Tax Dollars Wasted on Useless Projects

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker



County Road Conditions: Deep In The Red

(Rohnert Park, CA) In a packed meeting at Sally Tomatoes sponsored by Save Our Sonoma Roads (www.sosroads.com) Sonoma County Director of Transportation and Public Works Phil Demery told the audience that the state of Sonoma County roads is declining rapidly, and there is little hope for improvement in the near future. How bad is it?

In the map above, any road in green or chartreuse is considered to be in good condi-

tion, and any road in red has failed, which means it should be pulverized and completely replaced, at a cost of \$400,000 per mile. There's a lot of red in that map, with a lot more orange (poor condition) right behind it. There are 1,384 miles of road in Sonoma County, and that total doesn't include city streets.

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April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) is an annual campaign to raise public awareness about sexual assault and educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence.

Each year during the month of April, state, territory, tribal and community-based organizations, rape crisis centers, government agencies, businesses, campuses and individuals plan events and activities to highlight sexual violence as a public health, human rights and social justice issue and reinforce the need for prevention efforts. Cotati City Hall has never formally recognized SAAM. They have been a little busy with roundabouts, traffic calming, and new tax

hikes.

The theme, slogan, resources and materials for the national SAAM campaign are coordinated by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center each year with assistance from anti-sexual assault organizations throughout the United States.

As early as 1976, Take Back the Night marches rallied women in organized protest against rape and sexual assault. These marches protested the violence and fear that women encountered walking the streets at night. Over time these events coordinated into a movement across the United States and Europe.

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Is fighting for Cotati worth the effort?

Depending on who you talk to, the answers vary. For me, the question has been asked and answered, or you wouldn't be reading this column. Although I still get asked this question from time to time from residents and business owners in town. It always has me scrambling for a coherent explanation of my position with a bit of a lump in my throat. For hundreds, maybe thousands of people who have chosen to leave Cotati to its own devices out of disgust, dismay, or sheer frustration with a city hall gone wild, the question has already been asked and answered as well. These former Cotati business owners, potential developers, students, renters, and homeowners are long gone for a variety of reasons. So, what about the rest of us who still live or work here and left holding the bag?

City Hall's idea that the town should be socially engineered and centrally planned from top to bottom by city staffers who live miles away has run its course and proven a complete failure (thanks in large part to state and federal grant funding which has all but dried up). City council meetings don't last beyond a half hour these days because the city appears paralyzed on what to do next. Yet they still use a little electronic timer to prohibit citizens from speaking more than three minutes. Apparently, they have better things to do with their time than listen to taxpayers speak. What do we citizens know? We're all stupid and ignorant to them.

This current council is stiff, lifeless, stone-faced, inhospitable, defeated and as demoralized-looking a bunch as I have seen in the 15 years since I moved here. With the loss of state RDA funding from the Nanny State of California that has apparently run out of credit options, the council looks like they have been beat up in a dark alleyway. They simply appear too depressed to come up with new ideas, have no suggestions on what to put on future meeting agendas to make it worth anyone's time who is not on the city's payroll to show up and participate. They can't lead the community without outside funding of some kind, have rejected city volunteers as a partial solution to make ends meet, and are simply waiting for Obama's next series of bailouts to cities and states, which appears to be wishful thinking at this point.

A town the size of Cotati should have millions of dollars in reserve for a rainy day and for current and future capital repairs had the town been managed responsibly. Those days are long gone since Janet Orchard and Pat Gilardi came on board to fund everything from million dollar community room remodels that few people use, to buying open space in the heart of town for an eternal sheep pasture. The Cotati Police K9 Unit is forced to beg for donations to keep the pooch fed and trained.

The city deals with a number of lawsuits against them from behind closed doors while not uttering a word about them to the taxpayers. The city engineer clearly sees the handwriting is on the wall regarding ongoing city maintenance needs that this council ignores. He can't possibly fix what really needs to be addressed in Cotati with his paltry budget. Our tiny town has been strapped with \$73 million in liabilities which is hard to conceptualize, even for me. City Hall will be arm wrestling the state government for money for years to come to keep Cotati from going into receivership. This will be a bloody fight to be sure as the finger pointing will get more apparent come re-election time when the propaganda gets thick.

For people like me, Cotati is worth fighting for, not by raising our taxes and playing games with the city budget like they have been doing for so long. Let me explain. Many of us can't afford to move to greener pastures even if we wanted to in this crappy economy being passed off as some recovery. People like me are kinda' stuck here in Cotati, love it or not. Despite city efforts to discourage and silence people like me at every possible opportunity, we fight the good fight despite the browbeating and sour faces city leaders and their cronies give us at city council meetings when we walk through the door.

There are a few good people who are trying to save Cotati from eventually merging with Rohnert Park. Councilwoman Pat Gilardi said that merging will happen only over her dead body as long as Prue Draper is alive (Pat knows who butters her bread). We continue to watch our police department scramble to provide adequate protection while our police officers flat out quit, get fired, or go out on disability at an alarming rate. Now, Cotati cops take me out to lunch from time to time to explain to me what's really going on inside City Hall, but they refuse to be quoted for a story for fear of retaliation. Morale within the police department is very low despite building them a new \$5 million dollar police station that will cost over \$25 million including the interest over thirty years!

Bottom line is the people of Cotati own this town and need to take it back before it's too late. These "people" include the Cotati business owners who live outside of town who bring in the taxes that pays the city's bills, the people who reside just outside the city limits who spend their money in Cotati every day by the truckload, and the Cotati residents who actually reside here who often spend much of their money outside of town, and that's a fact.

Unfortunately, our town has been hijacked by a small group of far-left leaning liberals who have never made a payroll in their lives, never ran a successful business to know what it is all about, nor do they really understand how a city budget actually works, especially what's conveniently missing in the budget to make it appear balanced when in fact it does not.

As I have said so many times in the past, anyone can make a budget balance on paper if you just start inflating anticipated revenues beyond what is realistic, and if you ignore the future expenditures that will surely be needed in due time come Hell or high water. "Numbers don't lie, but liars use numbers" is what I was taught in college by seasoned professionals who ran businesses before becoming professors.

Like many cities, the history of Cotati is a case study of political stunts, power grabs and financial kickbacks going back many years and so typical of cities small and large in America. It is interesting to listen to the insights from Cotati folks pertaining to their views of specific council members and the BS city officials and city staff expound from during council meetings twice a month.

I chuckle under my breath when I hear the repetitious comments from our city council officials such as, "The people I talk to are in favor of this..." or "You are just part of that group..." Former Cotati mayor Harold Berkemeier once said on the record, "In all my years living in Cotati, I have never heard a single complaint about any of our police officers..." How is that possible when Harold himself actually sat in a room and listened to at least one police officer apologize to his victim, me? Does anyone remember the night a small group of Cotati youngsters came to a city council meeting with skateboards in hand, and com-



Former Cotati City Councilman
George Barich

"Just My Two Cents"

plained on the record that they were being verbally harassed by police officers for skateboarding on the city tennis courts? One kid, about ten years old, asked how he could file a written complaint against the police in question while his father sat a few rows back smiling with pride. It's madness to suggest Cotati does not have a long history of complaints against our police department. Even police officers themselves routinely complain about each other like school girls. At least one Cotati cop filed a lawsuit alleging an ongoing conspiracy within the police department of wrongdoing (Edward Dorsaneo, 2005, Sonoma County #237361).

Somewhere along the way this city council mistakenly came to the ridiculous conclusion that the only people they represent, or feel accountable to, are those in the community who pat them on the back while telling them how great they all are. I always get disgusted when I see outside consultants (who charge the city thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars for their services) are met at City Hall with hugs from city staff members. Good grief.

I submit that it is the duty of each council member to actually listen to, and assess the value of each and every idea brought forth by any of their peers in the community rather than reject many of those ideas on the basis of from where they emanated. Instead, what we often get from the council is derision and "I take exception to that remark...". Well, all of the exceptions in the world won't counter the facts contained in the common sense arguments against your positions in this diverse community we call Cotati.

I can't remember the last time a single Cotati council member did the decent thing and took the time to actually thank the public for coming to a council meeting and participated as active and responsible citizens. It's so obvious that citizens are in the way at these meetings, it's pathetic. There seem to be no house rules for the public to follow during these meetings, no protocol, so people don't know what to do, how to respond, when to come forward, and appear a bit terrified. And all this is intentional by city council design to make the entire experience as painful as humanly possible for John Q. Public. No wonder few if any citizens show up for these meetings unless they have their hand out for something.

