



The Cotati Independent

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Volume 7

Cotati's ONLY locally owned hometown monthly newspaper

February, 2012

Cotati to Gain from Loss of State RDA Funding

Story and opinion by George Barich (Cotati, CA) - Like many cities, Cotati has treated California Redevelopment Agency (RDA) money as if it was their own slush fund to do with it as it pleased within loosely defined state guidelines. For decades, Cotati pushed the limitations of its RDA to the breaking point. Despite constant warnings from citizens that Cotati's RDA was in fact a state agency, and that Cotati only had the authority to spend this money on behalf of the state to eliminate

blight and encourage economic development, Cotati twisted the meaning of RDA and abused the program, wasting millions. Cotati repeatedly claimed the money was all theirs to do with what it pleased while the City Attorney remained silent. The California Supreme Court recently ruled otherwise, and in doing so vindicated all those who had been warning cities for years that RDAs were indeed slowly bankrupting the State of California.

Unfortunately, cities that were entrusted

with state RDA money often wasted the money on city salaries, questionable pet projects and outside consultants that had little or nothing to do with eliminating urban blight. RDA became everything about "feel good" projects, supplementing the General Fund, and helping their friends who helped them get elected and re-elected.

RDA was also partly responsible for making California's public school system one of the worst in the nation. Property tax money which would have otherwise gone to

each county and the local school districts was diverted to city employee salaries, expensive public housing projects, private consulting firms, and much more. Under the leadership of Jerry Brown, the hammer has finally been dropped in an attempt to put the state's fiscal house back in order in the eleventh hour. Cotati has now been placed on a badly needed diet, forced to begin paying its own way, become more business friendly, and use more citizen volunteers.

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Anti-Roundabout Petition A Major Success

Single lane roundabouts on Old Red will go to a special election



Story and opinion by Greg Karraker

(Cotati, CA) On Sunday, January 8, a small group of citizens met at Patty Minnis' house to get the petitions necessary to put the city's traffic-choking, business-killing Village Main Street Plan up to a vote of the people.

According to an informal telephone survey conducted by the City, 66% of the citizens contacted were against the plan. Based on Sunday's initial gathering, that number is much higher.

In only half of one day, 7 volunteers were able to collect 375 of the 392 signatures required to put the issue on the ballot.

One petition collector, Former Cotati City Councilman George Barich, said, "I must have visited 80 houses on the West Side, and before four o'clock, I had 75 signatures."

From anecdotal evidence, I knew the number against the city's Village Main Street Plan would be large, but I wanted to see firsthand how prevalent and how strong those feelings are. Since I live in unincorporated Cotati, and any signatures I collect would not be valid, I walked alongside a registered Cotati voter, Teresa Thomas, who actually collected the signatures. My role was to watch and to listen, and I definitely got an earful.

Going door to door is slow work, and in 2.5 hours, we had only covered a few blocks behind Walgreen's. But in that time, 34 people thought so little of the



city's plan that they signed the petition. At least 20 more took a flyer and said they would think it over carefully. At another 30 doors, nobody was home.

In all that time, only three people said they were in favor of the single-lane roundabout plan. One man supported it because he had a long-term grudge against Oliver's Market, one said she was from Europe where they work just fine, and another voter just liked roundabouts, period.

But most interesting to me was the intensity and anger I heard about the city's indifference to the wishes of the people they claim to represent. Most people expressed utter frustration, but did not want to be quoted. In that same short time, though, I talked with some very indignant taxpayers who were happy to share their thoughts in this newspaper..

Continued on Page 5

Planning Commissioner Hancock tells workshop attendees, "I hate you Americans..."

"Brit" embarrasses town council
Story and editorial by George Barich



(Santa Rosa, CA) In a fit of apparent anger and a complete lapse of his better judgment, Cotati Planning Commissioner Neil Hancock told a small group of attendees during a short recess at a public workshop held in Santa Rosa, CA. **"I hate you Americans..."**

After listening to the majority of attendees object to a proposed state plan to take away private property rights and waste more tax dollars on a One Bay Area Plan to put more people into more "stack and pack", high density housing and get people out of their automobiles for good, Hancock simply had enough. On January 9, 2012 he stood up and let his feelings be known that he hated Americans who vocally objected to the socialist plan being presented and shocked onlookers in the room, especially those from Cotati who recognized him.

With members of the local press in plain view, Hancock created a public relations disaster by representing our fair city with such callous disdain for taxpayers who simply voiced their opposition to the plan.

Reporter George Barich witnessed Hancock's outburst firsthand and responded by asking Hancock to elaborate further. But Hancock refused and walked away, appearing proud to have made his feelings known.

The public workshop was held by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority which was trying to gain support for The One Bay Area Plan, which plans to spend precious tax dollars on more high rise housing, more public transportation, more bike lanes, narrower city streets, smaller parking stalls, and many more years of highly paid consultants who have been social engineering this ridiculous plan for decades now.

The overwhelming consensus from the attendees in the room was total opposition to such a \$68 million dollar plan. At times, the meeting became very loud and contentious. The police were called in for an assault on one person who had simply objected to failing to get a straight answer, and was said to have been struck by one of the supporters of the plan. -Continued on Page 5

Newspaper "Destroyer" finally charged by the District Attorney



Lilly Gomez, left

Photo by George Barich at the scene of the incident

By staff reporter

(Cotati, CA) - After confessing to Cotati police in November, 2011 about tearing up hundreds of editions of The Cotati Independent in news racks in Cotati without just cause, Lillie Gomez, age 53, will be arraigned in a Sonoma County courtroom according to the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office. Dozens of citizens plan to attend the arraignment hearing and witness Gomez, a delivery person for The Press Democrat, answer the

charges of destroying a competing newspaper every day for three months and attempting to deny the community freedom of speech.

The Press Democrat has refused to comment on this case, not returned our phone calls, and refused to publish any facts surrounding this case. Jeremy Hay, reporter for the P.D. was preparing a story and contacted all parties involved. But apparently, the editors of the P.D. answer to another set of journalistic ethics than reporter Jeremy Hay.

Local firefighter who stole from union gets year in jail

Story by Henry K. Lee of the SF Chronicle

A former captain with the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District in Sonoma County has been sentenced to a year in jail for embezzling more than \$63,000 from the firefighters union and using the money for San Jose Sharks season tickets, a trip to Disneyland and a divorce attorney.

Michael Bechtold, 39, of Rohnert Park must also pay full restitution and spend five years on probation, Judge Ken Gness of Sonoma County Superior Court said at a hearing Tuesday in Santa Rosa. Bechtold stole money that other firefighters had paid to the Rancho Adobe Firefighters Association in Penngrove, where he was treasurer.

The scheme was uncovered when association board members asked him for financial reports. Bechtold delayed providing them and began to miss association meetings. Bechtold forged and cashed several association checks and spent the money on housing, the Sharks season tickets and a trip to Disneyland, and to pay a divorce attorney and child support, authorities said. At a hearing in November, Gness also found Bechtold guilty of a probation violation stemming from a 2009 misdemeanor domestic violence conviction. This article appeared on page C - 3 of the San Francisco Chronicle, January 19, 2012



Hooters chooses Rohnert Park over Cotati after being warned.

Story and photo by George Barich



Cotati, CA) - You've probably seen the people lined up to fill out job applications outside the new Hooters Restaurant under construction in Rohnert Park on Redwood Drive.

After talking with the project coordinator, who did not want to be identified, he admitted Cotati was not on their desired list of towns to build in based on Cotati's long-

standing reputation as one of the most difficult towns to do business with in the county. Rohnert Park, he said, was by far a better fit for the Hooters business model.

Although Cotati offered many empty commercial buildings at competitive rates, Cotati was "too problematic to seriously consider." Cotati's Northern Corridor remains one of the most blighted areas in the city.



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Will this new year be better than the last?

Welcome to the New Year and a possible repeat of last year's deep recession. It seems that certain governmental bureaucracies just aren't getting the message. We are tired of your same old solutions of increasing taxes, fees, or rates when we can see perfectly well that you are mismanaging what we have given you. Maybe it is time to get out the paring knife to cut our way to a solution.

While we could apply this to Jerry "the Clown" Brown and his bumbling fellow Dems in Sacramento, we have little choice at the local level on opting out of State control other than to make our city as self-reliant as humanly possible.

The State Supreme Court just ruled that redevelopment agencies can be dissolved by the Legislature, just as they were created by the Legislature. Now that is one big fat "DUH!!!" Of course, we are going to hear all the whining from those who were benefiting from the tax revenues being siphoned off for dubious projects. Locally, just how much benefit did Cotati receive from our façade improvement program or even from building a new state of the art police station that won't be paid off for another twenty years? Those in charge threw that money away instead of investing it in eliminating real urban blight. Waste, waste and more waste has been the reality in Cotati.

All that our Cotati police officers really needed was two forty foot office containers parked along side City Hall with all the amenities afforded any public school classroom: heat, air conditioning, communications, and all the electrical service they needed. We could have even painted the brown colored portable offices to match City Hall. But no, that would have made too much sense and only cost a couple hundred thousand dollars rather than \$24 million. No, Cotati needed to go into debt for millions upon millions of dollars costing every man, woman, and child in Cotati \$11,000 over thirty years for a brand new police station in a residential neighborhood, no doubt.

Council members Janet Orchard and Harold Berkemeier made good on a promise to then police chief Bob Stewart to build a new police station in return for the endorsement of the Cotati Police Officers Association. Without the deal, Harold would have never been re-elected and received his lifetime health insurance coverage he and his family enjoys from the City. That's small town politics for ya. These council seats come at a very high price to the community, and especially those future taxpayers who aren't even born yet.

So, now that redevelopment agencies are being dismantled, the State will suck in six billion dollars more than before at no cost to us taxpayers. Yippee? Yahoo? Well, not exactly. We will still be paying the same amounts in property tax. The money will just be distributed differently, and many people feel the money will never make it to the public schools or our county roads in need of immediate repair. The supposed beneficiaries will be school districts, but will they really see the money? We all know how well the schools are run, don't we? Will the schools get shafted like they did with promised proceeds from the state lottery? This is gonna get really interesting.

As Ronald Reagan said, "We don't have a revenue problem; we have a spending problem". I would suspect that the Dems in control of the State haven't quite figured that out yet. Until they do, there is no hope for anything other than higher taxes and a further decline in California's economy as additional business firms leave for happier hunting grounds and there is nothing our social engineers and lawmakers can do about it.

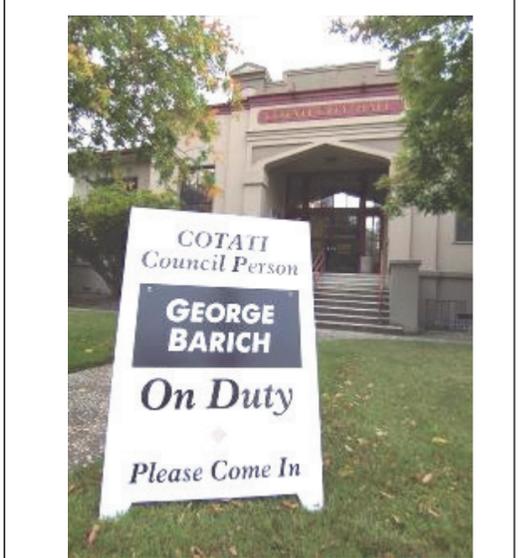
2012 is an election year. Three Cotati city council seats are up for grabs. But unseating Cotati's big tax and spenders won't be easy. Those currently on the council don't understand how to run a city meeting, or what's been conveniently left out of the city budget by the City Manager. The council cannot handle diversity of opinion within their ranks and have a special disdain for constructive criticism. At least council member John Dell'Osso appears to be listening to the public and returning phone calls. The problem is incumbent candidates who run every four years will stop at nothing to keep their power while ignoring their deplorable record.

