

EDITORIAL

Two Incompatible Projects

The Livermore City Council has taken a position of strong opposition to two proposed projects, a cemetery and small housing development, whose fate the county will decide.

The cemetery would be 40 acres in size, in North Livermore, near the proposed Pardee development that voters buried in November. Like Pardee, it threatens urban growth boundary policies.

A huge mausoleum, 34,184 square feet in size, would dominate the currently pristine site. There would also be 23,630 square feet of facilities for a mortuary, crematory, offices and storage. The project's opponents are especially concerned about the mausoleum. "The mega-size is appalling," said Harriet Cole, Friends of Vineyards president.

In addition, Livermore planners point out that Livermore already has three cemeteries and doesn't need another.

The housing is proposed for the hillside along Las Positas Road near Wal-Mart. The site is a county island surrounded by the city. Two landowners seek a zoning change from one unit per five acres to one unit per acre.

They reportedly approached the city first, then turned to the county after city planners responded negatively. It appears they hope to win the county's okay and then obtain sewage/water service by annexing to the city.

Among other ill effects, there would be severe grading of the hillside, violating Livermore's scenic corridor policy.

Scott Haggerty, who represents the Livermore area on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, has consistently supported the city on issues like these. We trust he and his board colleagues will do so again. Given that each proposal is so clearly out of sync with key planning policies — both county and city ones — there should be no question about denying each.

CHARTER

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public schools. Her teaching experience includes kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade. She received both her bachelor degree in elementary education and Master of Education Administration from Eastern New Mexico University.

Three years ago Morris moved to Livermore from New Mexico. In 2003, she applied for an open seat on the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District's (LVJUSD) Board of Education. She was one of 13 candidates vying for the seat vacated by David McGuigan, who resigned one year into his term. Bill Morrison, a current LVJUSD

trustee, was selected by the Board at that time.

Until her appointment as principal of the charter school, Morris was serving part-time as Director of Christian Education at Asbury United Methodist Church. She plans to scale back her responsibilities to meet the needs of LVCS.

This week Morris visited classrooms to introduce herself to students, and held several informal after school meetings with parents. The remaining meetings with parents will be held on Thursday from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. and Friday from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. in the LVCS library.

Red Cross Declares Blood Shortage

Assemblymember Johan Klehs called upon the community to respond to the blood shortage declaration by the American Red Cross.

With less than 100 pints of O-negative and only 28 pints of B-negative blood available for area hospitals, the blood supply has reached a dangerously low level. Typically, the Red Cross would provide more than 200 pints of type O-Negative and nearly 50 pints of type B-Negative blood to California hospital patients every day. Without blood donors coming forward to assist in this emergency, an adequate response to medical emergencies may be in jeopardy and routine surgeries at area hospitals may be cancelled.

Nearly 32,000 pints of blood are needed each day in the United States. One out of every 10 patients who enter a hospital needs blood. The average heart surgery requires six units of blood and accident victims have reported using up to 100 units in a given occurrence.

In response to the blood shortage emergency, Klehs is hosting his second emergency blood drive within the past five months

as part of the Family Emergency Preparedness Expo being held at Life Chiropractic College West located at 25001 Industrial Boulevard in Hayward on Friday, January 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In Livermore, a blood drive will be held on Friday, February 10, 1:00 - 7:00 p.m. at the Robert Livermore Community Center, 4444 East Avenue, Livermore. To sign up, go to www.GiveLife.org, and use ASBURY as the sponsor code. For information contact Tom Petty at 447-1950, menu #7 (leave a message) or e-mail BloodDrive@asburylive.org.

A blood donation takes about an hour. Advance appointments are encouraged but walk-ins will be welcome as time allows. Donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh a minimum of 110 lbs., be in general good health and have a Red Cross donor card or photo ID such as a driver's license. Children are not able to be in the donation area due to safety issues. To make an appointment, call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or go online at www.beadonor.com, "Find A Drive" and register using the LCCW sponsor code.