Maybe it's time the community insists Cotati pass a Sunshine Ordinance, which was attempted in the late 1990s by Councilwoman Pia Jensen, but failed for a lack of support on the council. For those of you who don't follow city government or have never attempted to get public information from the city on any aspect of its processes and procedures, I will give you a little primer of what a "sunshine" ordinance is all about. Simply put, those who are proponents want as much light to shine on how the city operates as possible rather than having city business being done in the dark, in back rooms of City Hall, or in Prue Draper's living room, for cryin' out loud.

Those citizens who ask for information from City Hall, who live within city limits or not, shouldn't have to wait weeks to get the information the law allows them access to, shouldn't be given inadequate answers to their questions, shouldn't have to witness such laziness or city attempts to cover up. The Brown Act, the California State code related to government meetings, and the California Public Records Act, both define ways to protect the citizens' interests. Unfortunately, both have been blocked by city attorneys who feel that those elected are smarter and of a higher station than those requesting data. I know for a fact that there was a seminar at a League of California Cities meeting in the past where an attorney stated his purpose there was to show the participants, all elected city officials, ways to get around The Brown Act. Across the state and the nation, citizen involvement is not appreciated and simply gets in the way of their socialist agenda.

Even when decisions have been made, and settlements made, closed session actions are never reported to the public anymore. Information is controlled by the propaganda minister herself, City Manager Dianne Thompson. What is blatantly apparent is that this council loves to keep the public in the dark and has utter disdain for transparency in government. Cotati has an attorney who is not confident in his advice and doesn't like language that puts him on the hook for legal fees if his advice doesn't hold up in court.

Can anyone remember the last time the city council came out and reported on what was decided on in closed session? Anybody? These people think they deserve to be re-elected time and time again, the same people who refuse to return our emails and will never hold office hours for walk-ins? It's all a dog and pony show at City Hall. They don't want us to know any more than they are willing to tell us. They demonize anyone and everyone who does not go along with their radical leftist agenda. Can Cotati be saved? Not with the current minds at City Hall that got us into this mess and who perpetuate it.

Now that the city is under closer scrutiny than ever before by this newspaper, change is in the air. The November elections could see the biggest makeover or takeover of the Cotati City Council in the town's history.

Do we want a government that works for us or the other way around? City Hall and their policies are unsustainable, unworkable, and intellectually dishonest. Economic development is on hold and even the Chamber of Commerce is closed four days a week. That should tell you about a town that has refused to be proactive and is preparing for a miracle because it is out of answers and out of real solutions.



Back to Basics

Guest Editorial by Michael Ceremello

I have been accused of being a “hater of government” by the liberal elitists harboring themselves on my own city’s council. There is some truth in this as I hate what government has become, far from what it was intended to be in our United States. Libertarians, and I am one, have been accused of being outright anarchists. I believe in limited government, as a necessary potential evil, much as our Founding Fathers did rather than no government at all which is not realistic or pragmatic.

With tax season once again upon us, it is incumbent on those of us who would deny the burgeoning of our bureaucracies as some sick manifest destiny in the minds of those who endorse government as the solution to all of our ills, mainly because those who aren’t in government can not fend for themselves in the eyes of bureaucrats, to address exactly what are the responsibilities and duties of those who would lord over us.

So exactly what is it that government should be doing for each of us, the average citizen? I will not bore you liberal looneys with the Founding Fathers’ version known as The Constitution. You people believe that The Constitution is a mutable document, open to interpretation, and adaptable to fit already proven failed economic schemes such as socialism and communism. So let’s look at what you would have government do, then assess whether or not it is possible given any potential economic system.

It seems that the term “cradle to grave” governmental assistance is a philosophy endorsed by most leftists. You want the government to take care of all of your needs from the time of inception to your death. You have given up your right to be an autonomous, self accountable individual with freedom of choice to allowing others to choose for you. When your leaders won’t give you what you want, you are relegated to the role of beggar or whiner until they succumb. If they don’t, you blame your own system for not responding to the spoiled brats they created by breaking the law and expecting to suffer no consequences.

Not only do you expect **YOUR** government to pay for your needs by raping the few productive members of society known as the 1 percenters or “wealthy”, you also expect them to welcome those who come from outside of our borders, who don’t pay into the system any more than you do, and siphon off resources which could potentially be going to those who are legally in our country. Do you see a trend here? There is a push to enable more and more burden on the financial system, a semi-free market system which you refuse to embrace.

That is only one side of the coin. On the other side you also want to lead a life of affluence, where you can have the latest toys and gadgets along with your Prius and a nice home or apartment. Who gets to decide where you live and what you will have? We could reference the old Soviet Union as a marvelous example of how limited resources are meted out by a political elite. I prefer to refer to Michelle and Barry Obama’s feasting on Kobe beef and lobster during the worst economy since the Great Depression. You can eat carrots while they eat caviar.

Let us assume that your system might work. Let us say that those of us who work for a living don’t mind becoming essentially slaves for your survival. Humans, being the critters that we are, will not attempt to innovate or be successful

if we are just given things. Witness the high alcoholism rate in Russia as men sat drinking vodka waiting on their monthly governmental stipend. Witness the lack of meat in their supermarkets. However, this is the reality which we were not discussing.

So we now have a society where the productive have been mind trained to produce for the populace because it is the right thing to do. Rather than earning a living, all wealth is confiscated for redistribution based on “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs”. Remember, unless you are at the decision making top, you don’t get to decide what your needs are. Yet this could still work but is it any more realistic than a libertarian philosophy which relies on self accountability and responsibility for one’s actions?

You now live in those nice little senior apartments behind the 8 Ball in Cotati. A bureaucrat comes along and decides you don’t “need” that much, that “stack and pack” housing is a better solution next to your “SMART” train depot, and you need to be displaced because they have no place for the rednecks from Texas and Nebraska who have been relocated from their family farms because the government has taken them over as “private property is not sustainable” according to the mandates coming out of the UN. You have no problem with that, do you, as you gave up your right to make your own decisions?

Our country, America, is getting closer to this model every day. Almost half of all who reside here do not pay income taxes. That half gets to vote further benefits to themselves from other people’s taxes as they do not pay any. It is only common sense that once the indigent are in the position of the majority, they will continue to expand on a system that works for them: raiding the public treasury for as long as it exists.

This system can only beget jealousy, much as the capitalistic system does. The difference between the liberal socialist/communist model and that of the free market is that in the capitalist system you can choose to change your circumstances for yourself. In the other system, you have to convince your superior that you have a “need”.

On the other hand, let’s say the system is similar to California of today, set for financial implosion as expenses continue to outpace revenues reined in by over regulation of business of all sorts. As someone who works for a living, invests, and lives within my means, do I continue to work for half or less of what I earn? Is my time valuable to me?

You only live once. Time is invested productively according to its benefit. If you take away my ability to make my own choices and to live my own life, I might have to rebel. I could become just another idle spectator watching life go by, waiting for my subsistence check. I might attempt to flee to some last bastion of economic freedom. The State, in the eyes of the bureaucrats, owns me, my potential productivity, my mind and my abilities. The Left will attack those last strongholds in the same way they are attempting and succeeding in bringing the world’s greatest economic powerhouse to its knees. Eventually any economy, even one that usurps the complete productivity of its participants, must deal with making ends meet. There is no creative impetus for revenue enhancement given your governance method of choice. Yet you want to provide services to those who haven’t earned it, who have squandered their income on poor choices, or simply because it is “right” to do so. If the system was working, we wouldn’t have to borrow money from the Chinese or print money while debasing and devaluing what already exists in our hands, wallets, and purses.

According to Obama, we just need to pay our fair share and the rich need to pay a little more. As the song goes, “tax the rich until they’re rich no more”. This is the desire of those jealous of success and too lazy or incompetent to compete.

For those of you who pay no taxes and live off the government dole, you could probably care less about what I am saying. Consider that when the system collapses, you will not have your subsistence check coming. I hope you have your riot gear ready and are into starvation diets.

The US government has well defined roles within the Constitution which have been expanded well beyond the initial intent. Providing for the “general welfare” does not mean getting grant funds to repair the Old Redwood Highway. It doesn’t mean that we will build parks for you. It doesn’t mean that the Federal government should be involved in any way with education. All of these things need to be under local control and by that I don’t mean State control.

Tax money is the life blood of the bureaucrat. He or she can “buy” a constituency. It would be far better to take back money from a government that destroys the value of our currency and finds value in projects such as the “bridge to nowhere” and let individual communities decide how it should be spent.

The simple solution to the situation is user fees. Those that use services get to pay for them. You get to keep all of your money and decide how to divvy it up. You want to use a road, pay the toll. You want a clean environment, pay an extra \$2 for a bottle of whatever. You want a school that teaches Islam or Marxism, then give your money to that school. I shouldn’t be able to choose for you any more than you should for me.