Now that the State of California has decided to take back its own money entrusted to Cotati to do the state's work of eliminating urban blight and state subsidized housing, Cotati's city manager is now calling for a midyear budget workshop four months late, which is simply laughable. By the time the midyear workshop is completed and the citizens try to teach the council how to spot problems and the blatant omissions in the city budget, the 2012-2013 budget workshop will be upon us. But this is Cotati and many of us are used to the madness of it all. Precious months have been lost jerking the community around with single lane traffic circles few big trucks will be able to navigate around and few citizens actually want to see built over the next two years.

Cotati will soon have a special election to decide whether or not it wants to ban traffic roundabouts once and for all after the council tried to fast track changes to the DSP which even its own experts said was a failure in design. Taxpayers will now have the final say to bring some semblance of sanity to our town's future, and hopefully stop roundabouts from ever coming back to haunt the community again.

The council shouldn't be too concerned. They love special elections, be it to raise sales taxes or robbing council members of their seat who just won't fall into line with a far left political agenda. This circus regarding roundabouts will be known in the Cotati history books as the Great Cotati Circle Jerk.

Recently, I asked the city council how much it cost the taxpayers to bring in consultants from out of town to tell us how great roundabouts work and how they believe fire trucks of all shapes and sizes will have no problem getting around town after the main thoroughfare is squeezed down to one lane in each direction. When the council refused to answer, one citizen filed a formal Public Records Act request. According to the city, they paid retired Novato Fire Chief Jess Messton \$1,045 for his "expert testimony" on roundabout safety, when they could have had the opinion



Former Cotati City Councilman George Barich

"Just My Two Cents"

of Rancho Adobe Fire Chief Frank Treanor absolutely free.

Outraged by the city's continued deaf ear to the opinion of Chief Treanor, one citizen, Greg Karraker, voiced his disgust at the January 11th council meeting. He asked why the council constantly ignores the local fire chief. Council member Mark Landman's response was totally predictable. "Chief Treanor is always welcome here," he said, apparently under the delusion that he was fooling anybody in the room. Whether pro or anti-roundabouts, every citizen in the room knew that Chief Treanor wrote the entire council on October 24, 2011, requesting a conversation. To date, no council member, including Landman, has called or written to our own fire chief. They must be too busy hiding all their redevelopment funds under the bed.

Hold on, 2012 is going to be quite a year.

Here's my favorite quote of the month.
"Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." -Dr. Seuss

Recycling Motor Vehicles Saves Millions of Barrels of Oil

Everyone is talking about the skyrocketing price of gasoline. America's dependence on foreign oil has been the subject of much scrutiny, and a desire to find ways to release the tethers of oil dependence. One of the most popular ways is to find alternative sources for fuel.

However, many people don't realize that a cost-effective and "green" way to partially release those tethers is by recycling used auto parts and automobiles. According to the Automotive Recyclers Association, recycling vehicles saves a projected 85 million barrels of oil per year, which would have been used in the manufacturing of new parts.

Not only do recycling cars and automotive parts create less of an impact on oil used per capita, recycling also makes a positive environmental impact. Imagine driving down a rural highway and looking to your left and then right. House after house, farm after farm might have cars and trucks deteriorating in the yard. Each of these vehicles leaks engine fluids scarring and polluting the earth.

While those cars piled up along that highway are posing potential environmental hazards, professional automotive recyclers must comply with a list of local and federal laws that deal with waste generated by those salvaged cars and trucks. In addition to keeping the land free of the pollutants from abandoned cars and trucks, recycling can potentially produce enough steel for car manufacturers to produce another 13 million new vehicles, according to the ARA.

Recycling those cars could also lead to potential income for not only the owners who sell their seemingly worthless cars and trucks, but also for the recyclers. When automobile recyclers process old cars, parts are salvaged before the car is reduced to scrap metal. Once these parts are refurbished, they can be made available at local parts stores and through the Internet at a substantially cheaper price - sometimes up to 50 percent cheaper.

Since many automobile recyclers maintain a database of cars and/or car parts available, these recycled parts could be of great benefit for the many car enthusiasts around the world. Those enthusiasts would likely find parts much easier for their pet projects. After all what is a refurbished car but a completely recycled car?

While a junkyard or landfill could house the leftovers from all those used and abused cars, why not recycle? Recycling auto parts not only makes sense for the environment but for everyone's wallet. I personally don't own cars less than ten years old. The oldest car I own is 43 years old, a real head turner, continues to increase in value, and easy to work on myself.



MICHAEL'S HARLEY-DAVIDSON CYCLES
COTATI, CALIFORNIA



What Would Mom Think?

Guest Editorial by Michael Ceremello

My mother was a dyed in the wool Democrat. She couldn't even see her way to vote for the recall of California Governor Gray Davis when it occurred. Considering that she was some 80 years old at the time, and rather disinclined to examine her principles against what the party had veered hard to the left and become, there is slight wonder why she continued down this subverted path.

On the other hand, my mother also was beyond fiscal accountability and conservatism in how she handled her own finances. I remember as a child having to repay even a nickel I had borrowed from her. Logically this was the way to conduct business and to set in her offspring's mind a value for our currency.

Turn the pages in the book to the end, which is where we are at now, and you will find quite a different approach to fiduciary responsibility on a local basis as well as the intent to destroy our nation's currency. As a youth, we often picked up pennies. In this day and age, the pennies no longer contain enough copper to have any intrinsic value. The same goes for the dime, quarter, half dollar, and dollar coins which have been depleted of their silver content. We can all thank Richard M. Nixon for that one as he took us completely off the hard metal standard to unwisely let the value of our dollar float against other world currencies. So much for Republicans being the answer to any questions.

While we listen to the lies of the economists such as Alan Greenspan who claims there is little or no inflation, one only has to have lived forty or fifty years and purchased products during that time to understand exactly how much inflation there has been and how little further we are ahead in this ballgame. When I began work, I could purchase a brand new Corvette for a year's salary. When I quit work, making ten times as much, it still took a year's salary because the price of a Corvette was up tenfold.

Is this an anomaly? The price of a premium hot dog at a well known local Bay Area chain known as Casper's was twenty five cents when I was a kid. My father complained because he could buy them for a nickel way back when. Now they are over \$2. Look at the price of porterhouse steaks. What use to cost \$2 per pound ranges from \$10 to \$20 depending on its quality or whether or not it is organic range fed beef.

The question that really needs to be asked is whether or not the "occupy" people have a valid point concerning the big banks, the government, and the military/industrial complex. It is my firm belief that they are all in this together and all simply out to make a buck. I have given you some background so you will understand my next point which is how futile all of this is except for those on the inside.

This is not simply a "wealth redistribution" program foisted on us by the left or right. It is a manipulation of the system to transfer wealth from those of us who save, who believe that our currency should not be debased, and who understand the basic concept of money as a store of value. You can't store your hours of work in a devaluing asset while hoping to live out your retirement years in some semblance of how you lived while employed.

Only those who are part of the scam, such as certain banks and insurance companies who were bailed out for carrying out these insane destructive programs, gained. When you are paid millions as the leader of Fannie Mae for doing essentially nothing but carrying out orders, those millions still have a purchasing power despite devaluation of the dollar. Woe to the poor average working Joe, whether he is a plumber or in some other profession, because it is the poor and middle income American who suffers because of these policies.

Isn't it the Democrat party which is supposed to be looking out for the little guy? Nancy Pelosi spends \$70,000 a night in Hawaii and Michelle Obama is parading around in \$2,000 sun dresses while we shop at Costco for a good deal. Pretty soon I think we will be seeing where only the "elite" can afford any of these things, whether that be the local drug dealer, Hollywood celebrity, or big time politician. Sounds a lot like Cuba or the old Soviet Union to me.

So what does any of this have to do with Cotati and your local government? This is really simple, simple enough for even a regressive progressive to understand.

Let's look at the latest local lunacy of your Cotati City Council, who all seem bent on putting in roundabouts and extending the old downtown "feel" further from its current place of residence to include a good length of four lane roadway. From where is the money going to come? I didn't realize that the local sales tax you fools passed with Measure "A" generated that much additional revenue.

Let me tell you upfront, this controversy in Cotati isn't about whether or not a roundabout is a viable traffic management tool. It is all about doing a project that only few support, is really unnecessary, and all at a great cost of state and federal funds. Downtown Cotati is not Sedona, Arizona which sees 50,000

vehicles a year where roundabouts might work well.

Is the money going to come from Obama's "stash"? You betcha. Janet Orchard's arm is stretched out so far to the Fed's that she might have to be hospitalized for straining her back. I only mention Janet because she is your mayor du jour, not because any of the others such as Jello-lard-ee or Landmine are any better. When you have been on the government's teat for all your life, you can't understand basic concepts of economics.

If the Obama administration were to fund this and many other questionably debatable projects in a re-election effort, guess what will happen to the remaining value of our currency? Oh, I know some of you don't care as long as you can enjoy a new spiffy downtown. After all, you didn't have to pay for it. We all did...

So you might be asking, Mike, how are we suppose to improve our town in light of all you have pointed out? My answer to that is, ever heard of "living within your means" as well as "strategic planning"? You could start out by reducing the salary and benefits of the city manager as well as the rest of those within city government. How's that police and fire department of yours doing? Do you really feel safe with one officer on patrol because that's all your city says it can afford? Isn't public safety the prime responsibility of city government as much as national defense is the prime responsibility of the Federal gendarmes?

Once you have a surplus budget, identify the needs of your community. Set aside funds to meet these future needs. Quit begging others to help you out. Additional sales tax should have been used for this sort of thing rather than keeping bloated salaries at their peak levels.

It is extremely hard to endorse political candidates who are products of the "machine" of either party. This is why it is so easy to value and believe in the TEA party movement. These people are the last vestige of economic common sense and traditional American constitutional values, the same values rejected by those on the left who will be truly chagrined when their erroneous self ingratiating decisions and ideals come back to haunt them as they become victims of their own larceny.

We are truly at a turning point in our national history. You can either continue to be beggars, or you can return to self reliance and prudent planning. There is going to have to be a lot of turnover within our State legislature as well as our Federal government. I am not asking you to believe any of this.

I simply want you to think about it ...



City Hall Never Ceases to Amaze Me.

By Eric Kirchmann
Cotati

It is amazing that in a city the size of Cotati millions are spent staffing City Hall but there is such a surplus of funds that consultants are brought in for almost everything.

Just a few years ago the Cotati Police were evaluated by an outside consultant, a retired Police Chief. Pretty amazing; he found no problems with our police force, and in fact suggested there was a need for additional Sergeants to supervise the patrolmen. The consultant sat with the officers in the audience before and after he presented his objective non-biased report of findings.

After an interim Cotati Chief of Police was hired, two of our then four Sergeants departed along with a few patrolmen. With the recent passage of Measure A in Cotati, supported by the community, we now have no more Sergeants, but we have a new police chief and a second in command, a lieutenant.

