

25¢
At Newsstands
plus Calif.
Information Tax (Sales Tax)



Real News, Real People, Right Direction



Republicans with no backbone get no free passes here. Page 3

The Cotati Independent

P.O. Box 7841, Cotati, CA 94931

www.thecotatiindependent.com

email: editor@thecotatiindependent.com

Volume 5

Cotati's ONLY locally owned hometown monthly newspaper

December, 2011

City Admits Million Dollar Downtown Plan a Failure

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker

(Cotati, CA) - In 2005, the city began to develop the Downtown Specific Plan. They claimed it would revitalize Downtown's dilapidated appearance, and bring healthy new growth to the Northern Gateway. This is the section of Old Redwood Highway between East Cotati Avenue and 116, which features a depressing number of vacant lots and empty storefronts. The plan took over two years to develop, and cost taxpayers well

over a million dollars.

One of the key features of this plan was to maintain 4 lanes of traffic in a simple straight line, but to add an 18' median strip, along with a 6' bike lane and a 14' sidewalk on each side. This change, they assured citizens, would "Reconfigure Old Redwood Highway into a vibrant, mixed-use, multi-modal, and beautiful urban street."

They promised it would have a 25-30 mph design speed, offer a 16 second crossing time, and support all modes of transportation,

including cars.

In a meeting at City Hall Tuesday, Nov. 8, City Engineer Damien O'Bid told an audience of over one hundred citizens that the Downtown Specific Plan for the Northern Gateway would deliver none of these promises.

Instead, the city staff is so obsessed with their new plan for a 2-lane street with complex curves and roundabouts that they presented citizens with a false, biased choice that they described as Santa Rosa Avenue

vs. a quaint Main Street.

According to O'Bid's presentation, the original 4-lane plan would have a design speed of 40 mph. This directly contradicts the city's own 2007 statement, which claims this plan would feature a 25-30 mph speed.

O'Bid further claimed that the 4-lane plan would not offer acceptable pedestrian crossing times, and would not accommodate large vehicles. Comparing city documents from then and now will make the disconnect clear.

-Continued on page 9

Cotati Historical Society Museum Struggles for Visitors

by George Barich

Visit the privately owned museum which is located inside Cotati City Hall and you might find yourself having the entire place practically all to yourself. Museum attendance is low, to say the least. Ever since the newness of the museum wore off, the Cotati Historical Society and the city council has



been begging for visitors by making repeated announcements at public meetings about the museum's visiting hours without much success of attracting new visitors.

The lack of visitors and donations might be a sign of the tough economic times, or just the fact the museum has a hard time competing in the digital age where the world is at your fingertips thanks to Smart phones, WiFi hot spots, and 24-hour a day cable TV.

The price of admission is affordable even for the "Occupier" crowd. It's free for all ages, but many are saying you get what you pay for. The museum is pretty small by museum standards, and Cotati's history won't be made into a History Channel Special any time soon. **- Continued on Page 5**

Mayor Tells Local Merchants She Refuses to Believe City Manager Lied to Sell Roundabout Plan to "Stakeholders"



by George Barich

In a shocking display of defiance and cover-up and before a packed house during the October 26th Cotati City Council meeting, Mayor Janet Orchard and the entire city council listened to numerous local merchants claim, on the record, that they were lied to by Cotati City Manager, Diane Thompson (photo right) and they demanded answers.

To rally support around new plans to turn Old Redwood Highway in Cotati into a two lane congested roadway with roundabouts at two intersections instead of installing traditional stop lights, Thompson was alleged to have told a significant number of Cotati merchants that this new plan had the support of the business community to when there in fact there was almost no support at all.

When merchants started talking between themselves, they learned they were being sold a bill of goods and took their complaint directly to the top, only to find the Mayor turning the tables on them implying the merchants were lying or simply confused. Merchants appeared convinced the City Manager had lied to get her way, and lined up to be heard that they were not going to stand for it.

The rest of the lemmings on the city council remained silent in support of the Mayor's harsh words or were simply paralyzed to speak up on the issue infuriating merchants and onlookers. Kathryn Wickstrom of Cotati



was in attendance and commented that she was simply shocked at what she had just witnessed. Money needed for the Downtown Specific Plan public portion of the project is projected to be \$73 million dollars. The city actually believes the money will come by way of the federal government at a time when federal government funds for these projects are drying up quickly. President Obama's own Debt Committee and the Congressional Super Committee are still pushing for trillions in spending cuts, and claiming such grants (handouts) are no longer sustainable. Cotati city leaders hope to get through the next election and are still hopeful that millions in grant funding are still available for cash strapped cities such as Cotati.

Newspaper Destroyer Not Yet Charged by District Attorney (a Democrat)



In a confession to Cotati police, Lillie Delaine Gomez, aka Lilly Sikes, who delivers newspapers in Cotati every morning for The Press Democrat, admitted to police she tore up C.I. newspapers in local news stands for months, and that the publisher, George Barich and his all volunteer newspaper staff deserve it, plain and simple. **-Continued page 3**

Holiday Gift and Toy Drive

by RAFD Chief Frank Treanor

Last year, hundreds of toys and gifts were collected and distributed to families in the Rohnert Park, Cotati and Penngrove areas. In addition, food donated by the local food bank, NOAH, was given to needy families. A holiday gift and toy drive is again being organized by the Rotary Club of Rohnert Park-Cotati. **-Continued on Page 9**



187 Helman Lane, Cotati, CA 94931

ANDREOLI TOWING

CALL: 707-795-3456

Supports our Troops and this newspaper.

24-HOUR SERVICE

Cotati Police Officer Cuts His Fingers Off

by staff reporters

One of Cotati's finest, Jason Yarnell, is currently on medical leave after a horrible accident. According to confidential sources inside Cotati City Hall, Cotati police officer Yarnell apparently injured himself at home while using a high-powered log splitter which cut off some of his fingers.

This story has yet to be confirmed by a second source. It is not known how many fingers were injured or lost in this terrible



accident, or how Yarnell is currently doing medically or emotionally in light of his injuries. Information about this incident or Yarnell's condition has not been released by the city because such information is highly confidential according to state law.

-Continued on Page 5

Sunflower Park Bathrooms Remain Locked 24/7

Report and photos by George Barich

At the far east side of town there is a charming public park called Sunflower Park on East Cotati Ave. For those who have never visited this huge city park, make sure you and your kids don't try to use the park bathrooms because they are locked up solid and have been for years now. By any standards of decency, this is public disgrace, so say residents nearby.



There is no greater abuse of the public's trust than city leaders locking up perfectly good public restrooms in order to use that maintenance money to line their own pockets, and do things like buy the City Manager a shiny new Toyota Prius she does not need on top of her \$183,000 per year compensation. In 2011, the city council nearly doubled their own salaries and benefits to the shock of many.

It's simply an embarrassment to see that our city can't manage the simple task of keeping a perfectly good bathroom in working order and open during the day. If they can't do that, the question is what can they do with any level of competence? Is the city that broke? No, it's a matter of city priorities and decency. In talking with residents in that area of town, they claim they have complained to City Hall for years but received no service, and feel the city council simply doesn't care about this problem. Citizens expect and deserve a working restroom with running water and toilet paper at city parks. Keep up the pressure and call the city at 792-4600 and tell them to reopen these public bathrooms if they really care about the children.



Business & Professional Directory

Star Restaurant

8501 Gravenstein Hwy • Cotati • 795-3772

\$1.99 Lunch or Dinner Buy 1 entree and 2 beverages and get your second entree of equal or lesser value for \$1.99	\$1.99 Lunch or Dinner Buy 1 entree and 2 beverages and get your second entree of equal or lesser value for \$1.99	\$1.99 Lunch or Dinner Buy 1 entree and 2 beverages and get your second entree of equal or lesser value for \$1.99
---	---	---

Good only at Cotati location. Not valid with any other offer. Expires 2/29/12

A DOWNTOWN AUTO

7883

Old Redwood Highway, Cotati 707-795-2442

MILLER DRIVING SCHOOL

Patient, Courteous Instructors



\$15 OFF
Class or Driving Lesson
One per person with coupon

Handicap Equipped Vehicles Available **707-585-1398**

8053 Old Redwood Highway, Cotati, CA

RICH THE HANDYMAN

No Job Too Small

* Cotati *



707-328-7759

ROCK • SOIL • COMPOST

SOILAND

SINCE 1962

ENVIRONMENTAL RECYCLING

COTATI • SONOMA • SANTA ROSA

412 Houser St.

OUTDOOR PRO SHOP

FISHING TACKLE

Sonoma Maintenance Constuction & Repair

Have Tools, Will Travel.

All phases of home and commercial repair



Call Phil De Nardo
707-795-0295

Protecting your investment since 1984
* Free Estimates *

SPA-LAND



SPA-LAND.com

7950 Redwood Drive Suite 31
Cotati, CA 707-795-9400

Are you Civically Fit ?

You have a decent job, a nice family, a nice home, a great golf swing, and maybe you even go to church each week. You eat right, exercise often, vacation regularly, give generously to your favorite charities, take time for your friends, and you're living the American dream. You are a responsible person, pay your bills on time, recycle, vote every couple years, open the door for other people, and even pick up that paper cup on the ground as you walk by and throw it into the nearest trash receptacle because it's the right thing to do. Some say you're a real party animal and can belt out a great song at a karaoke bar with a cocktail in your hand and never spill a drop.

But is that enough these days living in a representative democracy? Discussing issues of the day with friends on Facebook and blogging online about what you think should be done to improve the world around us may not be enough.

While you're blogging and complaining online, other people are running your life and planning your future from behind the scenes within local, state, and federal government agencies, often without you having the slightest idea what they're doing or what they're up to. It's also nearly impossible to undo the damage government often does at our expense after the fact, like traffic roundabouts, for instance.

If you think government is actually watching out for us, then who is watch-dogging the watchdogs? Does government really have your best interest at heart? How would you know? Is your voice being heard at your city council meetings or other government agencies? How much time do you devote to being involved in civic affairs? Who has the time for all that stuff, you say? Good question. But consider this; if government representatives are not listening to you, who are they listening to? Maybe you don't care. Maybe you can't be bothered. Maybe this Obama economic "recovery" is taking its toll on you. Maybe you think that someday you may have more time to get more involved and take a bigger stake in local civic affairs that affect you and your family.

You may feel you are physically fit, in good financial shape, and at the top of your game, but are you "civically fit"? By that I mean are you taking part in this thing we call a representative democracy and actually have a stake in the "game"? At a time when government seems utterly obsessed with trying to dictate how we live nearly every aspect of our lives, there seems to be no end in sight, and we citizens are no longer in control.

There is nothing fun about going to your city council meetings and listening to people who love to hear themselves talk. After attending nearly every council meeting and city workshop over the last 15 years, I think I speak from some experience by saying that Cotati has made the experience of participating in the process as painful as humanly possible for citizens to sit through a meeting without being bored to tears or completely frustrated by their antics and lying. It's simply agonizing to watch elected official and their staff stumble over their statements, cover for themselves and others they work with, and ignore the real problems facing our town.

City Hall is probably one of the most impersonal and inhospitable places in town and run by some of the most self righteous, overpaid, ego-maniacs you would find anywhere. When you run a monopoly and the public doesn't care much about what's really going on, it's easy to get away with keeping it that way.