It seems to me that taxation is the enabling device eliminating our freedom of choice. Much as in the Matrix, whose basic muddled message was about Neo’s right to “choose”, choice is essential to human survival. Perhaps you don’t mind being someone else’s automaton or property. You are being controlled whether you want to admit it or not. That is the purpose of a one world government, isn’t it? Do you even realize this or care?

Think about that as you are paying your taxes this year...



Great Ideas, Good Intentions & Reality

By Eric Kirchmann
Cotati

I feel I need to disclose a few things. I am out of town as I write this. In fact I am out of state, but I can see California from here. Some know the joke that Cotati is not the end of the world, but you can see it from there...

Well, it is 2012 and there is an election coming. I am looking down to where many motels once existed, an old time photo shop, T-shirt shacks, and funky stuff that made up the small town character of a place called South Lake Tahoe.

When I was a kid, we spent summers past Dollar Point outside of Tahoe City. We frowned on South Lake Tahoe almost as much as Reno and even Truckee. Times change and so do people, and even small town charm. Harvey Gross and The Ledbetter family ran a service station, sold sandwiches, and left their mark at State-line. Now there is an eyesore, unfinished cement stands where mom and pop stores once sold their goods; the few remaining motels that were not razed are reopening and making a go of it.

The convention center that was planned with redevelopment funds may never be now. What is left is a glaring testament to poor planning and economic development gone wrong. I feel I need to tell you before someone else does that I own property outside of Cotati in what we call West County. Despite too much traffic and no round-

abouts, people seem to be able to make a go of it as there are far more supermarkets, regular stores, convenience stores, gas stations, and even bars there in “WestCo” than in small town Cotati.

The Barlow may not be all that it is promised to be, but it is something and the City Council out there has yet to send would-be developers packing with unreasonable regulations and city hall forced traffic calming. Small town thinking is what leads to over a million dollars of planning and then a half million more to circumvent the original plans which the city said would not work. We are lucky perhaps that the Northern Gateway in Cotati never broke ground, as there would be a strong resemblance to the Windsor Green, often empty and lifeless because of high rents few can afford.

America was founded by idealists who thought that they knew better how to run their country than did King George and the redcoats... they said something about representation and taxation. Locally, a bear flag was raised as Californians grew tired of out of town leadership and felt they could better lead themselves.

Locally, people saw Sonoma State University as a boon, chartered a small city and set up shop in the local school house. There was a strong sense of diversity and of local leadership and yes a somewhat funky local character that drew people from far and wide to hear the music of the day and hoist a salute and celebration.

There was dancing as well as marching in the streets, and yes there were people walking and bicycling way back when; back then it really was a small town thing not a national go green movement. There is nothing wrong with out of town interest. Vito and Susie Q were not born locals any more than Carl or even Jerry Green. I guess I have concerns about out of town people having titles like Economic Development or City Manager when they choose to spend their salaries elsewhere. The fact is that the President of our Chamber of Commerce appears to no longer do business here... Red’s Recovery Room is now all boarded up due to backroom decisions at city hall and the boards seem to be going up all over town. Economic Development is the kind of thing that The Cotati Accordion Festival brings to town when the city is kind enough to allow them to pay hard and soft costs and draw thousands.

The fact that no Director or Board member lives in Cotati should not be of any concern; they give all a good time and give back to the community far more than any Economic Developer or Chamber. The Octoberfest is likewise an out of town affair but is staffed like the Accordion Festival with local volunteers. So folks lets let go of the divisions of insiders and outsiders and realize that what makes this community work is diversity and openness. Why do I write for this silly newspaper? Why

do I choose to live here? Because I can!!! Could I do more? Could you? Is there room for more openness and diverse thinking and doing more as a community? The answer is YES, and that should not be such a scary notion or given up to the lunatic fringe but should be embraced by us all.

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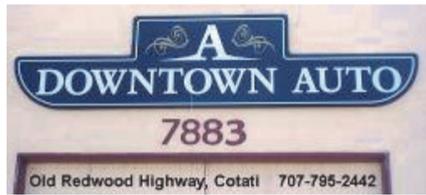
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A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND THINGS THAT MAKE THE DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN COTATI MORE ENJOYABLE AS WE CELEBRATE COTATI'S LONG LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE AUTOMOBILE, TRUCK AND MOTORCYCLE. WE BELIEVE WALKING CAN ALSO BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH, AND LIKE ANYTHING ELSE SHOULD BE DONE ONLY IN MODERATION.



system.

Cotati's car and truck culture is legendary. For many years, Cotati was known as a trucking town. To some extent it still is with its trucking firms on the west side of town.



The assault on traditional automobiles and motorcycles from Cotati City Hall has been underway for many years now. We will begin to take a closer look at this issue and celebrate Cotati's colorful love affair with the internal combustion engine in all its forms and all its glory.

But we can't drive or ride without decent roads. For this month, we start where the rubber meets the road, with this message from Michael Troy:

"The County Board of Supervisors has cut road maintenance budgets by 70% (in inflation-adjusted dollars) since 1989. Over 1,100 miles of county roads (83% of all county roads) will not receive any maintenance

other than the occasional filling of potholes. Six hundred miles of



these roads are rated a "failed" condition and could be converted to gravel in the near future.

Save Our Sonoma Roads is a citizens group whose purpose is to improve the condition of our county and city roads and streets. Good roads are vital to public safety, property values and our economic well-being. But after years of neglect, the official County policy is to let 84 percent of county roads degrade to gravel. SOS Roads says this is



unacceptable. The deterioration of county roads and city streets is at a crisis level and is directly correlated to insufficient funding for road maintenance and preservation. Our goal is to adequately fund the restoration of our county road and city streets. SOS Roads will accomplish its mission by educating individuals, groups and businesses on how roads are funded and by advocating for appropriate allocation of public funds to roads.



What You Can Do:

- Join SOS Roads as a Road Supporter or Road Champion. Your membership will help us in our effort to convince policy makers that letting roads deteriorate is unacceptable.
- Make a donation to SOS Roads to support SOS Roads

the most free, most business friendly city in California," said Mayor Tait.

Before Mayor Tait took office, an eager businessman submitted plans for a black-and-white themed car wash. City planning staff pushed back and suggested beige and...beige. "I don't want to be in the business of crushing people's dreams. Certainly not over theme colors at a job-creating business," he said. In addition to eliminating unnecessary laws, he handed down a directive (with the support of his colleagues on the City Council) that the staff was to use the broadest possible interpretation of laws - city staff is actually supposed to help applicants find loopholes, and help residents pay lower fees while meeting minimum interpretations of state and local regulations.

Kindness and the entrepreneurial spirit are not generally ingrained in the training process for people who work for government, so Tait worked to include city staff in the taskforce and in doing so gave them a stake in the process. Now, staff that 'breaks the rules' by doing something nice receive praise rather than reprimands.

One example: On a hot summer day, a security guard spotted an elderly resident sitting in the sun, waiting for a ride. The security guard (who worked in a city building nearby) drove the resident home after the resident's ride failed to show. Under the old rules, the guard would cer-

Put up a **Tired of Potholes** sign in your neighborhood and on the bad roads you drive.

Go to [Contact Us](#) to request signs.

Write your County Supervisor and/or city council person to express your concern for the condition of our roads.

Start an SOS Roads Forum for your neighborhood and email your neighbors about the forum.

Write about your experience on county roads on the Road Forum.

Sign up for our email list so we can keep you informed.

Michael Troy
Save Our Sonoma Roads
www.sosroads.org

That's it for this month. Good Motoring,
George Barich



Promoting a Culture of Kindness at City Hall

by Adam Probolsky

Local Governments - Exclusive — 23 February 2012

Imagine if government employees were always friendly and habitually went out of their way to be helpful.

Imagine, if instead of requiring that you follow every rule and regulation, City Hall looked for ways to get you through bureaucratic processes more painlessly; even finding ways to circumvent odious, unreasonable or inapplicable red tape. That is exactly what is happening in Anaheim, CA.

At a recent meeting of young political staffers in Irvine, Anaheim Mayor Tom Tait spoke about the importance of advancing a kindness culture and regulatory relief. In office for just about a year, Tait is transforming the typical bureaucratic habits of City Hall into an entrepreneurial culture and customer-centric action.

Mayor Tait tells the story about a group of neighbors who wanted to have a Fourth of July parade on their street - an event that the neighbors hoped would create new relationships with the families (of significantly lower incomes) in an adjacent apartment complex. The parade never got off the



ground. The city planning staffer who handled their request informed them in detail of every obstacle (including permits, insurance requirements and public works equipment) required to block off the street. Oh, and don't forget you'll need to pay for a police presence...