We spent over a million dollars on the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) where the consultants were very specific about maintaining Old Redwood Highway in its present configuration of two lanes in both directions. Never shy of hiring more staff and consultants to bolster her viewpoints, Ms. Thompson our city manager, hired yet another consultant; a retired fireman from Novato to tell our elected representatives of the good points of traffic roundabouts.

I am old enough to remember only one highway, and that went directly through the middle of the City of Novato. Old Redwood Highway in Novato has no roundabouts, and it is two lanes in both directions broken by signals and old fashioned stop signs and a transit island. One interesting thing I noted in this consultant's presentation was a simulation where he showed fire trucks going through a roundabout; three trucks drove through the roundabout smoothly.

Of course, there were no other vehicles in the

roundabout and this was a simulation, not the real world at commute hour that we experience here in Cotati. It failed to show what the street would look like during one of our annual fuel spills on Hwy 101. Of note was that this simulation had a cover sheet with a pretty girl in a bikini. Odd, I thought, that a consultant would adorn a presentation with a young woman in a swimsuit. But I got to thinking that this might well be a very inexpensive traffic calming device.

This might indeed have all the elements and outcomes that the City Council was looking for. Those would be to calm traffic flow, to slow it down. To attract people as a destination. To make a distinction of our small town mystique. I think if we had street signs welcoming motorists at our gateways and street crossings with women in bikinis; that these might indeed slow traffic and draw interest. Simply have various pictures of women in swimsuits posted on signs welcoming motorists to our city. These would not cost too much to create and post, and motorists would slow to view the various icons (they could change every quarter or



even every month as Cotati loves change).

People would talk; they'd say things like: "I was just in Cotati and guess what I saw when I drove through?" The old signs could be made into a mural as Cotati loves its public art. In a few years the murals could go into the Cotati History Room and draw even more visitors. It would be distinctive, unique and more powerful than a piano drop from crane that the Chamber of Commerce trumped up to bring business to town. Road photos of bikini-clad women would be inexpensive and could be used on a trial basis with a cost of a few thousand dollars, not millions like converting perfectly good intersections with costly roundabouts.

Business would not be impacted by the installation of these posters either, and traffic would not be impeded at all. The city could even sell calendars of these bikini-clad women and other depictions of

their public art. It would be a win-win. People would come to Cotati to see the signs, they would slow down so much and even park their cars (somewhere) and walk up to the signs and frequent the neighboring businesses wherever they are.

Picture people outside of Peet's Coffee, drink in hand, looking at a big sign that caught their attention. I can't guarantee increased bicycle traffic but I do not see how these signs would diminish bicycle traffic. Since there is no funding now for the City's vision of the future since Governor Brown has taken back redevelopment money, perhaps we should try the city's consultant's inspired "Girl in Bikini" alternative. This plan should not need five hours of testimony. It should not freeze or stymie Oliver's planned development next to the freeway.

This idea arrived courtesy of an out of town consultant. Therefore, past practice is that the concept will be approved quickly by a unanimous vote, no less. Of course, there could be men in bikinis as well to be politically correct. In fact, the welcoming signs could be a launching point for public art and a legacy project for Cotati as creativity and the human spirit expound which Cotati is best known for.

It is worth a try and it would make hiring all these consultants worthwhile after all. It is only a suggestion that came to me from the consultant's notebook presentation and since it came from an out of town consultant it is valid because we can't be bothered to hear from Cotati citizens or even our own fire chief. So, we might as well see what the consultants view will result in. Put up a few signs of bikini-clad women and lets see if traffic slows to acceptable levels. If more visitors come to spend money here as a result, and if more people get out of their cars and start working off that extra weight, and people connect with what Cotati has to offer, increased city revenues will surely follow.

Down the road I could see this street poster project morphing into other subject matter based on Cotati's history as a small town; chickens, puppies, sheep across from City Hall, etc. The possibilities are endless...

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By Carol Tomlinson

These days we are frequently asked to participate in public policy meetings and workshops to provide public input on issues, and we go to these meetings or workshops with the assumption that those hosting them really want our thoughts, concerns, questions and suggestions. After all, we ARE a republic where citizen participation is supposed to matter. Sadly, this is often not the case. Often we are manipulated into consensus on issues whose outcome has already been decided.

Does this sound conspiratorial to you? It shouldn't. The technique to achieve this consensus even has a name – the Delphi Technique. You can Google it and you will find many articles on it. This is how the Delphi Technique works. See if you don't recognize it and realize how often it is used.

Each meeting is led by one or more facilitators. They are supposed to be there to keep the flow of the meeting going and are generally believed by the attendees to be non-partisan and neutral. However, their real job is to ensure that the results of the meeting support the policy plan already developed by those hosting the meeting.

How they do that is really psychological (the technique was developed by the Rand Corpo-

Why You Should Be Angry

ration for the Department of Defense for use as a psychological weapon).

The facilitator is chosen as someone who will be generally liked by the attendees. His task is to determine who constitutes the opposition in the room, then pit supporters vs non-supporters against each other, to make those who are not supportive of the plan to look foolish or extremist or aggressive. That is Step 1.

Step 2 is to divide the group of attendees. Generally the group is split into breakout groups of smaller sizes, ostensibly to allow better for discussion and questions. Sometimes votes are taken on alternatives presented by the facilitators; the alternatives are usually not all inclusive but rather reflect choices that support the predetermined plan. Or you might be asked to write down your comments with the assurance that all will be read and taken into account. Of course, the question begs to be asked: who compiles these comments? How do we know that our comments are indeed included in the final result? There is never an answer.

The ultimate goal is to be able to report to the participants and to the community in general that the results were obtained through public participation. You will notice that the input of a relatively small number of people is taken as the opinion of all members of the community.

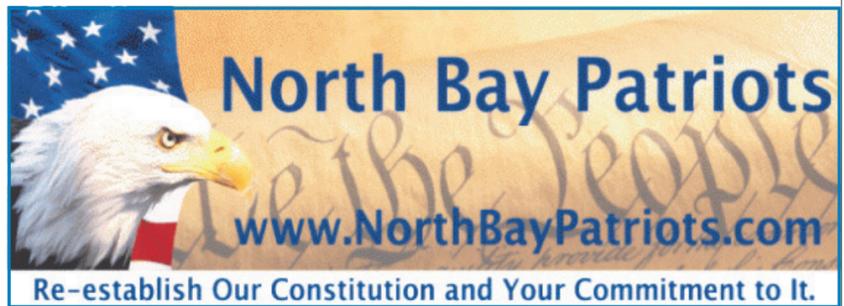
So now, for a concrete example of this technique in use at some workshops that are being held currently – the One Bay Area Plan visioning workshops. These are planned for

the nine Bay Area counties with an "advertised" attendance of 100 at each workshop. That means that 900 people will determine the future lifestyle of over 7 million residents of the Bay Area.

As this article is being written, 4 of these workshops have taken place. In at least 3 of them, there was space for over 170 people and that space was filled. Given that the online signups in December limited the attendance to 100, who were the additional people? And why did Greenbelt Alliance send out a call to members asking them to sign up AFTER the workshops were declared full? If you talk to people at these meetings you will find not only concerned citizens, but many representatives from Transform, Greenbelt Alliance, transit agencies, city government representatives, and others who have a financial stake in the outcome of these workshop such as developers. In other words, the "public" is partially made up of those who have a vested stake in the plan – and they vote right along with Mr. and Ms. Taxpayer.

After a brief session for all attendees at the beginning you are herded through 3 separate stations to vote or comment. This is the part of the Delphi Technique that calls for breakout groups. What is the saying – divide and conquer? At the end you are herded back into the room with all attendees for comments, questions, more voting. In several of these workshops, that never happened. In one workshop, when one vote went against the plan, no more voting happened. In response to questions raised, you are told to write them down and they will answer them later (never happens), to hold questions until the end (oh, we don't have any more time), or you are allowed to comment and they thank you for sharing. But basically you know they are not listening to you in any real manner.

Why do I say you should be angry? Because it is not true public input. Have you heard about these workshops? Were they advertised to the public? Only if you happened to look on the One Bay Area website. Who is attending them and speaking for all the people who live in the Bay Area? And with the not-so-secret goal of gathering input to support a pre-determined plan, we are being manipulated into a future plan that will dramatically change the way we live in Sonoma County and in every other Bay Area county.



Newt in 2012

By Richard Geertson

Happy New Year !

The Iowa Caucus is now behind us. Spending 13 times as much as his closest competitor, Mitt Romney squeaked out a victory, beating Rick Santorum by 8 votes. Ron Paul came in a close third while former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, finished a distant fourth. John Huntsman openly snubbed Iowa stating that the Iowa Caucus doesn't matter; and I tend to agree. Fact is, Republican candidates who win the Iowa caucus historically do not win the party's nomination. Let's reflect on the top four finishers:

Mitt Romney seems to be a nice family man who has been very successful in the private sector. Along with executive experience as Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt's resume is impressive. But a Romney candidacy comes with a massive ball and chain called "RomneyCare." Like the cumbersome cash boxes of Jacob Marley, the Obama billion dollar smear machine will bind and gag Mitt with RomneyCare. Despite the ugly realities of dealing with an ultra-left Massachusetts legislature, Mitt's "more liberal than Ted Kennedy" record was made link by link and yard by yard; "it is a ponderous chain" likely to sink a Romney presidential run. While he is smart, presentable, well-spoken, likeable and successful, none of these attributes stand in stark contrast to our current Marxist-in-Chief! Worse, Mitt seems unable to break 30% popularity in any poll at any time. America is clearly bored with the prospect of a Romney presidency.

Is it unreasonable to expect the Republican Party to learn from history? Candidates Bob Dole and John McCain became the party nominees "because they had the best chance of defeating the Democrat," and look where that got us... Having picked up a McCain endorsement, Mitt Romney is looking more and more like the third child sired by trouble!

Rick Santorum has a high likeability factor, espouses conservative core values, and boasts 12 years as a Pennsylvania Senator. However, Senator Santorum was also a king of pork-barrel spending during his time in the Senate; he has not a hoof to stand on if he attacks Obama for reckless fiscal policy. Worse, Santorum's extreme position on abortion will kill his chances of serious consideration; the man opposes abortion for any reason, including rape and incest. It matters not that the president's view on abortion has precisely nothing to do with the law of the land...the Obama billion dollar smear machine will capitalize on Santorum's fringe pro-life stance and hoist him on his own petard.

This leaves us with Texas Congressman Ron Paul. Mr. Paul exhibits the most aggressive, honest and essential fiscal policy of any Republican candidate. He would put many bureaucracies on crash diets, while closing the doors on many others; IF ONLY we had more like Ron Paul in Congress! Successful

implementation of Paul's slash and burn budget would depend upon a cooperative Congress; not at all likely even on the Republican side of the aisle. But it is Mr. Paul's foreign policy that is his real undoing: Allowing hostile theocracies like Iran to develop nuclear weapons with which they have unambiguously vowed to annihilate Israel and then turn against the United States, is unacceptable to the majority of Americans and to the world! While I believe a 'President Paul' would respond to such aggression with the full force and fury of the U.S. military, WHY would we want to wait around and watch World War III taking shape right under our noses while doing nothing to stop it?

