



# The Cotati Independent

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## Measure D Likely to Fail



This sign was not seen in town, but after listening to public opinion, it should have been.

Story and opinion by George Barich

(Cotati, CA) If you haven't noticed, "Vote YES on Measure D" yard signs have been seen popping up in front of many homes in Cotati in what seems like a never-ending attempt to raise our taxes as a cure for everything that ails us. But despite a major effort by those who think the taxpayers are not taxed enough already, such as the entire Cotati City Council, there appears to be little support in this weak economy to throw good money after bad to prop up one of the worst public school systems in the nation. Many people remember how they were fooled by the promise that the California Lottery would be used to fund public education, and won't be fooled again.

According to our sources, dozens of liberal Democrats, teachers, union sympathizers, city council members, and school board members have been walking door to door in Cotati pushing for the passage of Measure D without much success and getting an earful

from angry citizens. Most citizens have had enough of this nonsense and see the handwriting on the wall. School administration costs are unsustainable, which is the real root of the problem.

In an effort to save these high paying administrative jobs in the public school system, it's currently a call to arms to pass this tax measure or die trying. It appears you won't see many of the "NO on Measure D" yard signs in the community because frankly, there appears to be no financial interest from any group to put forth such an organized and expensive campaign. I have been polling as many people as possible, and there seems to be little support for raising our taxes, and only a serious cry for the public schools to spend within their means.

On Page 12, we present a side by side look at Measure D and expose the truth of yet one more attempt to fleece the taxpayers in the name of "the children".

-Continued on Page 12

### Plastic Grocery Bags May Prevent High Risk of Food Poisoning

Oregon norovirus traced to reusable grocery bag  
Published May 10, 2012, Associated Press

Oregon investigators have traced an outbreak of norovirus to a reusable grocery bag that members of a Beaverton girls' soccer team passed around when they shared cookies.

The soccer team of 13- and 14-year-olds traveled to Seattle for a weekend tournament in October 2010. At the tournament, one girl got sick on Saturday and spent six hours in a chaperone's bathroom. Symptoms of the bug, often called "stomach flu," include vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps. The chaperone took the girl back to Oregon.

On Sunday, team members had lunch in a hotel room, passing around the bag and eating the cookies it held. On Monday, six girls got sick.

Oregon scientists determined they had



picked up the norovirus from the grocery bag. Tests turned up the virus on the sides of the bag below the polypropylene handle.

The results of the research have been published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases.

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### Cotati Planning Commission graciously allows business owner to put three poppy plants on patio

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker

(Cotati, CA) California is well-known for being the most business-hostile state in America, and Cotati is known to be one of the most repressive, business-choking cities in the state. But at a recent Planning Commission meeting, perhaps because Chairman Neil Hancock was absent, a rare bit of fresh air blew through the drab, fluorescent-lit city council chambers.

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### Local Fire District Wastes Thousands on Telephone Survey and Brainwashing Session Disguised as a Focus Group / Workshop

Story and opinion by George Barich

(Cotati, CA) Ten citizens were paid \$100 each to sit in a room for 90 minutes and tell our fire department what the RAFD wanted to hear. Had I not witnessed it for myself, I would never have believed it. But first, some background on how this all came to be and why.

The Rancho Adobe Fire District is in the process of spending approximately \$15,000 to find out what is the best way to convince the public to increase fire taxes on everyone once again. Since fire taxes are passed onto consumers and renters in the form of higher prices, everyone pays the cost of tax increases and should be noted here.

Our local fire department claims that it simply cannot make ends meet with the millions that it currently take in in taxes; it simply must have more money, and claims it's up against the "wall", according to Chief Frank Treanor of the RAFD.

If this sounds like a broken record to most

of us, it is. The cry for more money appears to be a never ending theme of the RAFD who refuses to get their spending under control and live within their means despite the six figure incomes paid to some of their firefighters. With some retired firefighters serving on the board of directors, is it any wonder cuts in salaries and benefits for firefighters are taboo to say the least?

The last time the RAFD attempted to raise fire taxes via the ballot box was in 2006 (Measure J). It failed because they did not get two thirds support of the community to raise parcel taxes, and that was before the Great Recession began in 2007. The anti-tax sentiment in recent years is very real, but the RAFD thinks that can be overcome with good marketing and preying on people's fear that without higher fire taxes, fire services will be cut and response times jeopardized.

-Continued on Page 9

### Controversial Roundabout Plan Close to Extinction

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker



(Cotati, CA) Monday, April 30 was a bad day for the tiny group of people in Cotati who want to see "The Village Main Street Plan" choke Old Redwood Highway like hair in a bathroom drain.

On that day, the State of California announced that the city's overpriced, underthought plan did not qualify as an enforceable obligation. So the \$1.8 million in redevelopment funds committed to the project must be turned over to the state.

-Continued on Page 9

### Ride a Bike To Work Day Fell on Deaf Ears at Cotati City Hall

Story and opinion by George Barich

(Cotati, CA) Thursday, May 10th was National Ride a Bike to Work Day, but you wouldn't know it at Cotati City Hall. Not a bicycle was to be found anywhere in sight.

After a thorough presentation by Gary Helfrich of the Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition regarding the benefits of riding bicycles as an alternative mode of transportation at the May 9th regular meeting of the Cotati city council, I decided to see if all the applause in the room for this one-sided presentation would get one single city leader or city employee out of their car and onto their bicycle to work on May 10th. So, I started by walking around City Hall and the police station looking for any wonderful bicycles.

I spent much of my childhood dreading having to ride a bicycle to get where I wanted to go. I dreamed of getting my driver's license to free me from the shackles of living like a second class citizen who had to walk or bike everywhere.

Well, I couldn't find a bicycle parked anywhere at City Hall. So, I proceeded to walk into every office at City Hall, introduced myself as a reporter for this newspaper, and simply asked politely if anyone rode a bicycle to work. The answers were all the same: "No". Some claimed they didn't own a bicycle even though cost didn't appear to be the issue. Others claimed they lived too far

away to ride a bike. But in the Planning Department, the response was typical of the runaround experienced by so many who



have been forced to deal with our Planning Department. City Planner Misti Harris answered my inquiry by referring me directly to her boss, Dianne Thompson, who controls all information to the media as the "city's public relations officer", as Harris put it.

After that, I headed to the Cotati Police Department where the dispatcher on duty informed me that no one to her knowledge rode a bicycle to work, but she promised to call me if anyone had by the end of her shift. So much for the city's support of this event. At La Plaza Park, a refreshment table was set up for bicyclists by event supporters.

### City receives complaints of excessive noise, manure, and flies coming from "Earth-sustaining" Frogsong Community

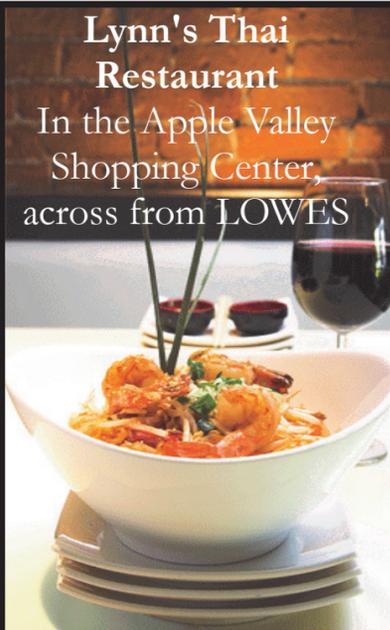
Story on Page 8



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**Which Way Do We Go?**

Politics is an interesting game. It can be quite frustrating when you're trying to clean up a mess, accomplish something positive, and the opposition continually obstructs, covers up, and distorts the reality of the state of our city government and the state of California. We understand city staff is currently gearing up again to help the incumbent candidates get re-elected to secure their jobs and possibly even help lay the groundwork for another pay increase for city workers. We get it.

It is amusing that those on the city council refer to me as an obstructionist, a troublemaker, and call me malicious in what I write in this newspaper, according to my sources. The fact is, the current crop of city officials are constantly attempting to obstruct more of your freedom and remove personal choices from you. Along with our beloved local fire department, the city council see us citizens as cash cows to be milked by raising taxes, raising city fees and water rates whenever and however possible.

What did any of them ever give you, or attempt to give you, than more government we can't afford? Do they even attempt to submit their thoughts and concerns to this newspaper, or send a letter to this editor? Do they hold office hours to make it easy to address your concerns? Have they been honest with you or given you the runaround? Have they encouraged you to get involved and put your thinking cap on to help save this city? Have they been frugal with your money? Have they solved the problems of the mobile home park residents? Have you ever wondered why you can't watch the city council meetings on cable TV or online like you can Rohnert Park's meetings? Why aren't there even public service announcements about Cotati on Cable TV Ch.26? Where are all the green jobs Mayor John Guardino promised us were coming to our town in 2009 and beyond? Have the city council been a good partner with Governor Jerry Brown to help him put the state's house in order and save the state from financial ruin, or have they simply exacerbated the problem fighting tooth and nail over state RDA money and giving us all a false sense of hope?

It would seem to me that if you are on the opposite side of the mismanagement team at City Hall, not going along and obstructing what they want to do, or simply questioning their priorities would be just what the Founding Fathers envisioned we do. What amazes me is that more of you don't attend the city meetings and workshops, speak up, and/or simply just go along with our town that is spiraling out of control. Maybe it's easier just to pay a little bit more for everything as city fees and taxes are simply added to the price you pay for things in Cotati. Surrendering is so damn easy and so tempting at times, isn't it? And who has the strength to resist with everything else on our plates?

Try upsetting the apple cart and stirring it up a little if that's how to describe standing up for what is right. See what happens and teach your kids something they probably won't learn in the public schools. What appear to be immovable objects can be moved. Movers, shakers and winners see no obstacles in front of them, only challenges. Sure, sometimes there are some minor setbacks along the way to doing what is right.

Some say my actions and writings are sometimes malicious and hurtful, and I need to essentially concede and accept things as they are. One woman in Cotati by the name of Mabe came up to me and told me that my newspaper was "downright hateful". Another woman complained in writing that I stop delivering the newspaper to her home which is so far outside of town I don't even deliver there. When I explained I didn't even deliver to anyone on her street, she refused to apologize and was indignant in an attempt to simply silence me and my kind, as she put it.

Look, there is nothing malicious in what I do or how I feel about people with different points of view. Unlike my political opponents, what I do I do out in the open, not behind closed doors or behind my attorney. I don't make phone calls garnering political support and seek fancy endorsements. I don't make deals with people to get their support like the flock on the council. Aren't these back-room deals with special interests part of the problem?

What is malicious is to not be satisfied with having power, but letting that power corrupt you to where you



Former Cotati City Councilman  
George Barich

*"Just My Two Cents"*

attempt to use it to hurt others. People like John and Lisa Moore, Mark Landman, Joan Simon, Andre Morrow and the other political hacks in town are on a mission. They want to punish any and all those who have the nerve to stand up to their far leftist and racist agenda which has brought Cotati to its knees and has her against the ropes.

Go try to listen to the last podcasts of our city council meetings online. They have been erased, or large parts missing due to "technical difficulties". Really, City Manager Thompson? Really, Mayor Harvey? Where is the outrage? Where is the transparency? Where is the public apology? Is there a conspiracy at Cotati City Hall? I don't know, but when we got permission to leave stacks of this newspaper publication next to the stack of Community Voice newspapers at City Hall from the City Clerk, our stacks of newspapers were gone within minutes or hours. We replaced the stack every day for weeks until we refused to humor them any longer. Did the city officials launch an internal investigation? No, they instituted a policy that our newspaper will no longer be able to be displayed for free at City Hall. Did the Community Voice object to any of this? Does anybody know? Does anybody care? Is anybody saying?

When I speak before the Cotati Planning Commission meetings now, Chairperson Neil Hancock instructs the city staff to delete my comments from the official record. No, this is not Germany 1939, it's Cotati, 2012. But few people know or really care except for the citizens who continue to support this newspaper with their hard earned money.

Finding tolerance for other viewpoints at City Hall is like finding Native American artifacts at Friar Tucks where they seem more concerned with hosting White



Trash Parties than protecting free speech.

So, where am I going with all of this? It would seem that we have three irresponsible councilpersons gearing up for re-election and soliciting money and support as we speak. They plan to double down on the last four years of kicking the can down the road and defend the tax and spend philosophy at city hall. Nobody down there seems to utter a word about the "business unfriendly" attitude of the city which is a reflection of a style of governance left behind in the 1960's where it was first introduced.