It seems that citizens simply get in the way, irritate city officials, and slow the process down. Therefore, there is no incentive to make participating in the process comfortable for the citizens, business owners, and taxpayers. To have to listen to the citizens during city meetings only brings the government more grief, more delays, more paperwork, and they all get paid the same amount of money whether we are there or not. Many people believe the city's mind are already made up in advance and they could care less what citizens have to say. The only thing they react to are threats of lawsuits, being defeated come re-election time, or threats of an outright recall.

Citizens who use "sugar" at City Hall in an attempt to get their way usually learn the hard way; playing "nice" literally doesn't work. What works best is direct pressure and direct involvement to stand up and be heard loudly and often. Don't bother writing letters or flowery emails to City Hall. They get ignored, deleted, or not read at all. I have sent over a hundred nice and professional emails to city council members and their staff over the years that were never responded to. I learned that it doesn't work to try to have adult conversations with these folks. They see opposition as a threat and are incapable of compromise.

The solution is to get more citizens involved in city government and our community which will make a difference. There is power in numbers. City Hall loves to divide and conquer anyone who does not fall into line with their progressive agenda. I know we all live in a world where we want solutions now and don't like to wait. But there is no magic wand that will fix the system. Only hard work, patience and sacrifice will change anything, and there is no guarantee that will even work.

But first, it's important we all get "Civically Fit" and have our voices heard and votes counted. Your family and kids will be so proud that you have made the time and taken advantage of the rights and freedoms so many have fought and died to protect.

Schedule dinner early once a week, put down the wine glass, find out what is going on at your local city hall, read the newspapers, get involved with your fellow citizens trying to make a difference, speak up, talk to your neighbors, fight back, and take a stake in your community. Don't expect everybody else to do your work for you. It's everyone's responsibility.

City officials are more concerned with making "friends" who give them the money to get elected and are all about getting re-elected. That's it; period. Their vision of what the town should look like or how it should work may be completely contrary to your vision and your idea of what is quality of life in Cotati. It's our duty to get involved. We owe it to our kids, our neighbors, and all those who have gone before us who worked hard to make a difference.



Former Cotati City Councilman George Barich

"Just My Two Cents"

Politics is a rough and tumble business. Expect to be humiliated, ignored, angered, and frustrated at times. I was literally told to leave town for good on more than one occasion. John Moore, husband of ex-mayor Lisa Moore, whispered into my face during a city council meeting and said he was personally going to run me out of town for speaking my mind and representing my constituents. Now, that may seem extreme, but that's what we're up against. Marxists like John Moore don't play fair and never will. It's not in their nature to tolerate those they disagree with. I doubt John Moore remembered the incident the next day when he sobered up, but it did happen and it's old news. I'm still here, John, you blowhard.

Small town politics can often be ugly and nauseating. I have seen people walk out of City Hall claiming they were never coming back. Many of these people were developers who wanted to bring jobs and tax dollars to Cotati. So, I understand why many people won't get involved in City Hall and think people who do are either crazy, have nothing better to do with their time, or are masochists.

The bottom line here is what you don't know can hurt you. If you don't take an interest in local politics and speak up, I assure you other people will. Nothing easy is worth having. I know people don't want more stress in their lives and participating may add some stress to your life. Many people work hard, have kids or elderly parents at home to deal with, and feel they don't have an evening here or there to take a stake in how our town is shaping up or how it's being managed. I get it. I do.

There are a 101 reasons not to get involved in local politics. But you can make the experience of public participation in City Hall less painful by bringing a magazine or book to get through those very boring matters during city meetings. Sometimes, I see someone in the room knitting a sweater or checking their email on their smart phone. I would suggest enjoying a cup of coffee courtesy of City Hall but the coffee is so bad, maybe not. Bring your own or even a snack to help you through it.

Getting civically fit may seem like a big waste of time, but it's our town. It's as much your town as it is anyone else's. We can't let people like Pru Draper intimidate others by insisting because she has lived in Cotati for 61 years that it is any more her town than ours! Her late husband Lloyd used the same lame tactic as if he knew better while Cotati got worse on his watch.

Even if you don't live within city limits, you shop here, pay taxes here, maybe own a business here in town or maybe thinking of starting a business in Cotati. That gives you every right in the world to speak your mind and have equal standing with people who fill the campaign coffers of their friends who were elected to office.

Get involved. Sharpen your analytical and public speaking skills, and participate in our city meetings. Hold government accountable with your constructive criticism and sense of civic pride. Remind them all that you work hard for your money, and it's not their money they are playing with; it's the people's money. But then again, socialists don't believe the money wasn't yours in the first place.

I don't advise bringing young kids to City Hall. It's not a pleasant place or conducive to kids under 16. Petty insults and outright attacks on people's character and reputation are commonplace, as well as racial slurs. Having your questions and comments ignored outright by the city officials and city staff is standard procedure and can leave kids really confused that this is the way government should treat people. It's the sort of treatment in this town you have to get used to. The city hopes we will all tire and go away in time. Don't give them the satisfaction, frankly.

Adding this responsibility to your life will take some getting used to. You may not sleep well after attending your first couple meetings. I sometimes get the urge to take a hot shower after attending city meetings because I feel like I just got done mud wrestling.

But there can be some comfort in numbers. So, join us. The more citizens who attend can be comforting and helpful in making others get through the experience. I think in time, you may find the experience rewarding, satisfying, and not as futile as you once thought. Share your new experience with others and inspire them to get involved, too. Getting civically fit will make a difference or at the very least help you see who is picking your pocket and why.

All politics is local. Occupy City Hall. Shake it up a little. Cotati City Hall is the people's house. Just keep the aspirin handy and please leave your sleeping bags at home.





The Not So Radical Right

Guest Editorial by Michael Ceremello

Rather than continue to pick on the hopeless, the Cotati or Sonoma County liberal regressives, we at the Cotati Independent intend to demonstrate our independence by attacking those within the conservative movement who are essentially pastiche. It does no good to simply parrot the party line. Much as the owner of this periodical, George Barich, I also have devoted an inordinate amount of time to putting my money where my mouth is.

We received an email announcement from Jim Judd, former candidate for the 6th Congressional District declaring his decision not to run for the newly created 2nd Congressional District seat next year. No big deal, right?

Within his message was this statement: "After much personal reflection, I have elected to draw my line in the sand based on the fundamental principles of our Constitution of limited government and love of Country that still resides for the most part in our rural areas." While this may be clear to some of you who won't ask the tough questions, George asked Judd, "So as you 'draw the line in the sand', what is your plan now to take back America?" Judd's response was illuminating as to his character and his devotion to TEA Party principles.

Judd responded, "You fight your battles and I'll fight my wars. In the meantime here's a little advise (sic)... in today's liberal world and those that are blinded by it You get more from sugar than you do vinegar. Try some sugar on occasion in your dialog and in your demeanor."

At this point you have to question the sincerity, resolve, and effectiveness of a person who can't even give an answer to a simple question. Exactly what is "your plan" Jim? I can answer that for those of you too blind to see. Judd has none other than what the Republican machine gives him to reiterate as if it is his own. However, it doesn't end there.

When I called him on his "phony bullshit" including demeaning George Barich's efforts as "battles" to his "wars", we received a response back from Judd asking to have his email address pulled from our mailing lists. George wrote back telling Judd that we would comply with his request and asking him how he would have responded if Judd had actually been elected to his sought office. Judd's reply?: "As a Congressman I would have considered the source." That is a liberal's response if I ever heard one, and his actions are antithetical to the First Amendment constitutional principles of free speech and a free press.

My response can be viewed as either harsh or to the point. You can be the judge as it follows in its entirety.

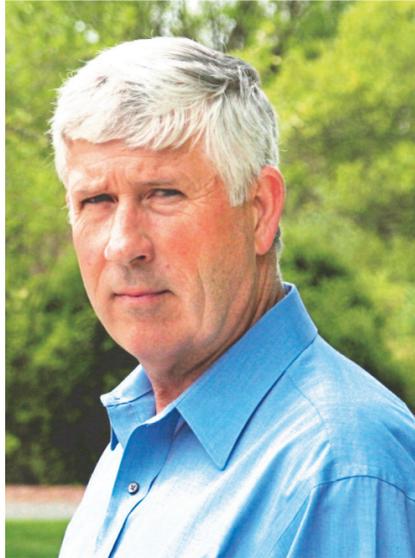
Jim, your values are appropriate but your message below is the typical trite, canned parroting of a conservative line. While you fight your "wars" while George fights his "battles", I would suggest you not demean the efforts of

others who are your equals or superiors. George has put his money, his time, and his life where his mouth is. Are you simply another one of the Republican machine candidates who talks a good game and that's where the effort ends? However, I know how difficult it is for a conservative, libertarian style candidate to have any influence in the looney left region known as Sonoma County. Perhaps you are right not to run. Obviously, your sugar won you nothing.

I was given similar advice in Dixon back in 1996 when I first began to write my critical essays on city government. Being "nice" got me ignored. To make my points stick, nastiness worked wonderfully. I was elected to office in 2008, faced a stacked 4 to 1 council when I was elected, had to drop the "F-bomb" on the mayor and vice mayor when they continually interrupted me speaking on the constitutionality of their actions, until the council was flipped 3 to 2 in my favor last November. I am now the vice mayor, much to their chagrin. Being sweet did not accomplish this.

Was David Crockett nice? Did he sugar coat his demands? When he died at the Alamo alongside other patriots, was he any sweeter than George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or Benjamin Franklin? Was General Patton sweet?

No, Jim, this is war. The sooner you come to that realization, the sooner you will be effective.



I believe you are a phony bullshit artist. You have no plan. What are you going to do, talk the liberal elite to death using logic? It hasn't worked before and it won't work now. Part of the problem is the Republican establishment which gave us George Bush, another socialist and centrist. Obama has provided no solutions except failed Keynesian economic policies along with a repetition of Bush's bailouts with his own, destroying the value of our dollar. Yet the left complains it is the fault of capitalism rather than their failed programs. The failed school system is another of their many disasters.

As George stated, exactly what are you going to do? Nei-

City Hall Flies Flag of Anti-American Organization

by Greg Karkaker

Recently, just below Old Glory and the California state flag in front of City Hall, there is a new flag: the familiar baby blue and white of the United Nations. Mayor Janet Orchard is proud to tell citizens it is there. But you have to wonder if some of that pride is based on the well-established pattern of UN member countries consistently voting against the United States. Here is the most recent verifiable record of votes, which was carefully compiled by snopes.com in 2007: <http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/outrage/unvote.asp>

Kuwait votes against the United States 86% of the time.

Qatar votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Morocco votes against the United States 89% of the time



United Arab Emirates votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Jordan votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Tunisia votes against the United States 89% of the time.

Saudi Arabia votes against the United States 90% of the time.

Yemen votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Algeria votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Oman votes against the United States 88% of the time.

Sudan votes against the United States 86% of the time.

Pakistan votes against the United States 87% of the time.

Libya votes against the United States 89% of the time.

Egypt votes against the United States 86% of the time.

Lebanon votes against the United States 90% of the time.