A Ron Paul world of "live and let live" would be an honest-to-goodness Utopia IF everyone were an avowed libertarian with the utmost respect for the rights of others, while taking full personal responsibility for themselves...But in a hostile world of vast religious differences, greed and downright evil, as much as we would all like to expect the best, we must always plan for the worst; Paul's foreign policy ignores this ugly reality.

If all this were not enough of a red flag, consider the kook fringe lunatic nature of liberalism and its affects on common sense. In the pantheon of liberal causes, World War III and wholesale government closures pale in comparison to Paul's biggest alleged liability: racism! Indeed, as Mr. Paul can be loosely linked to inflammatory racist statements appearing in his own newsletter – true or not – the Obama billion dollar smear machine would effectively declare Mr. Paul "Grand Wizard of the Republican Party" and nail him to the cross of political correctness. For this reason Ron Paul has less than a snowflake's chance in hell of becoming the Republican nominee, let alone winning the presidency; which bring us to Newt Gingrich... No, I did not forget Perry, Bachman and Huntsman, but for all intents and purposes, their ascensions to the presidency are over.

On heavy doses of fish oil and Gingko Biloba, Governor Perry might make a good high school debating coach. Perry's verbal gaffes and debate dead-air renders him incapable of going toe to toe with the polished and well-spoken President Obama. America suffered through 8 years of a stumbling, bumbling President Bush and we have lost our affinity for folksy, inarticulate presidents.

Michelle Bachman's heart is in the right place, but her campaign strategy wore thin. Using every interview as an opportunity to extol her virtues as the "only true conservative" became monotonous, at best, while her Stepford-wife-in-the-headlights stare creeped people out. After a dismal Iowa finish, Mrs. Bachman stepped out of the race. The upside of her presidential demise is that she will be much more effective in Congress moving us back towards the guiding principles of the U.S. Constitution.

John Huntsman's 1% finish in Iowa was as disappointing as it was expected. He spent no time campaigning there and quite candidly declared "Iowa simply doesn't matter." He was similarly underwhelmed by Senator McCain's uninspiring endorsement of Romney. In spite of his game show host appearance and insurance salesman delivery, Huntsman is very smart and should not be underestimated. When it comes to foreign affairs, there is no Republican candidate better equipped than Huntsman; and for this reason, the man should be on every presidential candidate's short list for Secretary of State.

Warts and all, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich is the most astute candidate; the best debater; and he possesses the most successful track-record operating within the crooked halls of Washington D.C. Gingrich is a Reagan conservative with a successful history of opposing the Democratic-socialist agenda. Recall that during Clinton's first two years as president with a cooperative Democrat Congress and sympathetic media, government stimulus spending, socialized medicine and radical social policies were imposed on We the People. America saw through the ruinous leftwing agenda with a wholesale rejection of the Democrat Party. A Republican Congress, lead by Newt Gingrich, was swept into power. It was in fact the 104th Congress (a.k.a. "Gingrich revolution") that pushed the Clinton Administration to government reforms and balanced budgets. However, with the help of a grossly pro-Democrat mainstream media, President Clinton masterfully 'triangulated' and took credit for much of what the Gingrich revolution put into motion, while blaming Gingrich for government shutdowns. While We the People benefitted from the Contract with America, Speaker Gingrich never recovered from the leftist barrage of lies and distortions. Fast forward to 2011...

Newt is a successful businessman and author; history teacher and strategic political thinker with measurable success moving America away from the deadly precipice of leftwing socialism. He has learned from the mistakes of the Clinton era and will no longer be pigeon-holed by leftwing propaganda.

The American people are sick and tired

of "political speak" and long for a straight-talking president who means what he says, and says what he means. Newt's ability to circumvent a hostile media and talk directly to we the people harkens back to the days of Ronald Reagan. Even with his flaws, Newt Gingrich can most successfully lead the Republican Party to victory in 2012.

Since 2007, the Democrat-controlled Congress and Obama presidency have run rough-shod over our Constitution. Their fiscal policies have been an unmitigated disaster for America and it is doubtful this republic could recover from 4 more years of Alinsky-style leadership. Obama's latest outrages, the illegal appointment of Richard Cordray and the authorization to indefinitely detain American citizens without trial, would be grounds for a Constitutional crisis (and impeachment) if imposed by a Republican president...but such is the bias, hypocrisy and selective silence of today's liberal fascists.

Without a positive record on which to run, the Obama smear machine will have only one path to victory – character assassination of the Republican challenger. Newt is the one candidate with the political experience necessary to turn the tables on Obama's Chicago-style politics of personal destruction. A one-on-one debate with Gingrich, something this president will avoid at all costs, would expose emperor Obama as both a Marxist and a political lightweight.

While ANY of the Republican challengers would be a vast improvement over the current POTUS, Newt is the best hope for conservatives in 2012.

The Cotati Independent

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On a lighter note



Police Chief Michael Parrish refuses to provide a written report on the state and readiness of our police department to this newspaper. The Chief has also refused to email us the Cotati police log for the benefit of our readership after repeated requests. This newspaper is delivered to every household and business in Cotati. Hey Chief, you're new in town. You've been offered your own monthly column for all the citizens to read. Take this as an opportunity to introduce yourself to the community, keep us informed without spending any city money, and help take a bite out of crime. It's a public relations disaster to keep such a low profile, unless you don't plan on being here that long. Why not sharpen those writing skills and communicate with the citizens. Help us help you, Chief.



Suzanne Whipple, Director of The Cotati Chamber of Commerce, can't be too thrilled with the Governor, The State Supreme Court, and the state legislature right now which have abolished redevelopment agencies around the state. Cotati's RDA currently funds Whipple's hefty salary. Cotati's gang of five on the city council will now have to figure out how to pay Whipple's salary or find someone else to help them with their re-election campaigns, one of Whipple's unofficial duties, along with attempting to destroy anyone who advocates that the Chamber of Commerce get off the city payroll once and for all. The CCC has had their hands out to the city for many years. With all the intelligent members in the group, they can't seem to bring themselves to run the Chamber like a business. The CCC should fund themselves through their membership like other cities do. Former Mayor Berkemeier suggested the Chamber make good on their repeated promises to be self-funded along with George Barich. Hey, Suzanne. The party is over. We warned you nicely and repeatedly to quit being so dependent on the city to fund the CCC with money that should have went to the schools and the elderly. What were you thinking?

Citizens not afraid to put their names behind their opinions:

(from Page One)

Typically, when you ask people what they think about their government, they're not shy about telling you. When you ask if they will agree to put their opinions in writing, it's a different story. But this time, in only a few hours, I met voters who are so white-hot angry with the city, they were glad to say so.

Warner Camp was upset about the cost of "feel good" projects like The Village Main Street Plan. He said, "All they (the City) can do is spend. It's not their money. It's my money. It's my grandson's money. They're just taking all this debt and throwing it on his little back".

Robert Dailey and his wife were annoyed by the green fringe groups that put their special agendas ahead of common sense. Referring to the Bicycle Coalition and other special interest groups he said, "You get these coalitions that want to kill everything that earns cash." Speaking about the Cotati City Council, he was even more pointed. He said, "Let's start a recall election. We should recall everybody who voted for it." (The Village Main Street Plan).

Another couple. Becky Lindstrom and her husband were

extremely upset about the city's anti-business attitude. "I'm in business," she said. "Business is here to make money. The city doesn't understand business. They're very narrow-minded."

But the most passionate quote of the day belonged to Alethea Anconetani, who almost leaped through her screen door to greet us when she was asked if she would sign the petition. After getting over her original enthusiasm to sign, she became skeptical, and asked if her vote would finally count for something, since it had been overturned so many times in the past. "They keep making us vote and revote," she complained. "Three times we voted to put Lucky in town. We wanted business, we wanted jobs and revenue, and they said no. They won't put anything in this stupid town because we're too stupid."

Now what?

In a City Council meeting on January 11, the subject of what to do about The Village Main Street Plan was the 800-pound gorilla in the room. The Council knew they were about to lose the redevelopment money it will take to build this mess. They had to know that petitions against it were being signed, and that they were piling up in COSTCO-sized bulk.

As they were required to by law, the City Council voted to dissolve the Redevelopment Agency and designate a successor agency to deal with whatever shreds of the redevelopment budget were left with. Not surprisingly, they voted 5-0 to name themselves the successor agency.

But did they utter one peep about their ill-advised plan to cut Old Redwood Highway in half? Nope.

Just like ten-year olds who never tell their parents that they got a D in Arithmetic, until it's absolutely necessary, they never discussed the traffic-choking Village Main Street Plan.

So the question is still out there: With no money, and with voter opinion nearly nine to one against their single-lane-in-each-direction plan, will they turn it into their personal Titanic and think they can win a special election? Or will they have the common sense to finally abandon this fantasy?

Based on previous actions of this council, my best guess is that it could go either way.

In other Council news, they voted 5-0 to appoint Susan Harvey as Mayor of The Year, and Pat Gilardi as Vice Mayor of The Year.

Cake was served.

Hancock vocalizes his utter contempt for taxpayers advocating private property rights.

(from Page One)

Former Cotati City Councilman George Barich, publisher of this newspaper, was in attendance and was also in vocal opposition to the One Bay Area Plan. Barich claims he came face to face with Hancock who was clearly representing the City of Cotati when Hancock said to Barich in the presence of many others "I hate you Americans". Barich replied, "Then why don't you go back to England and screw up your own country? In fact, I will pay for your airfare if you hate us Americans so much. We don't need government officials here hating any Americans."

The onlookers to this verbal exchange appeared dismayed and confused at what had just happened and the incident went no further. Hancock having been challenged walked away from a possible physical confrontation or request he be removed from the workshop for his outward hostility. The irresponsible public outburst of the Cotati Planning Commissioner was about as politically incorrect as one can imagine.

Barich brought his concerns about Hancock's unprofessional conduct to the city council on Jan. 11, 2012, and asked the council to investigate the matter on their own time as a clear ethics violation. Barich further stated the council could not be silent on this issue, and to do so would constitute condoning hate speech at a public workshop. Barich asked the council to seek an apology from Hancock and seek disciplinary action for his conduct that clearly embarrassed the city and hurt its reputation.

Four city council members refused to publicly comment on the charge. However, Councilman Landman stated only that he did not want to get into a he said, she said investigation, and was unwilling to even contact Hancock for his side of the story, even though Landman is retired, and should have plenty of free time. Landman was a key player in the efforts to recall Councilman Barich in 2009. Did he make a deal with recall organizers that in consideration for being the recall committee point man and putting pressure on local merchants to support the recall, he would be assured to succeed John Guardino who was stepping down from the council?

The community expects better from our planning commissioners. But Mark Landman doesn't think so. Landman has refused to accept the decline in economic development and town pride that comes with city officials walking around claiming to hate hardworking and vocal Americans. Is it any wonder more and more people avoid shopping in Cotati?

Landman is best known as a master at political attack hit pieces in Cotati, and has a clear history of threatening local merchants who failed to fall into line with Landman's political agenda. The most recent target of Landman's bully tactics was Tom Scott of Oliver's Market who was told during a city council meeting to not support any effort to place a measure on the ballot to overturn the city's Main Street Village project which would narrow Old Redwood Highway down to one lane in each direction.

Hearing of Hancock's hate speech did not move the Cotati City Council to any official action at the January 11th regular meeting at City Hall. Hancock has been unavailable for comment.