If there is one thing I am truly interested in is giving them and their henchmen on the city payroll their pink slips, and finding a management team that understands basic economics, the law, and business. Cotati needs to be completely restructured to not only survive, but thrive in the coming years. Sure, it's a tall order. But before Cotati is forced to merge with Rohnert Park to save costs (which is likely on the horizon at this rate), a serious face-lift at city hall may actually bring businesses back to Cotati if businesses see hope and change they can believe in and make a profit. Because right now, businesses like Oliver's are on the sidelines before committing to throwing any more good money after bad with this city council.

Cotati needs to be occupied by city leaders, not wannabes who claim to serve the citizens. Relying on handouts to pay its bills is no way to run a city. The general fund is not the city staff's piggy bank. We must begin to run Cotati like a business, not like a welfare queen with her hand out looking for "free money where it may be hiding", to quote the late Mayor Bob Coleman. Running a city as a business does not mean you have to be cold and impersonal. It means that you balance your income and expenses while putting real money aside for future foreseeable projects and exercise brutal honesty with the electorate. You look at long range projects that need to be done and plan to do them and stop kicking the can down the road to the next election. You look at what the citizens want, actively engage them like adults, explain the realities of the situation, and assess whether or not it is appropriate for government to be providing those things. As a governing body you can be an obstacle or hindrance to be overcome, or you can enable citizens and businesses to grow and prosper here and create some jobs rather than vacant buildings and empty weed filled lots.

I have resided in Cotati for 18 years, and I am still waiting to see our city government practice some common sense, partner up with local businesses, and get out of the way as the city continues to micro manage everything and everybody to death with their constant nonsense. Yes, folks, we have to decide which way we are going to go. Think about it, seriously.

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## Ignorance Is Bliss

By Mike Ceremello

Hello Cotatians. How are you doing this fine month? I have some new information for you on which to *muse*. As the majority of you in this quaint little burg are regressive liberals, I want you to know exactly what those you support are up to on a grand scale.

After attending the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Eagle Forum conference in Sacramento and sitting through council meetings in a number of cities, I have come to the conclusion that our country is in far worse shape than I had imagined. I have promoted the idea that individual citizens can make a difference by taking over their respective city councils and giving politics a new direction. While this establishes a solid base for eliminating the political elite occupying the Federal government ruling infrastructure, it amounts essentially to a diversion from the manipulations of national and world forces intent on destroying our constitutional America in hopes of creating a liberal utopia where all are equal and humans are eliminated as quickly as acceptable to restore mother Gaia. Oh yes, I forgot to say that on Sunday, Earth Day, I had the good fortune to witness the feminist misanthropic chants in support of the latter.

I know this is heady stuff for those of you so used to supporting all manner of fol de rol, but unlike the BOB crowd you chose to govern you I actually believe you can think if given inspiration. As I know a good conspiracy theory when I see or hear it, I will do what I have always done: present you with the facts. To what conclusion you come is up to you.

I have been attending some of the "One Bay Area Plan" meetings as well as hearing from the opposition such as those involved in the TEA Party movement, Eagle Forum, or other conservative based groups in an attempt to educate myself on Agenda 21 and the International Council for Local Environmental Issues (ICLEI). Both of these are based on the "global warming" scam of man made climate change. The old adage of "follow the money" is well worth giving acknowledgment as the "cap and trade" scheme will do nothing to reduce emissions but will make one man extremely wealthy as he rakes his take off the top of every trade of "carbon credits". That person is Al Gore.

Mr. Gore is only a hypocritical pimple on the rear of the one world liberal, environmental, eco-terrorist beast attempting to alter the way you live your daily lives. We have the "smart meters" that PG&E and other utility companies are attempting to foist on all of us. These little babies have the ability to track every use of energy in your house and thanks to what is called a "ZigBee" chip implanted in all new appliances, the utility companies will have the ability to do far more than just monitor your electrical usage. They will know what you use, when you use it, and the energy consumption. I saw the actual daily usage charts from one home at the forum I attended.

The ability for the energy company to decide on their own,

unilaterally is the term, to reduce the cooling inside your refrigerator by raising the temperature can be accomplished through RF (radio frequency) transmissions. The only thing the utility companies refuse to admit is that some people are sensitive to RF waves to the point of becoming ill. I could not confirm this and the companies naturally deny it. When your whole house is essentially electrified due to the wiring running through it on a rather continual basis as readings are sent out, it certainly bears more study. The larger point is Big Brother is here.

On a national scale, there was a map of all land in the United States which the environmentalists have essentially got the Federal and regional governments to declare as off limits to human development or use. Not only are the liberal cretins attempting to restrict human intrusion, they want humans gone or at least some of us. Two speakers spoke of their personal experiences with local county governments concerning these types of land.

One person was Michael Shaw, who told me he had spoken in front of the Rotary Club in Dixon years ago and was escorted away from the podium by some burly police officer because he was criticizing government and its officials. Shaw bought 74 acres of poison oak infested land north of Santa Cruz where he wanted to create his own version of nirvana. You would think the eco-freaks would have welcomed someone who was helping to bring back indigenous species from the native seed bank lying dormant beneath the suffocating effect of over growth. No such luck.

Shaw was harassed by the county and even into Alameda County where he had a business in Pleasanton. While his lawsuit against Santa Cruz officials netted him nothing for their offenses, (the one sure thing is government protects her own), it didn't work that way in Alameda County.

The other gentleman, whose name I didn't catch because I was prepping for my own podium pontification, spoke about one of these regions off limits to man which has become a tinderbox of eucalyptus trees and undergrowth. Planning is not part of the "greenies" environmentalism. You just let everything burn down, wring your hands, and say "hey, fire is natural". This is not good stewardship of the earth.

The overarching plot of Agenda 21, which I now know to be a tome of 40 chapters on every phase of human life or should I say regulations about those phases, is to not only push humanity into smaller and smaller cramped crowded living quarters but to actually reduce population by some 90%. They intend to do this by eliminating dams, such as the ones on the Klamath River, which I am sure you read about in those bigger papers such as the Sacramento Bee. I should check with one of my friends who reads that paper but even if he had seen it, I doubt that it would have registered in his governmental teat sucking head.

If you control the water, you control mankind. The same goes for all of these plans to reduce "greenhouse gas emissions" such as the "priority development areas", PDAs, which your mayor and council are so quick to embrace because it is a chance at some "free money". Stack 'em and pack 'em next to public transit. We don't want individualism and choice, we want to tell you how to live, where to live, and where to go. I don't mind telling them all where they can go.

Carbon dioxide is a main ingredient in the photosynthesis cycle where plants use it to create their structures while releasing oxygen. It is not a pollutant. It was stated that if the dams on the Klamath are removed, the sediment that has built up will choke off the very fish the action is intended to save or encourage. That sediment was also termed "pollution" which it is not. It is the natural product of chemical and physical geologic erosion and degradation processes which release the chemical nutrients contained within rock. And it is not man made in its majority.

I also listened to Orlean Koehle, who gave us her personal experiences with our daunting educational system also the

businesses have left Cotati and or gone out of business altogether. Many businesses have chosen to go where there is more commerce as business brings more business.

I was speaking to a business man in Cotati the other day and he was lamenting that "there are no people coming to Cotati, no one is walking the streets or coming in." In 1980 there were people riding bikes, walking about, and coming to town during the day and at night. There were many places to eat, shop, and listen to live music. The city was far smaller than it is now and less of a commuter city or bedroom hub. Back then there was a hub with six connecting streets the inner hub of La Plaza and the outer hub of the six Page Brothers. People got around, they stopped and talked on the streets, sometimes had coffee or an adult beverage, there were even times when folks would dance in the streets and smile openly.

Citizens participated back then and did not leave all decisions to City Hall. Things got bigger and street lights went in, roads were rerouted, more signs, and some citizens even blocked roads to reduce traffic. It was noted that when Old Redwood Highway came it was embraced as good for business because it drew more cars to the city and going by businesses. Many places were called "Road Houses". People could stop for conversation, a meal, some music and culture, and even spend the night.

When Mr. Adler suggested roundabouts and showed their use in Europe, city staff debunked the idea and promoted traffic signals and fabricating lamp posts and other additions out of state rather than reuse and recycle the same materials right here in the Bay Area. Many council members and former city staff have relocated out of the area because the grass is always greener elsewhere. Few staff members choose to live here or shop here, but they know what is best for the rest of us. Oliver's Market wished to add at least eighteen million dollars of development and retail space next to the freeway, but are now choosing to expand elsewhere due to the city staff claiming they know best.

Joel and Ron, who carried on after Orrin slipped away into bankruptcy, may now be at odds with each other as business cannot stand idle. City staff is decades behind in final inspections and building permits but claims they know what is best for business. Outside consultants come and go, and disgruntled former employees like the Police Chief turned Healdsburg City Council person complain of back room deals and a lack

product of liberalism and leftist lunacy at least from an environmental perspective. Orlean's fourteen year old daughter expressed to her mother that after what she had been taught in school she wished that the homo sapiens species had never existed on the face of this earth. This is the crap, yes I said **CRAP**, into which our children are being indoctrinated. You want to know why youth suicide is so high, look no further than the good feelings and mental disposition being elicited by this type of depressive material. Now I have the urge to do some reading of textbooks to see what kids in our schools are being taught.

How about math where the problem is about loggers cutting trees. Instead of asking how many trees can be cut by a certain amount of people given a certain productivity rate, the question posed to the children is "how do you feel about all those trees being cut down?" Liberalism is far more than a mental disorder and, indeed, the lunatics are running the asylum.

Why am I telling you about all of this? While some "sheeple" are far ahead of other communities because of my exposure of these things, Cotati is just beginning to get the benefit of my insights. Protests are starting to be heard. The minority of control freaks must be met with a resistance that is the antipathy of what you have done all your lives. My father use to tell me "why can't you just go along to get along." My answer: "because when it is wrong, it is wrong". Everyone wants some one else to do it for them. Wait too long and you won't have the opportunity.

If you want solutions to some of these items, I suggest you start to think about what you can personally do. Ask to have your "smart meter" removed if that worries you. Ask the council to ban them in the city. Other cities have. Write letters to the editor or to your political leaders. Definitely vote those out who are not responsive to you.

This brings me home to your city, Cotati. Does your city council even think about any of this or know about it? Do they simply go along with the program, hoping for governmental handouts? Cotati is going nowhere thanks to Orchard, Gilardi, Harvey, and Landmine. The new guy is an empty suit. They are all more worried about screwing up your old downtown with unnecessary "roundabouts" than dealing with issues that affect your lives.

Change is difficult and especially so if you refuse to assess what your choices on the dais have endowed you with after their legislation. It is also why our government on a State and national level is so easily controlled by those who have money including the Soros led liberals. This is how the future "direction" of government is pushed. It is far better to have it decided by communities, counties, and States rather than a foreign one world government.

I have been called an "idea man", a person who deals with issues, rather than a "people person". Many of you think I am mean and nasty, which I can be when I am fighting for your rights and your freedoms which are also mine. I would say that the majority of you who harbor bad feelings toward me don't know me nor have ever met me. The ones who have met me and still have a problem with me, don't like the fact that they can't control me. Others who have met me know that I am entirely different in person. I am a people person or I wouldn't be doing this work for you.

One last thing you need to consider is that I have nothing to gain financially or politically from informing you of the facts. My investment in your community is through the friends I have made in Cotati. They know your local government is unbalanced, both mentally and in political alignment. You would think that the majority of you would understand that even if you don't like conservatism, you should at least hear the arguments from the other side. Obviously your political elite don't agree with this.

Luckily for you, you can change that at the ballot box this fall...



## Spring Thought Cleaning

By Eric Kirchmann  
Cotati

The date is May 15, 2012. I mention this as a newspaper that is a monthly has deadlines, and closing such that the paper comes out two weeks after an article is written or even a month after. It amazes me that often the Independent has "spill over" and information is reported by two or three different folks on the same subject. I do not have conversations or share articles with the editor or other reporters prior to submission and the editor has never asked me to change articles etc.

There are times when items are added to the paste up by that pictures and/or explanations are provided. I mention all this as the public assumes that there is far more collusion and conspiracy than exists. Is the paper slanted or yellow journalism? You decide. I do not see it as any more slanted than our local daily or our more local weekly. In a free society we allow for the unpopular opinions and ideas, or we should. Diversity is not a bad thing. Holding an unpopular idea is not a bad thing, it is what our country is and should be about. That this paper is at times critical is not the issue so much as is there merit to the criticism?