The next time someone at City Hall gets a call about a small neighborhood parade, Mayor Tait says, "Staff should tell them to have a great time and maybe offer to bring the salsa."

It is all about the core values of freedom and kindness. If it doesn't meet the test of both, it probably isn't a needed - or welcome - policy. Shortly after taking office as mayor, Tait started a regulatory relief task force; he wanted to "knock off ordinances" that prevented job creation. "It is tough for California to compete with Arizona, but we can be

tainly be chastised, probably punished and possibly even fired. Now, he gets a pat on the back and the confidence that he won't be called out for doing the right thing.

All this is in sharp contrast to the direction the Irvine City Council is taking our city. A recent council decision authorized door-to-door searches for unlicensed pets. This is clearly a solution searching for a problem and a deeply anti-freedom move. Irvine's Mayor Kang could learn a lot from Mayor Tait.

I asked Mayor Tait if he was promoting his concept to other cities. Half-jokingly, he first said he didn't want the competition. But he further explained, "I just want Anaheim to be one step ahead of everyone else."

Adam Probolsky is a Turtle Rock resident and CEO of Probolsky Research LLC, which specializes in opinion research for government, corporate and political clients. He may be reached at adamprobolsky@gmail.com



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Cotati Follies.

I don't make jokes; I just watch the government and report the facts. - Will Rogers

Remember the good old days in Cotati before our nation was fundamentally transformed by Mr. Do-gooder?



Hey, Police Chief Parrish, we saw one of our Cotati police officers filling the gas tank of a one of our police cars at the Costco gas station in Rohnert Park. There's MTBEs in that gasoline. Buying such fuel is against city policy. Plus, the gasoline taxes go directly to Rohnert Park, not Cotati. What's going on here?

Also, there have been a rash of burglaries in Cotati, but somehow, City Hall is not uttering a word about it. Seems like a bunch of people are doing the crime and not doing the time...

Hey, Cotati is hiring even more high priced staffers it doesn't need and can't afford.

Cotati is searching for an assistant city manager for City Manager Diane Thompson to help free up some of Thompson's time so she can help get current council members re-elected come November. So hold onto your wallet, taxpayers.



From Craig's List. "Date: 2012-03-23, 11:56AM PDT, Reply to: 5kqfn-2918315469@job.craigslist.org

Under administrative direction, assists the City Manager in coordinating and directing citywide departmental activities and operations; relieves the City Manager of day-to-day duties associated with municipal operations; manages economic development and other programs; assists in the administration of the City's Human Resources programs; assists City Manager with supervisory responsibility; performs responsible and complex administrative work; directs or conducts special research and surveys; acts for the City Manager in his/her absence; performs other related duties as required.

Education and/or Experience: A bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, or a related field is required, and a master's degree is highly desirable. Six years of administrative or managerial experience in a public administration setting, including two years of management or supervisory experience, is required.

APPLICATION/INFORMATION Applications and information may be obtained on the City's website at www.ci.cotati.ca.us.

FINAL FILING DATE All completed applications must be received by the City of Cotati no later than 5:00 p.m., Monday, April 30, 2012. POSTMARKED APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED after this date and time.

• Compensation: The salary range is \$7,961 to \$9,677 per month. Excellent Benefits (2nd Tier)..."

You'll never guess who is considering a run for a seat on the city council. John Moore, husband of ousted Mayor Lisa Moore of Occupy Cotati fame, has been appearing at some public hearings at City Hall. Problem is, John mumbles so badly before the city council and appears so completely incoherent, it's unclear what in the world he's talking about. Famous for being one of those rare people in Cotati to show up at city meetings reeking of alcohol, John was known to make threats to people John saw as a direct threat to the socialist gains made by his wife when she was on the city council. John and his wife



Lisa came to City Hall in 2009 demanding the city council do something about a private website that exposed Lisa Moore as the big spender and

poor administrator during her term in office. She accused the website of depicting her so harshly in one sentence that as a result, her teenage son was having emotional and mental issues and was threatening to jump off the roof of the family home in Cotati and would injure himself, apparently.

What Lisa failed to admit to the city council was it was not the comment on the website that was the cause of her son's little temper tantrum before his enabling parents, but a series of criticisms of her lack of leadership from the public at large that rejected her bid for re-election that had led to the Moores' bad parenting. Looking for a scapegoat, the Moores marched into City Hall and demanded the city leaders, of all people, take down a private website. The audacity of these people sense of power knows no bounds.

Now, John Moore thinks it's time to put another rent control advocate on the city council and has been seen attending city meetings attempting to show he is now so concerned with the future of Cotati. The unmitigated gall. Lisa Moore, as mayor, admitted that had it not been for rent control, she and her husband would not have been able to afford to live in Cotati. She never mentioned the fact that by the use of rent control laws, she and her husband displaced other families who wanted to come live within our city limits and could afford to do so without government assistance but were forced to go elsewhere because of a lack of rental units.

These two people are exactly what Cotati City Hall does not need, another pair of freeloaders who think the government owes them something and don't have a clue how the government is going to pay for it all. This couple exemplifies what the entitlement movement in America is all about. We have the right to what others have and if you don't like it, shut up. John Moore has told people to their face that he would run them out of town for their comments at City Hall. Is that leadership? Even when Pat Gilardi was mayor she had to interrupt a scuffle started by John during a council meeting to keep order in the room.

City Hall is an alcohol free zone, and we don't need people like John Moore making a mockery of the process of governing by more of his antics. Everyone has a right to run for city council. But city leaders need to insure the public that they will not tolerate drunkenness in public by anyone, anytime, and will use police powers to insure the public's safety at all times. The public would be best served if John could just go back to keeping his bar stool warm and let others do the heavy lifting.

AN ACTUAL CRAIG'S LIST PERSONALS AD

To the Guy Who Tried to Mug Me in Downtown Savannah night before last.

Date: 2010-09-27, 1:43 am. E.S.T. I was the guy wearing the black Burberry jacket that you demanded that I hand over, shortly after you pulled the knife on me and my girlfriend, threatening our lives. You also asked for my girlfriend's purse and earrings. I can only hope that you somehow come across this rather important message.

First, I'd like to apologize for your embarrassment; I didn't expect you to actually crap in your pants when I drew my pistol after you took my jacket.. The evening was not that cold, and I was wearing the jacket for a reason.. my girlfriend was happy that I just returned safely from my 2nd tour as a Combat Marine in Afghanistan .. She had just bought me that Kimber Custom Model 1911 .45 ACP pistol for my birthday, and we had picked up a shoulder holster for it that very evening. Obviously you agree that it is a very intimidating weapon when pointed at your head ... isn't it?! I know it probably wasn't fun walking back to wherever you'd come from with crap in your pants. I'm sure it was even worse walking bare-footed since I made you leave your shoes, cell phone, and wallet with me. [That prevented you from calling or running to your buddies to come help mug us again]. After I called your mother or "Momma" as you had her listed in your cell, I explained the entire episode of what you'd done. Then I went and filled up my gas tank as well as those of four other people in the gas station, -- on your credit card. The guy with the big motor home took 153 gallons and was extremely grateful!

I gave your shoes to a homeless guy outside Vinnie Van Go Go's, along with all the cash in your wallet. [That made his day!] I then threw your wallet into the big pink "pimp mobile" that was parked at the curb after I broke the windshield and side window and keyed the entire driver's side of the car. Earlier, I managed to get in two threatening phone calls to the DA's office and one to the FBI, while mentioning President Obama as my possible target.

The FBI guy seemed really intense and we had a nice long chat (I guess while he traced your number etc.).

In a way, perhaps I should apologize for not killing you ... but I feel this type of retribution is a far more appropriate punishment for your threatened crime. I wish you well as you try to sort through some of these rather immediate pressing issues, and can only hope that you have the opportunity to reflect upon, and perhaps reconsider, the career path you've chosen to pursue in life.. Remember, next time you might not be so lucky. Have a good day!

Thoughtfully yours, Semper Fi, Alex



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Letters to the Editor

Email: editor@thecotatiindependent.com

Dear Editor,

The March issue is fabulous.

I read in there about your dismay with TransitionCotati.org. In my opinion, they are another creation of the socialists pushing the climate change agenda ad nauseum. They obviously know who you are, hence their response, or lack of it.

The whole transition movement is bogus Agenda 21 BS. Thanks for keeping up the heat on that disgusting city council. Absolutely shameful public behavior. Wish I could get it on videotape....

Amanaa Rendall,
Santa Rosa, CA
Refugee from Cotati

Dear Editor,

Please let me know how i can help contribute to continue your efforts in order to achieve a semblance of sanity to Cotati government...