Just a Pinch
Sharing Hometown Recipes, Cooking Tips and Coupons
By Janet Tharpe

Versatile Salad Adds Flavor, Health to Mealtimes

"This is a favorite salad I make often. It's so versatile you can really make it your own easily!"

Lindsey McCue
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Fast, easy, flavorful - and flexible! This salad is made with tons of delicious herbs and one of our favorite toothsome pastas, orzo. Mix and match vegetables, cheeses and herbs to suit your family's tastes and before you know it, this dish will be on your most-requested list!

See step-by-step photos of Lindsey McCue's recipe and thousands more from other home cooks at:
www.justapinch.com/orzosalad

You'll also find a meal planner and coupons for the recipe ingredients. Enjoy and remember, use "just a pinch"...

- Janet

Orzo Salad

What You Need	Directions
<p>Salad 4 c chicken stock 1 1/2 c orzo pasta 1 15 oz. can garbanzo beans 1 1/2 c grape or cherry tomatoes (halved) 3/4 c finely chopped red onion 2 c chopped fresh basil 1/4 c chopped fresh parsley or mint 3/4 c vinaigrette (recipe follows) salt and pepper to taste crumbled feta cheese (optional) toasted pine or walnuts roughly chopped (optional)</p> <p>Vinaigrette 1/2 c rice wine vinegar 1/4 c fresh lemon juice 2 tsp honey 2 tsp salt 1 c extra virgin olive oil</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a medium saucepan bring the chicken stock to a boil. Stir in orzo and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, stirring frequently (about 7 min). Drain the orzo and toss in a large bowl until it cools slightly. (I add a bit of olive oil so it doesn't clump together) Set aside to cool completely. Toss the orzo with the beans, tomatoes, red onion, basil, parsley and enough vinaigrette to coat. Season the salad to taste with salt and pepper. Serve at room temp. Add some crumbled feta cheese and toasted nuts (if using) before serving.

Submitted by: Lindsey McCue, Los Angeles, CA
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Letters to the Editor

Email: editor@thecotatiindependent.com

Dear Editor,

We have been residents in Cotati for 18 years. This city has finally put in a Starbucks and Subway. Its about time the city council should think about bringing new business instead of the stupid roundabouts which will discourage businesses from coming. Old Redwood Highway has nothing but vacant strip malls. Who walks to work and rides a bike when there is nothing to shop for?

They need to clean up the north end of Old Red', and make it desirable, something like downtown Windsor. They need to consider the senior residents and how confusing it will be for them trying to figure out how to get around roundabouts. I think everyone on the council is out of there minds. What a shame if Oliver's Market decides not to build there.

The city is dropping the ball on that one. Isn't it about time Cotati has more to offer than bars and a few restaurants? Listen to the people; they're the one who drive everyday. Remember, there is only one way to go North on the freeway !

Sharon H. Cotati

Dear Editor,

THE DECLARATION OF COTATI

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, PROVIDED THEY HAVE CONDUCTED THOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS AND CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT STUDIES, COMPLIED WITH BAY AREA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT GUIDELINES, APPLIED FOR LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING AND DESIGN CERTIFICATION, DO NOT OPERATE A FORMULA-BASED BUSINESS, AND EMPLOY DARK-SKY COMPLIANT LIGHTING

Sent in by Cotati Resident

Submit your letters to the editor online at

editor@thecotatiindependent.com

Is This Poll for Real?

By Jon Coupal

The tax-and-spend Sacramento insiders who hunger for more taxpayer cash are having to secure their drool bibs after the release of a poll claiming broad public support for Jerry Brown's proposed tax hikes.

The poll by the Public Policy Institute, a left-tilting think tank, asked the following question:

"Governor Brown has proposed a plan to help close the state's budget deficit over the next five years. The plan, which would be put before voters in November, would raise \$7 billion annually through a temporary four year half cent sales tax increase and a temporary five year income tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?"

According to PPIC, 60% of likely voters indicated support for the plan, which has those backing tax increases salivating.

Nonetheless, there are reasons to be skeptical. Let's take a closer look.

Note how the question is framed in terms of deficit reduction, even though real world experience shows that there's no correlation between raising taxes and reducing the deficit -- or else California certainly would have no deficit at all by now.

In the second sentence, it's stated the governor's plan will, for certain, produce \$7 billion in new tax revenue, even though, again, real world experience shows that tax increases rarely, if ever, produce the revenue that is predicted.

See how the tax increases are described as "temporary," while also

noting their sunset dates. Is it really necessary for a pollster to emphasize that four year and five year tax increases are "temporary?" Doesn't their description as four year and five year tax increases already make that clear?

And the question mentions the sales tax, which impacts everyone, first, and then ends with the tax increase on top earners, so that the "tax the evil rich" element is emphasized at the end of the sentence, right before the respondent is asked to make a decision?

Ironically, this same poll shows 57 percent of Californians believe there's a lot of waste in state government spending and 67 percent say the state government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves and not for the benefit of all of the people.

If taken literally, the poll tells us that most Californians think government wastes their money and, therefore, they want to pay higher taxes. This significant contradiction of logic takes us back to the biased wording of the tax increase question.

Only an election can sort out what voters are really thinking, but before the Sacramento politicians start spending the "new" money they believe this poll shows they will get, they should look back to 2009. Two months before a special election vote on Proposition 1A, that would have raised taxes by \$16 billion, a Field poll had the measure passing by 57%. It lost two months later by more than 65%

In releasing this latest poll, the PPIC should have provided bibs for everyone because what they have served up is pabulum.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association -- California's largest grass-roots taxpayer organization dedicated to the protection of Proposition 13 and the advancement of taxpayers' rights.

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The Good, the Bad, and the Inedible

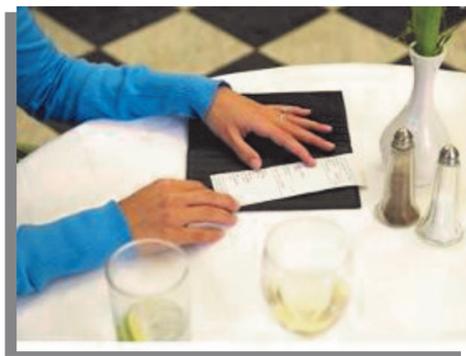


Candid reviews of Wine Country restaurants, bars, cafes, food vendors, and farmers markets.

by Kathryn Wickstrom - Cotati

Foodie, gardener, wine lover, and consumer of all things edible in Wine Country and beyond

Visit my new blog: www.goodbadinedible.com



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 **** Great
 *** Good
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** 11/25/11 \$\$\$-\$\$\$



I had hopes this restaurant would serve decent food. It had gotten fair reviews in the past. They advertise being focused on sustainable-organic agriculture from local farmers, with meat and poultry being organic or antibiotic and hormone free. The service at least, met that expectation; but the food fell far short. Pity. This place has all the elements - nice, large space; plenty of wines to choose from and a genuine French Bistro vibe going. With a name like Flavor don't you think the chef should take extra care to turn out food that has some?

Our meal should have been child's play. **Steamed Mussels** (\$9.75 **) with garlic, white wine and aromatic spices with grilled herb bread and a **Flat Iron Steak Sandwich** (\$11.95 **) with roasted tomato-mayo, grilled red onions and mushrooms. The mussels themselves were fine, the broth was mediocre. Nothing stood out. But the flat iron steak sandwich though tender had absolutely no flavor. Served on what looked like a Pita pocket that was dry and unappealing. Did I mention they make their own bread, daily?

Dessert was the highlight of this lunch time meal. A **Chardonnay Pear** (\$6.95 ****) atop puff pastry with Mascarpone cream filling. Presentation was lovely and this signature desert was very good.

One other point. This place is over-priced for the food it is turning out. And with a **Burger Favorites** menu (8 different offerings) from \$13.95 - \$15.95 the verdict is in. Organic, antibiotic and hormone free sure is expensive! I recommend walking just a half-block down the street to Rendez Vous Bistro on the corner. Way better food by far, and their street front patio is charming.

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Mail-order online (letthemmailcake.com)



***** 11/19/11 \$-\$\$

If you've seen the 2000 movie, "Chocolat" starring Juliette Binoche, Judi Dench, and Johnny Depp you will recall the shop that Vianne (Juliette Binoche) opens with her 6 year old daughter in a small town in France. **Chocolaterie Maya** is a magical place and everyone who enters falls under Vianne's positive spell and the candy she makes is irresistibly divine and very habit-forming!

Patisserie Angelica is similar. Once you have visited, you will return! Two sisters, Condra Easley and Deborah Morris, were well known in the pastry business before coming to Sonoma County in 1995 from Aspen where they provided sweets for the Hollywood celebs of that trendy, ski community. Pastry Chef Easley was classically trained in several pastry shops in Paris (*Fauchon* with Pierre Herme and la *Maison du Chocolat*) and at *Cocoa Barry School* in France; *Callebaut College* in Belgium and in classes with the British Sugar Craft Guild in England. Chef Condra's recipes have appeared in *Bon Appetit*, *Chocolatier*, *Food and Beverage World* and *Modern Baking* magazines. She is also an adjunct in-

structor for the CIA (*Culinary Institute of America at Greystone*) in St. Helena, teaching advanced decoration and wedding cake design to professional chefs.

Besides the fancy cakes and mail-order business, Patisserie Angelica makes the most amazing breakfast pastries that have created devout followers who visit frequently to enjoy some of these treats: **Almond Croissant**", (\$4 *****) soaked with a simple syrup, then an almond cream is piped in the middle and on top), **Cream Scones**, (rich, moist and crumbly--flavors vary) or **Pain au Chocolat** with a cup of **French Press** coffee or imported teas from **Mariage Freres** in Paris or real French hot chocolate. Pure heaven in a cup. **Get Thee to Patisserie Angelica** and enjoy a little bit of Paris in Sebastopol by spending a wonderful morning or afternoon at this heavenly shop of pastries.

HopMonk Tavern - Brew Pub & More

691 Broadway / Sonoma / 707-935-9100

Category: American, Pub Grub & more...

Speciality: Bottled beers - 66 varieties!

Full bar / Live Music / Great Patio

L- D 11:30am-9pm Sun - Wed;

till 10pm Thu - Sat

Kid and dog friendly - Convenient parking lot.

**** 12/4/11 \$\$-\$\$\$



Mussels with Tavern Fries — HopMonk

With 33 food choices on the menu and service all day, along with 66 different bottled beers from around the world, plus 3 ciders and 3 NA's (also of International origin) and 16 draft beers available, spending a lazy afternoon here is not a hardship!

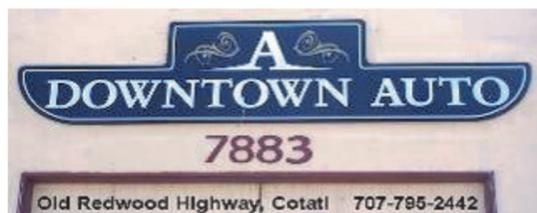
I am a newbie when it comes to drinking brewskis but my hubby is not; having taste tested his way across Germany many years ago on a vacation trip, where we sped down the Autobahn in our rented Beemer driving crazy fast just like a native and making stops for Pils between every town on our route! A beer lover's Odyssey. HopMonk Tavern comes close to that memory, as hubby was duly impressed with the selections offered. He settled on a brew boasting it "tasted like bacon - smoky in flavor." By golly, it did indeed taste like bacon. I opted for an NA Bitburger that was quite good. I wish more bars, pubs and restaurants would update their selections of NA beers.