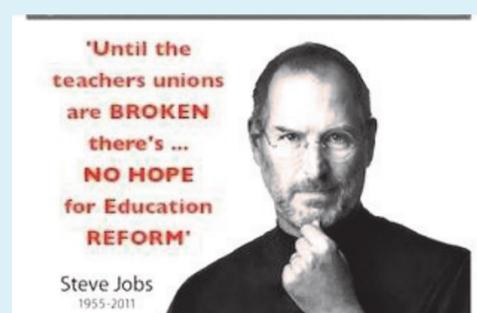
I have lived in Cotati since 1980 and have lived in the county since 1976, not as long as some, far longer than many, including city staff and council. Are things better? That is always the question. Things are different. Cotati claims to be a small town and not have chain stores. I guess you have to define chain stores. Burger King, Chevron, Valero, Peet's, Lowe's, H&R Block. Is a chain store more than one store or more than twenty? Is a shopping mall one store or more?

We have a LOWES, a standalone anchor store with no other store in the lot. The developer had no incentive to build any more retail there and the city has been slow growth on retail for decades. Retail is what makes sales tax a revenue stream. Retail brings and keeps jobs in the community. Sad to say but many

of transparency from our own Cotati City Manager. But these things pass, and we all accept things as they are.

A flag becomes a cause in our City Center Memorial Park and our late Mayor called Old Glory "that damned thing" and no one wonders where the flag went when someone — a gang or a team — took "the damned thing" the size of our Fire Station from our downtown without a trace. What people wondered was who would pay for the replacement and when the city failed to step up to the plate, an out-of-town interest took up the cause, yet again, and replaced the flag to where it now flies proudly. We have many symbols: a statue of a local accordion player, a mask of a Greek goddess across from a statue of a Pomo Chief.

Our police force sports a logo of our State seal rather than our local hub. Our city manager drives back and forth from her out of town residence in a foreign made car. People are used to it and say "so what" and "what is the big deal?" Things change and some stay the same. Traffic calming doesn't seem to work well in Cotati and the City excuses itself by saying it is "up to the drivers". We have money for sculpture but not "Old Glory"... We have money to spend on the Downtown Specific Plan and can then rethink this to the Roundabout Plan, but downtown remains blighted and the people who would have invested in our future are going elsewhere, so it goes... In the big scheme of things does it matter if a council member blocks your view of our flag during a salute? Blocking people's views is what the City is about. Vote for all the tax measures, we do have a legacy to leave future generations and we need to support them, we need to keep our fire services, we need to keep our community services, we need to support ourselves, and we better not ever dare to question management or the way things are or have become.



# Drivable Cotati

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE AND THINGS THAT MAKE THE DRIVING EXPERIENCE IN COTATI MORE ENJOYABLE AS WE CELEBRATE COTATI'S LONG LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE AUTOMOBILE, TRUCK AND MOTORCYCLE. WE BELIEVE WALKING CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH. SO, LIKE ANYTHING ELSE, WALKING SHOULD ONLY BE DONE IN MODERATION. DRIVING PROVIDES COMFORT AND SAFETY THAT WALKING SIMPLY CAN'T.



classic automobiles that are 25 years old or older. It just makes sense, according to Gina. Parts are readily available, and you don't pull up to a stoplight and see the same model, as is the case with many new cars.

The 1966 Mustang is "low tech" in many ways but gets the job done. No GPS, no airbags,



no anti-lock brakes, but best of all, it's exempt from smog emissions checkups because it was built before 1973. The DMV fees are less than \$100 a year, but are much higher now than they used to be because the state has raised their fees over the last few years.

Look for Gina's Mustang down at The Galley, 8099 La Plaza, Cotati in the mornings a few days a week. You can't miss it.

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

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



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

One of best ways to go green and lessen our dependence on foreign oil is to drive a classic automobile. According to a university study many years ago, it takes approximately 62 barrels of oil to design, build and bring a brand new automobile to market. It takes considerably less crude oil to keep a classic automobile

on the road and makes more economic sense for many people, especially if the car is parked most of the day and driven very little, or for short distances.

New car manufacturers kindly forget to reveal this fact when showing off their new models to potential customers. In cases when driving short distances a few times a week is your situation, it could take decades of driving a hybrid or electric vehicle to justify their high cost and the problem with disposing of their battery systems.

Cotati is full of folks who drive



older cars for that reason, and for the fact they just love how simple and beautiful the older cars are to drive and admire.

Gina McMorrow drives her 1966 Ford Mustang to work in

Cotati every day from her home in Sebastopol and just loves her Mustang. She purchased the car a few years ago and updated



many components and finished the car to her liking, and what a jewel it is. The car continues to turn heads wherever she takes it and increases in value with each passing year. Appreciation and low maintenance costs are one of the biggest reasons so many people have turned to driving



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## Cotati Planning Commission, May 7, 2012: "You can have your three poppies, but paint your barbecue hood black."

(From Page One)

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the findings of the Design Review Committee, and decided to allow Mezzetta's Deli on East Cotati Avenue to plant their three California Poppies exactly the way they wanted to.

As you can see from the report below, the matter of these poppies was pondered by city authorities in painstaking detail. But the speed at which they arrived at their pro-poppy position surprised veteran city hall watchers. The nice people at Mezzetta's filed their application to make minor upgrades to their property on November 3, 2011.

It practically flew through the Design Review Committee in only six months, and here, almost seven months to the day, the Planning Com-

mission is giving Mezzetta's permission to use their own money to make their own improvements to their own property. I think that is exactly what Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he wrote the words "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

### City sign ordinance makes life better for all of us

You might think that after counting the poppies, picking the color for the barbecue hood, and deciding that the umbrellas should be city-approved Sunbrella fabric in black with no logos, they would call it a day, but the Planning Commission works hard to elevate the quality of barbecue restaurant signage, so that no unsightly sign will offend you.

From the same report, city staff states "The existing fascia sign would be removed to accommodate the new awning, and the applicants intend to install the same size sign on the new awning. The awning and signage will require a subsequent building permit; staff would review the proposed sign for compliance with the sign ordinance prior to issuance of that permit."

This report does not state how long it will take city staff to ponder the new awning signage, write a report and submit it to the Design Review Committee and the Planning Commission. It does not also state how much the permit fees for this report will cost. But it is a good guess that entire housing developments in Texas



Site of the new patio: A monument to the speed of the Planning Commission



### 743 more California Poppies than Assistant City Planner Misti Harris says are acceptable

have been planned and approved in less time.

The Planning Commission also swore in their newest member, Wendy Skillman. Like the three seasoned members of the Commission, she agreed that the proposed improvements were a good thing. By her vote, she signified her approval of poppies, if used sparingly. As Ms. Skillman settles into her new role, we hope she will make future decisions with the same clarity, and reassure every citizen that the eyes looking over their shoulder at all times are just the eyes we want looking over our shoulders.

## Oregon norovirus traced to reusable grocery bag

Published May 10, 2012, Associated Press



(From Page One)

The authors are Kimberly Repp, epidemiologist for Washington County, and William Keene, senior epidemiologist with Oregon Public Health.

Norovirus causes about 21 million illnesses, 70,000 hospitalizations and 800 deaths a year in the United States. It caused 139 of 213 outbreaks of gastroenteritis in Oregon in 2010.

The germ can spread quickly in places like day care centers, nursing homes, and cruise ships.

Usually, it's transmitted by direct human contact, but can contaminate surfaces. Leafy greens, fresh fruits and shellfish are commonly involved in foodborne outbreaks.

An epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the work also shows how hardy the norovirus is and how difficult it is to control. "What this report does is it helps raise awareness of the complex and indirect way that norovirus can spread," said Aron Hall, an epidemiologist with the Division of Viral Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

His agency says the best way to fend off the virus is thorough hand-washing and cleaning contaminated surfaces with a bleach-based solution.

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2012/05/10/oregon-norovirus-traced-to-reusable-grocery-bag/#ixzz1uoBW8Ktv>



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# Cotati Follies

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

Only in Cotati do they hand out diplomas for surviving hours of barhopping downtown on a school night. Cheryl Nixon, owner of Friar Tucks in Cotati,



is taking higher education to a new level by handing out diplomas to her "paying" customers who want them. *I think an award for anyone surviving the food served at Friar Tucks might be more appropriate.* The Cotati Crawl, which was named for how college students make their way back to SSU after a Thursday night of partying heavily downtown in Cotati, has been the subject of much debate for the city council and the police department, who for years have had to deal with citizen complaints of excessive noise, vandalism, and urinating in public from those exiting the bars. The late Mayor Bob Coleman suggested imposing a 25-cent fee on every alcoholic drink sold in Cotati to cover some of the city's expenses, only to find out that enacting any such fees was not only illegal but very unpopular with local business owners who felt if the city could do that, nothing would stop them.

*Can you feel the love?* The owner of this lovely bus hopes so. Seen parked around Cotati, City Manager Thompson



refused to do anything about the numerous complaints lodged against this bus parked in front of homes and businesses in town. Maybe Thompson sees it as just a rolling A-board sign, and we need more love in Cotati.

At the May 9th city council meeting some sincere young greenies from the 350 Home and Garden Challenge (which aims to reduce CO2 in the atmosphere) shared a number of environmentally friendly ways to reduce our energy use. There was the predictable stuff about clotheslines and composting, but no fresh ideas. So, during the meeting, I thought of *five new ways to save energy* that probably haven't occurred to these people:

1. Instead of wasteful natural gas, fry your bacon with the solar heat from a

- magnifying glass.
- Why use toxic gun bluing? Coat the barrel of your .45 with used motor oil.
- Want better gas mileage? Take the muffler off your car.
- Save lawnmower gasoline this summer: just put goats on that dry lawn.
- Don't buy expensive cat litter: use shredded city council agendas.



Oliver's Market and Cotati Coffee contributed refreshments to this Energizer Station at La Plaza Park on May 10th, National Ride a Bike to Work Day. I asked these folks how successful the day had been, and Planning Commissioner Ben Ford, (left) claimed they got 42 signatures from people bicycling through town in two hours. That's pretty good even considering Old Red' gets over 2,400 vehicle trips an hour up and down that street. At this rate, who knows, in our lifetime bicyclists commuting to work on a bright sunny day in Cotati might reach 1% or better.

*We have a winner from last month's tequila bottle contest.* Within 24 hours, we received many emailed responses correctly identifying the mystery tequila bottle as coming from Mi Pueblito, and have sent the winner his \$25 gift certificate to Mi Pueblito.



Here is this month's challenge: *Tell us which Cotati business has this item, and win a \$25 gift certificate to the Redwood Café, a Cotati favorite.* Is this harder than last month's contest? Yep. We think the more time you spend exploring Cotati and sampling what its businesses have to offer, the better.

Same rules apply: Email all entries to: editor@thecotatiindependent.com. First correct answer wins. Employees or families of the establishment in question are not eligible.

## Phunky Phunn & Positive Thoughts



What's with the big lips? Do big puffy injected lips appeal to you? Some women are going too far with the botox and other fillers. After observing some reality shows and attending certain events in the community, lips have become the boobs of yesteryear. Enhanced lips even give speech impediments. While listening to someone speak, all you see are the huge puffy lips moving. Have you ever imagined what it feels like to be kissing those humongous and grossly shaped labials? Just because the Hollywood crowd has gotten to the point where they can't smile anymore, because of too many injections, doesn't mean they should be copied. Some females that have the enhanced lips can stand on one side of the room and suck from a lemon on the other side of the room. Besides lips, why do ladies that have long hair extensions keep stroking it like a pet? They want people to think it is their very own hair but when they stroke it just makes people stare more. Come on ladies, isn't there any pride left in a natural look? Just because God made plastic surgeons and hair salons doesn't mean you have to constantly make use of those products. Do you ever people watch at the mall? The natural gals can do other things besides glance in mirrors and windows and check out their lips or play with their fake hair.

Phunky Phunn

*The views of this column do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.*



## Cooking with Megan Cromwell



### Lentil Stew

This recipe came from a "what do I have on hand to make a delicious, nutritious vegetarian dinner" moment. I am one of those people that stalks the bulk foods section at Oliver's Market to check out what kind of goodies are there. It's a great way to try new foods without having to buy a huge package of something if I don't like it. One day I decided, "Hey, Lentils are pretty; I think I'll buy some," even though the couple times I had lentils they were pretty lame. So, they sat in my cupboard for a couple months (they're dried -- they're not gonna waste away) until tonight.

Makes 6 one cup servings.



- 1 cup of lentils - I mixed green and red together
- 6 cups of vegan chicken stock, vegetable stock, or regular chicken stock
- 1/4 cup dehydrated onions or 1/2 cup fresh minced white onion
- 3 to 6 oz. tomato paste: Whole Foods' 365 brand tube is perfect
- 1 15oz. can diced peeled tomatoes (no salt added)
- 4 to 8 oz. frozen chopped spinach
- 1 12 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup water if needed

- All Spices to Taste:
- 3-6 Tbs cumin (I like mine a little more bitter)
  - 2 Tbs garlic powder
  - 1 Tbs onion powder
  - 1-2 Tbs mild yellow curry powder
  - cayenne pepper to taste
  - sea salt to taste, if needed

1) Bring the stock to a boil. Add dehydrated onions and lentils, and garlic and onion powders, and cook on high for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium.