I don't expect Cotati inhabitants to be anything, in fact I do not believe we have any right to expect anything but civility from fellow citizens. What I do expect of my representative gov-

ernment is to enable the people they have the privilege to serve to succeed or fail to the best of their ability, in the best tradition of our nations founding, with minimal governmental interference.

Far from it, we have a self-serving caricature of democracy in Cotati, hell bent on government power and laughable "projects" conceived as part of the "we know what the masses need" socialist nonsense.

Let me know how I can help.

Bill Hints
Cotati

Dear Editor,

I love your newspaper and it's making a difference. I have spoken to many people in the neighborhood who love it.

Please keep it up. Every town needs a keeper.

Lance Ryken
Cotati

Sonoma County Roads Crumble as Funding Shrinks over Two Decades

By Craig S. Harrison

Between 1988 and 2007 the Board of Supervisors regularly allocated \$7.3 million each year from the general fund for road maintenance. During the last four years that allocation has been cut every year and now rests at \$4.7 million.

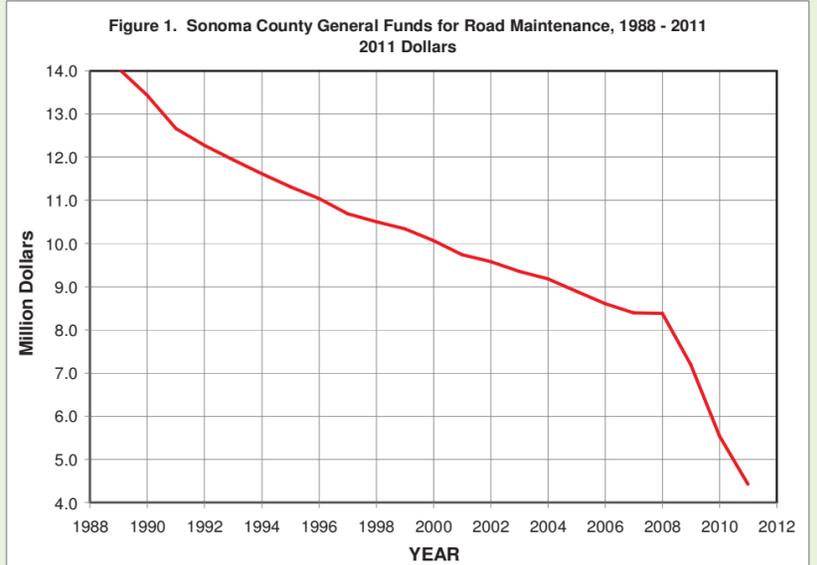
While it might appear the Supervisors have consistently funded roads for nearly two decades, county funding for road maintenance has actually been cut by nearly 70 percent, after adjusting for inflation during this period.

This graph converts county road funding over the last 22 years into 2011 dollars adjusting for inflation. It provides a vivid image of why many of Sonoma County's 1,382 miles of

The Department of Transportation and Public Works estimates that 600 miles of collector roads and 222 miles of residential roads are at the end of



their functional life, which represents 60 percent of all county roads. Its Road Ahead Report (2008) estimated it would cost to rebuild these 822 miles is estimated to be over \$685 million. Director of Transportation



county roads are crumbling.

Under current county policies, more than 1,000 miles of county roads are destined to become dirt or gravel instead of paved roads if the Supervisors make some hard choices.

To return to the levels of 1988 road maintenance, county funding would have to be increased to about \$15 million from the \$4.7 million currently allocated by the Supervisors.

Instead, the supervisors have made even deeper cuts in general fund contributions, reducing the road maintenance budget 42 percent since the housing bust in 2007.

The supervisors may have begun to recognize this approach to funding one of the county's most important and valuable assets is unsustainable. SOSRoads asked the supervisors to increase funding for road maintenance at their board meeting on February 7th, and they approved an increase of \$2.2 million for the fiscal year beginning in July. This will bring the total budgeted amount to \$6.9 million and will add 42 miles to the county's high priority system which now totals 198 miles.

The new funds come from a portion of the franchise fees paid by solid waste haulers. Most of the supervisors thanked SOSRoads for its leadership in bringing attention to an issue that has been festering for years, if not decades.

The supervisors also discussed how to maintain the remaining 1,184 miles (86%) of orphan roads that now receive only emergency pothole repairs and will ultimately fail and become dirt roads. Long-term upkeep of the entire system might cost as much as \$100 million annually, although employing new techniques for refurbishing roads might reduce this estimate substantially.

Phil Demery estimates that rebuilding roads costs 10 to 15 times more than pavement preservation maintenance.

The board of supervisors appointed David Rabbitt and Shirley Zane in February to an ad hoc committee to develop a long term solution. Initially they seem to be considering a property tax increase, possibly in the form of road maintenance districts, which would require two-thirds approval by voters.

SOSRoads believes that before asking for new taxes the supervisors should return to the 1988 level adjusted for inflation of \$15 million per year from the general fund to preserve the county's basic infrastructure.

It is easy to claim that roads are a priority, as the supervisors have often stated in recent years, while they simultaneously slashing road maintenance budgets. JFK once observed that "to govern is to choose." It's high time for the supervisors to choose to improve the funding of our county road system.

Craig S. Harrison is the president and co-founder of Save Our Sonoma Roads. He practices environmental law in Santa Rosa



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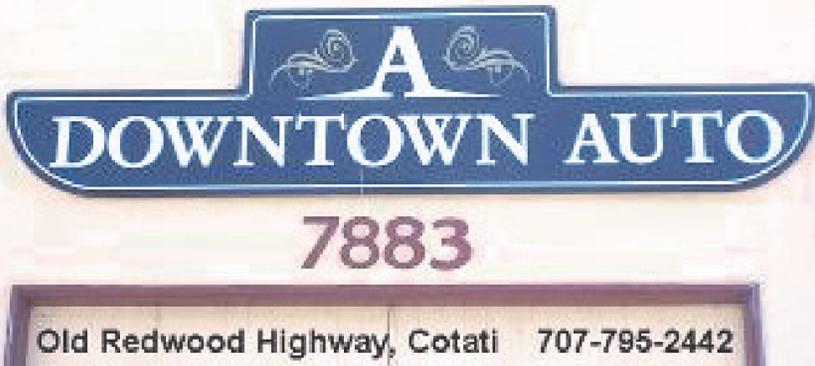


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The Good, the Bad, and the Inedible



the Bad,



and the Inedible



Candid reviews of restaurants, bars, cafes, food vendors, and farmers markets in Wine Country and beyond

by Kathryn Wickstrom - Cotati

Foodie, gardener, wine lover, and consumer of all things edible

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 **** Great
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 ** Needs Improvement
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 (Excludes beverage, tax, and tip)

Lynn's Thai Restaurant

8492 Gravenstein Hwy, Suite M / Cotati
 707-793-9300

Hours: **L - D**

Mon - Sat 11:30am - 3pm / 4:30pm - 9pm

Closed on Sun

Specialty: Lunch Specials

Beer & Wine

**** 2/28, 3/7 and 3/13/12 \$\$

Small and tucked in a mini strip mall off Hwy #116 right by the #101 freeway off-ramp and just before entering Cotati, this place is a little jewel of a find and the owner, Ding (pronounced Dee) couldn't be nicer. Who's Lynn? Ding's aunt, who has returned to Thailand. Lucky for us Ding stayed here!



She tells me she gets very few Cotatians? Open for three years, Cotati does not know what they have been missing because this place is definitely worth a visit. Especially for the lunch specials! Served with two vegetable rolls to start and either a cup of excellent coconut soup or a salad, white or brown rice included. All for \$8.95 - \$9.95, this is a deal.

On my first visit I ordered one of the lunch specials, **Vermicelli Noodles** (\$8.95 ****). Really flavorful and a good-sized portion; and a glass of iced **Sweet Thai Tea** (\$2.50 ****)

On my second visit, again for lunch, I ordered off the regular menu. First, **Salt & Pepper Calamari** (\$8.95 **) very tender bodies breaded lightly with Panko crumbs then fried quickly and served with a sweet chili sauce. Wonderful. Next, **Papaya Salad** (\$7.95 ****) fresh papaya, carrot, and tomatoes mixed with ground peanut lime sauce. I love this salad and Lynn's makes a good one. For dessert, **Black or White Sticky Rice with Fresh Mango Slices** (\$5 ****). Very few Thai restaurants serve the black rice as it is more expensive and hard to find but, oh so good.

