

EDITORIALS

Housing Discrimination Still Smolders

Eden Council for Hope and Opportunity (ECHO) recently put the local housing market to a racial test and discovered that a significant amount of discrimination still exists.

The Hayward based agency tested 53 rental units in Livermore, Pleasanton, Union City and Hayward. All of the testers were men, half of them white, half of them black. The black man would call first and make an appointment to see the rental. The white man called next, using the same procedure. Both represented themselves as unmarried and childless. Conclusive instances of racial differential treatment were evidenced at 14 of the 53 units, or 27%.

The breakdown by city was: Livermore, 5 cases of differential treatment out of 13 contacts, 38%; Pleasanton, 3 cases out of 10, 30%; Union City, 5 out of 10, 50%; Hayward, 1 out of 20, 5%.

A similar test by ECHO six years ago encountered less discrimination. Both men and women participated in that one, all posing as unmarried and childless. They tested 59 units; differential treatment occurred at 12, or 20%. The women's participation may have been a factor behind the lower percentage of discrimination, as black women tend to be treated with greater tolerance than black men, studies have found.

"Nevertheless, it is appalling to find evidence that racial discrimination has actually increased, primarily in the eastern part of the county," states ECHO's report.

If there is anything here to cheer, it is ECHO itself. The work they do is noble and necessary. As Martin Luther King Day approaches, ECHO helps remind us that the struggle for tolerance and justice has a long way to go before victory can be proclaimed.

Half Dozen Hens Are OK

Pleasanton residents may keep up to six hens in their yards without needing a permit, the City Council has decided. Roosters, whose crowing can be a nuisance, aren't covered by the policy.

The Pleasanton Planning Commission recently held hearings on two requests to allow chickens for 4-H projects. In bringing the issue to the council, staff sought to avoid future such hearings and recommended a simple permit process. Unanimously, the council decided a permit isn't even needed for residences with six or less hens.

Annalee Sanborn of 4-H pointed out that most California cities allow chickens without a permit, from 4 chickens in San Francisco to 25 in San Diego.

Though this was hardly a major issue, it did entail one of those decisions that can make suburbia a little richer in texture. We applaud the council for saying it's okay to keep a few hens.

FLOOD

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the committee was brought together.

Myers told the Independent that the advantage of this approach is not only to work out good solutions in a full master plan, but also to find more grant money available for some of the functions, which then can contribute to the whole picture.

What prompted Myers' appearance before the city council was Livermore's current negotiations about development west of the city's golf course and in the vicinity of El Charro Road.

That area has been identified in the master plan as a critical area for flood control. Pleasanton is involved, too, because the Staples ranch is also in the vicinity. So is a small portion of east Dublin, near Fallon Road, though the acreage there is much smaller, said Myers.

Myers said that probably within a six month period all of the concerned parties can work out an agreement about phasing in the stream master plan to minimize flood risk, and also accommodate the gravel quarries still in operation there. Eventually the quarries will be gone. The abandoned mines will revert to Zone 7 as part of the long-term flood control plan.

Originally, the flood control plan was estimated at \$620 million. That would have involved creating deeper channels for the arroyo waters. Since that first proposal, attitudes of agencies that issue permits have changed about such issues as silting, and the effects of silting and flooding on fish and other stream life.

Now the thinking at Zone 7 is to forget about channelization,

and store the water instead upstream in quarries after storms. It would be held there in the way that floodwaters are held now in Lake Del Valle, for release after the storms pass.

The new approach will cut the flood control portion of the task significantly. The flood control part of the plan now is reduced to \$473 million. However, with other benefits brought into the plan, such as trails and habitat safeguarding, the total price tag is expected to be \$724 million. Myers said that there will be opportunities to bring in grant money on those aspects of recreational use and habitat protection, although local agencies, such as the cities and the park districts, will also have to make some effort.

Myers gave a report to a Zone 7 special meeting Jan. 4 at which he said that flood channel damage from recent storms will cost a little over \$1 million. There were no overflow problems, though.

Myers reiterated earlier statements that Zone 7 won't have any money in its flood control fund in the next two years to conduct regular maintenance, because the state is taking money from the district. Instead, the money for flood control will have to come out of the agency's general fund, and be used only for the most critical maintenance.