The menu here is pub food on steroids. Oh, they've got the usuals like **Crispy Calamari** (\$11); **Sliders** (\$9-\$10.50 - pulled pork and burger variety), **Tavern Fries** (\$4) and **Garlic Fries** (\$5) with parmesan cheese and so on. But, they do them with panache. And their regular size burgers and sandwiches looked awesome as they passed by, leaving their aroma. Another visit?

For starters, we opted for a cup of oven roasted **Tomato Soup**, (\$3 cup/\$5 bowl **) blended with fennel, white wine and cream. Main dishes ordered were **Mussels & Tavern Fries** (\$17.50 ****) with prosciutto, tomato, shallots, garlic, herbs, and cream, then finished with ale and butter! **Fish and Chips** (\$16 ****) had been recommended earlier by a friend; was beer-battered cod with tavern fries, a house made tartar sauce, and seasonal coleslaw.

The only disappointment was the soup. Not enough salt was added to the roasted tomatoes during the cooking process. Tomatoes need lots and lots of salt, whether eating them raw or making a soup or sauce. Trying to adjust the seasoning afterwards is difficult. The Mussels and Tavern Fries were delicious. Excellent texture on the shellfish, and the broth was to die for with lots of diced-up prosciutto. The Fish and Chips was battered lightly and the golden color indicated it had been fried in clean oil. Too many times you get fried foods that are very dark in color - a sure sign the fry oil is old. My advice, don't eat it.

Very friendly wait staff and a crisp, sunny afternoon spent on their lovely patio eating good food, enjoying a lazy day. Life is good! **Get Thee to HopMonk Tavern** and grab yourself some California Pub Food at it's best. Bonus: A second location in Sebastopol!



Stark's Steakhouse

521 Adams Street / Santa Rosa / 707-546-5100

Category: American Steakhouse

L-D: Mon-Thu 11:30am

- 9pm; Fri till 10pm

D: Sat 5pm - 10pm;

Sun 5pm - 9pm

Happy Hour -

Mon-Sat 3pm - 6pm

Full Bar / Entertainment / Raw Bar



Stark's Bar & Lounge

**** Last reviewed: 11/12/11 \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

In the tradition of Alfred's and Harris' restaurants, two of my favorite haunts for steak and chops in The City by the Bay, Stark's Steakhouse in Old Railroad Square in Santa Rosa carries on that classic tradition of serving booze and red meat. And as a card-carrying carnivore, I never pass up sitting at the bar first to enjoy a real cocktail before I tear into my steak. Stark's makes this ritual easy and very pleasant. The bartenders are friendly and professional - mixologists extraordinaire.

After I've quaffed my Basil Hayden Manhattan (shaken, not stirred), it's time for the main event. The Beef. Moving into the dining room we are shown to a table by the hostess. Following on her heels, a server appears to check on drinks and hors d'ouvres. As veterans of Stark's for the past 3+ years, we know that a fresh, warm, butter-oozing-over-the-top, house made mini-loaf of bread - served in its own cast-iron skillet with melted butter and garlic on the bottom is on its way to our table so we decline any extras and concentrate on which cut of steak and sides we will share. The bread arrives and all conversation stops as we cut thick slices from the loaf and dip into all that butter. YUM.

For years the only steak I ever ate was a New York. That was until I discovered Rib Eyes. Now, I settle for a 5-6 oz. Filet Mignon, as the previous two are generally always 16-oz. and Rib Eyes have the most fat. Stark's Filet is a full 10-oz. (leftovers?). Authentic steakhouses carry two to three grades of beef for you to choose from: USDA Choice, USDA Prime and Dry-Aged. Fact: Less than 2% of beef is good enough to meet USDA's stringent qualifications to be branded as Prime. Every bite of USDA Prime Beef ensures flavor, juiciness and tenderness. In short, "Just Delicious". Any questions?

I used to request my steak be cooked rare. Now, medium rare works just fine. Anyone who orders a good steak well done, you better be pregnant (according to my daughter, who is), or the restaurant just ran out of chicken! You are missing the real taste of beef if it's cooked any other way. Ask a chef. They hate to serve over-cooked steak.

We order ours: the **Filet Mignon**, (\$38 *****) with a topper of **Roasted Bone Marrow** (\$6 ****) and a **Peppercorn Dipping Sauce** (\$2 ***) for me; **American Kobe Flat Iron Steak** (\$29 *****) for hubby. **Truffled French Fries** (\$6 *****) and **Creamed Spinach** (\$6 ****) are the side shares we choose. Okay. The steaks arrive and they are everything I have described above. Exactly the way Prime beef is supposed to be and with the addition of the Roasted Bone Marrow (I know, strange but soooooo fab) and dipping sauce and sides, Stark's is worth every penny and you better bring several bags full or, use your credit card and hope you don't go over your limit but heck, you don't eat here like this every night or, even once a month. Splurge a little.

Deserts? OMG, who's got room? They've got you covered if you dare. **Get Thee to Stark's Steakhouse** and enjoy a classic American meal. BTW, they do have a complete menu with other choices like chicken, fish, pasta and even a vegetarian dish or two. Tell me how those work out. For me, it's "Where's the Beef?"

Until next time, bon appetit!



Cotati to win big from the elimination of redevelopment money putting city on a path to sustainability.

(from Page One)

Anyone with any common sense could see that sooner or later California cities were going to be put on a "crash diet" by the State. But the lobbying group which works for Cotati for a hefty yearly fee, The League of California Cities, had convinced liberal city council members all over the state that kicking this can down the road was in their best interest. Now, many cities are suffering from a terrible hangover from the realization the State is bringing some sanity back to California by eliminating RDA once and for all as a program that simply didn't work leaving millions of public school students with poor test results and other damage in their wake.

This take back of state funds is a huge victory for towns like Cotati which is now forced to come to grips with the fact that it needs to spend within its means, begin some real strategic planning to place the town on a firm financial footing, and begin to get rid of some of the dead weight at City Hall still collecting huge paychecks and not producing much more than acting as a re-election committee for the current city council members.

Cotati Redevelopment Agency, which is in reality a state agency that has entrusted local city leaders to administer the funds on behalf of the state, has essentially been robbing our public school systems and county for years, while lining the pockets of unscrupulous developers who have reaped millions in profits from the program.

Governor Brown eliminated RDAs because they had become too expensive costing the state \$6 Billion a year, and RDA's other offenses were far more serious. The California Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Legislature. But at this moment, a number of lawmakers are talking about resurrecting redevelopment in one form or another to the horror of many citizens.

So let's look at how redevelopment failed our community and helped to bring the state to the edge of a financial meltdown. According to an article by Doug Kaplan of the Mercury News dated

January 9, 2012, "The Legislature created the redevelopment program in the early 1950s for the sole purpose of "eradicating blight" in struggling urban areas such as San Francisco's Western Addition. Convinced that this monumental task could not "be accomplished by private enterprise alone," Sacramento lawmakers gave local officials the authority to establish powerful public agencies endowed with extraordinary abilities to borrow, tax and seize private property through eminent domain.

It didn't take long for local officials to realize that they could use their new powers to do much more than rebuild blighted neighborhoods. Soon, nearly 400 cities and counties in California, including some of the most affluent suburbs in the country, were using their new redevelopment agencies to toss people out of their homes and businesses in order to build tax-generating auto malls, hotels, shopping centers and big-box stores on prime -- not blighted -- commercial sites. This was the first perversion of legislative intent.

City boosters throughout the state also used their redevelopment powers to build sports stadiums, arenas and even luxury golf courses, something that also would have been inconceivable to mid-century lawmakers. And most recently, during the mad, use-it-or-lose-it rush to spend redevelopment money before the program ended, local officials threw legislative intent completely out the window and used their redevelopment powers for just about anything they wanted.

For example, in Santa Cruz County, where I live, county supervisors, with minimal notice, minimal environmental review and no public vote spent \$44 million of borrowed money to toss 17 businesses out of a thriving office park and then convert the 85,000 square feet that they occupied into new offices for the county sheriff. Rather than using redevelopment to "accomplish what private industry cannot accomplish on its own," supervisors used redevelopment to undo what private industry had accomplished.

And as for the "eradication of urban blight" -- the entire justification for redevelopment -- well, that had nothing to do

with anything. The county simply wanted the office park for its own use, so it invoked the legal and financial powers of its redevelopment agency to get it.

State lawmakers from the 1950s would be appalled at how their program had mutated into something so radically different from what they intended, and therein lies the lesson: The reasons we pass a law or start a government program matter less than the powers that we bestow. Our intentions might be noble, but over time officials will inevitably ignore what we intended, do what they want to do and use the power that we gave them to do it.

We do need new tools in our municipal toolbox to rebuild California, but let's hope that lawmakers take to heart the lessons learned during the past six decades. They must not again ignore the checks and balances that underpin our democracy and, in a fit of good intentions, grant local officials extraordinary powers to borrow, tax, spend and seize."

In January, the Cotati City Council voted that the city itself will now be the successor agency for redevelopment, following a California Supreme Court decision banning redevelopment agencies. Money the city collected via its redevelopment district will now go to fund schools and police, but it will likely result in layoffs at city hall, since numerous salaries were directly funded by redevelopment monies.

The City of Cotati is now scrambling to figure out how it will fund a bevy of housing programs and numerous city salaries and retirement packages.

The California Supreme Court's ruling to abolish RDAs is effective Feb. 1, 2012 and is a pressing reminder that you can't squeeze water out of a rock. Cotati now enters a new chapter many are now embracing as the start of getting Cotati back on a realistic path to economic growth that has been held back by the social engineers at city hall who have only made matters worse over the years, not better.

Cotati will now have to reach out for volunteers, something that was frowned down upon despite efforts by citizens to get city hall to stop hiring people to do jobs volunteers could do. Previously, city hall resisted reaching out for volunteers to protect their jobs and the symbiotic relationship between city officials and city workers. The late Mayor Bob Coleman, responding to George Barich's

plea to begin an outreach program to recruit city volunteers for office work and much more said, "George, until the front doors at city hall are being broken down by volunteers, I am simply not interested".

City Hall has voted to be the successor agency to oversee the winding down of the redevelopment agency. There will also be a state oversight committee to make sure funds are used appropriately.

That's a key point because critics say redevelopment agencies, of which there are about 400 in California, have been slush funds for cities, allowing them to spend money frivolously. Critics also say that since being created in 1945 to fight urban blight, redevelopment agencies have been used more to prop up city budgets and offer sweetheart deals to developers than create real economic improvements.

With the end of redevelopment agencies, property taxes from the redevelopment area, money will be allocated to schools and police, which Gov. Jerry Brown says are more crucial than redevelopment.

The cuts will be drastic and happen quickly. In its first year, Cotati, the successor agency will receive 5% of the city's redevelopment assets and in subsequent years that figure would decrease to 3 percent.

Cotati has had its engineer and road consultants working on Old Redwood Highway feverishly because any project now in progress that was funded by RDA money will remain since they have been obligated through agreements with Caltrans and the Sonoma County Transportation Agency.

However, the oversight committee, along with the State Department of Finance, will ultimately decide whether the roadwork project in Cotati falls within their definition of redevelopment.