Third visit: Dinner, we ordered **Crab Rolls** (\$9.25 **) - six fresh rolls with crab meat and filled with julienned carrots, Thai basil and Enokitake or Enoki mushrooms (long, very thin and white) served with sweet and sour lime sauce; **Tom Yum** (\$8.25 **) hot sour soup, with lemongrass, galangal, kefir lime leaf, onion, tomatoes and mushrooms; **Barbeque Chicken** (\$8.95 **) grilled chicken served with sweet and sour plum sauce; and, **Pad Thai** (\$8.25 ****) pan-fried rice noodles, ground peanut, egg, green onion, tofu and bean sprouts. For \$2 more, I added prawns to my Pad Thai. Everything was good and I especially liked the rolls, so light and crunchy and the Pad Thai was very, very good. Tom Yum is an excellent soup with the subtle flavors of lemongrass and kefir lime. Like lunch, there is a separate sheet in the menu with "Dinner Specials" priced from \$8.95 - \$9.95 with a selection of 6 - 8 items, all ala carte but, good value.

My advice: **Get Thee to Lynn's Thai Restaurant in Cotati** and enjoy authentic Thai cuisine at reasonable prices.

Zazu Restaurant & Farm American "Farm to Table"

3535 Guerneville Road / Santa Rosa
 707-523-4814

Category: Farm to Table American Cuisine

Hours: Wed - Sun from 5:30pm - ? **D**

Sun Brunch 9am - 2pm / Closed on Mon

Specialty: All things Pork!

Beer & wine.

Parking lot / kids okay / wine country casual

**** 1/15/12 \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$



With a menu that truly changes with the seasons, it's hard to keep up with Duskie Estes and John Stewart, the husband and wife chefs of this eclectic establishment. Best to check in with them to see what's cookin'. Although I would make a bet anytime you go you will have some mighty tasty food. The owner chefs raise their own pigs and cure their meat, making salami and sausages. Together, they were crowned "King & Queen of Porc" at the Grand Cochon at Aspen Food & Wine, 2011. They also produce their own wine with Thomas George Estates: **Black Pig Pinot**, **Blanc Pig** and **Pink Pig** that is highlighted at their restaurants. Oh yeah, they own and operate Bovolo in Healdsburg too.

Zazu is located right off Hwy. 12 just outside of Sebastopol. Set back from the road, it looks like a former chicken coop! Indeed, it was in a former life. Rustic is an over-used term. Let's just say the interior is much warmer inside than out. But, if you suffer from claustrophobia, you might object to the rather low ceilings. It can get a bit noisy, too

We went for dinner on a cold winter night and were immediately welcomed upon arrival and shown to a charming table near a window. The dining room is long and a bit narrow, so be prepared to sit close to nearby tables. Actually, it felt cozy.



The wait staff was very helpful with the menu items and cheerful. We were off to a good start. House-made breads of pumpernickel and corn muffins arrived while we scanned our menus. **Dates Wrapped in Bacon** (\$2.25 ea ****) caught my hubby's eye for a starter and I ordered the **Crab Salad on Endive with Tobiko** (\$15****). The Dates in Bacon was like eating candy first! 10 more please! Fantastic flavor combo of a roasted date with bacon wrapped around it. Yum. The Crab Salad and Tobiko was excellent with a healthy portion of crab, too. Next, **Juniper Crusted Venison** (\$29****) with celery root Pommes Anna and cranberry salsa for me and **J.B.'s Balsamic Pork Shoulder** (\$19.95****) with melting onions and mashed potatoes for hubby. Before I describe the food let me again tell you that the service we received was extraordinary. Hubby described it as, "Gary Danko - of Sonoma County." Danko being our favorite restaurant in the City. Like Danko, there is a true team spirit exhibited -- wait staff circulate the dining room and check in with different tables, they are not just assigned to a certain area; and everyone who spoke to us was genuinely warm and friendly. They made us feel special. Even Duskie made her rounds, stopping by tables, pouring patrons wines. So much for uppity chefs -- none here.

Okay. The food. Simply said, it was terrific. The venison was perfectly cooked, medium rare and the presentation of this dish was well executed. I love **Pommes Anna** and these were delicious. The cranberry salsa complemented the gameness of the venison, as did the glass of Black Pig Pinot I ordered. Excellent depth of flavor with lots of fruit. J.B.'s Balsamic Pork Shoulder was succulent, served with melting onions and potato mash. All in all, a very satisfying meal. We were happy, happy. I highly recommend this restaurant for a special occasion or, casual evening. It's a kick-back place with lots of kicked-up food! **Get Thee to Zazu** and see what's cookin'.

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2698 Fremont Drive / Sonoma
 707-938-7370

Category: Farm Direct Comfort Food

Specialty: Serving large portions

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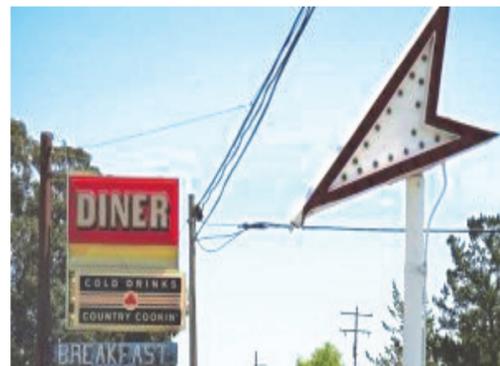
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Friendly**** 01/09/12 \$\$

Having driven by this place for years, thinking it was just another diner along the side of Hwy. #121 and probably fine for a burger with fries and a milkshake, I never gave it much of a thought or considered stopping in to check it out. Big mistake. Huge!

My dear friend Chef Mary Bergin came for lunch on a Sunday afternoon that turned into a dinner that turned into a sleep-over and before retiring she asked if we



should go out for breakfast the next morning. Hubby declined (business meetings pending) but I said, "Sure, where do you want to go?" Having never been to Boon Fly Cafe, that was her pick.

The next morning, at the crack of 9:30 am we hit the open road. Upon passing The Fremont Diner en route to Boon Fly Cafe, I mentioned to Mary that I intended to do a review of the little restaurant sometime in the near future. She responded with, "Why not today?" Indeed. Why not? A quick U-turn later, we were parking in the Fremont Diner lot.

The visual of this place screams nostalgia; complete with a rusty circa 1950's pickup truck parked directly in front of the entrance. Against the wall, a vintage Coca-Cola ice chest. Through the door and into the restaurant, a homey atmosphere with replica signs from the 50's, wooden tables, metal chairs, and a small counter directly in front of the open kitchen. Cool.

On a Monday, this place was full and Mary asked if this was unusual - "Not at all, we're busy every day," came the waitress' reply. Nobody stays busy for long if the food isn't good. So what's on their menu? Well, **Almost Famous Biscuits & Gravy** (\$8.99 ****) two buttermilk biscuits & house made gravy and house made sausage crumbles) **Ricotta Pancakes** (\$9.99 ****) - made with Bellwether Jersey Ricotta); **Egg Breakfast** (\$9.99 **) - with 2 eggs, toast, house made sausage or bacon and breakfast fries or cheesy grits appealed to us. The Almost Famous Biscuits & Gravy is the bomb and I am not a fan of this dish, but with Chef Mary's encouragement, I decided to get my feet wet. OMG! This could become addictive! Ricotta Pancakes were as light and fluffy as they should be. Since I'm not a Cheesy Grit kinda girl, I depended on Chef Mary and she gave a definitive thumbs up good.

Other items on the breakfast menu included: **Hang-**



town Fry (\$12.50) - Drakes Bay oysters, remoulade, potatoes, bacon and scrambled eggs with baby mustard; **Huevos Rancheros** (\$9.99) - Fried tortillas, refried pinquito beans, eggs poached in ranchero sauce, avocado, sour cream and cilantro; **Chicken & Waffle** (\$10.99) - Thin American style waffle, fried chicken your choice of light or dark meat, syrup & sweet butter; **Fremont Granola** (\$4.50) - Sorghum & local honey granola with clover yogurt & quince jelly.

I'll just bet their hamburgers and fries for lunch time are killer! Another visit? You betcha and I'll also wager hubby will make sure he's available for that....

Until next time, bon appétit!



By Carol Tomlinson

The Fight is Far From Over. MTC-ABAG Ignore Public Outrage

The Fight Is Far From Over: MTC-ABAG Ignore Public Outrage

January of this year was designated by MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) and ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) as the public's opportunity to provide input on Plan Bay Area (www.onebayarea.org). To this end nine public workshops were held, one in each of the nine Bay Area counties. On March 9th, MTC and ABAG held a meeting in Oakland to present the results of these public workshops. Their conclusion? 87% of respondents believe a regional plan like Plan Bay Area is important.

For those of us who attended one or more of these public workshops, the results presented are amazing. In San Francisco, this question was answered with less than 50% agreement. In Sonoma County and Marin County, a vote was not even taken on this question. So how did they get these results?