The total loss to the state will be about \$6 million for the two years. The money was taken by the state as part of its third-round seizure of local government and special district money to pay the state's debts.

year's enrollment of 582. There will be 100 students in both kindergarten and first grade, 80 students in each grade 2-4, 81 students in fifth grade, and up to 120 students in both the sixth and seventh grade. LVCS maintains student teacher ratios of 20:1 in grades kindergarten through fourth and 27:1 in grades five through seven.

There will be an open house for prospective students on Thursday, Jan. 12 at 7 p.m. in the LVCS Multipurpose Room. For more information on LVCS, see www.livermorecharterschool.org. LVCS is located at 543 Sonoma Avenue.

BUDGET

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of more than \$600 per pupil throughout the state.

The governor's office says his budget proposes restoration of art and music programs and physical education to schools. There is also money for teacher training and recruiting math and science teachers. Full funding for the after-school programs mandated by voters in Proposition 49, and enough funding to put more indigent families' children on health insurance rolls is also in the budget.

The budget proposal came on the heels of Schwarzenegger's state of the state message last week, in which he proposed a program of \$68 billion worth of bonds to install infrastructure over the next 10 years. Those capital funds would do such things as add 1200 miles of highway and HOV lanes and 600 miles of mass transit, build 2000 schools and 40,000 classrooms,

improve Delta levees and build two prisons, and expand prison space for 83,000 prisoners.

Democrats applauded the public works aspect of the governor's infrastructure bond plan. Generally, Democrats like construction projects, because they provide construction jobs to their constituents in the working class.

Reached for comment late Tuesday afternoon, Republican Assemblyman Guy Houston, whose 15th Assembly District includes Livermore, said that overall he is pleased by the governor's budget and infrastructure bond plan. Houston is especially enthusiastic about the education and transportation aspects of the plans.

With the lock on Prop. 42 diverting gasoline sales tax to road projects, "we can get things done now, versus having to wait 10 years. That's a good plan," said

Houston.

"The other exciting thing locally is that the governor is looking at an additional \$200 million toward equalization funding (for school districts, such as Livermore and San Ramon Valley). In the fall, we worked with the governor's office on that. That's a big win. We need to fight hard to keep it in the budget," said Houston.

Previously, Houston convinced the governor to spring for \$110 million in equalization aid, which helped the two Tri-Valley districts then. The districts need equalization money because they are shorted out by inequities in the state school funding formula.

Houston did have a caveat, though. He noted that the governor is using surplus carry-over money for his budget. When that's gone at the end of the budget, he wonders what will replace

it. Houston's concern is what he called an 8 percent rise in expenditures, but only a 4 percent rise in revenue. It's that kind of budgeting that got former Gov. Gray Davis in trouble, said Houston.

Democratic State Sen. Liz Figueroa, who represents Pleasanton and Sunol among her constituents, said that she hasn't had time to see the details of the budget message, because she was in a committee hearing when Schwarzenegger had his press conference.

However, she said that she applauds his desire to sell bonds for infrastructure needs. Democrats also will be looking at what state Sen. Don Perata called "the human infrastructure," said Figueroa. They will examine the housing and medical needs of their constituents, to see how well the governor's budget measures up on those counts, she said.

MAILBOX

(Opinions voiced in letters published in Mailbox are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of The Independent. Letter Policy: The Independent will not publish anonymous letters, nor will it publish letters without names. Frequent letter writers may have publication of their letters delayed.)

BART Extension Clarence Hoenig Livermore

Ms. Wieskamp's BART appeal letter and Ms. Sailors' BART petition for BART to Livermore are well intentioned but too simplistic and shortsighted. Their primary target should be the Governor as well as the BART Board.

They would have the Livermore public believe that all we have to do is convince the BART Board of Directors to approve and build a BART extension to Livermore. The BART Board already approves of the extension in principle but doesn't have the \$1 billion dollars to build it. Double that figure for a second BART extension to Pittsburg. They can't do one without the other. Then add in the millions of dollars for earthquake upgrades and you have a horrendous capital improvements program for BART with an empty pocket book. The solution of this financial dilemma goes beyond the BART Board to the State of California and even the Federal Government.

Both Ms. Wieskamp and Ms. Sailors should level with the public and redirect their BART to Livermore campaign to Governor Schwarzenegger. In his State-of-the-State speech the Governor asked for a voter approved mega-bond measure as primary funding for roads, bridges, schools, levees and other aging infrastructure. Will BART to Livermore be included in the Governor's proposal? Don't count on it. Ms. Wieskamp and Ms. Sailors should carry their petitions to a higher level where the money is.