Tri-Valley Haven In Need of Volunteers

Tri-Valley Haven is in need of volunteers. The nonprofit organization was established in 1977. It provides services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and homelessness in the Tri-Valley.

More direct service volunteers are needed to answer the crisis line, respond to sexual assault calls at the hospital and police stations, and assist clients with restraining orders in the legal

clinics.

Three-month volunteer training classes will begin in February 2006. Volunteers must be over the age of 21 to participate in this state mandated training. Classes will meet weekly on Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

To receive more details about the training please contact Jenny Fraser, coordinator of volunteers, at 449-5845 ext. 111 or jenny@trivalleyhaven.org.

COALITION

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ter of talking about the 90 percent they agreed on, and not the 10 percent they didn't agree on."

Alameda County supervisors are the only supervisors to sign on so far. However, others will be approached. The Alameda County supervisors joined after an endorsement of the coalition by the county agricultural advisory committee, where Koopman and Darrell Sweet have been active members.

Both Darrell and Karen Sweet said that as far as they know, this 32-member partnership is the first of its kind in the nation.

Some environmentalists didn't take to the idea right away, said Darrell Sweet. They were suspicious of the ranchers, many of whom support changes to the Endangered Species Act in a bill written by Rep. Richard Pombo, the Republican incum-

bent whose district includes Pleasanton and Sunol.

However, both ranchers and environmentalists are interested in working with "hands-on restoration, and really dealing with how you preserve habitat. That's what brings people together of different persuasion," he said.

Uniting ranchers and environmentalists has another advantage, said Darrell Sweet. "We have access to Pombo and they (environmentalists) have better access to (Democratic) Sen. Barbara Boxer than the cattlemen do. If collectively we go to both offices, and say we are on the same page on this stuff, we'll be more effective. That's the real driving force," said Sweet.

Looking ahead to next year's federal budget, there is supposed to be "a fair amount of funding on habitat and conservation. We

would like to get the California delegation behind us. We have 300 endangered species in California, more than in any other state," Darrell Sweet said.

At a press conference last week in Sacramento, Ed Pandolfino, conservation chairman of the Sierra Foothills Audubon Society, was quoted in a press release as saying that the state's rangelands "support a stunning variety and abundance of wildlife."

"Preserving habitat is tied to the survival of ranching "as a viable way of life in California. If we are to save these grasslands, we need to find more ways to support the positive land management practices of the private families that own these lands."

Also emphasizing the growing scarcity of ranchland habitat was Mike Chrisman, California

Secretary for Resources, who was quoted as saying, "California's private rangeland is a precious resource that can be managed to fulfill the goals of ranchers and environmentalists. These lands are the last frontier, both for the ranching families who maintain them and for the sensitive species with natural habitats in many of these open spaces."

The next step for the coalition, besides starting to work on programs to benefit ranchers and habitat, is to keep growing, said Karen Sweet.

Environmentalists are putting out feelers to more of their compatriots. On the ranching side, the word is spreading, too. "The Nevada cattlemen's association said they want in. They couldn't believe we were doing this," said Sweet.

LETTER

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underscore local issues of great need.

A letter was sent later. Carson and his chief of staff, Rodney Brooks, told the Independent several times, including early this week, that they saw no reply from the governor.

Darrel Ng, a spokesman in the governor's press room, said he could find no record of a reply from the governor or that the governor received the letter. However, the governor "supports the President's efforts to combat terrorism, including the war in Iraq. The governor has been briefed on the abilities to respond in the state, including this time of federal deployment."

Carson's point in bringing up the request to call back 4500 National Guard troops from Iraq was that they may be needed in California to deal with disasters, such as earthquakes and major fires, for example, the Oakland Fire of 1991. The role of the Guard in helping Louisiana and Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina brought the subject to people's attention.