India votes against the United States 79% of the time.

Syria votes against the United States 89% of the time.

Mauritania votes against the United States 87% of the time.

U S Foreign Aid to those that consistently oppose us:

Egypt, after voting 79% of the time against the United States, still receives \$2 billion annually in US Foreign Aid.

Jordan votes 88% against the United States and receives \$192,814,000 annually in US Foreign Aid.

Pakistan votes 87% against the United States: receives \$6,721,000,000 annually in US Foreign Aid.

India votes 79% against the United States and receives \$143,699,000 annually.

Quite a few other countries voted against the US frequently:

Australia voted against the US 44% of the time.

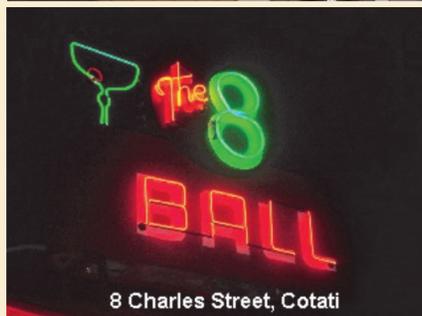
Canada voted against the US 51% of the time.

Japan voted against the US 58% of the time.

UK voted against the US 40% of the time.

France voted against the US 46% of the time.

Israel voted against the US 11% of the time.



ther George nor I will sweat it because talk is cheap. The voice of conservatism is now being heard in Cotati every month. Either add to it or get the hell out of our way ... and don't bother patronizing us with your snide comments ...

You might be asking yourselves "so what?" at this point. What does this mean to any of us? Well let me explain it to you.

For those of you on the deluded left, this should be telling you that the Taxed Enough Already Party has identified core constitutional principles for which they will fight. They are tired of your "redistribution of wealth" rehash of Marxist philosophy with its inherent destruction of traditional family and religious values. Destroying all reason to produce means we all will have less until your Ponzi scheme collapses. We also know when one of your ilk has invaded our party.

The larger part of the problem is within the conservative or right side of the spectrum. True to the form of the allegations by the left against the "Republican" elitism, we have this type of candidate running under the banner because they are opportunists. The TEA Party has given impetus to opening minds while creating a venue for throwing the bums out. However it does no good to replace bums with phonies and these phonies must be rooted out.

Perhaps Mr. Judd actually believes in the principles of limited government and the Constitution as the highest legal document in the land. Many spout these viewpoints as their own but cannot expand on them. We do not need these types of people in office. The right is not alone from this aspect.

John Garamendi is an example of the confused participant on the left who wants manufacturing jobs back without reindustrializing America. America has no hope given the clueless candidates the machines on both sides continue to give us.

Rather than running away to hide or putting your fingers in your ears when you don't want to hear us, it might be better to address the questions and have solid, fact based answers behind your responses. I don't have the time or energy to sugar coat the bitter pill of the America's decline or the need to feed you plabum as the county slips into the abyss.

I expect you to be able to answer my questions or say you don't know. Honesty is lost on politicians which is one of the reasons I consider myself a statesman rather than the former. I expect more out of my elected officials and candidates than simply doing the same thing the same way it has always been done and expecting a different result. That is the definition of insanity.

My type of insanity exists only to make sure I have your attention ...

(from page One)

The Press Democrat fails to comment on one of their own

But why is Sonoma County District Attorney Jill Ravich dragging her feet on this case? It's a slam dunk. The Cotati police have Gomez confessing the crime according to Cotati police officer Lyssand. The report was sent to Ravich weeks ago and Gomez was scheduled to be arraigned in court on Nov.15. But for some reason, the District Attorney has not followed through and made a decision whether or not to prosecute the case.

Is Ravich listening to the Cotati City Council members who supported her during her bitter campaign? How many months of tearing up newspapers does it take to shock the liberal community in Sonoma County to see justice done? Is freedom of the press only protected for leftist speech? Where is the outrage from the liberal attorneys in Cotati, or Sonoma County for that matter, who believe in freedom of the press?

Where is the outrage from the Press Democrat who have been sitting on this story for weeks and refuse to comment? Why aren't they protecting journalistic freedom and apparently covering for Lillie Gomez? Where is their apology for allowing this to go unpunished and where is their sense of decency? We haven't heard a peep from anyone. Where is the outrage and condemnation of these vicious attacks on free speech on our community by the Cotati City Council? These are questions being asked by the community who are deserving answers.

How long would the District Attorney take to prosecute someone for stealing or tearing up hundreds of copies of the Press Democrat? Where are the PD's reporters Jeremy Hay, Chris Smith, Brian Sweeney, or Paul Payne on the issue of vandalizing competing newspapers in Sonoma County? Can their silence be construed as giving Gomez a free pass? Gomez has even admitted to the vandalizing. What's left to discuss?

We have tried to get a comment from the Press Democrat on why one of their delivery people would be tearing up perfectly good competing newspapers in news racks everyday in Cotati. Why is she still employed? To date, we have received no comment from either The Press Democrat, Cotati City Hall, or the Sonoma County District Attorney on this matter.

If you want to voice your opinion on this case, contact : Jeremy Hay at the Press Democrat, 707-521-5212

Call Cotati City Hall, 707-792-4600

Call the Office of the Sonoma County District Attorney at: 707-565-2311 and ask about the status of the Lillie Gomez, Cotati case and demand she be brought to justice now.





By Carol Tomlinson

Your Future?

Who can say they are against something that is deemed "smart"? And shame on the person who says he or she is against "sustainable" or "green"? It must mean they are against clean air, and water, mustn't it? Surely they must advocate the destruction of our planet and all that resides on or is part of it. Well, not quite so fast drawing that conclusion. If one digs only a little below the surface of these currently fashionable words and concepts, one finds a multitude of layers.

Right now in our towns, cities, counties, and state our future is being planned for us. Sounds crazy? It's not – and it's easy to find the documents to support this if you do a little research. In fact, here in the Bay Area the plan has a name – One Bay Area. Just google it or go to www.onebayarea.org. This 25 year plan describes how and where we will live in the future. It all sounds wonderful – affordable

North Bay Patriots – Your Future?

housing, open space for us to enjoy, easy and convenient transportation alternatives, sustainability. So let's look at what is envisioned for us.

Affordable Housing:

The plan calls for high density urban housing close to mass transit. This translates into high-rise units, preferably placed above commercial space. "Stack and pack" is a good term for it. There will be few parking spaces available, but who needs a car with mass transit so handy? And perhaps you won't even have to go further than the commercial space below to shop and to work. Everything you need will be right there in your "sustainable development community". Isn't that how many live in cities in China? Hmmm....

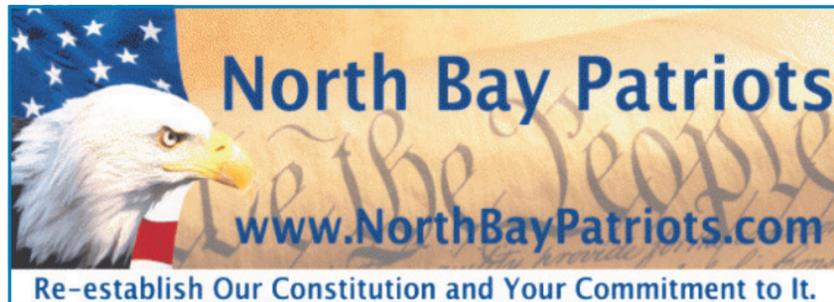
Transportation:

With everything right at hand in your housing community, car ownership will be frowned upon. In fact, the cost of owning and operating a car will skyrocket. But how, you ask, will you get your kids to softball practice? Or how about that visit to their grandparents for Thanksgiving? Or the ability to vacation in those areas of the U.S. not served by mass transit? Isn't this a diminution of our personal liberties? Hmmm.....

Open space:

All of us love open space. It is our refuge from the busyness and stress of our lives. Already a huge percentage of our country is owned by the federal government, and they want more. Much of the land they don't own is under private ownership, but that would no longer be the case. So how does the government get the land? Sometimes they just take it, with little or no compensation. And that government owned land – how will it be used? Much of it will revert to wild lands while humans are gathered into "sustainable communities". Since this also includes farmlands, you have to wonder where our food will come from. Dependent on other countries for our food? Is that smart? Hmmm....

The bottom line is this. Do we want our government planning our future and seeking to modify our behavior to fit in with their central plan? Are we willing to give up our single family homes, our private transportation, our private property, our recreational land use (golfers, skiers, hikers...beware), our ability to sustain ourselves agriculturally? It will not only be the private property owners who are affected – this affects everyone. So before you blindly accept what is being presented to you as your future, ask yourselves if this is what you really want – and do a little research beyond what is fed to you in the media.



Solar Generators: Affordable Green Energy

by Arthur Dufresne



Many of us know someone or a business that uses solar energy to reduce their electric bills. Grid-Tied systems are the most common type of solar power system being installed today. However, most are dependent on electricity from the utility company to operate home appliances. A "solar generator system" offers true energy independence from utility power.

What is a Solar Generator? The Solar Generator is a term given to solar electric systems that use a battery or group of batteries to power appliances. The batteries are then recharged by the solar panels.



What can a Solar Generator operate? Most Solar Generators are equipped with 120 volt AC and 12 volt DC receptacles. Any 120 volt AC or 12 volt DC appliance can be operated with a Solar Generator. The power rating of the Solar Generator

determines the limits of appliance operation. Power ratings are expressed in Watts, for example a standard home AC receptacle can provide up to 1875 watts.

Can I save money on my utility bill with a Solar Generator? Yes. Any appliance operated with a Solar Generator is using pre-paid power. The amount of money saved is based on how much the Solar Generator is used.

Solar Generators are available for a wide range of uses from cell phone charging to supplying power to remote homes. Many have built-in solar panels or have separate solar panels mounted on an aluminum frame. Most are portable and well suited for camping and RV's in addition

for use as home backup power.

by Arthur Dufresne – Owner, Solar Design Concepts, 600 Martin Avenue #103, Rohnert Park, CA 94928, Phone: (707) 585-2337, Email: Arthur@adcsolargenerator.com, website: www.sdcsolargenerator.com



By Rancho Adobe Fire District Chief Frank Treanor



The holidays are upon us, a time for good food, good cheer and spending time with friends and family.

These times could be dangerous unless we are careful.

Cooking fires are more likely to happen on Thanksgiving than on any other day of the year. Of all reported home structure fires, cooking equipment fires account for 40% and 36% of home civilian injuries. Entertaining guests is great fun but remember to monitor meal preparation closely. Here are a few things you can do to be safe during this season:

Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you must leave the home for even a short period of time, turn off the stove or oven.

If you are simmering, baking, boiling or roasting food, check it regularly and remain in the home while food is cooking. Use a timer to remind you that the stove or oven is on.

Stay alert. Don't cook if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.

Keep things that burn – pot holders, oven mitts, paper or plastic - off your stovetop.

Don't store things that can burn in an oven, microwave, or toaster oven.

Clean food and grease off burners, stovetops and ovens.

Wear clothing with sleeves that are short, close fitting, or tightly rolled up.

Keep kids away from cooking areas by enforcing a "kid-free zone" of 3 feet around the stove.

