

# OPINION

## Letters to the Editor

### Listen to voices of reason

#### Editor:

Thank you, Tony Daysog and Frank Matarrese, for rejecting the landlords vs. tenants contest by asking reasonable questions about how "rent control" is going to affect the entire city. That is what we want the City Council to do.

Their questions restore faith that the City Council is looking out for the entire city, not just the interest groups before them. I appreciated their questions on the fees and structure for the proposed mediation hearings such as: How can a small administrative hearing cost almost \$2 million and need 10 full-time staffers? A full time courtroom, operating five days a week does not use that many staff.

Daysog and Matarrese seem to be the only ones who appreciate that a landlord has to make a reasonable profit in order to maintain a property. The city really cares to have property maintained. Tenants mostly want low rents and if the property deteriorates, they will move. How many tenants have the skills and are willing to trade lower rent for maintaining the property?

Other cities have tried rent control and abandoned it as housing stock deteriorated. In Berkeley, some housing has deteriorated with students jammed into ever smaller spaces.

Reasonable restrictions seem to work. Fixed controls produce unintended but predictable results.

— Susan Jeffries Fitzgerald

### Preserving Victoriana

The Alameda Sun received a copy of this letter addressed to the city's Planning Department.

#### To whom it may concern:

According to *Alameda Magazine*, there are supposedly more Victorian-era houses in Alameda than anywhere else in the country. Using the National Register of Historic Places as my guide to seek a new home, I was drawn to the city's historic architecture. I am writing to respectfully inquire why two particular initiatives are not in effect which would promote and protect Alameda's historic resources.

Why does the city of Alameda not participate in the Mills Act? According to California's Office of Historic Preservation website, the Mills Act "is the single most important economic incentive program in California for the restoration and preservation of qualified his-

toric buildings by private property owners. Enacted in 1972, the Mills Act legislation grants participating local governments (cities and counties) the authority to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historic properties who actively participate in the restoration and maintenance of their historic properties while receiving property tax relief."

This applies to both commercial and residential properties. Why deny Alamedans the opportunity to benefit from this long-standing program? Berkeley, Orinda and Oakland already utilize it to their advantage.

Also, I would like to inquire whether the city has a local ordinance discouraging the practice of demolition by neglect. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), demolition by neglect is "a situation in which a property owner intentionally allows a historic property to suffer severe deterioration, potentially beyond the point of repair. Property owners may use this kind of long-term neglect to circumvent historic preservation regulations."

Several prominent buildings I see daily appear to be suffering from this neglect. In particular, the home at 1623 Central Ave. and the boarded up storefront at 1427 Park St.

The city of San Francisco has an ordinance that explicitly deals with demolition by neglect. We should devise a similar ordinance to discourage the unnecessary loss of Alameda's heritage.

Alameda is a true gem. Ask anyone why, and they invariably mention the Victorian-era homes and the charm of Park Street. We should be protecting what makes this city unique.

— Chase R. Martin

### A month of hell

#### Editor:

This has been a month of hell for us. The night of July 3, until 11:30 p.m., at, I'm guessing, Jackson Park, there have been fireworks going off. They started again at 2:30 a.m.

Against my better judgement I've had to tranquilize our new dog because there's so much noise so close that the thunder shirt and the dark out drapes and the television noise and the air filter and the double pane windows still leave her panicked and panting. Just one more night of hell to go. At least.

Since all fireworks are illegal here, I'd like to know how much enforcement was done this year and what penalty was incurred. I'd like to see the number of tickets written and fines paid by those breaking the law.

By the way, this is also a huge

issue for veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. We should honor them by attempting to minimize their trauma, too.

I would like to know what the city is doing to stop this on behalf of all families with pets, autistic children and veterans with PTSD.

— Debra J Sarver

### Adopt-a-Bed update

#### Editor:

Many thanks to those individuals and groups who have contributed to the Midway Shelter for abused women and their children. A number of the donors listed have contributed several times in the month of June.