2) Add the tomato paste, spinach, and can of tomatoes with the juice. Stir in the cumin and curry powder, starting with a moderate amount; you can always add more seasoning. If you overseason, you can add more water and let the soup reduce down. Let cook covered over medium heat for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

The lentils for this dish are best after they take on the texture of cooked black beans. It also gives them time to soak up the flavors of the spices and tomato base. Keep tasting as you stir. Add more cumin, curry, and salt if needed. Also watch the liquid. The lentils are greedy and will soak up a lot of the liquid, but it will also evaporate from cooking, so if it starts to look like a paste instead of a stewy-soup, you need to add water or broth.

3) Top with a dallop of greek-yoghurt or sour cream, and enjoy! I'm also eating mine with a side of Mediterranean pita, warmed up with a little olive oil in a hot pan -- but any crusty Italian or Mediterranean type bread would be delicious with this soup.

4) For you carnivores, mini-meatballs, small bits of greek flavored chicken sausage, left-over lamb, goat, pork, or some shredded chicken would work well in this stew-soup.

(FYI: It's also good at room temperature! I know cuz it got cold while I was typing this!)

FYI #2 : This is great for people dieting or on low-glycemic diets; the fiber and protein counts in lentils are astronomical, the lycopene from the tomatoes is cancer fighting, and there's no fat because we didn't sautee or fry anything. Ok ok, so the sour cream or yoghurt add some fat, but you don't HAVE to put it on.

Blog: <http://megarasmunchies.blogspot.com/>

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## Letters to the Editor

Email: [editor@thecotatiindependent.com](mailto:editor@thecotatiindependent.com)

Dear Editor,

As a former resident of Cotati, I still like to keep up with the local news and find your newspaper to be very informative. I want to thank you for your contribution to this little city as I still have friends who live there. Cotati appears to be another Bell, California. I feel that there is corruption and out of control spending. Roundabouts are an idiotic example. I am praying that the city council running this scam can be thrown out. Please find my donation enclosed and I would like to remain anonymous.

Anonymous,  
Petaluma, CA

Dear Editor,

Just finished reading your paper. Probably the one I've enjoyed most so far. Excellent story on Dan Murphy. Let's get rid of French and Parish, and you and Dan open up your own Investigative Business??? I know many citizens would prefer that to what we have now. You really made my day informing me of Marsha Sue's departure. The only other departure that made me happier was when Dennis Dorch left. The stories from the citizens are so true, all you get is lip service. As you may recall, I once emailed you regarding \$75,000.00 worth of jewelry I had stolen from my home. When it was clear that no investigation was happening, I contacted Parish, and he did the same thing he did to Murphy, "passed the buck" and didn't want to deal with it. When I complained to you, you suggested I go before Council, but I already knew that was a waste of time. (At one time, I never missed a council meeting, twice a month for 2-3 years.) I was on several Task Forces, and a Director on the Chamber of Commerce, back then, the Cotati Chamber was self sufficient and operated without city money. I know who the thief is, who burglarized me, who his accomplices are, and none of them were ever even questioned. I recently contacted the police, and told them I had proof, even gave them the name of the 4th street "Broker" where the jewelry was taken for sale, and a copy of the traffic ticket the thief got while there. This individual is in jail every weekend, and he's on Cocaine, but do you think they'd ever do a random drug test???? The police have gone to his residence twice, and couldn't see the Bongs, the Glass pipes, weed, mirror, razor blade, etc., He recently stole the license plates off someone's car, Sgt. Chris Parker came out, made him take the plates off the car, and didn't even arrest him. This guy is smarter than the police, and even they know he's a thief, but nothing ever happens to him. Two years ago, he would sit up at Howarth Park, and would wait for joggers and hikers to leave their vehicles and then break into them. He's in jail on weekends

for traffic violations, can you believe it? And even when you give them all the information gift wrapped and placed in their lap, they do nothing!!! So yes, we Seniors are pissed off ! Seniors Unite; Murphy needs to get his own agency so we have some-one we can go to. Well, I've griped enough for one day, Keep up the stories. Everyone needs to know how this City has gone downhill. I've been here since Les Wasko was Chief, and boy have I seen the changes. (And I can't tell you how many city managers) And frankly, none of them were worth a "pinch of salt). They all seem to have the same type of mentality.

Pat Goodsell,  
Cotati

Dear Editor,

Dennis Anderson claims he has lived in Cotati for thirty years and appears serious about running for a seat on the Cotati City Council, according to his facebook page. The legal deadline for declaring to run for Cotati City Council is late July. Yet, Dennis refuses to reveal whether he is a Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative, independent, Occupy Cotati supporter, or TEA Party activist. He isn't telling, or maybe hasn't made up his mind. Since he won't tell me his party affiliation, I can't begin to make an intelligent decision to support him or not. Any ideas? Is this another sign of the lack of transparency in some candidates, or a joke?

Can we get potential candidates to come clean as to what they plan to do about Cotati, or are they just teasing us with their charm and take us for fools? I'm looking to support qualified candidates in Cotati, and Dennis has shown some interest in running, but who is he politically? Will he decide to come under the scrutiny of the community by showing his true colors and give us citizens some "hope and change" we can believe in? Will Mr. Anderson begin to at least start attending the city council meetings and join the rest of us who seriously care about Cotati and its future. Or will Anderson be another Forest Galt like in 2002 who ran for city council who couldn't find the bathroom at City Hall, and after he lost, we never saw him at City Hall again?

Concerned in Cotati

Dear Editor,

When I read the article about councilman Landman and his refusal to allow others to see the flag, all I could think was: "An elected official who doesn't listen to his constituents.... He's PERFECT for CONGRESS!"

Bev Hammond,  
Cotati

Dear Editor:

Reading so many negative letters and articles about the Cotati Police Department I cannot help defending the Department in regard to one important aspect of their service. Whenever I leave the house on a vacation I register my property with the CPD as part of their "Vacation House Inspection" program.



## Tips on How to Keep Burglars Away

**1. Of course I look familiar. I was here just last week cleaning your carpets, painting your shutters, or delivering your new refrigerator.**

**2. Hey, thanks for letting me use the bathroom when I was working in your yard last week. While I was in there, I unlatched the back window to make my return a little easier.**

**3. Love those flowers. That tells me you have taste... and taste means there are nice things inside. Those yard toys your kids leave out always make me wonder what type of gaming system they have.**

**4. Yes, I really do look for newspapers piled up on the driveway. And I might leave a pizza flyer in your front door to see how long it takes you to remove it..**

**5. If it snows while you're out of town, get a neighbor to create car and foot tracks into the house. Virgin drifts in the driveway are a dead giveaway.**

**6. If decorative glass is part of your front entrance, don't let your alarm company install the control pad where I can see if it's set. That makes it too easy.**

**7. A good security company alarms the window over the sink. And the windows on the second floor, which often access the master bedroom - and your jewelry. It's not a bad idea to put motion detectors up there too.**

**8. It's raining, you're fumbling with your umbrella, and you forget to lock your door - understandable. But understand this: I don't take a day off because of bad weather.**

**9. I always knock first. If you answer, I'll ask for directions somewhere or offer to clean your gutters. (Don't take me up on it.)**

**10. Do you really think I won't look in your sock drawer? I always check dresser drawers, the bedside table, and the medicine cabinet.**

**11. Here's a helpful hint: I almost never go into kids' rooms.**

**12. You're right: I won't have enough time to break into that safe where you keep your valuables. But if it's not bolted down, I'll take it with me.**

**13. A loud TV or radio can be a better deterrent than the best alarm system. If you're reluctant to leave your TV on while you're out of town, you can buy a \$35 device that works on a timer and simulates the flickering glow of a real television. (Find it at <http://www.faketv/...com/>)**

### 8 MORE THINGS A BURGLAR WON'T TELL YOU :

**1. Sometimes, I carry a clipboard. Sometimes, I dress like a lawn guy and carry a rake. I do my best to never, ever look like a crook.**

**2. The two things I hate most: loud dogs and nosy neighbors.**

**3. I'll break a window to get in, even if it makes a little noise. If your neighbor hears one loud sound, he'll stop what he's doing and wait to hear it again. If he doesn't hear it again, he'll just go back to what he was doing. It's human nature.**

**4. I'm not complaining, but why would you pay all that money for a fancy alarm system and leave your house without setting it?**

**5. I love looking in your windows. I'm looking for signs that you're home, and for flat screen TVs or gaming systems I'd like. I'll drive or walk through your neighborhood at night, before you close the blinds, just to pick my targets.**

**6. Avoid announcing your vacation on your Facebook page. It's easier than you think to look up your address.**

**7. To you, leaving that window open just a crack during the day is a way to let in a little fresh air. To me, it's an invitation.**

**8. If you don't answer when I knock, I try the door. Occasionally, I hit the**

Last year, I went away for 10 days and an officer had been inspecting the place nearly every day. I would receive a list of the inspection after my return with the dates, time and name of the officer. I have not heard that other cities in this area offer that service. Let's be fair.

Hiram Aguirre, Cotati

jackpot and walk right in.

Sources: Convicted burglars in North Carolina, Oregon, California, and Kentucky; security consultant Chris McGoey, who runs <http://www.crimedocter.com/> and Richard T. Wright, a criminology professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who interviewed 105 burglars for his book *Burglars on the Job*.

Protection for you and your home:

If you don't have a gun, here's a more humane way to wreck someone's evil plans for you.. (I guess I can get rid of the baseball bat.):

### WASP SPRAY

A friend who is a receptionist in a church in a high risk area was concerned about someone coming into the office on Monday to rob them when they were counting the collection. She asked the local police department about using pepper spray and they recommended to her that she get a can of wasp spray instead.

The wasp spray, they told her, can shoot up to twenty feet away and is a lot more accurate, while with the pepper spray, they have to get too close to you and could overpower you. The wasp spray temporarily blinds an attacker until they get to the hospital for an antidote. She keeps a can on her desk in the office and it doesn't attract attention from people like a can of pepper spray would. She also keeps one nearby at home for home protection. Thought this was interesting and might be of use.

### FROM ANOTHER SOURCE....

On the heels of a break-in and beating that left an elderly woman in Toledo dead, self-defense experts have a tip that could save your life.

Val Glinka teaches self-defense to students at Sylvania Southview High School. For decades, he's suggested putting a can of wasp and hornet spray near your door or bed.

Glinka says, "This is better than anything I can teach them."

Glinka considers it inexpensive, easy to find, and more effective than mace or pepper spray. The cans typically shoot 20 to 30 feet; so if someone tries to break into your home, Glinka says, "spray the culprit in the eyes". It's a tip he's given to students for decades. It's also one he wants everyone to hear. If you're looking for protection, Glinka says look to the spray.

"That's going to give you a chance to call the police; maybe get out." Maybe even save a life.

Put your car keys beside your bed at night.

Tell your spouse, your children, your neighbors, your parents, your Dr.'s office, the check-out girl at the market, everyone you run across. Put your car keys beside your bed at night.

If you hear a noise outside your home or someone trying to get in your house, just press the panic button for your car. The alarm will be set off, and the horn will continue to sound until either you turn it off or the car battery dies. This tip came from a neighborhood watch coordinator. Next time you come home for the night and you start to put your keys away, think of this: It's a security alarm system that you probably already have and requires no installation. Test it. It will go off from most everywhere inside your house and will keep honking until your battery runs down or until you reset it with the button on the key fob chain. It works if you park in your driveway or garage. If your car alarm goes off when someone is trying to break into your house, odds are the burglar/rapist won't stick around. After a few seconds all the neighbors will be looking out their windows to see who is out there and sure enough the criminal won't want that. And remember to carry your keys while walking to your car in a parking lot. The alarm can work the same way there. This is something that should really be shared with everyone. Maybe it could save a life or a sexual abuse crime.

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## The Good, the Bad, and the Inedible



the Bad,



and the Inedible



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

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

Visit my blog: [www.goodbadinedible.com](http://www.goodbadinedible.com)



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

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

### Wild Goat Bistro - California Grill

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**Category:** Slow-cook food and pizza

Daily: **L - D**

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Fri-Sat 11:30am - 9:30pm

Sun 11:30am - 8:30pm

**Specialty:** Pizza & House-made Desserts  
Indoor and Outdoor Patio Seating

Beer & Wine

\*\*\*\* \$\$\$\$



For such a small, 850 square foot space with inside seating for only 35, this restaurant runs like a well-oiled machine. The wait staff is well trained in the art of service, and they know the menu and the wines being offered well. Helpful but not intrusive service is the mark of a well-run restaurant, enhancing the dining experience.