Use the stove's back burners whenever possible, and turn pot handles inward to reduce the risk that pots with hot contents will be knocked

over. Never hold a small child while cooking. Always keep an oven mitt and a lid nearby when you are cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan (make sure you are wearing the oven mitt). Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from re-starting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.

In the event of a fire, when in doubt, just get out. When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. Call 9-1-1 after you leave.

Never use water to put out a cooking oil fire.

Holiday Safety: Decorations

Holiday decorations are festive; using safe practices will keep your season merry.

The National Fire Prevention Association and the United States Fire Administration reports that an estimated 250 home fires involve Christmas trees and another 170 home fires involve holiday lights and other decorative lighting. These fires resulted in 21 deaths and 43 injuries.

Selecting a tree:

Needles on a fresh tree should be green and hard to pull back from the branches. The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing them on the ground and many needles falling off.



Caring for your tree:

Avoid placing your tree by a heat source, including a fireplace or heater vent. The heat will dry out the tree making it more easily ignitable. Your tree should be up for only about two weeks and should be in a stand filled with water at all times.

Disposing of your tree:

Never place branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. Dry trees burn very rapidly and give off a tremendous amount of heat that could involve your home or chimney. Dispose of your tree promptly, when the tree becomes dry, by recycling it at

a center or having it hauled away by a community pickup service.

Electrical and lighting:

Inspect your holiday lights for frayed or bare wires, broken or creaked sockets and use only those lights that are in good repair and approved by a testing laboratory. Electrical circuits can be overloaded; do not connect more than 3 strings of lights on a run. Periodically check the wiring; it should never be warm to the touch. These lights should be turned off when no one is home.

Decorations:

Use only non flammable or flame retardant decorations and place them away from heater vents or the fireplace. Never place wrapping paper in the fireplace it burns rapidly with high heat and may throw off embers that can result in a chimney fire.

Exits:



Don't block exits with holiday decorations, a blocked exit puts you, your family and guests at risk in the event of a fire.

For more information, including turkey deep fryer safety you can go to the USFA website and the Sonoma County Fire Chief's Association/ Fire Prevention website

The holidays are a time of celebration, paying attention to holiday safety will keep your celebration safe.

The Cotati Independent
 PO Box 7841, Cotati, CA 94931
 Phone: (707) 795-4121 Email: editor@thecotatiindependent.com

RATE CARD	
Open Rate.....	\$6.95 / Col Inch
Full Page	\$800
1/2 Page.....	\$410
1/4 Page.....	\$210
1/8 Page.....	\$110
Front Page, bottom banner.....	\$300
4" x 4 cols monthly	\$ 50
2" x 2 cols monthly	\$ 25
Inserts:	
Single sheet (8.5 x11)	\$360
Tabloid	\$500
Inserted Card	\$500
(Includes 1 color printing on 67# Vellum Bristol 5" x 8" image area.)	
COLOR IS NOW FREE! *~*~*~*	
Because of a special arrangement with our printers, we are now offering free color for all ads. This may change in the future, but you can take advantage of this deal and make full color work for you.	

More News in Cotati

“I am a Socialist Democrat, but its not about ideology...”

Jan Kravitz, Cotati



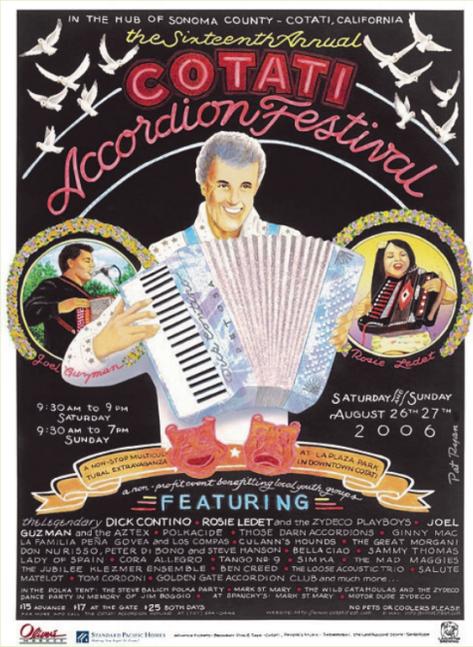
The Cotati Independent has given long time Cotati resident Jan Kravitz an opportunity to make his case here to the community and write an article why he thinks more socialism is what Cotati and America needs right now to jumpstart the economy. But Jan has refused our offer, for what reason Kravitz won't say. We hope to find other Cotati citizens who are willing and able to express their views and face public scrutiny on this and other subjects of community interest.

(From Page One)

The Search for Museum Visitors continues

Open only a few hours each week, the museum pays no rent and no utilities at City Hall for a large space of about 1200 square feet that was supposed to be only a temporary location for the museum. But it sure looks like they have no intention of leaving, ever. No matter what the city officials do to increase more visitors, the museum just comes up short despite the high expectations. The Museum has become a sort of Occupy movement in and of itself to many people who asking why the non profit historical society gets free office space and preferential treatment at all. If you follow the money, answers will often follow and explain everything.

The Cotati Historical Society Museum curator, Pru Draper recently came before the city council declaring she has lived here in Cotati for 61 years, obviously attempting to throw here political weight around about who exactly the city council needs to listen to. Draper, and her late husband Lloyd Draper, used to show up together at city council meetings on rare occasion to remind the council and the public who really pulls the strings in Cotati, and where much of the campaign money came from over many years to get liberals elected to office and stay elected in Cotati.



But some people are asking how after 61 years someone could have sat back and allowed the city fall into such a state of decline and disrepair with a deteriorating infrastructure that the city can't keep up with which is a disgrace. Draper herself is also partly to blame for the cronyism and behind the scenes wheeling and dealing that Cotati City Hall has become so famous for.

Draper has been a financial supporter of many far left leaning candidates for city council over the years which was a big benefit when she came to City Hall with her hand out asking for free office space for a museum project that was to be filled with many items donated by people over the years who have long since passed away.

The Museum now appears to be hurting for visitors and money, but they won't say to what extent. Museum financial reports have not been forthcoming to the public or the city council for review.

Because of the low visitor turnout, visitor hours have been reduced to two short time periods per week. The museum is empty most of the time fully heated and air conditioned at the taxpayer's expense. So, check it out sometime. Many citizens are saying no matter what the city does to promote the museum, it's just not drawing very many visitors to justify the large office space and cost to the city.



After receiving a poor restaurant review from our restaurant critic, Gerard Guidice, owner of Sally Tomatoes in Rohnert Park, emailed us at The Cotati Independent and told us to stay the f___k out of his restaurant. All that we at The Cotati Independent have to say to that is don't worry, Gerard. The poor quality of your food along with your unprofessional conduct and vulgar language won't be having us beating a path to your door. We went out of our way to be completely fair, did you a favor by being honest, and offered to give it a follow up review to no avail.

Any reputable restaurant owner would have at least offered a refund or an invitation to return once you got your act together. The worst restaurants in the world are simply a result of poor management, and Sally Tomatoes has proven to be a textbook example on how to lose customers by insulting paying customers.



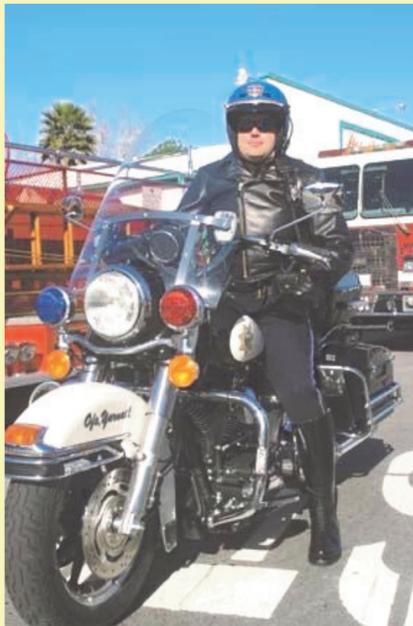
We have repeatedly asked the Cotati Police Department for a monthly police log for publication here. Police chief Parrish has ignored our request. We have also requested the police chief write and submit a monthly message to the community to help keep our community safe. But the Chief has refused this request as well and won't return our calls. We think Chief Parrish is a swell guy, but that he is taking his marching orders from the City Manager and the City Council to ignore our requests. Is it any wonder why stacks of our newspapers continued to be pulled from the information table inside City Hall every day never to be seen again?

(from Page One)

Yarnell was widely known as Cotati's infamous traffic cop. Many people have come face to face with Yarnell over the years under less than comfortable circumstances, especially if you were one of many who were pulled over and cited for an alleged traffic infraction.

"This is shocking and terrible news. Second only to Cotati's City Manager and Planning staff, Yarnell was the most talked about city employee I got an earful about on the campaign trail from local citizens. Jason made quite an impression, to say the least, and I hope his injuries are minor," said former city councilman, George Barich.

News of this accident is a huge loss for Cotati that has only eleven sworn officers on staff and one police officer on patrol on any given time in a town struggling to meet the public safety needs of the community.



Cotati police officer B. Gallo (Bee) has been seen out on traffic patrol in one of the three shiny new police cruisers the city recently leased because the city claimed they did not have the money to buy even one new police car outright.

One Cotati citizen, Greg Karraker, questioned the city's commitment to the police department. "They'll lease a new Prius for the City Manager at \$9,000 a year, but they beg the citizens to donate \$8,500 a year for the police dog?"

Some years ago, George Barich attempted to persuade the Cotati Police Department and city officials that Cotati needed an Adopt-A-Cop program to help Cotati police officers in good times and in bad. This is a successful program for many police agencies across the country where citizens support police by taking them to lunch, having benefits for injured officers, and generally showing that we appreciate their efforts. But the plea for such a volunteer program fell on deaf ears, and failed to get any support from the police association or the city.

Recently, Cotati police officer Dave Houts came before a city council meeting begging for financial assistance, claiming he did not have the money to pay for his healthcare premium which broke the hearts of many of the onlookers in the room who listened to Houts tell a story of city mismanagement that caused him serious financial difficulty.

As the city suffers from a decline in revenues from high sales taxes and other wasteful spending practices, the situation appears to be getting worse for City Hall.

We hope to provide more information on the condition of Yarnell as we receive it. The volunteer staff at The Cotati Independent wish Officer Yarnell a quick and successful recovery.

Cooking with Cotati Chef Jeff Collier

Butternut Squash and Apple Soup ~ 8-10 servings



Celebrate this Holiday with a flavorful hearty soup, that is not only festive, colorful, and delicious, but provides a healthy break from the traditional Holiday dish. Introduce a new taste to your family and friends with this warm fragrant soup that will leave your guests coming back for seconds.

- ~
- 1 tsp unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 3 shallots, minced
- 1 tbsp peeled,minced fresh ginger
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 4 lbs butternut squash,peeled,seeded,coarsely chopped
- 3 apples (sweeter the better) peeled,cored,coarsely chopped
- 6 cups. chicken stock
- kosher salt & freshly ground white pepper
- 2 tsp fresh lemon juice
- pinch of cayenne pepper

- garnish~
- 1/2 cup of coarsely chopped pistachios (toasted on a skillet)
- Creme Fraiche thinned with milk
- swirl of maple syrup

Melt butter and oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add shallots, ginger,cardamom, and cumin. saute 2-3 minutes. Add squash and apples, stir frequently until they begin to soften, about 4 minutes.Add stock. season with salt and pepper. Raise heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to med-low cover, simmer about 40 minutes.