Probably the first Cotati city staffers to be let go will be the new city planner and economic development director Vicky Parker, the assistant City Manager Marsha Sue Lustig who has been on staff since she rolled out of her VW bug with her suitcase from New York in the 1980s, and Suzanne Whipple of the Chamber of Commerce who has been active behind the scenes doing much of the dirty work for her friends on the city council. Maybe Cotati will also lose one of the three gals getting paid handsomely who manage the water department in that beautiful office inside City Hall.



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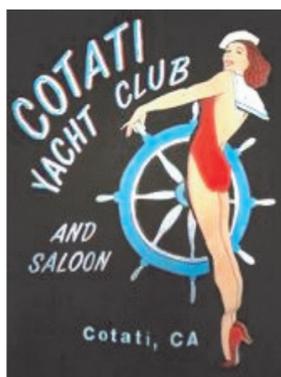
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Just a Pinch

Sharing Hometown Recipes, Cooking Tips and Coupons

By Janet Tharpe

'Win or Lose' Chili Scores Big on Gameday

"Everyone is a winner when they sit down with a bowl of Big Bill's 'Win or Lose' Chili!"

Bill Wentz
Virginia Beach,
VA pop.
454,250



Just in time for playoffs, "Big Bill" Wentz from Virginia Beach, VA scores a serious touchdown with his varsity-level chili recipe. Chock full of sauteed beef, tons of veggies and an all-star spice mix with a kick, you'll win big among friends and family with this fantastic recipe! Serve with cornbread and a mix of favorite toppings and get ready to do your victory dance!

See step-by-step photos of Bill Wentz's recipe and thousands more from other home cooks at:

www.justapinch.com/bigbillchili

You'll also find a meal planner and coupons for the recipe ingredients. Enjoy and remember, use "just a pinch"...

- Janet

Big Bill's 'Win or Lose' Chili

What You Need

- 3 lb 80/20 ground chuck
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 lg onion chopped and diced
- 1 lg jalapeno seeded and chopped
- 1 md green bell pepper seeded and chopped
- 1 sm can chopped green chilis
- 4 tsp minced garlic
- 4 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tbsp chipotle chili powder
- 3 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 2 tsp cayenne
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 3 c beef broth
- 2 cans pinto beans (15 oz) rinsed and drained
- 2 cans diced tomatoes (14.5 oz) w/ juice
- 1 can tomato paste (6 oz)
- 1 sm can of ro-tel tomato sauce
- 1 tbsp cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp cornmeal

Directions

- In a large pot heat vegetable oil and brown beef. Drain fat and add onion, jalapeno, green pepper and canned chilis. Cook over med heat until onions are soft. Add garlic, chili powder, cumin, sugar, thyme, cayenne, oregano and black pepper, stirring often for 15 minutes.
- Add beef broth, pinto beans, diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato paste and cider vinegar; mix well. Reduce heat and let simmer at least 3 hours. Ten minutes before serving combine cornmeal and about two tbsps warm water until slight paste forms. Stir thoroughly into chili. Top with favorite toppings like sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese and fresh or pickled jalapenos.

Submitted by: Bill Wentz, Virginia Beach, VA (pop. 454,250)

www.justapinch.com/bigbillchili

A engine that runs just on the air?

Will it be the next big thing? Tata Motors of India thinks so. What will the Oil Companies do to stop it?

It is an auto engine that runs on air. That's right; air not gas or diesel or electric but just the air around us. Take a look.

Tata Motors of India has scheduled the Air Car to hit Indian streets by August 2012

The Air Car, developed by ex-Formula One engineer Guy N. For Luxembourg-based MDI, uses compressed air to push its engine's pistons and make the car go. The Air Car, called the "Mini CAT" could cost around 365,757 rupees in India or \$8,177 US.

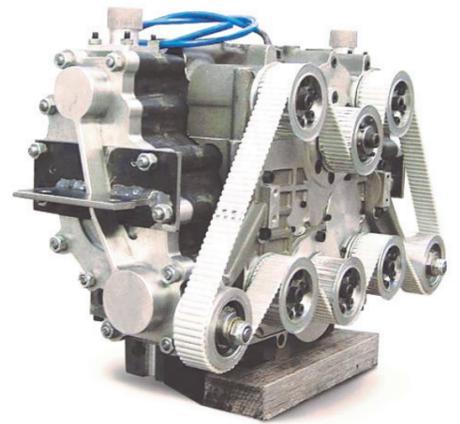
The Mini CAT which is a simple, light urban car, with a tubular chassis, a body of fiberglass that is glued not welded and powered by compressed air. A Microprocessor is used to control all electrical functions of the car. One tiny radio transmitter sends instructions to the lights, turn signals and every other electrical device on the car. Which are not many. The temperature of the clean air expelled by the exhaust pipe is between 0-15 degrees below zero, which makes it suitable for use by the internal air conditioning system with no need for gases or loss of power.

There are no keys, just an access card which can be read by the car from your pocket. According to the designers, it costs less than 50 rupees per 100 KM, that's about a tenth the cost of a car running on gas. It's mileage is about double that of the most advanced electric car, a factor which makes it a perfect choice for city motorists.

The car has a top speed of 105 KM per hour or 60 mph and would have a range of around 300 km or 185 miles between refuels. Refilling the car will take place at adapted gas stations with special air compressors. A fill up will only take two to three minutes and costs approximately 100 rupees and the car will be ready to go another 300 kilometers.

This car can also be filled at home with it's on board compressor. It will take 3-4 hours to refill the tank, but it can be done while you sleep. Because there is no combustion engine, changing the 1 liter of vegetable oil is only necessary every 50,000 KM or 30,000 miles. Due to its simplicity, there is very little maintenance to be done on this car.

This Air Car almost sounds too good to be true. We'll see in August 2012.



World's First Air-Powered Car: Zero Emissions by Next Summer



This six-seater car, which should be available in India next year, is powered entirely by a tank filled with compressed air.



Peet's Coffee off to a bumpy start?

A few dumb questions by Greg Karraker

On January 9, 2011, after filing their first permit application with the city in January, 2008, Peet's Coffee finally opened their new store in Cotati's Northern Gateway, a location that has been guarded by city planners as fiercely as Fort Knox. In this on-again, off-again soap opera, Peet's gave up on the Cotati location in November 2009, then changed their mind in May 2010, and finally built the showplace of caffeine that now sits next to Walgreen's.

Not just any showplace; this establishment strives to earn a LEED Certification, a hoop which may be difficult and embarrassing to jump through.

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Administered by the US Green Building Council, this system awards participants with four levels of recognition, depending how green they want to be: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum.



Welcome to Peet's.

Park your gas-guzzling PetroPig elsewhere, Pal.

To get this one of these awards, a new retail building has to spend an additional 2% — 15% in construction costs, and make a number of concessions to the environmental movement. The first concession I noticed was this curious space in the parking lot.

I asked the store manager why hybrids and all-electric cars are more welcome at Peet's than yours or mine, and he said this is one way they accumulate cred-

its towards their LEED certification. I went to the LEED website, and sure enough, it is.

But even more interesting, when your product is coffee, water becomes a big deal. *On Monday, a bit after 7AM, I heard a Barista apologizing to several customers that their espresso machine didn't work. Something about copper pipes and filters.*

I asked her if the problem was with the machine itself, or with the plumbing in the ground. A tad flustered, she said something like, "I think it's a combination of both."

Returning on Thursday, I learned that they had finally fixed their problem after being espresso-less until Wednesday. This made me curious, especially in light of the sign I noticed in their City-approved landscaping.



How come "green" landscaping always looks so brown?

So, finally, here are my questions:

1. If I park my big honking pickup in the space reserved for Toyota Prius drivers, will I get a ticket?
2. Did the problem with Peet's espresso plumbing have anything to do with the fact they were trying to earn LEED credits for water conservation, or was it just a coincidence?
3. Why does it take three freaking years to open a simple business in this loony town?

By the way, Peet's serves terrific coffee, the place looks nice, and none of this is intended to criticize a very fine business. But I suspect it demonstrates, once again, what happens when meddling governments interfere with good businesspeople who are just trying to make a living.

Greg Karraker alternates between being amused and enraged by the incredible folly of local governments. Read more of his observations at www.thelittlepicture.net



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Should these council people be committed?