For one thing, we learned that not only had 1,100 people participated in these workshops, but also, unbeknownst to us, a telephone survey of 1,600 residents, four focus groups made up of participants in this survey, and ten focus groups comprised of community-based organizations for input from low-income communities and communities of color were also held.

Why were not informed that this additional input was being gathered? Who were the participants in the telephone poll? How were participants chosen from the telephone poll to also be a member of one of the four focus groups? The 10 focus groups were chosen from the following organizations: Monument Community Partnership and Opportunity West (Martinez); South Hayward Parish and Just Cause Causa Justa (Oakland); Housing Leadership Council & Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (San Mateo); San Jose Downtown Association (San Jose); KBBF Radio (Santa Rosa); Dixon Family Services (Dixon); Vietnamese Voluntary Foundation (San Jose); POWER (San Francisco); Grassroots Leadership Network of Marin (San Rafael); and Chinatown Community Development Center (San Francisco). Bottom line – we have votes clearly heavily skewed by focus groups with little input from the public in general.

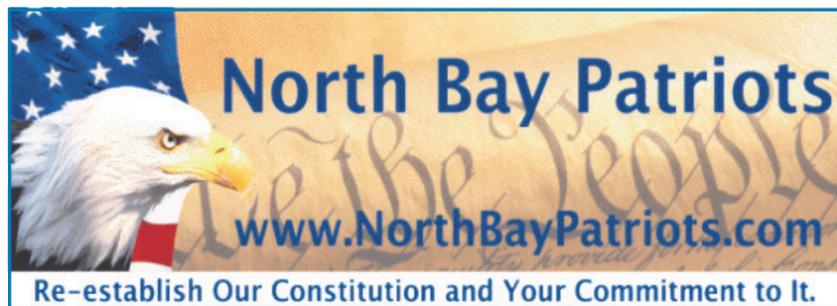
And how were these results interpreted? After stating that 87% of the respondents agree with the importance of a regional plan like Plan Bay Area, the results by individual county were presented. Napa County was stated as the most supportive at 95%, Santa Clara the lowest at 84%. But if you look at the breakdown by county you see, for example that the 95% positive response in Napa includes those who feel the plan is very important to those that feel it is not at all important. On a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important), only those who voted

below a 1 were not counted in the 95%. So even those who considered a plan not at all important were counted as being in favor of a regional plan. For Sonoma County they show 89% in favor of the plan even though we didn't vote on it in the public workshop; this result was only from the telephone survey and focus groups.

So here's what we have. Two agencies, MTC and ABAG, that are not elected by us determining what the Bay Area housing and transportation should look like for the next 25 years. Two agencies that present choices to us that are already skewed to get the answers they want. Two agencies that hold focus groups comprised of participants they choose and participants who will almost certainly support what they present to them in glowing terms. Two agencies that are asking us to vote on alternatives without any economic analysis of those alternatives. Two agencies that are holding our local governments hostage by withholding monies if they do not sign on to their Plan Bay

Area. Two agencies that hold their meeting to summarize the results of their Winter 2012 "Public Outreach" in Oakland at 9 am on Friday morning, March 9th, a time when many people cannot attend, at a location where parking is limited, and in a room where only a relatively small number of people can fit because the majority of the room is taken by the enormous seating arrangement for MTC and ABAG officials (a bit reminiscent of their plan: open space for the chosen few, stack and pack housing for the masses).

Last time I checked The United States was still a republic where we elect those who represent us. We did not elect members of MTC or ABAG to decide our future here in the Bay Area. If you are angered by their actions and complete disregard for our input, please join us in this fight. There are many groups active in the battle. Contact us at North Bay Patriots (northbaypatriots@northbaypatriots.com) for more information.



City Attempts to Deny Liability for Tax Overcharges

(From Page One)

So as it stands at the moment, it looks like the city is hunkering down and hoping everybody will just forget this mess. But if that feels wrong to you, we encourage you to speak up. Send your opinions to editor@thecotatiindependent.com. If you have been personally victimized by the city's overcharges, contact this paper, and we will see to it that your story is heard.

Council won't even give reporter's \$20 back

The city's responsibility to return wrongly obtained money is so obvious to me that I wanted to see if it were equally obvious to the City Council. So, at their regular meeting on March 14, I stood at the podium, less than ten feet from the council, read the city's response to my public records request, and asked once again if it was ethically correct to sit and wait for theft victims to approach the city for refunds. I was met with silence.

I then put the question another way

and said, "On a personal note, if any of you discovered money that did not belong to you, would you reach out and notify the owner? At that point, I draped a \$20 bill over the edge of the podium in plain sight and sat down.

My questions were followed by blank stares, silence, and more silence. *Did one council member speak up and ask me to retrieve my money? Not one. Not a peep.*



Two other speakers stood at the podium and spoke for their three minutes. Finally, the last one, John Moore, at the end of his remarks to the council, asked me to come retrieve my \$20.

All I can say is that it must be terrible

to be so afraid of how lawyers might interpret your words that you lose sight of your basic sense of right and wrong.

In fairness, only Mayor Harvey and Council members Dell'Osso, Landman and Orchard were there. Council member Gilardi was absent.

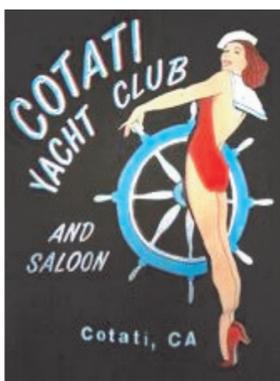
FOR THE RECORD:

In our formal Public Records Request, here are the questions we asked. As you have read, see, the City answered #1 and ducked all the rest. Their response should show you how much respect they have for the concerns of honest citizens.

1. On what date did the City of Cotati begin adding an additional \$1.90 per \$100 transfer tax to home sales within the city?
2. If a home seller in Cotati was charged an excessive transfer tax by the city, will the city locate those home sellers and send them a refund check

3. If a home seller contacts the city, does the city have a form they can fill out, and a simple procedure to get their lawful refund?
4. What is the statute of limitations to obtain a refund? One year? Three years? Ten years? Five minutes?
5. How much will this cost the city in refunds?
6. From which budget will the city get this refund money?
7. How much income from these overcharges did the city factor into its current budget?
8. What person, persons, or government agency brought this illegal overcharging to the city's attention?
9. Does the City Attorney view the City's overcharging as a case of petty theft, fraud, or mere incompetence?

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Behind the scenes, Cotati looking at raising taxes, again !

(From Page One)

With virtually no money in reserves to bring the city hall up to earthquake standards, no money to replace the city's crumbling infrastructure at the rate it is failing, no money to fund the police K9 unit, and no money to even keep some of the park bathrooms open for the kids, the city is looking at raising revenues on the backs of the local taxpayers before reducing their salary and benefits packages another dime.

Since Cotati City Hall is closed on Fridays and city council meetings running less than a half hour these days, city officials will most likely be working behind the scenes to strategize just how to sell raising new revenues through new taxes will actually take shape and when the timing would be best to bring in the consultants for Round Two. How the city will pay for these consultants will be a high priority in the coming weeks, and will be quite a challenge after news the city has been overcharging the transfer tax on home sales for two decades and owes hundreds of thousands of dollars in refunds to taxpayers.

Any new tax proposal on the November ballot in Cotati will surely usher in a wave of new candidates to challenge the incumbents running for re-election. Therefore, it is most likely any new tax proposals will be launched in early 2013.

In sharp contrast, the City of Petaluma is taking a more conservative approach for now. It appears raising taxes is off the table. From the Petaluma Patch dated March 16, "More cuts to every city department—and potential layoffs—are imminent unless labor unions make serious concessions and help the city reduce spending by \$1.6 million.

Last week, City Manager John Brown asked every department to come up with 5 percent reductions in order to have a balanced budget by the start of the new year. The police department is being asked to make the biggest cut—\$720,000—since it also uses the lion's share of the city's budget.

The proposed cuts to police include eliminating two animal services officers and a temporary officer, freezing two vacancies and cutting overtime. The cuts to animal services would mean police officers would now have to respond to calls about aggressive dogs, pick up animals that have been run over by cars and injured or killed and investigate bites. Last year, two animal control officers responded to more than 2,000 such calls, according to Lt. Tim Lyons of the Petaluma Police Department.

The change would effectively convert the shelter to a care and adoption facility, which some say leaves a gaping hole in services.

"It's dangerous to the community if there are stray and aggressive dogs roaming around and no one to respond to it," said a source close to the animal shelter who did not want to use her name. "Under the new proposal, police officers would have to deal with it. But will they be trained in this? We have not had to shoot an animal for many years, but that may now change."

Lyons said that the department is now conducting an analysis of the impacts of the cuts on the police department, which should be complete in about a week. Meanwhile, Interim Police Chief Danny Fish says the suggestions for cuts are just recommendations that will ultimately have to be approved by the city council.