Restaurant names fascinate me, and I like learning how a name is chosen. In this case, especially when the owner is a vegetarian and the name refers to meat! "Well, that was simple," the owner, Nancy DeLorenzo explained. The space Wild Goat Bistro occupies in the Old Petaluma Mill was a former meat storage locker for a local butcher. Not sure where the wild part fits in, but it works for me.

Nancy is also very interesting, having started on her culinary journey at the tender age of 12 years old, working at a relative's pizzeria in New Jersey. Between then and now, she has worked both in the kitchen and in the front of the house for large corporations like Neiman Marcus and Bullock's in So Cal, as well as smaller venues like helping to open Graffiti across the street from The Wild Goat in Petaluma. Very much a part of the California organic, sustainable, farm-to-table movement, the ingredients she uses are always locally sourced. Upon request, breads, pizza crusts and pasta can be ordered "gluten-free."

The menu is a small and large plate format with meat, fish, chicken, salads, pizzas and luscious looking desserts. Large plates for dinner only and sandwiches for lunch. We came for dinner with another couple on our first visit and decided on **Slow Pork-Braised Pork Shanks** (\$17.50 \*\*\*\*\*) with simmered tomatoes & garbanzo beans, Spanish Chorizo and Mediterranean spices. Very tasty. **Cobb-Grilled Chicken Salad** (\$7.75 small - \$12.75 large \*\*\*) is an excellent starter or main course salad with apple wood smoked bacon, chopped egg, avocado and creamy blue cheese dressing. **Cider Poached King Salmon** (\$18.50 \*\*\*\*\*) with sautéed honey crisp apples, rosemary and thyme. Cooked perfectly and flavored well by the use of apples and herbs.

Sandwiches (served for lunch only) offer gluten-free breads as an optional choice from local artisan bakers and range from a **Petaluma Burger** (\$9.25) **Niman Ranch** Angus beef with aioli; **Wild Mushroom Sando** (\$9.25) Swiss chard, roasted bell peppers, artichokes, fontina, aioli and black truffle salt; **Herb Smoked Turkey Breast** (\$8.50) Provolone, baby greens, tomato and aioli; and an **Albacore Tuna Sando** (\$8.75) with sun-dried tomatoes, capers, basil, celery, olive oil and lemon juice, to name a few.

Nancy's Italian heritage and earlier pizzeria experience, coupled with her frequent trips to Tuscany, have guided her well with nine offerings of **Neapolitan Style Pizzas**. I want to come back to try one of these beauties with the thin, thin crust. They looked and smelled won-

derful passing by our table!

Dinner over, it was time to sample some of those desserts I had been staring at all through our meal. The photo really does say it all. Gorgeous, mouth-watering and very tempting. We tried four. Well, there were four of us dining. Why not? **German Chocolate Cake**, **Lemon Cake**, **Cappuccino Ice Cream Pie** and **Carrot Cake**. The German Chocolate was the best I can recall eating, and was made by one of the wait staff from her grandmother's family recipe. Melted in your mouth. However, the Cappuccino Ice Cream Pie was running close behind, and the Lemon Cake was as light as air. All of the cakes are displayed in pretty glass cake stands on the counter in front of the kitchen. I dare anyone not to order at least one.

**Get Thee to Wild Goat Bistro in Petaluma** and see if you can eat just one dessert! After you eat your supper, of course.

Wine Notes: Excellent offerings of very unusual wines from all over California. If you need help ask the staff as I did. They are very knowledgeable.

### GTO's Seafood House

234 South Main Street / Sebastopol  
707-824-9922

Hours: **D only**

Tue - Thu 5pm - 9pm

Fri - Sat 5pm - 9:30pm

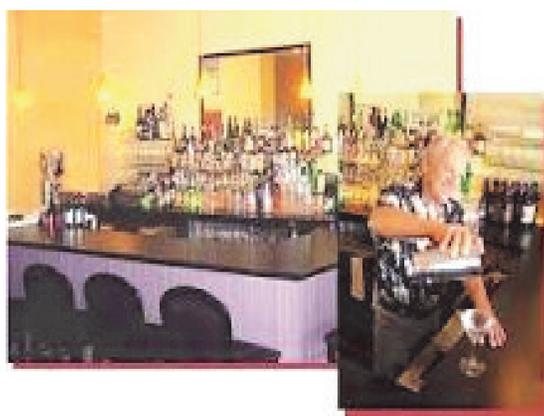
**Specialty:** New England Clam Chowder  
Full Bar -

Happy Hour Tue-Sat 4:30pm-6:30pm

\*\* \$\$\$\$

I had been wanting to try this 11-year old restaurant in Sebastopol for some time. The restaurant is owned and operated by a local couple, Gene and Tess Ostopowicz; hence the name, GTO's.

This is a smallish restaurant and since our visit was close to 8:30 pm on a Tuesday evening, we decided to eat at the bar. You can learn a lot about a place seated at the bar talking to the bartender or sometimes, the owner. In this case, it was the owner, Gene.



It always makes me wonder why restaurants do not take the time to train staff that the most important thing they can do when new or old customers come in is to greet them. Even if you are busy, tired, or both, recognize someone and let them know you know they are there. Gene must have forgotten this as he left, came back, then left his station behind the bar again. We sat there for nearly 15 minutes, which seemed like an eternity without a drink before anyone said a word to us. Not a good start. Finally, Gene came back and asked for our drink order.

Drinks in hand, we turned our focus to the menu. Hubby was hungry, so he wanted a dinner-size meal while I was more interested in sampling several starters, hoping to get a good sampling of their food.

First up for me, **Clam Chowder - New England Style** (\$8 \*\*\*\*\*) served nice and hot with lots and lots of fresh clams. Seasoned with thyme, this was a very good rendition. Next, **Four Prawn Cocktail** (\$8 \*) house boiled prawns served with GTO's famous cocktail sauce. Served in a traditional Martini glass, the prawns were too small to look appropriate for the stemware. I would suggest upgrading to jumbo prawns, or serve the smaller ones on a plate. Cocktail sauce was good. Next, **Fried Calamari** (\$11 \*\*) with Chipotle lime dipping sauce. Not to be picky but, the dish was over-fried and the fish came out on the tough side. They also tasted like the breading had cornmeal in it?

Last for me, **Fresh Dungeness Crab Cakes** (\$13 \*\*) with lemon thyme aioli sauce. Again, the cakes were over-fried and this time, very dark in color — almost burnt — leaving little of the delicate flavor.

Hubby's order was **Fish & Chips** (\$14 \*\*\*) battered cod, house-made tartar sauce, with choice of regular French fries or garlic fries. This was an okay example of the dish; nothing special or exciting.

Overall, I would say there is a tired atmosphere at GTO's and a genuine lack of interest. A kind of "it's good enough" feeling. Too bad. It could be so much more.

### Forchetta - Italian & Brick Oven Pizza

6948 Sebastopol Road / Sebastopol  
707-829-9500

**Category:** Italian Neo-Rustico and Brick Oven

PizzaHours: 5pm - 9pm Thu - Mon **D only**

**Sun Brunch** 11:30am - 4pm

Closed: Tue - Wed

Full Bar

Off Street Parking Lot

\*\*\*\* \$\$\$\$



Two restaurants under the same roof with three chefs? One for the Italian, one for the Thai and one for the **Pizza oven!** Forchetta/Bastoni is the full name (forks and sticks in Italiano). Bastoni is patterned after a Thai noodle bar. Pizza is pizza in anyone's language! Both restaurants are in the former Pizzavino 707 space in front of the Sebastopol Plaza where the parking lot is located. Bastoni has the added patio area for warm weather dining, while Forchetta is facing Sebastopol Road. Entrance to both restaurants is through the plaza area.

This review is for Forchetta only, because even though both restaurants reside under the same roof and are only separated by the immense brick pizza oven, you cannot sit in one side and order food from the other....mildly disappointing as that would seem to be the purpose. but for now, about the only way to sample both cuisines is to start at the bar with a cocktail or glass of wine, which is on the Bastoni side and sample some of the five starters. From \$8 - \$12 per order offering curry rice balls, wings, meatballs, naam plate, and Thai beef salad. Or return another time, as I plan to do.

The interior of Forchetta is eclectic and charming. Old-world brick walls, booths and tables made from salvaged doors and a large, innovative/modern chandelier centerpiece made by a local artist, to wall scones made from old wine bottles. Tables are topped with butcher paper and utensils are in a mason jar. Napkins are actually dish towels! Funky chic? I thought so.

After an excellent cocktail, the amiable bartender told us why guests can't pick and choose from both cuisines: "Because Italian dishes take much longer to prepare". That's technically accurate, but all the more reason for some pre-dinner grazing on the Thai side while you wait for your Italian dinner.

But let's not be picky. We came for an Italian dinner. The menu was inviting and short. Displaying four **Antipasti** (starters); four **Verdi** (greens or, salads); four **Pasta/Risotto**; three **Pizzas**; three **Al Forno/Alla Griglia** (from the oven and from the grill); and three **Dolci** (desserts). My kind of menu, uncomplicated. However, that does not describe the dishes within this. This chef takes basic Italian cooking to new heights, with his imaginative ingredients like: Verdi: **Insalata Mista** (\$9\*\*\*\*) daily greens with radish, Pt Reyes blue cheese, olio nuovo and 3-yr old Balsamico vinegar. This is a simple salad but, oh so easy to overdress and ruin the dish. Definite restraint was used with the dressing, making this one of the better mixed green salads I have had in a while.

Secondo: **Risotto di Giorno** (\$22\*\*\*\*\*) made fresh daily with whatever ingredients look good to the chef. Today, Chanterelles & Oyster mushrooms with bone marrow and crispy fried prosciutto. OMG! If you have read my review of Stark's Steakhouse in Santa Rosa, you will recall my fondness for bone marrow. This dish was incredibly good. Rice cooked perfectly al dente (to the tooth) with excellent flavor and color.

Pizza Course: **Pizza Salsiccia** (\$16\*\*\*\*) house-made sausage with pickled peppers and Fontina cheese. Thin, thin, thin crust and ample toppings without smothering the pizza. Very tasty. We boxed up half to take home and continued on our culinary quest.

Primo: **Quaglie alla Griglia** (\$22\*\*\*\*\*) grilled quail with risotto cake, cherry agra dolce. Wonderfully flavorful dish and the small quail was cooked right to retain its juiciness. The cherry sauce complimented the game perfectly. **Sardine alla Griglia** (\$22\*\*\*\*\*) Monterrey sardines (large) with roasted romanesco broccoli and potato salad with mustard. I have not seen large sardines prepared this way outside of Italy! This may not be everyone's fish dish as it is a strong flavor; not fishy, just robust. The potato salad with house-made mustard went well with the fish. Roasted veggies always bring out more flavor, and this preparation had romanesco as well. Excellent dish. Dolci: **Torte Limone** (\$8\*\*\*\*) house-made Meyer lemon tart. Perfect ending.

I highly recommend this restaurant for a pizza or a full blown Italian feast. **Get Thee to Forchetta** for some rustic Italian cooking

*Until next time, bon appétit!*

# The Many Tentacles of “Sustainability”



By Carol Tomlinson

This month (June) the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will take place ([www.uncsd2012.org/rio20](http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20)). The conference, dubbed Rio+20, has a goal – their mandate – of creating a global vision for the next 20 years. Another goal is to push for speedy implementation and action of the vision they have created. The question is just what are they envisioning for all of us.

Exactly what is sustainability and sustainable development? It sounds great – making sure that what we do now will not endanger future generations. “Sustainable” is certainly one of the current buzzwords we hear all the time and it has become the organizing principle around which government agencies, educational institutions, and world governments are restructuring. It is the way others now judge our activities and behaviors – sustainable behavior is acceptable, non-sustainable behavior is not.

Sustainability applies to every facet of human life. Maurice Strong was the Secretary General of the first U.N. Conference on the Environment and the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development that produced Agenda 21, the Climate Change Treaty, and the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity. In his opening speech to the attendees of the U.N. Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 he said:

“Current lifestyles and consumption patterns of the affluent middle class – involving high meat intake, the use of fossil fuels, electrical

appliances, home and work air-conditioning, and suburban housing – are not sustainable.”