In blender or food processor, puree soup in batches until very smooth. Return to saucepan on med-low heat. add lemon juice and cayenne.

Ladle soup in warm shallow bowls, garnish with swirl of thinned creme fraiche,maple syrup, and sprinkle with toasted pistachios.

Cooking tip of the month:

"Mise en place" is a french cooking term for having everything in place. During the holidays, things can get hectic in the kitchen, so before you start your recipe, make sure you have everything in place and in order. Whether it be herbs, flour, or chopped vegetables. Having everything at your side and ready to go will make your cooking a lot easier on yourself in the kitchen

Award winning Executive Chef Jeffrey Collier is a lifelong resident of Cotati. He attended Scottsdale Culinary Institute Le Courdon Bleu. He is the founder and Exec Chef of California Catering. 2011 Harvest Fair winner : Best use of Sonoma County Seafood, and two time double gold winner for his appetizers.

<http://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaCatering>



Cotati Yacht Club & GALLEY

8099 La Plaza 707-795-1417

THE FUTURE IS TODAY

"The Green Technology is here, now"

By Tim Mentz, Cotati

My name is Timothy Mentz. I'm a thirty year old former U.S. Marine and resident of Cotati. This past summer, when gas prices were on the rise and predicted to reach six dollars per gallon, I found myself constantly complaining of the hardships caused by such ridiculous prices.



Eventually, the Marine in me took over and I became sick of hearing myself complain. Something needed to be done! There must be some way for each of us as individuals to stand up and say, "I'm not going to take it anymore! The oil company doesn't control me! I'm a consumer, I control them." After weeks of research and study, I found the solution, an electric motorcycle.

Affordability was my main concern, as I work in retail and am putting myself through college. I am not by any means, a wealthy man, but I did it; I built it from the ground up. Starting with a twenty year old Kawasaki motorcycle that was inoperable, I stripped the old gas engine and its components and began putting together what I dubbed the, "Ninja-E," (Electric).

Upon completion my total outlay was roughly \$3,000. My creation, however, has already begun to pay for itself after the first month. Riding it mainly to work and back, about six miles round trip, I have saved a great deal of money on gas. Simply turning the surge protector off on my entertainment center every night, I haven't spent an extra penny on electricity. How well does it work though?

My motorcycle uses four, deep cycle batteries(boat batteries) and has a top speed of 50 mph with a single charge range of fifteen miles. These, of course, are all adjustable. But again, cheap transportation was my goal. The bike's weighs roughly equal to what it was as a gasoline motorcycle, and it is an absolute blast to ride. As an experienced motorcyclist, it is completely different and exciting to ride. The electric motor connects directly to the back tire via the chain, which means no gears. No gear shifting is required. This also makes it extremely fun for beginning riders as it is equal to an automatic transmission.

The bike gives off absolutely **no** emissions and almost **no** noise. Witnesses have told me that it sounds similar to a bicycle traveling at a high rate of speed. The motorcycle currently has a fifteen mile range per charge but it only costs about 40 cents per charge. This means that if you round the current gas price up to an even \$4, the electric motorcycle will go around 150 miles for the price of one gallon of gas. 150 "mpg," (miles per price of gallon) is pretty amazing. 15 miles per charge doesn't seem like much? How far



do you actually travel to work? According to ABC News, the average American travels only sixteen miles to work. This means that millions of us travel even shorter distances. Personally, I travel only three miles



to work and there is an outlet conveniently located on the outside of the building should I need to charge my motorcycle while working. This doubles the range of the motorcycle, as long as it would have the entire, 8 hour work day to charge. Range and speed are only limited to a persons budget, with significant increases in range and speed, roughly every \$200 dollars.

I know how devoted this beautiful city is to find cleaner ways of living, and I want everyone to know that I've found one affordable and fun green solution.

I want to see many more electric vehicles on the road in the days, not years, ahead. The technology is here and it's increasingly affordable. If anyone is interested or has any questions or comments I can be reached at Electricmoto@live.com. Building this motorcycle has been a great experience. I've learned how to weld, mold plexi-glass, repair fiberglass and much more. It may sound difficult, but it's not. Every one of us can do it. Every one of us can make a difference.

Special thanks to Thunder Struck Motors in Sebastopol. I ordered several of my parts through them and even received some very friendly technical support. Until I started this project I had no idea that an electric vehicle conversion company existed, let alone, one so close to home.

Timothy Mentz, Cotati 707-327-8728



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Another great edition. BTW, that Press Democrat delivery woman Lillie, reminded me of my situation. When we try to spread a conservative message in Novato, all the leftists can do is tear up our words. They cannot argue against them because of they are the truth. My campaign signs say: "Eliminate Illegal Alien Gangs", and "Take Back Government". Of my 100 street signs, 33 have been stolen, 10 vandalized 4 or more times... Some people are simply afraid of change.

Jerome J. Ghigliotti, Attorney at Law
Novato, CA

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your article regarding the proposed idea of reducing Old Redwood Hwy from 4 lanes to 2. I thought putting another park in Cotati's prime commercial real estate location was a harebrained idea, but this one takes the cake. On Nov. 2, a representative from Sonoma County Conservation Action (SCCA) knocked on my door to tell me how lucky I am to have such a great city council in Cotati, and how lovely it will be to have a tree-lined median down the stretch of Old Redwood Highway if the new plan were to be put in place.

"Keeping Cotati's small town character, drawing visitors out of their cars to shop, and reducing green house gas emissions" were just a few of the reasons for eliminating half of the highway the SCCA rep gave me during her 20 minute rant on my doorstep. However, I am just unable to see it. My backyard backs up to Old Red, and starting at 5:00 pm on every weekday, I have a steady stream of cars idling, waiting to move north through downtown, just on the other side of my fence. How does eliminating an entire lane of traffic improve this situation?

The city approved the widening of Cotati's sidewalks in an effort to reduce traffic and deter big-rig trucks from using downtown Cotati as a detour from the 101 grade, yet the only thing it did for the traffic behind my fence was make it even slower than before! How they think this roundabout-with-2-lanes idea will make things any better is beyond me.

Amber Heidtke
Cotati

Dear Editor,

I love your newspaper and was glad to hear that the newspaper vandal has been caught. Even if criminal charges aren't successfully pursued, at least she was exposed. Hopefully she will at least, change her ways.

Timothy Mentz
Cotati, CA

Submit your letters to the editor online at

editor@thecotatiindependent.com

Winter Special
Limited Time
Up to 8 Feet x 4 Inch Skirt
Some Restrictions Apply
SPA COVERS \$295
707-584-4SPA
www.SpaExpress.net

Pick Your Plan

and Download mobile application to your smartphone or access through Call Back Service

Talk and save up to 70% on your mobile phone bill

Can Mobile World allows you to save up to 70% on your mobile phone bill. Simply pick your plan and download a mobile application to your smartphone, or make calls through the Call Back Service.

"Money tight? Let me show you how I can save you hundreds on dollars a year on phone, Internet, Satellite TV, Home Security & Long Distance."

For more information call **Brett Sandquist**



707-490-9194

To make a contribution to *The Cotati Independent*

Cotati's ONLY Locally Owned Newspaper

Contact George Barich at editor@thecotatiindependent.com
www.thecotatiindependent.com

Thank you to all who have contributed generously.

BIG O TIRES

5979 Commerce Blvd # 1
Rohnert Park, CA
94928-1650
(707) 584-4880
Open Weekdays
8am-5pm; Sat

The Ultimate Guide to Everything Tires From The Team You Trust

Want inside tips on comparison shopping for tires? Or do you just need some help figuring out whether you need new tires in the first place? Big O mechanics will answer your tire questions and give you some straight talk about tire alignment, balancing, repair and rotation - they'll even show you what these services look like in action.



The Good, the Bad, and the Inedible

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

by Kathryn Wickstrom - Cotati
Foodie, gardener, wine lover, and consumer of all things edible in Wine Country.

Visit my new blog: www.goodbadinedible.com



Legend: ***** Perfection
**** Great
*** Good
** Needs Improvement
* Not Worth Going

Prices: \$\$\$\$ Expensive (over \$30 pp)
\$\$\$ Mid-Range (\$18 - \$30 pp)
\$\$ Average (\$8 - \$18 pp)
\$ Bargain (under \$8 pp)
(Excludes beverage, tax, and tip)

Bar-B-Que Smokehouse Bistro

6811 Laguna Parkway / Sebastopol
707-575-3277

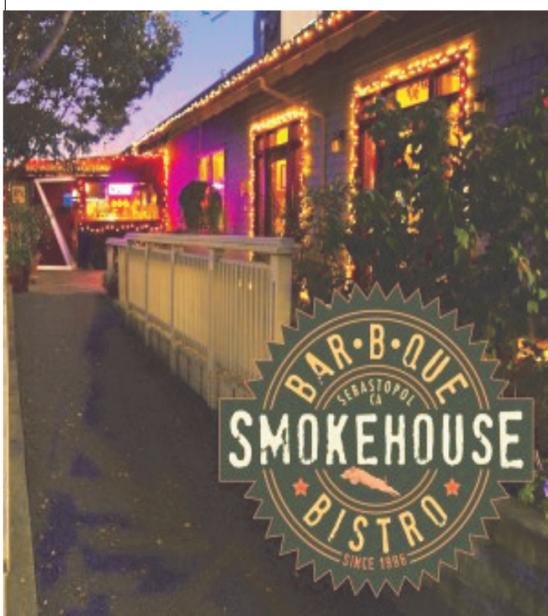
Category: Texas-Style Barbeque

Daily: 11am-8:30pm **L-D**

Take Out & Catering

Beer & Wine

**** 10/23 & 10/30/11 **\$\$**



I had heard a little about this place, Mobil rated 5-Star Chef (Stanford Court Hotel's Executive Chef), Larry Vito's culinary background includes working with some of America's most renowned chefs like Emeril Lagasse, Paul Prudhomme, Wolfgang Puck and Alice Waters. That certainly makes him one of (if not the) most qualified pit man in the business but did it make him the best in Sonoma County? I just had to find out for myself.

So on an idyllic fall evening my husband and I got into our car, Garmin plugged in, and set out for the wilds of Sebastopol. I never really trust the darn things; it always seems to me they take you in round-about ways. Finally, we arrive, and for sure my Garmin had a good laugh on me because this place is far simpler to find than the route I was told to take!

Tucked behind the cinema theatre off Main Street, this is a very tiny place. Resting on a raised concrete slab, you walk along a wooden floor, past Patisserie Angelica (heavenly creations of all things sweet) to this small wooden structure with 4 tables and chairs and a counter where one or two young, smiling staff await your arrival. Directly to your left is a stairway down to a patio area with wooden picnic tables. One large enough for a group of 20+. The patio at night has white string lights above your head, crisscrossing between the trees and 3 or 4 gas heaters set between the tables. All of this took me back to summers spent at Lake Berryessa in Napa when all our dining was outside under the stars. The lake is missing here, but not that feeling you are going to eat some really good food. Bring it on and let the games begin!