"There will also be employee concessions and other plans or options for these reductions that may be better solutions," Fish said. "Nothing is set in stone."

The fire department has to shave \$499,000 off its budget, which Chief Larry Anderson said would come from freezing four vacant positions. But doing so may increase the department's overtime expenses, since it's constrained by minimum staffing levels that require 14 firefighters to be on duty at any given time.

In 2010, the department accrued about \$1 million in overtime, although this was offset by about \$500,000 in salary savings from vacancies.

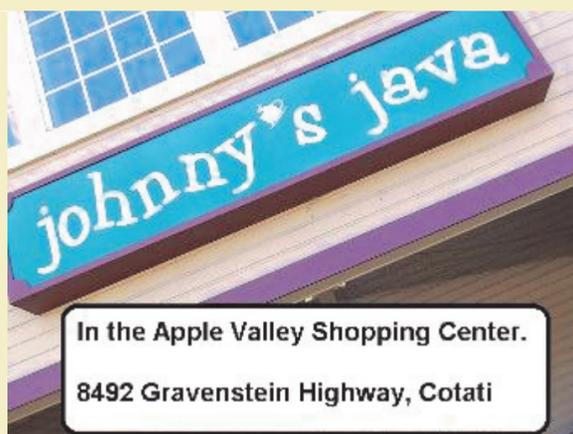
Calls to Public Works and the Department of Parks and Recreations were not returned Thursday.

Mayor David Glass said he was looking to the city's bargaining units—currently in negotiations—for help in balancing the budget and reducing future expenses. One place this can happen is by altering the amount contributed by the city toward public employee pensions, he said.

"We cannot afford the status quo because the day of reckoning is coming," Glass said. "If we don't get it (pension reform) done, it will be done for us in the form of petitions and a referendum by voters. We need the help of the bargaining units, so let's all come together and come up with a solution."

Cotati appears to be exploring a tax increase strategy in sharp contrast to The City of Petaluma.

As ironic as it seems, this may be the first time the Progressives in Cotati could learn a valuable lesson from their comrades in Petaluma.



City and County Roads Failing with No Solutions in Sight

(From Page One)

So, what is the plan? According to Demery, Sonoma County's roads are one of its most valuable assets, valued at \$2.5 Billion, and his department is doing their best to save them, but this calls for making some tough choices.

Their budget is \$19 million, \$7 million of which goes to pavement maintenance, but in 2011, mostly because of property tax declines, their income fell drastically, leaving them \$8 million short.

Let the roads return to gravel?

The story has often been repeated that the County plans to use their limited resources only to maintain 150 miles of "important" roads and let the rest slowly degenerate into gravel. When pressed on this by anxious audience members, Demery stated there were no actual plans to let this happen. For a while, I actually sympathized with his position. He has a huge job to do, and only a fraction of the budget to do it with. So like an EMT performing triage at a natural disaster, he has to choose who to save first and who to pass by.



A short course in paving technology

To show how difficult the job is, he gave a semi-technical presentation of the Pavement Quality Index (PCI). Generally speaking, it boils down to this: The average useful life of every road is about 20 years. If a road is 70 PCI or better, regular, low-cost maintenance will help prolong its life. But the lower the PCI, the more cracks in the surface, which damage the expensive road base beneath the less expensive top layer. When a road degrades to PCI 35 or lower, patches and temporary fixes do little good, and total replacement is needed.

For now, the County will continue to fill potholes on all roads. In 2011, they filled nearly 100,000 of them, at \$17 a pothole. That works out to \$1.7 million dollars of the \$7 million allocated for pavement maintenance. But how long can the county keep patching the worst roads until it's futile? Who knows?

How much would it cost to maintain the roads well? In his presentation, Demery said it would take \$100 million a year to restore all county roads to PCI 70 (good condition). When pressed, he immediately said the real number is more like \$60 million a year. (This is probably the first time a government official has ever inflated the cost of a project, and I was lucky enough to witness it.)

In Demery's ideal world, where would the county get this kind of money? He spoke wistfully of raising the state tax on gasoline, which did not make the audience happy. He mentioned that a number of Road Maintenance Districts might be created, in which local residents could see their property taxes go up by \$700 per year.

\$60 million a year sounds a lot like the amount Sonoma County residents are being taxed every year to pay for a SMART train that will only serve two or three percent of the total population. So Demery was asked by a citizen (me) if he would support defunding the useless SMART train and using those funds to restore county roads that benefit all of us.

Not surprisingly, he did not answer the question.

Cotati should be so lucky

What about the streets in Cotati, which have rattled a few fillings loose? Demery's presentation only discussed county-maintained roads, but at a recent budget workshop, Cotati Director of Public Works Damien O'Bid told the three citizens in attendance that *Cotati has enough money in its street maintenance budget to fix exactly 200 feet of pavement every year.* However, he went onto say that the streets in Cotati are deteriorating at a much higher rate than his ability to repair them." The city council failed to comment on this disaster in the making.

To learn more about the mess that your county roads have become, and what you can do about it, go to SOSROADS.org.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

(from Page One)

Because of this movement, broader activities to raise awareness of violence against women began to occur. In the late 1980s, the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA) informally polled state sexual assault coalitions to determine the preferred date for a national Sexual Assault Awareness Week. A week in April was selected. By the late 1990s, many advocates began coordinating activities and events throughout the month of April, advancing the idea of a nationally recognized month for sexual violence awareness and prevention ac-

tivities. SAAM was first observed nationally in April 2001.

In 2009, President Obama was the first United States president to proclaim April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. However, this proclamation did not recognize men are victims of sexual assault as well.

State, territory, and tribal sexual violence coalitions were polled in 2000 by the Resource Sharing Project (RSP) and the NSVRC to determine that the color teal was the preferred color for sexual assault awareness and prevention and that April was the preferred month to coordinate national sexual assault awareness activities. The teal ribbon was adopted as a symbol of sexual **assault awareness and prevention.**



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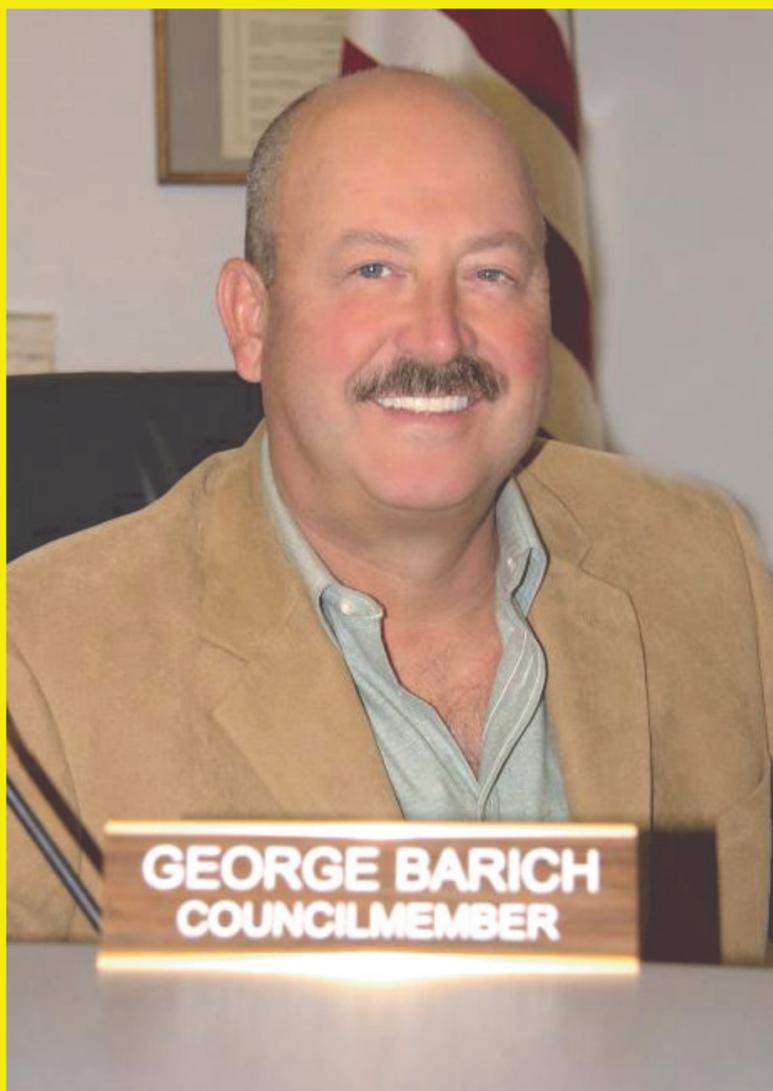
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