The Global Biodiversity Assessment has identified agriculture, automobiles, industrial technology in general, and energy and chemical production in particular, as unsustainable. Sustainable agriculture uses no man-made fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, no hybrid seed stock or livestock, and only low-input technology (that which requires no fossil fuel). Can you say mule, horse, oxen, wife, kids? “Traditional” agriculture is described as communities of indigenous (primitive) people who raise their own food without the influence of modern technology. Sounds like American agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

If you spend a little time Googling, you will find this information online. Agenda 21 is a real document – you can read it online ([www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/)). However, great care is taken to hide references to Agenda 21 from the public. To quote J. Gary Lawrence, an advisor to the President’s Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) that was established by an executive order signed by President Clinton in 1993:

“Participating in a UN advocated planning process would very likely bring out many of the conspiracy-fixated groups and individuals in our society....This segment of our society who fear ‘one world government’ and a UN invasion of the United States through which our individual freedom would be stripped away would actively work to defeat any elected official who joined ‘the conspiracy’ by undertaking LA21 (Local Agenda 21). *So, we call our processes something else, such as comprehensive planning, growth management or smart growth.*”

We have heard a great deal about smart growth at a local or state level. Think One Bay Area Plan. But the “comprehensive planning, growth management, or smart growth” goes far beyond local or state levels. Think EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). The National Academies of Science (NAS) has published a detailed study called “Sustainability and the U.S. EPA” (aka the “Green Book”). Here are some excerpts:

“The (UN’s World Commission on Environment and Development) called upon the UN General Assembly to transform its (1987) report into a global action plan for sustainable development. The nations of the world did precisely that at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, or ‘Earth Summit’, in Rio de Janeiro. These nations, including the United States, endorsed a global sustainable development action plan, known as Agenda 21, and a set of 27 principles for sustainable development, called the Rio Declaration. Together, these agreements modify the definition of development by adding a third pillar – environmental protection and restoration – to the economic and social pillars of development.”

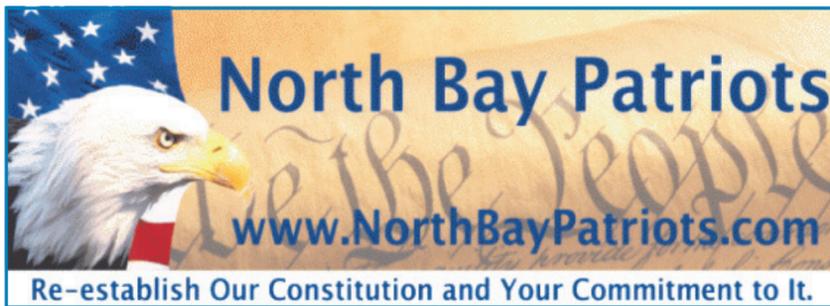
“First, the committee recommends the EPA formally adopt as its sustainability paradigm the “Three Pillars’ approach of ‘Social’,

‘Environment’, and ‘Economic’ dimensions of sustainability.

“Sustainability impact assessment is used to analyze the probable effects of a particular project or proposal on the social, environmental, and economic pillars of sustainability.”

Thus the NAS “Green Book” is positioning the EPA to become the premier federal agency for implementing Agenda 21 in the U.S. Let’s go back to Maurice Strong’s comment quoted earlier in this article. You don’t have to work too hard to see how much downward pressure a sustainability-oriented EPA could put on our standard of living. Such an EPA would aspire to regulate virtually every aspect of our lives, thereby completely destroying our freedom and prosperity. An EPA based on an operational framework of sustainability would be far worse than the current EPA that is already guilty of vastly over-regulating us.

You can see that while we focus on our local planning and smart growth issues, the impetus for them really comes from a U.N global vision for the future of everyone on the planet. It is their vision that seeks to determine our lifestyles, our freedoms (or lack thereof) and our prosperity far into the future.



## “Earth-sustaining” FrogSong Community offends neighbors with noise, manure, and flies from 20 chickens

Story and opinion by Greg Karraker

(Cotati, CA) As you drive into town on Old Redwood Highway from the south, the simple, Crayola-colored red and yellow buildings of the FrogSong Cohousing Community are one of the first things you see. Most people know little about these cutesy little buildings, except that they have a number of different small businesses on the ground floor and some kind of living space above.

It’s called the FrogSong Cohousing Community, and they are poster children for almost everything that is wrong with Cotati. Since FrogSong was built in 2003, it has been a favorite of the Cotati city council and staff.

One of FrogSong’s better-known members is Ben Ford, who serves on the Cotati Planning Commission, and who was unsuccessfully nominated to a vacant position on the city council by Mark Landman.

The “sustainable urban lifestyle” embraced by FrogSong is featured prominently in the Cotati Downtown Specific Plan, which is based on the assumption that the ideal way for all humans to live is directly above a pizza shop.

From the FrogSong website, they claim to “practice and promote recycling and organic agriculture. We provide clotheslines and composting facilities. We buy hybrid vehi-

cles and harvest solar energy.” They also have a vision statement that sounds like it was written by a whole committee, or “consented”, as they say. Which explains a lot; it was written by a whole committee.

We’ll get to the real chicken manure in a minute, but first, an important piece of background. One of FrogSong’s tenants is Little New Yorker Pizza. In a college town, the owners would like to stay open till 2:30 AM. Unfortunately, **both the former and current owners have been forced to close their pizza shop at 9PM because the noise of a pizza shop just didn’t fit the FrogSong vision of living in a transformed world.** As a result, Little New Yorker is forced to sell their after-hours pizza to Spancky’s Bar down the street and forfeit a percentage of their income in the process.

### Manure in a joyful community: the gritty details

Cut to the Cotati city council meeting on Wednesday May 9, 2012. During Citizen’s Business, a sane, well-dressed, visibly upset Cotati couple lodged a complaint. They live on McGinnis Lane, immediately next door to one of the FrogSong buildings. As her husband stood at her side, the woman said that her neighbors keep 20 chickens just a



few feet from her home. Her husband took out a tape recorder and played the noisy squawking of FrogSong’s chickens, which he said starts every day at 5 AM. Worse, the wife said the large pile of manure leaches directly into Cotati Creek, and that in warm weather, the smell and the flies are unbearable. When you read the vision statement below, taken directly from the FrogSong website, **the words smell, flies, and unbearable are conspicuously absent.**

The offended neighbor said that they have been complaining to FrogSong about this unhealthy nuisance for over two years. Getting no satisfaction, they complained to the city in July, 2011. Last October, FrogSong promised to move the chickens, but since they “consent” all their decisions, the chickens and their “compost pile” have not moved an inch. When I interviewed the homeowner on her front porch recently, a number of flies buzzed around our conversation. (Also, where there are chickens, there are usually rats nearby.)

When she addressed the council, she was near tears. As I recall, she said, **“I just want to be able to open my windows this summer instead of hiding in my own house.”**

In responding to this complaint, I have never seen city staff spring into action so quickly, doubtless because reporters from two different newspapers were at the meeting, where this dirty laundry was hung out for all to see.

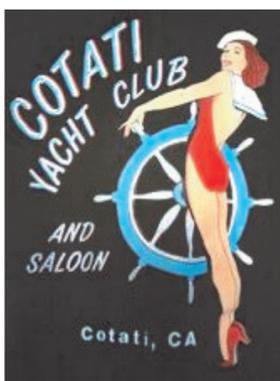
Almost immediately, Community Development Director Vicki Parker had sequestered the aggrieved wife away in her office, and could be seen talking with her and gesturing animatedly. Her husband stood outside the locked door, and launched into a white-hot rant about how impossible FrogSong is to have as neighbors, and how totally indifferent both FrogSong and the city had been about their complaints up to this minute.

This reporter attempted to contact Laurie-Ann Barbour, the FrogSong resident who is allegedly in charge of the chickens, and asked for her side of the story, but predictably, there has been no answer.

What will happen next? The city makes a podcast of its council meetings available to the public. But the first 40 minutes of the most recent meeting, including the neighbors’ complaint, is “missing due to technical issues.” Does that sound like Watergate? Is the city covering up for FrogSong, and its chickens and rats? Will the city finally read its own Land Use Code and start enforcing its own laws? Or will the “earth-sustaining” members of this borderline cult look in the mirror, realize what total hypocrites they have been, and move their 20 squawking, Laguna-polluting chickens so that decent, hard-working property owners can finally open their own windows in this town?

We’ll just have to wait and see.

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7 nights a week  
at the Cotati Yacht Club  
6PM to 9PM**



**Soups, Salads, Sandwiches, Appetizers, Great Side Orders, Munchies, Take Out Orders.**

**Tri Tip Sliders, Fish N Chips, Jalapenos Poppers, Yachty Burgers, Steak Sandwiches. Yum Yum.**

**Come in and enjoy, or call for a take out.**

**Drink Specials throughout the week.**

**Friendly atmosphere, pool tables, great parking, large screen TVs.**

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### Vision Statement

#### Our Vision for a Wildly Successful FrogSong

We live in joyful community  
Deep in connection and caring  
Rich in beauty and celebration  
By sharing with each other, our possibilities soar  
Encouraged to participate and empowered to initiate,  
We continuously create our community together.  
It’s the place we call home  
Where we grow up,  
Live on our own or partner,  
Raise a family,  
And thrive as elders  
Where we savor life together  
Share our joys and sorrows  
In an atmosphere of kindness and goodwill  
It’s a place that nurtures and supports our caring for the world  
Where, by living in balance, we help sustain the earth  
And by taking action, we strive to transform the world

(consented January 14, 2007)

*Greg Karraker is not a member of the joyful FrogSong community. He is, however, frequently amused and outraged by the acts of sanctimonious progressives. His blog can be found and commented on at [www.thelittlepicture.net](http://www.thelittlepicture.net)*

# Roundabout Plan Likely to Go to a Public Vote in November

(From Page One)



The city was given 30 days to appeal the state's decision to reclaim the \$1.8 million in RDA funds, which they are almost certainly in a crazed rush to do.

On the same day, former city council member Patty Minnis, who heads the No Roundabouts initiative, delivered 660 signatures on a petition that would compel the city to ban roundabouts permanently. To put the initiative on the November ballot, only 388 verified signatures are needed.

By law, the city has 30 days to verify the signatures. Once they are verified, the city has two choices: Agree to give up on the roundabouts, or put it to the voters, who will certainly vote against them. According to Patty Minnis, when she was collecting anti-roundabout signatures, voter sentiment was running 9 to 1 against them.

## How will City respond?

In a sensible city, long-term politicians like council member Janet Orchard and Vice Mayor Pat Gilardi would be smart enough to know they're beaten, fold their cards, and move on to the next game of Three-Card Monte.

But this is Cotati, where city staff and council seem to feel as tenured as the worst leftist hack professors at Sonoma State. So the guess is that they'll spend \$20,000 — \$30,000 of your money on a survey to determine if a.) you'll be misguided enough to vote for their roundabouts, and b.) if you'd support another 1/4 or 1/2 cent tax increase to pay for them.

## Collateral damage continues

Because the city still can't figure out what it's going to do with the four block stretch of Old Redwood Highway in question, it's unclear whether Oliver's Market will be able to plan, open, and build their new \$18 million store, which would have made that blighted part of town something to be proud of. But because of the city's stubbornness and incompetence, this once-exciting development could remain a desolate weedpatch for years to come.

With two more businesses gone from Cotati within a month — Porter Street Barbecue, and North Light Books, the city is looking more like a Rust Belt nightmare every day.

Perhaps the only bright spot is that the city's continued failures could finally spell the end for City Princess Dianne Thompson, for council member Janet Orchard, and for Vice Mayor Pat Gilardi, who have stayed in office well beyond their usefulness, if they ever had any.

# Fire District's \$15,000 Focus Group Workshop Fiasco Revealed

From Page One



After years of giving generous pay and benefit increases to the rank and file firefighters, many who helped the majority of the RAFD board members get elected to their current positions, the board is now on a mission to put the fire department's best foot forward in a propaganda campaign that even makes me blush.

The history of the RAFD is as clear as tap water. The fire district board of directors decided long ago that ignoring capital improvements (replacing older fire trucks, keeping emergency supplies on hand, or maintaining the fire houses to proper standards) would take a back seat to salary and benefits demands of the RAFD firefighters who are part of the social elite now in our community. In Cotati, the best way to sell higher fire taxes is to spend, or obligate, all the money you have, then throw yourself at the mercy of the community and beg for a taxpayer bailout. Sound familiar?

When there was no money for new fire trucks in 2006, after Measure J (fire tax) failed, the fire department had a backup plan. They voted to simply borrow what money it claimed it needed to purchase new fire trucks, upgrade a truck, and do a complete end run around the electorate despite the warnings from local citizens and this reporter that such borrowing money for capital equipment and repairs was really a bad idea. But the board did not heed the advice of their critics and borrowed over a million dollars for new fire trucks they should have budgeted for. The economy has gotten much worse since 2007 (as many

predicted it would) which caught the RAFD flat footed but not without a few more tricks up their sleeves. So, the playbook has been dusted off, put into action and here's the plan.