Ng referred the Independent to National Guard headquarters in Sacramento for a statement on the Guard's abilities. National Guard Maj. Jon Siepmann said that even with 4500 Guardsmen in Iraq and scores of them in other missions, such as Kosovo and a

special Middle East assignment, the state still has 11,500 available for emergencies. The primary tasks in emergencies are establishing communications for rescue operations, evacuating people and moving supplies in trucks, and keeping the peace.

Federal duty for units in Iraq and elsewhere provides soldiers good training. They operate better when they get back home, said Siepmann. Further, the Guard is really a part of the federal military, with 95 percent of its budget in California coming from the federal government, so there is no conflict about federal assignment, he said.

Informed of this by a reporter,

Carson said that he wasn't aware of the extent of the federal control of the Guard. However, he pointed out that with vulnerabilities in the Bay Area, such as airports and seaports, there is also an ongoing need for good protection here.

"What is further disturbing (about no letter from the governor), is that if they think they have a rational reason for sending California National Guardsmen to Iraq, I wouldn't hesitate to express that in writing. If they can document the reasons, they should be the first to get out and market that information to people," said Carson.

GENERAL PLAN

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consultant take public input so the process can begin. The EIR study would be conducted in parallel with the council decisions, so that the city would be able to meet the deadline to complete the update this year.

The 1996 general plan contains 11 elements, 10 of which are part of the current update along with a new energy element. The housing element was updated in April 2003 and will not be part of the EIR.

Land use includes consideration of properties that are either vacant or in the process of land use changes. Areas include over 300 acres in east Pleasanton, the Hacienda Business Park's 65 acres, west side sites totaling

over 1000 acres, south east hills encompassing 777 acres, and other sites scattered throughout the city. These include 7.4 acres near the proposed westside BART station where the city may consider changing the land use to allow transit oriented mixed use development and the 7.5 acre church site on Valley Trails where medium density residential is being considered.

Circulation is another element. A working draft plan was discussed by the city council in August. It includes a four lane Highway 84 and a new east-bound I-580 lane from Hacienda Drive to Vasco Road. It does not include a Stoneridge Drive extension or the West Las Positas

interchange. Potential changes in the city include Bernal Avenue widening, Foothill Road widening, Vineyard Avenue widening, West Las Positas Boulevard widening, El Charro Road extension, Busch Road widening, and Hopyard Road widening. It is possible that some of the street widenings and extensions may

be eliminated in the final plan. Other general plan elements include public safety, public facilities and community programs, conservation and open space, noise, air quality, community character, economic and fiscal, subregional planning, and energy.

HAPPY VALLEY

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ing copies of the petitions to the Pleasanton City Council at its meeting Jan. 17. Close maintains that the alternative route is also comprised of narrow roads and sharp curves. Traffic safety

might not be any better. Solutions could include putting stop signs at the intersection of Happy Valley with the Alisal-Sycamore route, and stepping up traffic enforcement there.

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.)

Airport Hangars Adrienne and Gary Smith Livermore

I was disgusted when I read two recent Livermore Airport related letters. The most recent letter was written by an outspoken male pilot. Last year, a pilot coalition attempted to have the impact area of the airport expanded, as well as the airport itself. Both would have negatively impacted many homeowners. These letters personally attacked Wendy Weathers, a member of a citizens' group. They criticized her account of what was said at a recent city council meeting. I attended the council meeting, and in my opinion, Ms. Weathers' description of that evening was accurate.

Attacking her is another example of their selfishness. They want hangars for their beloved planes, or as they refer to them their "investments." It doesn't matter if many homeowners are forced to live with more planes, and jet noise as a result. Contrary to pilots' claims, more hangars do mean more noise. Homeowners have a right to protect their investments also, their homes. And, homeowners aren't intruding on others with their noise hobbies. I am not a member of a citizens' group, but I attended the January 31, 2005 airport meeting with another 1000 sign carrying protestors.