Among the generous donors are: the Alameda Kiwanis Club, Barbara Anderson, Elaina Barulic, Lon and Connie Harvey, Elaine Kofman, Beverly Church, Meredith Owens, Paula Patillo-Dupris and Sandra Montgomery. Mary Butler gave in memory of Therese Hauer. Dolores Hickey and Helen Pacovsky gave as did Virginia Krutilek, Robert McBride, Teri and Kevin Kennedy, Kathy McIntire, Jacqueline MacMillan and Kay Fraser.

We'd also like to thank Beverly Moore, Elizabeth Rogers, Rich and Susan Sherratt, Lois Pryor, Garienne Nakano, Louis E. Rembrandt, Noel and Cathy Folsom, John and Johanna Schuitema, Marguerite Lacy, Nancy Issel-Mayes, Patricia Gannon, John C. Weaver, Jr, MD, Jan Ortner, Patricia Sahadi, Virginia and David Miller.

We'd also like to thank Anonymous I, Emily Shea, Nadine Barbera, Dee Keltner, Marian Williams, Total Body Development, Barbara Anderson, Claudia Fenelon, Nelia and Nolito Galvez, Carolyn Smith, M. Buck and Barbara Gibson helped out, along with Suzanne Hamilton, Kathryn Hanley, Regina Dimig, Louis Toepfer, Anonymous II, Christine Buck, Alice Lewis, Liza Reilly, Audrey Aljoe, Betty Sanderson and Kappi Bowen.

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Donations may be sent to Alameda Homeless Network, P.O. Box 951, Alameda. For further information call 523-2377 or visit www.midwayshelter.org

— Ginny Krutilek



## Hotel Is Ill Advised, Poorly Conceived

### Kerwin C. Allen

Let me start by saying I am not a NIMBY. I have supported many development activities in Alameda, including VF Outdoor's relocation to Alameda and the movie theater expansion and garage addition.

As a long-time Alameda resident, I understand the value of well-planned, sustainable commercial and residential development. These bring tax revenue and jobs to Alameda, in addition to increasing property values.

I cannot support, however, ill-advised or poorly conceived development. Enter the planned Marriott Fairfield Inn hotel planned on Harbor Bay Parkway, a 100-room hotel, a 63 foot high, five-story edifice (practically a skyscraper in Alameda Business Park terms) with a setback of a mere 15 feet from the Bay Trail, sitting on a 1.17-acre site.

For comparison, the existing hotel on the Harbor Bay Parkway, which is also 100 rooms, sits on a 3.5 acre site, three times larger than the proposed site of the proposed Fairfield Inn.

The project is so out of scale,

it requires a "car-stacker" to park cars one atop the other in a two-story garage and even at that, does not have the city-code-required vehicle parking spaces necessary. It has to go troling for another 45 additional parking spaces from BCDC or other business park tenants just to move the project forward.

In addition to blocking views and public access to the bay, the hotel developer stated plan is to have no allowed public access to the hotel itself.

In spite of these issues, the Planning Board and the City Council inexplicably approved this development, in spite of what I can only generously describe this as a loose interpretation of permitted use for this property.

The zoning document says nothing about a hotel and actually describes a commercial building with a ground-floor coffee shop. How in the world did the City Council and Planning Board interpret this to mean a 100-room hotel from this zoning description?

The zoning document further forbids uses that require truck loading and staging for any devel-

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opment on this space. How does one supply a 100-room hotel (with a bar no less) without trucks for laundry service, food service, alcohol deliveries, etc.?

While I support the businesses in the business park, building a five-story hotel for the convenience of the executives who come to visit at the expense of the general public seems inappropriate.

The City Council should rescind its approval of this project, admit it erred in granting it in the first place, and work collaboratively to develop this property in accordance with the actual zoning requirements, allowing more public access and is scaled appropriately for a 1.17-acre site.

Kerwin C. Allen lives in Alameda.