We ordered a couple of starters first, **Drunk and Stoned Shrimp**, soaked in whiskey and lightly smoked with a salad of baby lettuces and garlicky Habanero aioli; next **Rib Tips**, smoked rib nubbins trimmed from their famous **Memphis Style Ribs** (Sonoma County Harvest Fair Gold Medal winner!). The shrimp dish is really, really good. Cooked perfectly and the salad dressing was light and applied with restraint. If the rib nubbins were any indication of what a whole rib would be, another visit was definitely in my future. Next, we ordered a dinner plate of **Southern Barbecued Chicken**, a house specialty using only thigh meat and smoked slowly. Hey, if it's good enough for Jeff Cox of the Press Democrat (4 Stars) it should be good enough for your humble writer. OMG. This is the bomb of all BBQ'd chicken. Unbelievably moist, juicy

and smokey. Served up with fresh made cornbread (very good) and your choice of 2 sides (we chose **Cowboy Beans** and **Red Potato Salad**). Others include **Nana's Slaw**, **Mac & Cheese** and **Collard Greens**.

On our most recent lunch visit, I decided to go "whole hog" and ordered a **Combination Plate** of 3 signature BBQ meats plus 2 sides (I did take half of it home for another meal)... **Memphis Style Barbecued Pork Ribs**, **20-Hour Texas Beef Brisket** and **Southern Barbecued Chicken** (again!) along with Mac & Cheese and Nana's Slaw. This is the real deal here, no foolin'. Better BBQ than my trips to Texas where the owner/chef, Larry Vito spent time mastering the techniques of Texas pit barbecuing, using only hardwoods in a big smoker. You can visit the 8,000-pound smoker he had shipped from Texas, a huge shiny structure with a 12-foot tall smokestack behind the restaurant

Getting back to the basics, and why I now believe this is the best BBQ in Sonoma County: It's the taste and the appearance of the meat that Chef Vito produces. Absolutely smoked to perfection. No sauce needed! Oh, there are 3 or 4 squeeze bottles of different flavors on the table for you to dab on the side of your plate if you must. For me, I like mine naked! The spice rubs used here really flavor the meat and all that long, slow smokin' does the trick. **Get Thee to BBQ Smokehouse Bistro** for some kicked-up Q.

Oh, and save some room for the **Warm Apple Cobbler**. A house made specialty with sliced apples, brown sugar and spices tucked under a crisp oatmeal and butter topping served with whipped cream. YUM!

Spud Point Crab Company

1860 Westshore Road / Bodega Bay / 707-875-9472

Category: Crab Shack

9am-5pm 6 days **B-L**

Closed – Wed

Take-out

Live guitar weekends, maybe.

**** 11/28, 11/29 **\$\$-\$\$**



Located across the street from the Bodega Bay commercial fishing fleet, and family owned and operated since 2004, this out-of-the-way, parking-challenged, hope the weather is decent cuz the picnic tables are outside or you're takin' food to go hole-in-the-wall serves up the best **Fresh Crab Sandwich** on a toasted bun I have ever eaten! Plump, juicy and piled high, light on the mayo, and not a leaf of lettuce in sight, or fillers like chopped celery---the true flavor of all that crab comes through loud and clear. Warning: This sandwich is smallish; enough for one but not enough to share unless you buy another (shrimp?) or add an order of the **Crab Cakes**. But that's not what the place is known for. At least not with the locals and those in the know about Spud Point Crab Company. It's all about the **Clam Chowder**. They serve both versions, Manhattan (red) and New England (white). Personally, I believe the New England variety is the real deal.. So on my first visit, I shared a pint container with my husband; served with plastic spoons (who needs a real bowl?) and a bag of tasty seasoned oyster crackers. Although it is chock full of fresh clams, and served piping hot, we both found the soup tasted too garlicky. You may not. Many folks say it's better than the clam chowder you can get in Boston! I've had chowder there too, and find it more to my liking. Maybe it's because in Boston they add bacon, and go easy on the garlic? You be the judge on your visit, and don't forget about the Crab Cakes (served Sat & Sun only---while they last). Yummy. Tri-Tip sandwiches, hot dogs and chili are also available, but why go out of your way or waste a visit for that unless you live in the area? Go for the crab, baby!

Terrapin Creek Café

580 Eastshore Road / Bodega Bay / 707-875-2700

Category: International Comfort Food

11am - 2:30pm Thu, Fri & Sun **L**

4:30pm - 9pm Thu, Fri & Sun **D**

Closed Mon & Tue

Beer & Wine.

***** 10/30/11 **\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$**



3 years and 1 Michelin Star later, Terrapin Creek Cafe is preparing some of the most exciting food on the Sonoma Coast. With a dining capacity of only 35, the kitchen can and does succeed in turning out both visually exciting and wonderfully seasoned plates. The owners, Andrew Truong and Liya Lin, are a couple with impressive culinary resumes, having cooked at many of San Francisco's top restaurants; she at Michael Mina, Ame, Ducca and Absinthe; he at Jardiniere, Ame, and Bacar. Just 2 chefs who decided in 2008 to move to Bodega Bay to get away from the high anxiety and stress of the restaurant world in The City to start a family and a restaurant in this beach/fishing community on the Sonoma coast.

All that talent now benefits Terrapin Creek Cafe's lucky diners. And lucky you will be if you make a reservation quickly, now that the news about their Michelin star is out. Trust me. This place is worth the drive, even for lunch in case you won't be staying overnight.

We were staying in Bodega for a couple of nights, and I had made our reservation before reading about the one-star rating. In fact, it wasn't until my husband pointed this out to me the night we were to dine there! Many of my readers and blog followers know that I normally prefer unsung restaurants to Michelin rated hot spots that are generally, but not always over-priced, over-rated and over-egoed. However, having read several reviews on Yelp about this place, I had a good idea we were in safe territory as the owners got high marks for their friendliness, and higher marks for their adorable toddler daughter who could be seen there. Oh yeah, and the food got high praise too!

Now to the food. Having read a Yelper review about the incredible **Ahi Tuna Poke**, I just had to give it a try. **The Figs & Prosciutto Salad** was recommended by the owner so we ordered that, too. The dishes came out together and looked impressive. The Ahi Tuna Poke was delicious, on a bed of seasoned seaweed, thinly sliced onion, and toasted pine nuts. Figs & Prosciutto salad was a perfect blend of endive and radicchio, toasted almonds, goat cheese and dressed with tart cherry vinaigrette. Delightful.

Main courses ordered: **Liberty Farms Duck Breast**, with roasted Brussels sprouts & butternut squash, spatzle, bacon bits and natural jus; and a **Kurobuta Pork Chop**, with creamy Farro, fontina & bleu cheese, fresh pears & figs and balsamic gastrique. Both dishes were incredibly good. The duck, cooked perfectly pink and juicy, and the accompanying sprouts, squash, and spatzle with bacon bits gave the dish a wonderful earthiness fitting for a game bird. The pork was succulent and mild, a thick sirloin atop the Farro, pears and figs. To wash this all down, I chose a '08 Freeman Winery Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir that went well with the duck and pork meat.

This restaurant deserves its Michelin star and the owners could not be more friendly or involved with their food and their customers. Their philosophy: Use top quality produce, meats, and fish that showcase both local and global cuisines, using seasonal and locally sourced ingredients.

I think they've succeeded in their mission; you try it and see if you agree. **Get Thee to Terrapin Creek Cafe** and enjoy!

On the wine: Very decent offerings from varied sources. By the bottle and by the glass. Corkage: \$15.

Until next time, bon appétit!



Street Fests and All the Rest

By Amanaa Rendall, Cotati, CA

Why is it so fun to dance and party in the street? Everybody seems to love it: people, kids, dogs, even artists like to have fun and get out with the neighbors once in awhile. A bunch of us got a chance to do just that at WinterBlast 2011, SOFA (South of A Street) Artists' and friends annual street fest in Santa Rosa. There was good food, amazing entertainment, music, and lots of art! I had a plate of delicious Coconut curry from Karma's streetside kitchen, while a parade of decorated sofas filled with laughing kids and pushed by artists floated by, after a florid and peripatetic musical introduction by the Hubbub Club. Behind the studios, under the trees decorated with lights, there was jazz and IPA, oysters, paella, and nice wine.

Yes, my friends, it is still possible to have fun while enjoying the overflowing creative energy oozing out from everywhere in Sonoma county. It's an annual event --SO-- hope to see you next year!

I got a chance to take a look at 'Pop'd From the Panel', the show at the Schulz Museum I mentioned last month. The exhibition is in a smaller portion of the museum reserved for changing shows. The introductory information on the wall of the gallery helped me understand the context the curator, (the person who came up with the idea for the show and/or assembled and arranged the art in the show), is trying to place the combination of pieces in. In this case, the



information on the wall explained that the artists whose works are in the show were influenced by, made reference to, or critiqued art history using images from cartoons and comics.

All of the works in the show are interesting, but there were a couple I really liked. One was Enrique

Chagoya's *Double Agent*, (1989), a charcoal and pastel drawing on a large piece of heavy paper. And I do mean large; the dimensions are approximately six by eight feet. That's pretty big for a drawing! We were in school together at the Art Institute in the '80's and when Enrique started using large sheets of paper and oversized imagery and I remember being very inspired and impressed. The drawings look like beautiful art billboards to me and many of his drawings have sharp political themes, content and imagery.

In the piece in this show, the figure of George Bush dressed and flying as Superman, with a smiley face on his chest, looms over a dog with the head of George Bush. Other images in the picture contribute to the strangeness one feels while viewing all the elements swarming over the large surface in black charcoal and white and red pastel, with smeared hand prints like...blood? Wow. Pretty powerful. I recommend looking up images of Enrique's work if you are at all interested in political art. Much of his work is direct and holds nothing back.

Another piece I liked was Jeanne-Claude and Christo's *Wrapped Doghouse*. The information about it explained that it first appeared in a Peanuts comic strip; later it was created by the artists, who gave it to Charles Schulz. Usually the creation is first, and the comic reference later, but not in this case. I recommend seeing this show and you still can until December 11. Unfortunately, I didn't get any reviews from readers. Too bad!

In the beautiful, bountiful wintertime, there is always lots of art everywhere from printed decorations and paper goods with turkeys, to window displays of trees and toys and miniature towns, to the amazing storm cloud formations over the hills. To me it is all art. It is touching to see decorations and lights everywhere during the holidays, from the dry cleaner's window to the coffee shop counter. Someone had to put forth the effort to make that display, and it does make a difference, to me, at least! Those small touches can make a gray, wintry day that much warmer and brighter. It all disappears much too soon for me, and winter still goes on for a few more months without all the lights and tinsel.

I love using natural materials for decorations indoors. Pine and eucalyptus branches, holly, juniper, cedar, anything that is fresh and aromatic is wonderful to bring indoors and put in water, just like cut flowers. As for decorations, I will be waiting for the sales and stocking up, *after* the holidays.