Without Cause Eric and Deidre Boyd Parents, Livermore Valley Charter School

A letter was sent to parents of students at the Livermore Valley Charter School on Thursday, January 5. The letter outlines a decision by the school's Board of Directors to terminate Principal Mike Hazelhofer without cause, effective immediately.

The new charter school has received much well deserved press and acclaim for opening this year with a record high number of students. Much fanfare was made over the summer at the decision to hire Principal Hazelhofer.

Hazelhofer is the well respected 25-year veteran principal of Arroyo Mocho Elementary, East Avenue Middle, Jackson Avenue, Fifth Street, and Marilyn Avenue schools throughout the Livermore School District.

The letter to the parents is cryptic and does not communicate the sense of an impending decision, but rather an elective one. It does beg many questions: was there a crime on the part of Mr. Hazelhofer? Or, is this a group of revolutionary parents who make up the board and just weren't quite getting their way?

There is a scandal behind this shocking development, even if the scandal is only the firing of a principal without the existence of a scandal.

Thank You Jeanie Haigh Chairman, Good News Bears

A belated, but sincere thank you for your feature story on Good News Bears. As you know,

we are dedicated to spreading comfort to those in need. We provide "stuffed love" in the form of teddy bears and other critters to anyone experiencing trauma, loss, or illness. Your article generated many phone calls and resulted in hundreds of critters donated. The exposure you gave our group is fantastic, and continues as people realize there is a good home for those stuffed animals that have been sitting on their shelves. The response has been more than I ever expected.

Our organization relies heavily on the support of the community. With the support of businesses like you, we are able to provide comfort to thousands of children, men and women each year.

We appreciate you thinking of us. Thank you again for your wonderful article on our club.

Discrimination Piece Mike Dwyer Pleasanton

Your "Discrimination Found" headline caught my eye, and I read the accompanying article. It was the first time I've read your publication. Now, I'll read it regularly. I've lived in Pleasanton for eight years, and I've taught high school History and Ethnic Studies in Hayward for 21 years. The findings of the ECHO study show that race-based housing discrimination is pervasive, and that it's worse here in the Valley than it is in Hayward. These findings surprised me not at all.

What did surprise me, though, was that you'd feature such a study on your front page. Good job. I assume, perhaps incorrectly, that many of your readers will conjure up a variety of reasons to disagree with or dismiss the ECHO study. Some might even be miffed that you chose to spotlight this story. Others might just ignore the story and its topic. Still, you've broached a topic in vital need of exposure and dialogue, as you should have.

You also featured an editorial strongly criticizing the Bush Administration's attacks on Americans' civil liberties, and Rep. Ellen Tauscher's efforts to fight these attacks. Again, I applaud you. Keep up the good work.

BART Trains Cathie Brown Former Livermore Mayor

Who is Clarence Hoenig to criticize Linda Jeffery Sailors (former Mayor of Dublin) and Ayn Wieskamp (former Livermore City Council and current East Bay Regional Park Board Director) for trying to bring BART to Livermore? Perhaps he did not know that they, along with Karin Mohr (former Pleasanton City Council) and Erlene DeMarcus (former BART Board Director) were the people who fought for the first Dublin station and won. I know, because I was also involved in that successful effort.

BART came to Dublin, because we refused to believe the regional transportation agency when they said that there wasn't enough money for BART in the valley. It just wasn't their priority. BART also told us that we couldn't support a BART station, because we didn't have enough potential riders. Within the first month of operation, the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station reached its 10 year ridership projection.

You have only to look at I-580 to know that we could fill the trains. I suggest that Clarence leave this issue to those who have the knowledge and history to pull it off.

Anyone interested in voicing your desire for a Livermore BART

station should sign their petition. Call 449-7274 for information.

Senior Project Debi Allen, Sandy Briggs, Rick Briggs, Renee Roberts, Drew Roberts, Caroly Wagner, Tom Wagner Pleasanton

We encourage parents of students attending Pleasanton middle schools and elementary schools to make every effort to attend the next school board meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, January 17 at 7:00 p.m. The agenda includes a presentation about a new mandatory high school graduation requirement that will affect your children, and all those who graduate from Pleasanton schools in the year 2010 (current 8th graders) and thereafter.

The school board passed the new graduation policy in 2003, with plans to implement it with the graduation class of 2007. Last June, the parent community of current high school students learned about the proposed Senior Project requirement. After a series of well attended and vocal meetings, the Board voted to defer the requirement until 2010.