**Of course not,
they already are.**

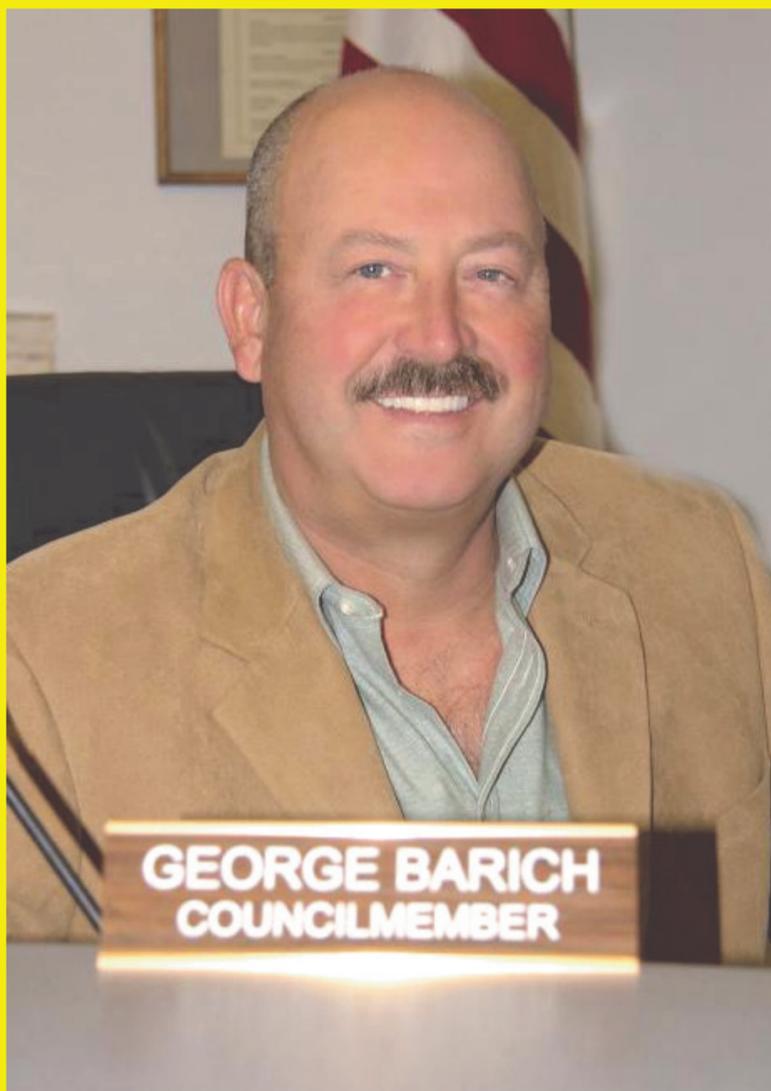
**Take a look.
It's scary.**



- * Committed to single lane roundabouts on undoubtedly the busiest street in town.
- * Committed to choking traffic to a slow crawl to encourage more local shopping.
- * Committed to telling Oliver's Market to move out of town if they don't like it.
- * Committed to higher water and sewer rates. Committed to higher sales taxes.
- * Committed to demanding more state funds at the expense of bankrupting California.
- * Committed to changing Cotati's small town character by building higher, narrowing city streets, and getting people out of our cars and onto public transit, rain or shine.
- * Committed to securing grants from both the state and federal governments which are broke and forced to borrowed money from other countries to pay it's bills.
- * Committed to increasing Cotati's population to well over 12,000 people in the next decade alone as part of Cotati's General Plan.
- * Committed to more "stack and pack" high density housing, small parking spaces, and more ridiculous business regulations in hope of bringing Cotati green jobs.
- * Committed to never televising or webcasting any open city meetings in Cotati.
- * Committed to eliminating diversity of opinion on the city council at all costs.
- * Committed to reducing public comment to three minutes during city meetings.
- * Committed to playing the race card and condoning violations of their own Ethics Code
- * Committed to spending every available tax dollar in the city budget to keep city salaries and benefits some of the highest in the county.
- * Committed to using city employees and members of the Chamber of Commerce to help run their political campaigns and eliminating their political adversaries.
- * Committed to legacy projects that the city simply cannot afford.
- * Committed to almost 20 million dollars still outstanding on our new police facility for the next twenty years that must be paid.
- * Committed to never instituting term limits for city council members.
- * Committed to ignoring real and sustainable spending cuts to balance the city budget.
- * Committed to increasing greenhouse gases by encouraging more people to come live and shop in Cotati. Which is it, more or less greenhouse gases?
- * Committed to enlarging Cotati's Urban Growth Boundaries and more urban sprawl.
- * Committed to ignoring any real economic development in Cotati.
- * Committed to never saving for a rainy day and depleting city's reserves to \$0.00
- * Committed to being led around by the nose by an inexperienced City Manager.
- * Committed to never holding office hours for the convenience of Cotati citizens.
- * Committed to taking campaign contributions and running expensive campaigns.
- * Committed to relegating themselves to being bought and sold politicians.

These city officials in the photo above (posing as city leaders) do not understand what citizens really want most, which is to stop playing politics with Cotati's future and get our town back on track. Stop trying make Cotati a tourist destination and start representing the citizens of this town. The only real chance of restoring Cotati's small town charm and returning it to financial solvency is to treat the city as a business that is committed to customer service. Treating citizens like the customers they are, rather than like subjects, must become Job 1. Cotati is suffering from a lack of leadership which is jeopardizing our town's future and our quality of life. Replace the failed leaders with new ones in 2012. From the editorial staff at The Cotati Independent.

No Roundabouts



“You meet the nicest people at stop lights.”

Asking questions, demanding answers

It's time for real leadership

Fiscal responsibility now

Let's reform broken government

Consistent and committed to bringing common sense back to City Hall

Let's get Cotati back on track

Strategic planning must begin now

Resolution Exposing United Nations Agenda 21

WHEREAS, the United Nations Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of extreme environmentalism, social engineering and global political control, that was initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992; and,

WHEREAS, the United Nations Agenda 21 is being covertly pushed into local communities throughout the United States of America through the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) through local “sustainable development” policies such as Smart Growth, Wildlands Project, Resilient Cities, Regional Visioning Projects, and other “Green” or “Alternative” projects; and,

WHEREAS, this United Nations Agenda 21 plan of radical so-called “sustainable development” views the American way of life of private property ownership, single family homes, private car ownership and individual travel choices, and privately owned farms; all as destructive to the environment; and,

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations Agenda 21 policy, social justice is described as the right and opportunity of all people to benefit equally from the resources afforded us by society and the environment which would be accomplished by socialist/ communist redistribution of wealth; and,

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations Agenda 21 policy National sovereignty is deemed a social injustice; now therefore be

RESOLVED, the Republican National Committee recognizes the destructive and insidious nature of United Nations Agenda 21 and hereby exposes to the public and public policy makers the dangerous intent of the plan; and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, that the U.S. government and no state or local government is legally bound by the United Nations Agenda 21 treaty in that it has never been endorsed by the (U.S.) Senate, and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, that the federal and state and local governments across the country be well informed of the underlying harmful implications of implementation of United Nations Agenda 21 destructive strategies for “sustainable development” and we hereby endorse rejection of its radical policies and rejection of any grant monies attached to it.

Want to know more? Check out this website: Democrats Against UN Agenda 21.com

Read “Behind The Green Mask: U.N. 21 Agenda 21” by Rosa Koire

Six Degrees of Dianne Thompson

Six Degrees of Dianne Thompson



Should Cotati keep Cotati City Manager Dianne Thompson, or look for a replacement?

City Manager Dianne Thompson has been the subject of considerable controversy this past year, most notably because of the city's decision to undo the Downtown Specific Plan, and replace a four-lane section of Old Redwood Highway with a two-lane street (one lane in each direction).

This has led some people to say that she is doing an excellent job, and others to say the city deserves better. Now that the city stands to lose millions in Redevelopment Funds, which pay a large part of Ms. Thompson's extremely generous salary and benefits, the question of her value to the city becomes more critical.

With that in mind, this paper invited six people to submit a statement that describes their impressions of City Manager Dianne Thompson. Here are their unedited responses:

How I see City Manager Thompson

By Greg Karraker
Advertising Creative Director



If you made \$183,702 a year in salary and benefits, plus the lease on a Prius for \$9,092 a year, had five assistants, and your office was closed every Friday, would you return phone calls, and emails, and respond to public safety questions from the Fire Chief who protects the small town you are paid to manage? If you are Dianne Thompson, the answer seems to be "Maybe, maybe not."

Most people would give their right arm to have a job that pays so well and demands so little. But Ms. Thompson seems to be unfazed by the numerous complaints lodged by citizens about her nonchalant, entitled attitude.

But she doesn't just ignore you and me. She has also blatantly ignored urgent questions from the Rancho Adobe Fire Chief. Instead of being asked his opinion about the city's plan to cut Old Redwood Highway down to two lanes, Chief Treanor read about it in the newspaper. On October 24, he wrote Ms. Thompson a letter, asking for a meeting to express his concerns. Some six weeks later, he had not received any response.

Another example: The city hired Susan Jones as Temporary Police Chief, asked her to help recruit a full-time police chief, and then completely ignored her advice. This is not to criticize the current chief, who seems to be a good man; it is just another example of Ms. Thompson's management style. As Temporary Chief Jones told the Press Democrat, "It's the lack of information, it's the holding back, and not being forthright with employees, all of this secretive behind-the-scenes thing."

I think you deserve a more responsive City Manager. If you think she could do a better job, her office number is 792-4600. Call her today. Just don't expect a call back in the near future.

How I see City Manager Thompson

By Former Mayor Janet Orchard



Ex-Mayor Orchard (then Mayor) was contacted by email on January 9, and asked to submit her impressions of City Manager Thompson for this newspaper by January 15. Her response, in full, appears below.

How I see City Manager Thompson

By Eric Kirchmann, Ph.D.,
High School Teacher



In Cotati City Hall people do not think outside of the box- they are the box. Our City Manager Dianne Thompson has no flexibility and is too busy in her office to meet and greet with anyone but the "Insiders".

In Cotati there are those who agree and are allowed inside, and then there is everyone else. Business is not encouraged, but no one dare speak against "the City".

The late Mayor Robert Coleman used to clearly define outsiders speaking in regards to Cotati but he failed to realize the majority of city staff chooses to live elsewhere. This is the choice of Ms. Thompson. She does not shop here, live here, and she is rarely seen. Most of her work is done behind closed doors and our Council votes in 5-0 fashion with pre-written epistles to support their decisions.

Most council meetings have five or six items to act upon and usually at least one is pulled off the agenda as staff is not ready to move forward. Consultants make a good living in Cotati echoing staff reports. The parroting consultants remind me of the tax joke where you look for an accountant: the first two say "two plus two equals four", the third says: "two plus two equals what ever you want me to find". One consultant found our Police Department should be staffed with six Sergeants. The last consultant, a retired fireman from Novato, was pro roundabout and reducing the number of traffic lanes on the busiest thoroughfare in town. Funny thing is there are no roundabouts in the City of Novato, and the lanes are two in each direction just like here. Sad thing is our fire chief was not asked his opinion. So it goes in Thompson's Cotati.

How I see City Manager Thompson

By Neville Hormuz,
Owner, Loud and Clear Music



I'm Neville Hormuz, longtime Cotati resident and owner of Loud & Clear Music on Old Redwood Hwy. Loud & Clear is the new music store in the old Zone Music location; we've recently doubled in size and have nine employees.

In general my personal history of working with the city has been disappointing to say the least. My earliest experience was years ago when Deputy City Clerk Tami Taylor contacted me while I was general manager of Zone Music. She asked us to create a web cast system for the Cotati Council Chamber so people could view the meetings from home. We had already successfully completed similar systems at Sonoma State University, JDSU Flex Products, and the Rohnert Park City Council Chamber. We spent hours creating a design for a functional system that worked within all of the city's physical and financial requirements then heard nothing back. The following year Tami contacted me again to design a new system with different parameters. We created yet another design/proposal within the City's new parameters and again no movement, wasting city staff time as well as my own.

My next experience with the City was a few days after Zone Music went out of business and a few weeks before I opened Loud & Clear. I received a call on my cell from a city employee named Joan saying that someone tripped over a cable in the council chamber and now the microphone input was no longer working. She said it was urgent that we fix it that day as there was a council meeting that evening. As requested, we went out and repaired the problem that day. I sent the city an invoice and two weeks later I got a letter in the mail, no check but a note stating that it's come to the City's attention that I was doing business within the City limits without a business license. The only business I had done in the City was for the City.

My next experience was a personal visit from City Manager Dianne Thompson a week after having my first Music Flea Market event at the new shop. She mentioned needing a permit the next time. I told her that we did the same event at Zone twice a year for the past 20 years and never had to get a permit. She said that the previous owner was "grandfathered in" and that we (the new owner) should get a permit next time. She also told me that we had too much signage for the size of our storefront.

This was the feedback I got from the city, not a welcome to Cotati, not a thank you for starting a new business and employing local citizens, but rather a feeling of being picked at for fees to perpetuate a mis-managed municipality.

This brings us to 2012 and the Roundabout Plan. Despite years of planning and close to a million dollars of taxpayer money to create a Downtown Specific Plan, the city staff said that the originally developed plan wouldn't work and our only viable option is roundabouts. They then began a HARD SELL campaign for the roundabout hiring consultant after consultant at our expense to prove their case.

After first meeting with City Manager Dianne Thompson on the matter, then meeting with other property owners and businesses in the area we realized that the City Manager was misleading the stakeholders and the citizens to push this new plan forward.

Despite how anyone feels about roundabouts, in favor or against, we as a community should not stand for our public servants misleading us to move forward with an agenda.

I recently spoke in front of the council to request an investigation of the city staff misconduct and was told by Mayor Orchard that she trusted City staff, and knows that they wouldn't do anything to mislead anyone.

As a business owner, I could never ignore complaints made by my customers about my staff, and I can't understand why the council chooses to look the other way when so many people have had the same negative experience with the current City Manager.

How I see City Manager Thompson

By Andre Morrow
President, Cotati Chamber of Commerce



Mr. Morrow was contacted by email on January 9, and asked to submit his impressions of City Manager Thompson by January 15. His response, in full, appears below.



How I see City Manager Thompson

By our new Mayor Susan Harvey

Mayor Harvey (then Vice Mayor) was contacted by email on January 9, and asked to submit her impressions of City Manager Thompson by January 15. Her response, in full, appears below.