I know everyone is usually extra busy during the holidays, so I won't recommend any other events or

shows. But I will recommend taking time to rest and rejuvenate in the midst of all the scheduled events and commercial chaos. This is a powerful time of year for reassessing and evaluating our lives. It is a great time for getting away alone, even if only for a few hours, and turning inward and asking yourself some deep and probing questions, such as: *Am I truly happy? If not, what do I feel I must have to be truly happy? Am I on my path or off it? If I am off it, how can I get back on it? What do I truly value in my life and how can I honor this more fully? How can I live my life more creatively, honestly, and genuinely?* Questions such as these, asked of ourselves gently and compassionately, when we can listen to the quiet answers that may arise, can reveal deeper connections within ourselves that we might not be in contact with on a daily basis. Contemplation can be a very seasonal act. It seems so natural to get quiet and go within when the days and nights are longer and colder. What you ponder and reflect on during the dark days and nights of Winter can come to a rich new fruition in the light of Spring. When you give yourself the gift of self-contemplation, you can enjoy a life well and richly lived. It is the best gift you could ever give yourself.

May you find peace and your heart's true desires during the holidays, and I wish you a beautiful and art-filled new year!

The two pictures are my own work. They are smaller details from an 18 x 24" painting on paper titled *Elements of a Dream*, which I currently have hanging in my home.



Round and Round We Go...

By Eric Kirchmann
Cotati

I attended an "informational meeting" of two plans presented by City staff in Cotati this past month. What troubles me is that the consultant spent a lot of time selling the proposal where we pick from one of two choices. Staff then made it clear which choice they were sold on. The vast majority (95%) of city staff does not live in Cotati, but they know what is best for us and our character and our infrastructure. They talk about "Walkable Cotati" before they get into their city owned and maintained vehicles. The sidewalks downtown have been redone four times in the time I have lived here and there still is not a way to walk on a sidewalk from Old Redwood Highway to East Cotati Avenue on Charles street. There are no sidewalks on Henry, Olaf, Williams, George, or Arthur streets that are connected such that you cannot walk on sidewalks down any one street in our Hexagon Hub city.

Years ago the City paid for wood chips to be flown in so wheelchairs could wheel around the new and improved playground structure in La Plaza Park. Trouble is there was no way a wheel chair could get in to use the park and the wood chips as the city forgot to create an opening in the two foot wall around the park. Now there is a ramp and opening sixteen years after the chips were flown in. This is why some of us are concerned about consultants and plans where you choose door number one or door number two- some of us remember what happens on "Let's Make a Deal". People spoke at the meeting who have business outside of the city limits (They Pay No Cotati Sales Taxes or Business Licenses), they live outside the City Limits (Paying no property taxes, etc) yet they are embarrassed driving into Cotati and they favor a two lane road with roundabouts over a four lane road. I am happy to hear other's opinions but what is strange in this case is how they can determine what I should be forced to accept in Cotati when they do not support Cotati in any way and in front of their business there is a road with tow lanes in one direction and two in the other, or to use Cotati City Staff Speak, they have a four lane "City Boulevard" in front of their business but they want residents and property owners in Cotati to have a country lane in front of their businesses. I guess hypocrisite is too strong a word. Others live in Sebastopol and suggest in editorials what should happen in Cotati. What is worth noting is the fact that there are no roundabouts in Sebastopol. What is worth noting is that the City Staff did not choose to show any roundabouts in Sonoma County in their sales presentation. They showed us simulations with bicyclists going the wrong way, with traffic flows that were blips and lines, and simply a presentation like a time share sale without any coupons. They showed two roundabouts

in La Jolla California and the other in upstate New York. Neither roundabout shown was the same configuration or six hundred feet from another roundabout as Cotati staff has planned. Neither is a block from a major interstate highway or even an existing highway as both our highways are designated. Apples and oranges do not taste the same or look the same even if you love both they just are not the same.

For months we have been waiting for our highways to get back to normal because millions are being spent to widen the roads and allow more lanes. This is not being done for safety or local character so why hasn't Cotati said they don't want this happening? Did Cotati demand a train instead of an extra HOV lane on the freeway? No one likes someone who points out the obvious. There used to be a stop sign at Arthur Street, East Cotati, and Charles Street. It was right between the new Traffic Calming Islands which have been hit weekly since they were created for our safety. Pedestrians have been hit luckily less than the islands themselves. The city did not return the stop sign where everyone would stop where they had for years because "It would be too confusing for drivers". When I and other pointed out the need for reflective tape and that the islands were being struck we were told "it takes drivers awhile to get used to changed conditions".



I am fine with roundabouts but the question goes unanswered why a roundabout was not put in at Old Redwood Highway and East Cotati when the city changed that intersection; Why not? Now two roundabouts and two less lanes are what Cotati's character needs? Sebastopol has two and even three lanes in their downtown and that would be going in one direction as they have a round and round sort of around their park and many banks, restaurants, real estate offices, ice cream stores, shops, oh and yes bars. They have more bars than Cotati and more liquor licenses. Just to point out the obvious, they even have hotels, and most people think of Sebastopol as a small town. Cotati staff choose to live there and pay taxes there. Cloverdale has no roundabouts, but they do have a train station, markets, motels, and a fair-ground; lots of things Cotati does not have but most people think of Cloverdale as having small town charm and character. I guess I am kind of lost as to why we need so much character in a town that has long been known for its characters. Petaluma has no roundabouts in their business districts. They have

them in their residential areas, and in their business districts they have four lane "City Boulevards" that can barely handle the commerce. Santa Rosa has "City Boulevards" with four lanes (two going in each direction in most of their new business areas). The redeveloped old areas have recreated the character of yesteryear, complete with missions and outreach programs blended with empty buildings and few people walking after dark or far from their cars. I've never seen a crowd of bicycles there except during the now gone Handcar Regatta.

My point is the following; I have not seen anywhere in Sonoma County where by design anyone has removed traffic lanes and made things work better for traffic or business. Four lanes come into Cotati from 116 now, the single lane turning right heading from 116 to Old Redwood Highway jams up as drivers "get confused" and this causes accidents and backup even when this is a pass through lane just like roundabouts. It is illegal to drive right on to 116 from the north by the old Shell station and abandoned Backdoor Records, so this is not a safe roundabout-like approach, but two roundabouts and one lane will take the traffic which now needs four lanes?

The police accept that people speed twenty miles over the limit, but roundabouts are the answer because? Traffic will be at a standstill so people won't be able to go above twenty miles an hour most of the time, but this traffic snarl will be good for kids and bicycles going to and from the parks and shopping opportunities. Where in Sonoma County has this worked and where are all the business owners demanding this? I hate to point out the obvious, but two lives were lost on 116 and Madrone Avenue. Children on a bus could have been involved, and were in that they watched one fatality as the accident occurred before them. The answer on that road with one lane going one way and another going the other is not compacting the lanes, but widening the road, allowing more room for vehicles to pass and allow for emergency response vehicles.

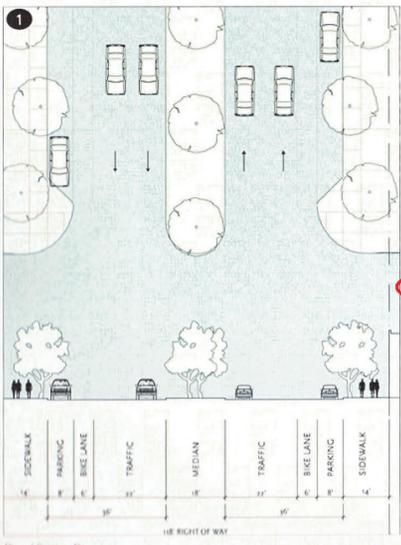
If you really believe that roundabouts reduce accidents by 51%, then perhaps that is where the City Council, City Engineer, City Manager, and Police Chief should be selling a plan for a roundabout because I will support that and believe that that intersection has been ignored for far too long. The city contends they have no control over that. I have trouble understanding what small town character means when children sit on a bus watching a tragedy on a road with the configuration the city prefers when on either end the road opens up to the two lane "City Boulevard" configuration to allow for traffic flow on to the freeway or north to shopping options in other cities that have no roundabouts or desire for them. To be fair I like the idea when it was proposed to have a roundabout at Old Redwood Highway and East Cotati but a citizen suggested it, so it never happened. I'd like to see a roundabout at Hwy 116 and Madrone Avenue but the state may not like it. So, we are left with a city that chooses not to look at, many options, listen to all citizens, or do much more than concede that the Downtown Specific Plan will not work after millions of dollars have been spent on consultants and plans. At least we don't have a train station in the middle of nowhere do we?

(From Page One)

City Documents Reveal Major Flaws in Downtown Specific Plan

CHAPTER 3 : IMPLEMENTATION

Old Redwood Highway (La Plaza to Gravenstein Highway)



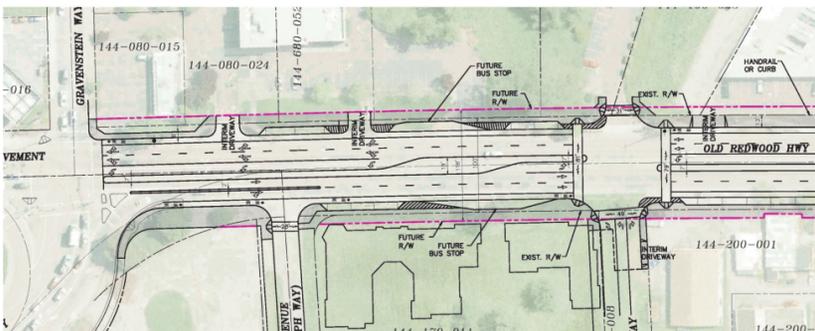
Collector Street

DESIGN SPEED	25-30 mph
CROSSING TIME	16 seconds
ROW WIDTH	110
MEDIAN	18'
TRAFFIC LANES	4, 2 each direction
BIKEWAY	both sides 6'
PARKING	both sides (parallel)
CURB TYPE	vertical
CURB RADIUS	10' with curb extensions 15' without
SIDEWALK WIDTH	12'
PLANTER WIDTH	5'x5' with grates
PLANTER TYPE	well at 30' o.c.
PLANTING	trees
TREE SPECIES	see page 3.62 (Street Tree Plan)

Where did alternatives come from?

- Original 4 lane concept came from the Downtown Specific Plan
- ~~Design issues with the 4 lane alternative:~~
 - Does not reduce speed to 25 mph
 - Does not shorten pedestrian crossings
 - Does not maintain access for delivery trucks
 - Limits u-turns

The million dollar city plan, 2007



4-lane City Boulevard: City says simple, straight lines won't work

As you can see, the plan that cost you over a million dollars says plainly that Old Redwood Highway will become the center of a beautiful, revitalized downtown where traffic pokes along at a leisurely 25—30 miles an hour, and where cars bicycles, and pedestrians are treated equally.

So what happened? Here is one fact and four possibilities. The fact is that the 4-lane plan made it necessary to widen the right of way by 18 feet. In January, 2011, city staff began approaching merchants on both sides of the street, and asking them to donate 9 feet of their property rights, along with the diagonal parking that makes a great deal of their business possible. In exchange for their valuable property, they were offered a new, free sidewalk. Not surprisingly, the merchants told the city to buzz off. You'd think the city might have done this simple homework before spending over a million dollars on a plan that couldn't be built without this concession.