I assure our city council will not forget that night. Homeowners will always fight any airport expansion attempt and have been doing so for 20

years. Pilots say the airport should be able to build hangars as part of the 1975 master plan. If I asked the building department to approve an addition to my house with obsolete 1975 plans, they'd laugh. Since two of our three cars sit out in the elements, because we only have a one-car garage, I find it hard to have sympathy for those poor hangarless pilots. Face it. You can't have everything you want.

School Survey Kathy Ellam Livermore

I have learned the Livermore School District is getting ready to present a mandatory survey to the students of Livermore. The survey is on the district web site www.livermoreschools.com. I found the questions written in a clumsy and misleading way. It is called the "Healthy Kid's Survey," but some of the questions actually encourage drug and alcohol use.

I feel that these questions will actually encourage students to think more about using drugs or treat it as a joke to throw off the results. Either way, 50 minutes of precious class time is taken out to submit this survey. I want to encourage parents to review the survey and to sign the opt-out form if they feel that their best interest of the student is in class work not spent filling in bubbles that may or may not benefit them. This is another example of how our valuable education funds are spent.

Real BART Robert Allen Livermore Former BART Director

BART at grade in a freeway median in 2003 dollars costs about \$12 million/mile, plus stations, land, structures, cars, shops, yards, and "implementation." That is for the BART line itself - track, power, train control, and K-rail. (Current figures are not

available. But I suspect they would run about \$15 million/mile today.)

The largest BART-taxed cities with no BART rail are Antioch and Livermore. Each lies just a few miles along an overcrowded freeway from BART. Route 4 and I-580 are both crying for widening. That widening should include a median wide enough for BART.

Given a wide enough median, a real BART line could reach Hillcrest in Antioch for about \$120 million, and Greenville Road in Livermore for about \$180 million, both plus stations, cars and implementation. BART in a freeway median would need little extra for structures, and sops/yards could be added later beyond Hillcrest and a Greenville ACE intermodal along the railroad right-of-way.

eBART beyond Hillcrest and ACE beyond Greenville make sense. (Of these rail connections, ACE is a commuter rail, while eBART would be transit, which needs double tracks.)

The proposed eastbound HOV land along I-580 is a wasteful use of Alameda County money to benefit Central Valley commuters. It would have to be relocated when BART comes. The money should instead be used to widen I-580 eastward from the end of BART to accommodate both BART and HOV lanes in both directions.

Route 4 has already been widened enough to allow BART to Railroad Avenue in the median. In any event, real BART - not eBART - should run between Bay Point and Pittsburg. The cost would be minimal. All East Contra Costa commuters would benefit. However, widening Rt. 4 for real BART to Hillcrest should be top priority.

Relieve Congestion Don Pickett Livermore

In Saturday's (1/14) Valley

section of the Contra Costa Times several residents expressed concerns that the plans to build a new Home Depot at the corner of Stanley Blvd. and Bernal Ave. would negatively impact the increasingly congested east side of town, citing that Stanley has already become a popular way to cut through Pleasanton and Livermore to avoid Interstate 580.

It is overly optimistic to believe that development on these open lots, which have already been zoned, can be prevented. However, there is something that every concerned resident of the Tri-Valley can do. Plan for the inevitable and the future of your neighborhoods by joining Linda Jeffery, former Mayor of Dublin, and Ayn Wieskamp, former Livermore City Council and current East Bay Regional Park Director, in their petition to bring BART to Livermore (The Independent - Mailbox, January 12th issue <http://www.independentnews.com/>).

Relieve the congestion on Interstate 580 and we will relieve the congestion caused by commuter cut-through traffic from our neighborhoods.

One Chicken George Burdell Livermore

I am shocked and outraged at the "Half Dozen Hens Are OK" editorial printed in the January 12 edition of The Independent. While it comes as no surprise that the liberals in Pleasanton would push such an anti-family values agenda, I am disappointed that the Independent would support it.

I for one am thankful to live in God-fearing Livermore, where such views of livestock are an abomination. Here, we promote monogamous relationships that are morally sound, and live by the simple rule: one-man-one-chicken.