## Beware: Your Child May Be Headed for Nerdville

Guidelines to ensuring your son or daughter doesn't succeed as an adult

### Jeffrey R. Smith

#### Part 2 of 2

Last week I wrote of the dangers of your innocent children entering a world where only nerds and geeks dare to tread. What, for example, would you think if your kid won a bidding war; running up real estate prices or rents in Redwood City or Atherton or worse: Alameda? Suppose you get evicted and later find out that your own Little Roscoe is the techie now occupying your old apartment?

So how do you assure that your child will never run the world as a geek or nerd? It's easy. Start by making fun of mathematics and that silly, stupid math teacher. As a math teacher with 22 years of experience, I have witnessed multiple strategies to deep-six math education; they are essentially fail safe. First, schedule a conference with your child's math teacher; when you are sure your child is between text messages and listening to your rant, announce that you "always hated math" or you "cheated your way to a 'D' in Algebra-I."

Hearing this, your children will inwardly celebrate the end of their math education. Citing a family tradition of "hating math" is one of the most effective ways of signaling abysmal expectations and assuring "Junior" that you are psychologically braced for his stagnation in the same math class for five years of high school.

If you're not opposed to sounding a little clinical, announce that the results of "23 and me" DNA testing prove there has been no math gene in the family tree since the retreat of the Cordilleran Ice Sheet. Once a student hears "no

math gene," he or she can sprint to the text book depository and unload that pesky math book, possibly as early as October or November.

Although teachers load students' grades into School Loop, there exists no AUSD requirement that you, the parent, monitor those grades, why spoil the end-of-year surprise? Many parents are shocked to learn the last week of school that Junior had been carrying a rock-solid 30 percent average all semester.

Ignoring School Loop allows for what Iran-Contra conspirators called "reasonable deniability." "If only I'd known Junior was in a nose dive, I could have done something." Implicit to this expression of astonishment is the dodge of the Teflon parent; it puts the blame squarely on that weasel of a teacher. It's called, "Pin the Tail on the Donkey."

When Junior hears you yelling at the teacher over the phone, he enjoys restored self-esteem buttressed by guilt-free underachievement. Perhaps your son or daughter was not nimble enough to intercept those dire, Casandran progress reports that the school district kept lobbing into your home.

Risking a paper cut, you may have opened an envelope and read that Junior hasn't turned in one assignment since Labor Day Weekend and now it's Memorial Day. There is no reason to admit that Junior is slacking — you may yet have an out.

If homework consists of worksheets, closely examine the font and titles. Perhaps the print too exotic? Does it look like the drink

### Tongue in Cheek

menu at the Tiki lounge? Some parents don't like the titles on my worksheets: too Delphic they allege. In a politically correct world, any trace of ambiguity is treated with gravitas; it qualifies as a micro-aggression.

Remember: nothing that gets your progeny, your DNA, off the hook is too petty or too trifling. An enabling parent need only establish the most tenuous causal-nexus to conclude that the homework was impossible for anyone except Stephen Hawking, Alan Turing or Mister Spock. Like nuclear warfare or a domestic disturbance launching the first salvo is essential for winning the blame game.

Play your trump cards; don't keep them up your sleeve while Junior is staggering under a sense of personal responsibility. If you spout the invective, "You didn't teach my kid nothing," before the teacher gets out, "Apparently your child learned nothing all year," and then you have won the blame game.

Don't be out-manuevered by sound reasoning or out-foxed by Aristotelian logic; always remember: volume speaks louder than words. Remember too: administration serves at the pleasure of the community; like "ghost-busters," they are ready to believe you.

As Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas once said about math: "That's what I look for in hiring my clerks — the cream of the crop. I look for the maths and the sciences, real classes ..."

**Citing a family tradition of "hating math" is one of the most effective ways of signaling abysmal expectations.**

And, as I often remind my students, "You can ride the Google Bus, or you can picket the Google Bus." One option involves work, the choice should be obvious.

Jeff Smith teaches math at Encinal High School, where he encourages the young to aim for the Google bus.

### Our Letters Policy

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Letters to the Editor are welcome from the community. Letters must include a name and phone number for verification purposes. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

Letters are subject to editing for length, clarification and legal considerations. Please try to limit letters to 250 words.

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