The RAFD has now decided to explore raising fire taxes once again that will affect everyone in this town one way or another. What can only be described as one of the most unbelievably small and controlled focus group workshops I have ever witnessed, it relied heavily on what is known as the Delphi technique which is a technique of leading people to a desired result by the moderators through a series of half truths, misinformation and time limits on questions from the attendees. This most recent waste of taxpayer money will go down in history as one of our slickest propaganda campaigns ever devised by the RAFD.

## This story begins like this.

On Saturday May 5, 2012, I was tipped off by a caller who said that the RAFD was conducting a meeting of citizens to learn as much as possible from them on how the public could be convinced to raise fire taxes they felt were desperately needed and long overdue. I learned that these ten citizens were hand picked from a consulting firm after they each participated in a phone survey and answered one question in the affirmative. They answered that they were more likely than not to vote in favor of increasing fire taxes on all property owners, with little or no other information at their disposal. Interesting, I thought.

Yet, the press was not invited to this focus group workshop, nor was the press properly informed as to what was actually taking place, and why. Apparently, this workshop was to be under the "radar" knowing that spending this amount of money would raise eyebrows in the community. More consultants and more surveys?



So, I stopped everything I was doing to attend this meeting to see what was going on and see how objective the meeting would be in trying to get usable and valuable feedback from the participants. My concern was would they allow me to quietly sit in as a member of the press.

I entered the meeting room early at the Double Tree Hotel in Rohnert Park and introduced myself and asked to sit in and observe in preparation of writing this story. They agreed, but advised me I could not ask the names of the participants and to respect their privacy. It's a public agency, so I knew they had no right to ask that of me, but I played along and didn't care who these folks were.

The moderator was a man by the name of Herb Williams who claims to be a "researcher". The fire chief sat quietly by for the first five minutes, and a stenographer took down every word for the record to be made available to the RAFD board of directors as a transcript. The participants were promised that by the end of the meeting, they would each be paid a crisp 100 dollar bill as promised to participate. The average age group was 40+.

Williams explained that the goal of the focus group was to learn why they all answered the telephone survey the way in which they did, but I later learned that was far from the truth. Then Williams explained he wanted to find out from the participants what could be done to help them all move from being somewhat supportive of raising fire taxes, to "Very Supportive". Normally, to get useful information, you would want to listen, but it was the moderator and the fire chief that did most of the talking, and talk they did until they were blue in the face. They began explaining how the fire department has done everything humanly possible to save money, cut expenses, and have the finest firefighters on the planet working for the RAFD. If you listened to the fire chief, not a dollar has been wasted, and not a stone left unturned. From the facts about our fire trucks to the fact that neighboring fire district run almost entirely on volunteers, the propaganda was as thick as split pea soup. The RAFD had not presented a newsletter in years, has a website that is practically useless, and has done nothing to encourage public participation at its monthly board meetings. I know, because this reporter was usually the only citizen in attendance for nearly six years from 2002 to 2008, and I saw the mismanagement and cronyism for myself.

The fire chief began explaining to the group that he was using fire trucks that were 20-30 years old and needed to be replaced. But the participants did not ask according to who, why, or how come and took the Chief at his word because of the color of his authority. The chief explained the hardship of his firefighter who had taken only one pay increase in the last five years. But what kind of pay increase was it? How does the pay increase compare to how much the volunteer fighters get paid in neighboring fire districts like Gold Ridge? When so many people have lost their jobs or taken huge pay cuts since this recession started, why have the firefighters been spared any such hardships? No one asked. Is it because they were already presupposed to voting to increase fire taxes before entering the room? Do any of them have friends or family members working in the profession of fire safety or public safety? How many of the participants work in the public sector and have a soft place in their hearts for public employees? These are the questions that really should have been asked but were not.

The fire chief then began the threat that without more tax revenues fire services would suffer and "draconian changes will be instituted..." He clarified by threatening that they might resort to rolling blackouts of closing one of the three fire houses to save money. I had seen these fear tactics in the past and saw these coming. The Chief plays this card like nobody else can and does it with a straight face. When one citizen with firefighting experience asked if merging with CAL FIRE is possible, Chief Treanor shot that idea down quickly and handily claiming the community does not want to lose its "identity" whatever that's worth. Treanor also explained that four to five minute delays in response time could be expected if one of the fire houses is closed due to budget cuts. He had no facts to back up that estimate knowing the response time is dependent on many factors and depends on where the fire or medical emergency might be needed. This was a performance by Treanor and Williams that could have won them both an Academy Award for Best Performance in a

sitcom. They put the best spin possible on the situation, but without a rebuttal from those who have followed the RAFD, the focus group came off more like a Sunday sermon before a flock of believers. When Williams jumped into character as a man with personal knowledge of the inner workings of our fire department, he said, "What impressed me about the fire district is..... I must tell you (Chief Treanor) you are doing too well a job... You don't need a tax increase but in this bad economy you deserve it and need it now..." pushing the attendees to brink of tears. This love fest was a bit over the top, but the attendees appeared to eat it up and a couple attendees looked a little teary eyed if I can say so myself. Williams is a master at pushing his attendees towards a desired result he is looking for. To me, that's not a researcher, that's an old fashion snake oil salesman doing what he does best, sell and make them feel good about parting with their money.

This was anything but an objective survey that could be used by any intelligent management team and was a complete disgrace and insult to my intelligence. The fire chief was supposed to simply stay quiet and only observe. The transcript will show in fact the chief and Williams did most of the talking and should not have. Chief Treanor is a nice guy, and I felt really embarrassed for him that the moderator Williams had completely screwed up the process and skewed the results to the point they are worthless. At a few points during the 90 minute workshop, Williams came off more like a cheerleader than he did a qualified and experience researcher. In fact, he came off like a preacher, praising the chief and his staff as if knew anything about the fire district that the chief himself had not spoon fed him beforehand in preparation of this two ring circus. Williams repeatedly flattered the participants ad nauseum to gain even more of their support. This is all part of the Delphi technique to lead you towards a desired result.

The entire purpose of the focus group was defeated, in my opinion. By the end of the 90 minute workshop, even Williams himself referred to the ten participants in the room as "disciples" as if they were in a church of God. I did everything I could to hold back the laughter and keep a straight face. All the participants in the room had also answered the survey that they had all benefitted personally from fire department service in the past and were pleased with that service. Is that a cross section of the community who will be voting in November? In the end, all the participants showed their support to raise fire taxes \$60 a year per unit of risk (i.e. an average home).

The workshop oddly began without any fair description of what the fire district does, what area it covers, what its budget is, how much firefighters get paid, how many hours they work, how much money the RAFD owes, that it sits on land it rents from the City of Cotati for a grand total of one dollar per year, that the fire trucks roll out for some of the most minor and silly incidents imaginable, that other fire districts are actually using our old fire trucks the RAFD thought were obsolete and are surely not, and so much more. When the fire chief invited all the participants to the next RAFD pancake breakfast and Williams added by saying how good the food is, I was almost moved to walk out because enough was enough. I know from years of experience the food at the pancake breakfasts is some of the worst I have ever eaten. I don't attend the pancake breakfasts for the food quality. I go to show my appreciation knowing full well these guys apparently have no concept of what good food is to be served hot and delicious. I go because it's the thought that counts and to donate a few bucks to a good cause.

It's quite obvious by now that the RAFD cannot and will not save for what it needs and can't operate within a realistic budget. Revenue projections have been too rosy for too long as they played fast and lose with the people's money when they should have been planning for the worst and hoping for the best; they got it backwards.

For Treanor and Williams to impose their values on the focus group was irresponsible, unprofessional, and a waste of precious tax dollars at a time we can't afford such stunts. To resort to fear tactics that without more money the fire department may not be coming for you, or may come too late to do any good, was the last straw for me. When Williams said, "Fear mongering is a real issue, but not the case here in this workshop..." I had to restrain myself from screaming at the top of my lungs to stop the



torture; I can't take any more.

I understand that desperate people often do desperate things to save their jobs, their own skin, and even for the benefit of other people. But when Williams turned to me in the back of the room and said for the first time he was going to do something he had never done in the past, take a question from the press at any anyone in the room, I respectfully declined as not to start a scene. I mean, first, I didn't know where to start. I was overwhelmed with misinformation and my mind reeling. Second, there was not enough time to make a convincing argument. And third, I can't possibly deny the RAFD their ten disciples. What kind of person would do such a thing?

Had the focus group answered the survey question "not very likely to approve a tax increase" the RAFD might have gotten some value for their \$15,000 and learned a whole lot more about what they are really up against should the board of directors place a ballot measure on the November ballot. But this was a dog and pony show.

Look for a \$60 fire tax measure to come your way on the November ballot because I think the RAFD is that delusional and misguided. Incredible pressure will be put to bear on the local firefighters union to open their wallets and pay the campaign expenses needed to win a ballot measure and walk door to door to gain the necessary support which they did not do well in 2006 in support of Measure J. Even more money this time around will be needed to gain a 66.3% of the community to pay more in taxes. The RAFD doesn't need luck, they need a miracle and this newspaper will be holding them accountable every step of the way for the sake of the taxpaying community who deserve value for their money.

# Remember Who Demanded Roundabouts Will Be Built in the Center of DOWNTOWN Cotati



John Dell 'Osso



Susan Harvey

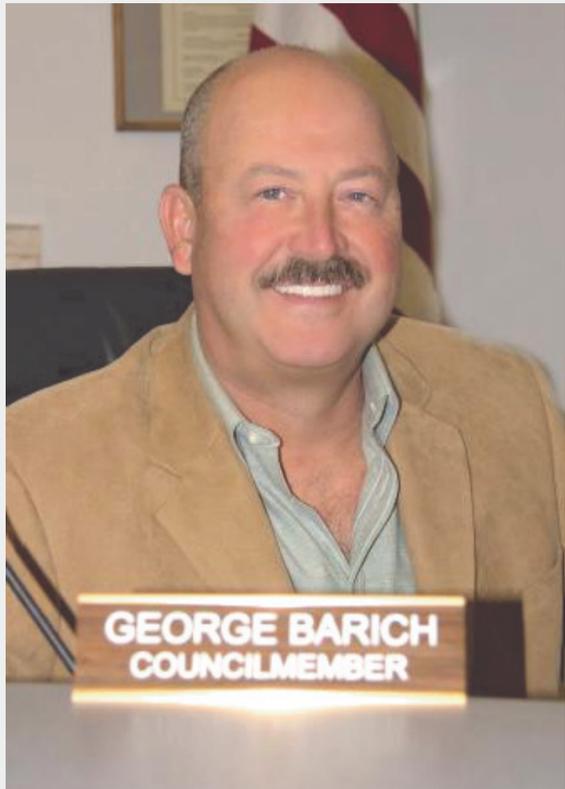


Janet Orchard

## These People are Out of Money, Out of Realistic Ideas, and Out of Their Minds!

### “Remember Who Voted Against Roundabouts and the Silly \$73 Million Cotati Downtown Specific Plan”

Councilman, George Barich



Cotati has not one dime budgeted for roundabouts. Yet, city officials claims they will find the money somewhere and are defiant. Do they think we are fools?

It will take another twenty years to pay off our 22 million dollar Cotati police station because they borrowed, rather than saved. Who are they kidding ?

This city council refuses to televise the city council meetings. Yet the money given to the city by the cable company to do it has been sitting in the budget for nine years doing nothing despite my complaints they put the system in for the sake of the citizens. They don't want to be televised and want to keep Cotati citizens like you in the dark as much as possible. Their track record proves it.



Let's get Cotati back on track

It's time for real leadership

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# Cotati could learn a thing or two from East Germany

Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the citizens of East Germany woke up from nearly 50 years of communism and realized that capitalism could be the agent that lifted them out of five decades of decay and defeatism. These pictures are dramatic proof. Each picture on the left was taken in the early nineties, then taken about a decade later by a photographer named Stefan Koppelkamm.

I took the pictures of Downtown Cotati in 2010, but everyone who lives here knows this same dirt poor, bleak downtown streetscape hasn't changed in years, and isn't likely to in the near future. So here we are, in the middle of one of America's most beautiful, most prosperous counties, looking like a monument to the centralized planning and failed policies that East Germany finally rejected. Maybe

if the voters of Cotati kicked the leftists who run this blighted mess out of town, we would finally see some fresh new growth, fresh new buildings, and fresh new enthusiasm. Just open your eyes, look at your town clearly, and do something about it this November.



Zittau, East Germany 1990



Zittau, East Germany 2001



Dresden, East Germany 1991



Dresden, East Germany 2001



Bautzen, East Germany 1991



Bautzen, East Germany 2001



East Berlin, 1990



East Berlin, 2004



Ballenstedt, East Germany, 1991



Ballenstedt, East Germany, 2003



7800 Block, Old Redwood Highway, where Oliver's Market was going to be: Vacant since anybody can remember, and not likely to change soon.