So here are the four possibilities:

1. The city was incompetent when they designed the original plan without talking to the merchants involved.
2. The city lied about the design speeds and crossing times in the original plan.
3. The city is incompetent in projecting the 40 mph speeds and 23 second crossing times in the new 4-lane plan.
4. The city is lying about the drawbacks of the new 4-lane plan.

What happens now?

In their presentation to a group of citizens on November 8, city staff were pushing their preference for a 2-lane system with roundabouts as hard as Vince the Sham-Wow Guy telling you to CALL THIS NUMBER NOW.

Diane Thompson even went so far as to say that the difference between a 4-lane street with a median and signals, and a 2-lane street with roundabouts was like choosing between Santa Rosa Avenue and an idyllic village square. Given this skewed, inaccurate description, some citizens were lulled into accepting the city's promise of Disneyland North. The great majority of merchants — including Oliver's — who will have to live with this business

-killing mess, felt otherwise.

At the moment, only 4 businesses support the 2-lane roundabout plan: The Redwood Café, Peet's Coffee, The Hub Cyclery, and Liberty Valley Doors.

To date, at least 15 businesses have attended meetings that oppose the roundabouts, including 8-Ball Bar, Arch's Glass, Cotati Jewelers, Cotati Market, Cotati Massage Therapy, El Paso Bakery, Hines Signs, Little New Yorker Pizza, Loud and Clear, Masala Jack's, Miller Driving School, More Unlimited, Papa Murphy's Pizza, Rancho Realtors, Sharp Cuts, and of course, Oliver's, who will pull the plug on their proposed \$18 million development unless the city makes reasonable changes to the roundabout plan.

The Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District also wrote a letter to the city, expressing their opposition to the plan, saying **"This plan creates a safety**



Rancho Adobe Fire Chief Frank Treanor says: "From looking at the cheesy, no-dimension plans on the city's website, in my opinion, the 2-lane plan will constipate traffic. If the city ever returns my calls, I'll tell them so."

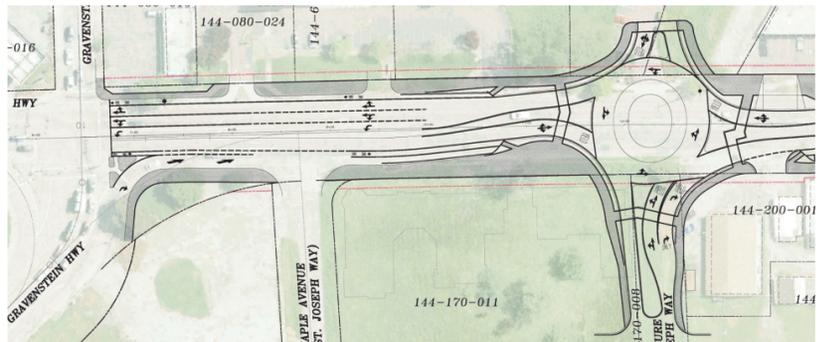
problem within your community that cannot be ignored". Chief Frank Treanor wrote this letter October 24, but the city has not returned his calls.

Despite serious safety concerns, in a packed Planning Commission meeting on November 17th, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended the 2-lane plan. And according to an informal telephone survey taken by the city, 16 of 20 citizens contacted were against the 2-lane roundabout plan.

What sets this program apart from many others is that "Santa" and his elves deliver the gifts to each family. "Santa" is driven in Cotati Police Dept cars and Rancho Adobe Fire District engines to his destinations. This brings great delight to the children.

Our program also focuses on families who reside in transitional housing. These families not only receive gifts for their children, but are also given clothing and essential items for their homes, all donated by members of the rotary club. It is the outpouring of community support in donating gifts and cash that allows this program to thrive and help

The million dollar city contradiction, 2011



2-lane Village Main Street: City says complex, off-center curves will work just fine

So perhaps the only way to resolve the conflict is to put the question on the ballot..

Patty Minnis of Cotati Jewelers, a former councilmember, and vocal leader of the no roundabout group, was asked what the next steps are. She hopes the city will listen to the concerns of its businesses, emergency responders, property owners, and citizens, and do the right thing. But, if they do not, she says, "Then we should let the citizens decide."

If the majority of citizens want to spend their visits to downtown backed up in traffic and stuck in roundabouts while they look out their car windows at businesses that never opened, fine. But you deserve a fair comparison between the two choices the city is offering, plus a look at the Plan C for this area that Oliver's has created at their own considerable expense.

4 lanes vs. 2: A fair comparison

The city claims that a 4-lane street, which they named City Boulevard, is doomed to look like Santa Rosa Avenue. This is only true if they want it to look that way. Earlier on the same day the city made this unsupportable claim, I had driven down Columbus Avenue in San Francisco. It's an attractive tree-lined street with a friendly, green median separating its 4 lanes of traffic, which move at a comfortable 25-30 mph. Both sides of the street are lined with restaurants, cafes, boutiques, bike stores, banks, shoemakers, galleries, and all the other things that make a city a city.

Instead of wasting 18 feet on a hugely oversized median, Columbus Avenue does well with a median that is no more than 6 feet. Drive around Northern California and look for 4-lane streets with tree-lined median strips. Chances are, you'll find some very attractive ones.

\$3.5 million for a complex 2-lane plan vs. \$4.5 million for a simple plan?

Saving the most puzzling contradiction for last, the city claims that 4 lanes for families in need.

Donations can be brought to the Cotati Police Department or to any of the Rancho Adobe Fire stations until December 25. However, "Santa's" elves will be wrapping gifts on December 10th and "Santa" will be making his rounds on Saturday, December 17th. **For those wishing to donate, please also consider gifts or gift cards for the ages 9 to 14 as many times these young people are underserved.**

To request assistance for your family or someone you know who resides in Rohnert Park, Cotati or Penngrove, please call the

4 blocks, in a straight line with two signal lights, will cost a million dollars more than the much more complicated roundabout plan. They also say the simple plan will tear up city streets for 2 years, compared to 1 year for the complex plan. How can that be?

I believe it comes back to unfinished homework. If the city had obtained the 9 feet needed from the Old Redwood Highway merchants before they began this fiasco, this discussion would not likely be happening. But my educated guess is that the extra time and money come from the city having to use the expensive, time-consuming process of eminent domain.

What should you do?

The city is right about one thing. This is a decision that will affect the future of Cotati for decades. So by all means, you should express your opinion.

You can attend every City Council meeting in the upcoming weeks: 201 West Sierra Street, Cotati, second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at 7PM.

You can also write City Manager Dianne Thompson, Mayor Janet Orchard, and all city council members at the address above.

When you write, I recommend that you demand a fair presentation of the two choices offered, by the city, along with a presentation of the very practical Plan C proposed by Oliver's.

But be aware that Ms. Thompson has a history of not returning phone calls, e-mails, or mailed correspondence. To ensure that your voice is heard, mail a copy of your letter to The Cotati Independent, PO Box 7841, Cotati, CA 94931. This newspaper will keep a file of all correspondence. Unlike some in Cotati, this paper respects your opinions.

Greg Karraker is amused and outraged by the actions of local governments. See more civic misdeeds at www.thelittlepicture.net

Holiday Toy Drive

(from page One)

Over the years, this holiday gift and toy drive has grown not only in popularity but also in partnership with others in order to help fill needs in our communities. The Rotary Club of Rohnert Park-Cotati spearheads this effort working together with the Rancho Cotati Rotary Club, Rotary Interact Youth Members, The Rancho Adobe Fire District, The Cotati Police Officers and Management Association, Cotati City Employees, The Rohnert Park Chapter of Realtors and the community at large.

voicemail system for the Rotary Club of Rohnert Park-Cotati at (707) 765-4898.

Winter Special

Limited Time

Up to 8 Feet & 4 Inch Skirt
Some Restrictions Apply

SPA COVERS
\$295 Plus Tax

707-584-4SPA
425 Rohnert St
Suite F, Cotati (4772)

www.SpExpress.net

Cotati Downtown Specific Plan, 2041



81-Year Old Cotati City Manager Says Vision Finally Realized

By Marty Mc Fly

(Cotati, CA) 37 years after the \$73 million Downtown Specific Plan was first proposed, Cotati City Manager Dianne Thompson led a ribbon-chewing DSP completion ceremony and town celebration. (Citing safety concerns and greenhouse gases caused by steel manufacturing in China, scissors were outlawed by the Cotati City Council in 2021.)

Beaming with pride, Thompson pointed out the triumphs that define Lustig Boulevard, the center of the town's vibrant, mixed-use, urban-but-kind-Cotati-weird downtown core (previously Old Redwood Highway).

"First, the railway tracks," Thompson pointed out. "Three times a week, a hemp-powered SUPER-SMART train stops here, where an average of 4.2 passengers per disembark and enjoy the green retail environment we've created here. Storefronts include Tofu Surprise, the Macrame Museum, and of course, the Department of Education Drug Counseling Office which helps school children, Grades 3-12, select the most age-appropriate variety of cannabis."

Getting misty-eyed over the scope of the Plan's long-awaited finalization, Thompson pointed out that the new downtown had fewer than 4.6 cars

passing through its 5 clustered roundabouts daily (just North of this view.)

"Today," she beamed, "our *Traffic Cocktail* is 56% bicycle, 22% rickshaw, 10% horseback, and the rest is Retro London Hansom Cabs. The horses that pull the cabs are gradually socializing with the bicycles, and spooking/runaway accidents are trending downwardish"

Responding to heckling from three-term city councilman George Barich, 84, who unsuccessfully tried to derail the DSP in 2009 and again in 2012, Thompson pointed out "This looks just like Milan in 1904, right down to the horse****." Standing her ground firmly, Thompson said confidently, "Everything old is new again," apparently humming the chorus of a 1940s show tune.

Getting back to her three-hour prepared speech, Thompson said, "The best part of this new urban masterpiece is that we didn't build it with a dime of General Fund money. We got every bit of the \$145 Million, including cost overruns, from Federal Stimulus Fund 18A.03d, with a few extra million from raising taxes on Wall Street Millionaires from 99.7% to their fair share of 99.8%."

Vocal critics of high-density, mixed-use downtown centers were quick to point out that only a few apartments above the ground floor retail and government outreach offices were occupied. But Mayor

Janet Orchard, currently in her 22nd term, hastily pointed out that there was one tenant in the third-floor studio apartment above 8224 Old Redwood Highway. "She's a sweet person, fully qualified for Section 8 low-income housing, and pays her \$12/month rent in a fairly timely fashion. She and the 170 cats she caretakes up there are just the kind of tenants we're looking for as we evolve deeper into the 21st Century," Orchard told eager reporters from *The Community Voice* and *Press Democrat*, who hung on the mayor's every word.

Only one unfortunate incident marred the otherwise splendid day. About two hours and fifteen minutes into City Manager Thompson's speech, Rohnert Park Vice-Mayor Jake "Pothole" Mackenzie wrenched the microphone from Ms. Thompson's hands, and electrified the crowd with the following statement: "While you've been playing with trains down here, your Big Brother to the North has been busy. This afternoon, I'm proud to announce that the City of Rohnert Park has just bought Greece. With their socialist government, they were pretty much in the dumper, so we were able to buy the whole country of Greece, Parthenon and all, for less than you spent on this cutesy little downtown....a lot less," he grinned.