

North & East Newsletter

February 2006

Newsletter of the North & East Neighborhood Council

P.O. Box 254, Richmond, CA 94808

(510) 237-5670

www.northandeast.org

Dear Neighbor,



New North & East resident Chris Magnus, Richmond Police Chief, was a recipient of a Good Neighbor basket in January. He especially liked the cookies.

Read about the Chief's visit to the Neighborhood Council on page 2. This visit was unannounced, but we will invite him back soon and we'll let you know in advance.

By the way, the cookies in the baskets are courtesy of *Cakes, Cookies and Catering by Snazz*, who is our own Vice President, Bessanderson McNeil. If you can donate baskets, goodies to put in them or just want to help, call Good Neighbor Chair Ronnie Marty at (510) 235-5696.

Photo courtesy of Ellen Gailing, who is our neighbor in Richmore Village.

RICHMOND IN AN EMERGENCY?

The question was raised at the January meeting: what arrangements has the City made for disasters? Come to the February meeting to meet Kathryn Gerk, Director of the Office of Emergency Services for the City of Richmond and hear the answer.

What can you do to be ready?

Thank you to our sponsor,
Darrell Ho
of Marvins Gardens Real Estate,
who is once again sponsoring this issue of
the N & E Newsletter.

THE NORTH & EAST NEEDS YOU!

We seem to have lost both of our Secretaries and our long-time Treasurer, Ronnie Marty, will not be running again when we elect officers at our May meeting. So maybe this is your chance.

Neither job is too strenuous. The Secretary takes minutes at our monthly meeting. We try to have two to make sure that one can be there at all times.

We don't have much money to worry about and if you volunteer now you will have time to spend with Ronnie to learn the ropes.

Please call or email me to talk about getting involved.

Sandi Genser-Maack

President

(510) 237-5670 northandeast@comcast.net

N & E Calendar

Thurs., Feb. 16 -- N&E Meeting, Senior Center, 7 p.m.,

Sat., Feb. 18 -- Good Neighbors Delivery Day, 10:30 a.m.,
950 32nd St., (510) 235 -5696.

Mon., Feb. 27 -- Planning & Zoning Committee, 7 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: THURS., FEB., 16, 7 P.M., AT THE SENIOR CENTER

RICHMOND BAY TRAIL NETWORK

The colorful, upbeat Richmond Bay Trail New Year Report has been mailed out to about 600 people on TRAC's snail mail list, including elected officials, community and business leaders and key government agency management. Special thanks go the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency, Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau and ABAG's Bay Trail Project for funding printing and mailing costs and to Tarrafirma Graphics for designing the report pro bono.

Do not despair if you did not receive the report in the mail. It is available for download at <http://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/trac/> along with the new January 2006 Richmond Bay Trail map.

2005 was a very good year for Richmond's Bay Trail. Not only did construction begin on three trail segments totaling 2.7 miles, \$500K in new grants and appropriations were obtained for planning and designing three miles of trail during 2006. In addition, 33 new exhibit panels designed during 2005 will be appearing along the trail early this year.

Richmond has 24 miles of completed Bay Trail and 17 miles of gaps remaining in the planned route as shown on a report map highlighting all current Richmond Bay Trail projects. The report describes breakthroughs for planning and design work needed to fill two major gaps and the greatest challenge remaining to fill a gap of almost seven miles between The Plunge and the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor.

TRAC, the Trails for Richmond Action Committee, greatly appreciates your support for completing the Bay Trail in Richmond.

TRAC Steering Committee

NO PLASTIC BAGS IN BINS

If you've been seeing plastic bags sticking out of Richmond Sanitary's blue recycling bins lately, you might be thinking you can start adding your own to what you are recycling. But unfortunately, Richmond Sanitary says they don't take plastic bags and when they are put into the other recyclables, they contaminate the whole bin.

The good news is that most grocery stores in the area do take the plastic bags, so you don't have to throw them into the regular, unrecyclable garbage.

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

Most people know that leaving packages in their cars is like writing an invitation to a burglar to break into your car and check out what might be in the bag.

Some other, less well known tips: locking gas caps keep car thieves from getting too far away with the vehicle they've stolen (they can only drive until they run out of gas), so it's more likely the car will be found - often in good condition.

A club - with the lock side away from you - is a must.

Thanks to Rudi Raab, a Richmond resident who is a police officer in the East Bay, for these tips.

FREE TAX HELP

Don't forget: if you earned less than \$38,000 last year, you can get free help in filing your taxes and probably get an Earned Income Tax Credit that could be worth hundreds of dollars. Last year, trained volunteers at sites across the county helped about 1,700 Contra Costa residents collect more than \$2 million in tax credits and refunds.

For locations and hours of the local tax sites, which will be open until early April, call (800) 358-8832.

The project is a joint effort by United Way, Contra Costa Health Services, First Five Contra Costa, Employment and Human Services and the Internal Revenue Service.

SURPRISE VISITOR

The Neighborhood Council had a surprise visitor at its regular January meeting: Richmond Police Chief Chris Magnus, fresh from his first three days on the job, dropped in to join the meeting and say hello.