The school board mandated this new requirement with no input from the Pleasanton parent community, despite Board Policy #1250, which clearly states, "The Board of Trustees recognizes that a pupil's education is a responsibility shared by school AND family during the entire period the pupil spends in school. To support our mission to educate all students effectively, schools and parents must work as knowledgeable partners."

This is your opportunity to become a knowledgeable partner in your child's education. Please join many other parents who plan to attend the January 17 meeting to learn more about your child's high school graduation requirements.

One Parent's Opinion Ray Hrdlicka CEO/Publisher Crime, Justice & America, The Premier Magazine for the Criminal Justice System

I have just returned home after attending the Livermore Valley Charter School (LVCS) Board Meeting last night regarding the termination of the principal, and feel compelled to write a letter addressing the similar comments made by nearly all the parents attending the meeting. Emotions ran high, tears were shed, and accusations rampant.

After hearing one after another accusatory comments by the attendees, it seemed nearly everyone believes the Board made this decision over evening coffee the night before school resumed. At the public session on the last agenda item, I spoke in support of the Board (seemingly the only one), recognizing and acknowledging the difficulty involved in their action. The emotions of the moment seemed to veil the facts supporting the publicly unknown reasons for the termination. With a little objectivity, maybe more people would support the Board.

Without knowing the "why," as a parent of two little boys in LVCS, I support the Board's decision after contemplating the prior relationship dynamics. Many of the Board members worked years to achieve the certification of a Charter School, contributing thousands of volunteer hours. Many were personal friends with Mike Hazelhofer. Most Board members had their own children at LVCS. Two members are attorneys. Some additional influences are that we live in the most litigious state in the country.

LVCS remains a high-profile organization, especially after overcoming the controversy dur-

ing the certification process. LVCS is newsworthy as the state's largest charter school. Failure would throw support toward the traditional school system. With all that criteria, it would be ignorant of anyone to believe the Board made their decision lightly, without seeking to find any other solution. The Board members are not stupid or ignorant people. The audience repeatedly accused the Board of ignorance regarding potential adverse reactions. Please, let's think a little here. Taking the chosen action opened Pandora's Box for the Board members, yet they still made the decision. Ridicule, criticism, loss of friendships, heartache, and open scorn was the current result of that difficult decision, with the looming possibility of legal action in the future. It is a sad fact of life in these situations in California that litigation inevitably ensues, thus revealing the "why" so many of the attendees want to know. However, nobody wins in the end because the emotions are wrung out once again. So I ask, why go through that gauntlet unless the Board was confident their decision was the best one for the children of LVCS? Personally, I am confident their decision was the correct decision for the situation.

I chose to place my children in LVCS, and entrusted the policy decisions to the Board, and the education to the teachers. I feel blessed to have those two teachers for my children. I am also truly thankful the members of the Board have the emotional and mental strength to make incredibly difficult decisions, regardless of personal fears, rightfully focusing on the future of our children.

**Time for Livermore
Linda Jeffery Sailors
former Mayor of Dublin
Letter to BART:**

In reviewing your ten year plans, it was very clear that the Livermore BART station is not on your funding priority list. With the recent information about the severity of the I-580 commute (second worst in the Bay Area), it would seem to me that the Livermore BART station at Greenville Road should be a regional priority. The station acreage has already been purchased and the rail to Livermore is one of the most cost effective (construction cost vs. fairbox return) extensions in your system.

I ask that status of the Livermore extension be re-evaluated and that the preliminary engineering and environmental work be scheduled so that when money does become available, Livermore is ready.

On a side note, Livermore has been paying for BART since 1962. We have helped build all of the other BART stations—it is our turn. I would further suggest that all of the planned stations in the original BART district should be completed before letting San Jose, or any other outsiders without a full buy-in get their station. Fairness is the issue. Also, the people going to San Jose, come through the I-580 corridor and need BART at the base of the Altamont, where a logical transit hub with Ace, CCCTA, LAVTA, San Joaquin Valley Transit and BART could exist. (Note: The ACE train goes to San Jose, but not San Francisco like BART does.)

BART has already purchased the land for two Livermore stations. A promise delivered at the 1991 dedication of the Dublin/Pleasanton station said Livermore would be in the future. The verbiage in both of the 1/2 cent sales tax measures (Measure B) constitutes clear evidence that BART has promised to build Livermore. Let's get it started now.