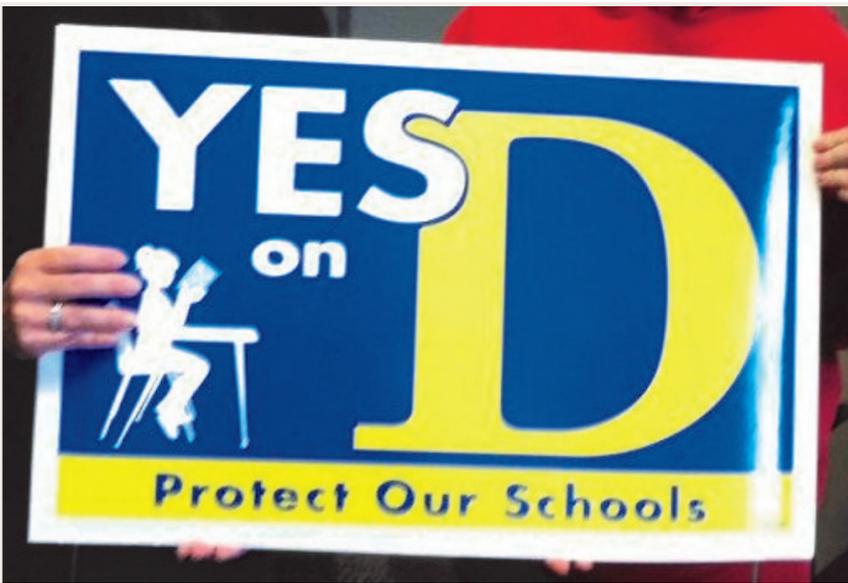
Rancho Adobe Fire District Station 1: City orders RAFD to use wrong wood for siding, won't spend Redevelopment money to fix the damage their decision created.



East Cotati Avenue & George Street: Prime business location for sale. No buyers, and with Cotati's business policies, no wonder,



NW Corner, Old Redwood Highway & 116. No Shell station since 2004. Thank God that eyesore has been replaced by earth-friendly weeds.



Dear Editor,

We need more money for the public schools. Some say we can't keep throwing more money at our problems but they're wrong. Public education can only get better in time if it has more money to work with. Please don't listen to the critics who have lost hope in our vision of providing the finest public education system in the nation right here in our own school district. More of our money pulled out of the local economy for local schools will help the schools eventually. People need to have faith. Open your hearts and open your wallets everyone. With your support, by digging deeper, with your generosity, Yes We Can make a positive difference in our local public education system with a vote of Yes on Measure D.

Government knows how best to use our tax dollars wisely. It has been doing a great job managing our taxes for decades now, and I advocate keeping government education strong by asking for a small bailout of the local public school system. Let's pass this new parcel tax for the sake of the kids and send a message that our commitment to public education will never waver.

We know the California Lottery promised millions of dollars for the public school systems and it didn't work so well. Should we be discouraged? Absolutely not. If at first we don't succeed, I say try and try again. Let's be bold and try something different this time and raise our own money for public education on the local level and do this the right way this time. We can't trust Sacramento to borrow more for what we need, but we can trust our local school boards and politicians who have shown time and time again they are working hard for us and our children.

This new tax, on top of the taxes we already pay for education, is only an additional \$89 a year for five years levied on your property taxes? That's only \$445. This Measure contains all kinds of guarantees in writing so the money will not be further wasted on highly paid administrators. We cannot guarantee this new tax will survive a legal challenge; nobody can. But it's a promise nonetheless, and it's the best we can do. At the very least, attorneys will fight over this money and take a piece for their trouble in any battle that may rage over the language of the new law, if passed.

Here are some facts to consider Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified over the last five years has [faced unprecedented cuts](#), many long overdue. Three schools have been shuttered—Mountain Shadows Middle School, Gold Ridge Elementary and La Fiesta. Class sizes are at an all-time high, and teachers have taken cuts to salaries and benefits like people in the private sector. Meanwhile, the district has experienced the most precipitous fall in student enrollment countywide. Ten years ago 8,300 students attended classes here. Today, enrollment is a bleak 5,913, and students continue to leave. We can ask why the public school systems are getting worse all day long, but that won't help us raise the money we need to get the job done.

According to Smartvoter.org: “**Quality Teacher and Academic Instruction Preservation Measure:** To protect quality education with local funding that cannot be taken by the state, shall Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District preserve reading, writing, math and science programs; keep school libraries open and available for students; protect art, music and vocational instruction; and attract/retain qualified teachers by levying \$89 per parcel annually for five years, no money for administrators' salaries, and all funds staying local.”

- Helps to preserve reading and writing programs (if someone decides those should be cut)
- Helps to preserve math and science programs (that currently show no signs of going away).
- Helps keep school libraries open and information technology services available for students, (despite the fact school libraries remain open right now).
- Helps to attract and retain qualified and experienced teachers and staff.
- Helps to protect art and music instruction for a well-rounded education.
- Helps provide 21st-century vocational education to prepare graduates for a competitive job market.
- Will help minimize class size by hiring more teachers to ensure students receive more individual attention from teachers. May also help minimize further budget cuts that have resulted from high school administration costs couple with reductions in state funding for local schools. More money can only help, not hurt the situation.

Critics say, “Any new tax money will go into the school district's general fund. Without a specific plan of what the money will fund, why give the district another 5 million dollars that will be wasted on something like renaming a school or renovating office space? The schools need the money, but that's not what this is....” Don't believe the critics. I ask for your trust that the money this time will go directly to benefiting the children, not highly paid administrators.

In the past four years, the State has cut \$8.4 million (more than 27%) of funding for our local schools to keep the entitlement system in California funded, and additional state funding cuts are expected because corporations and businesses have been leaving California in record numbers and taking their taxpaying employees with them. The District claims it has made every effort to keep state cuts as far away from the classroom as possible by reducing administration, salaries and benefits. Unfortunately, teachers have been laid off and schools have been closed. We must try to avoid further cuts to the core instructional programs that directly impact student learning rather than look at consolidating all the administration involved in all these schools, and more money will do just that. At the very least, it will buy us a few more years.

Every penny will stay in local districts, and no funds can be taken by the State or other school districts. The details in how they will do that will be worked out in due time. We must have a game plan to implement. Independent citizen oversight and annual audits will hold the school district accountable and ensure that funds are spent as authorized. People in positions of power will pick these “independent” citizens. These programs and efforts will need additional administration whether successful or not. The district will add these administration costs to the cost of doing business. It's only fair and we ask for your understanding.

We promise that no Measure D funds may be used for administration costs. The old revenue source can be increased to cover increases in administration costs if needed. The new funds will also be used to support student achievement and core academic programs, the amount of which is unknown at this time. Senior citizen homeowners, age 65 or older, are eligible for an exemption from this new tax increase. If you're a renter, your landlord can, and mostly like will, pass the tax onto you in higher rents.

Measure D does not promise to reverse old cuts to education or prevent any new cuts, but hopefully the most devastating cuts that directly impact our students may be delayed or avoided for now. We simply don't know. Measure D can't ensure anything but taxing your property \$89 every year, but we hope it will help students receive the quality education they need to go to college and compete for good jobs here or overseas. \$445 is not too much to ask. It's only money. Open your wallets, and Vote Yes on Measure D.

By a local business person who requests to remain anonymous.

Dear Editor,

The public school kids are innocent victims, but let's not punish them further by teaching them that throwing money at life's problems is the answer because it often only makes matters worse. Measure D is a BAILOUT, plain and simple. Have we learned nothing in the past four years of bailouts? School district administration costs are out of sight and sucking the life blood out of the school budgets, but no one is talking about it. Leland Fishman, past Chairman of the Rancho Adobe Fire District once said it best “There's plenty of money in our budget; we have a spending problem”.

Who is REALLY behind measure D? How much money do the schools actually need? Why can't they operate within their means? Just like every other government entity they always claim to need more money. And of course, it's "for the children." Do any teachers actually believe they can teach better if they simply have more money? Measure D will probably pass in this part of the country. There are plenty of suckers here in Rohnert Park and Cotati. Here's another \$89 of my money I can't afford to waste and being thrown into another bottomless pit...

A small army of public school administrators (fearing the loss of their jobs or fat pay and benefit packages) are behind this tax measure and calling on the troops to make it happen. But what these well-intentioned administrators fail to acknowledge is that school cuts are but a symptom of a much larger problem. Sacramento is awash in red ink. Schools funding has been cut as Sacramento pours more and more money into unsustainable and exploding public employee pension costs. Depending whose numbers you believe, the state has a \$300 to \$500 billion unfunded public employee pension shortfall. That's a serious problem that isn't going away. The real problem is that public employee unions are huge contributors to the campaigns of state and local elected officials, who in turn are loathe to enact any meaningful reform to the public employee pension system that provides such generous benefits. Schools and other government services must be sacrificed to keep these pensions afloat.

The sad reality is that legislators in Sacramento will never undertake meaningful pension reform and thereby restore schools funding until the pressure for reform becomes so great that they have no alternative. Parcel taxes such as Measure D simply grants Sacramento legislators an excuse to ignore the real problem. The problem is in fact compounded by passing onto future generations out of control public employee pension costs as well as the burden of higher taxes. We leave our children a world where schools, parks, libraries and hospitals are sacrificed in order to pay for the pensions of a single generation of public employees. It's got to stop somewhere.

If we keep adding school parcel taxes to what we already pay the state to educate our kids, there will be no end to it. They will continue to come back and ask for more and more. And over the years we have passed various measures intended to insure that state schools funding is not diverted to other uses. But have those measures worked? Of course not.

Loopholes allow the withholding of those funds by the state in exchange for false promises of repayment. Repayment that never comes and city officials complain about this all the time. So, before you authorize the levy of yet more taxes, ask yourself what happened to all that money? By and large it has been used to pay for ever-increasing and unsustainable public employee pensions. While politicians in Sacramento give lip service to the need for pension reform, no meaningful reform will ever occur so long as we are willing to tax ourselves more and more to pay for the services we've already paid for.

While the monies raised by Measure D may improve classroom conditions for our children in the short run, the real tragedy is that the long-term costs of Measure D effectively doom future generations to a world void of libraries, parks, hospitals and schools as these traditional government services are sacrificed to pay for bloated public employee pensions. For the sake of our children, I encourage you to look beyond the short-term benefits of this measure and look at the long-term costs.

## Parents, please don't pass these taxes onto our kids.

Contrary to what proponents of school tax measures would have you believe, local school taxes simply pass tremendous tax obligations to our children and their children. Tax proponents will tell you that school tax measures benefit the kids. But if we set aside our initial emotional response to that seemingly appealing plea, we will see that in fact the real beneficiaries of these taxes are us – the grown-ups by kicking the can down the road or making the situation even worse.

Contrary to what proponents of school parcel tax measures would have you believe, school taxes simply take needed money away from the family and our children. Tax proponents will tell you that school tax measures benefit the kids directly, yet the students rarely see but a fraction of that money after expenses. But if we set aside our initial emotional response to that seemingly appealing plea, we will see that in fact the real beneficiaries of these tax band-aids are us – the grown-ups.

Ask yourself if you really believe the children are going to directly benefit from these outrageous parcel tax increases? Sure, some short-term improvements will enhance the public school experience for some, but if there's a will, there's a way to siphon as much off the top for administration and legal costs and will do very little to reduce class sizes or put new computers in the classroom today?

The real beneficiaries of any additional property taxes are not the kids any more than after the California Lottery went into affect. Local school districts and local politicians are really no different than the representatives we have looking out for us in Sacramento. They are just smaller fish swimming in a smaller pond.

We look at the condition of our public schools, parks, and roads and say we should do something about it. But we fail to address the root causes behind the deplorable condition of these public institutions. We throw up our arms and walk away from the out of control costs of public employee compensation and pensions that demand ever increasing shares of tax dollars once used to fund those schools, parks and roads. This is clearly a case of treating the symptoms while ignoring the cause. By ignoring what may appear to some as an insurmountable problem and opting instead to tax or borrow money today our children will have to repay tomorrow, we rationalize our behavior as being for the benefit of the children.

We conveniently ignore the mountain of debt, increasing taxes, and world of diminished government services we leave to our children because, well, let's face it, some say we all have too much “stuff” and need to pay more. In the worst cases of school bonds, we won't have to pay for it, the kids will. This tax increase is a band-aid and a cruel hoax. We only delude ourselves while saddling our children with a future made bleaker by our actions to be unwilling to look at the out of control administration costs which have brought these problems to bear. Surely, we can do better than this. Vote No on Measure D. This madness has to stop sometime.

Editorial staff of The Cotati Independent