Since the new Chief bought a house in our neighborhood, he's automatically a member of the Neighborhood Council.

Magnus had some good things to say about Richmond and the Police Department. "I like what I've seen. It's the kind of city I want to be part of. I feel safe (in my neighborhood) and want to keep it that way." Magnus praised the police department, saying there were excellent people there. "A lot of it comes down to how we coordinate and better leadership." He said he'll be looking at improving follow-up, easy to use contact information and tips for residents and improving the way crime statistics are used to monitor what's going on. He described a community alert system launched in Fargo, where he was chief, that 15,000 residents signed up for to receive important information.

"It won't happen overnight," he said, promising to improve voice mail and email so residents could reach their officers. He's considering a number of initiatives to implement Community Involved Policing, including requiring officers to come to neighborhood meetings and improving accountability and openness. To walk the talk, he encouraged residents to contact him at chris_magnus@ci.richmond.ca.us

NEW SOURCE OF RICHMOND NEWS

Now there's a place online where news about Richmond is being posted. You can read about what's going on and also send community news, make comments, discuss and inform the community.

It's a "blog" at <http://richmondcurrents.blogspot.com/>.

PARKING STRIP REGULATIONS

The parking strip is the planting area between the front of the sidewalk and the curb.

Richmond Municipal Code 12.36.161 states "It is unlawful to place loose rock, decorative stones or pebbles, bark, asphalt or any other surfacing not specified hereafter in any strip of land used and maintained for parking between any property line and street. It is lawful to pave with concrete, brick or exposed aggregate concrete in such a parking strip by first obtaining a permit from the Director of Public Works.

In any of the above-mentioned situations, the Director of Public Works may require that planting areas be left in the parking strip for the planting of street trees and may require the planting of such trees as a condition of such permit."

The following are not allowed in the parking strip area:

- Concrete
- Aggregate
- Pea Gravel
- Brick

Plant material that blocks visibility

Plant material that inhibits walking across the parking strip.

However, the City has allowed property owners to fill in a parking strip with the condition they will plant a tree(s). A permit will be needed from the Engineering Division at (510) 307-8091. If the strip is filled in without a permit, the City will require the resident to pull the necessary permit and take out a section of the material at their own cost, so a tree can be planted.

If you have questions about this, please contact the Parks and Landscaping Division at (510) 231-3004.

The North & East Neighborhood Council heartily endorses planting trees in the parking strip and any other place you can. Our goal: make Richmond a city of trees.

NORTH & EAST PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

January 23, 2006

The Committee convened at 7:05 p.m. with members Sandi Genser-Maack, Dolores Hembree, James Johnson, Martha Seymour, Michael Warren and Jerry Rasmussen (Acting Chair) present.

1. Single-family dwelling at 2344 Esmond Avenue -- addition and conversion to multiple units — action deferred.

Myro Escobar, realtor, presented his proposal to add 400 sq. ft. to the rear of an existing 1100 sq. ft. house, plus a 1500 sq. ft. second story. A four-car attached garage would replace a two-car garage.

The Committee suggested cosmetic changes including tile trim along the parapet edges, and reconfiguring the new upper front entry, both to replicate existing design details. Re-aligning windows on the east facade was also suggested.

Noting the five exterior entry doors and the four separate rooms designated "living room," the Committee asked for clarification of exactly how many units are proposed. The applicant's response was vague (evasive) at best.

The Committee voted 6 - 0 to defer any decision pending submittal of clarified drawings and a copy of the City application to clearly indicate the number of units proposed.

2. Speed bumps proposed at 1124 26th Street — action deferred.

Elder Dorn, the only resident with an address on the 200' stretch of 26th Street, described the traffic problems here and along adjacent Rheem and Maricopa Avenues. And he suggested the best location for one or more bumps.

The Committee heard his concerns, noting that 26th Street dead-ends a half block north of Maricopa and that the problem drivers seem to be mostly speeders turning from the adjacent through streets. They pointed out alternative traffic calming tactics. They also suggested the Mr. Dorn enlist the support of his three neighbors on the other corners of his block, who also have driveway access on 26th, if he decides to petition the City for a speed bump.

The Committee voted to defer any decision pending Mr. Dorn's return with a more formal application.

The Committee adjourned at 8:20 p.m., to reconvene on Feb. 27th.

Richmond Art Center announces Family Day on May 6. At our Spring Splash celebration, enjoy FREE arts and crafts projects for all ages. There's something for everyone!

Save the date and watch for more information.

DEAR FRIENDS,

I am writing to inform you about two exciting pieces of legislation that cleared their first hurdle in the California State Assembly in January.

CLEAN MONEY IN CALIFORNIA

A crucial and historical vote took place on a bill that would bring real campaign finance reform to California. Assembly Bill 583: The Clean Money and Fair Elections Act of 2006 passed the Assembly Elections Committee with a vote of 4 -- 3. Over \$250 million was spent on initiative campaigns during last November's special election -- a record amount. The increasing sums of money and influence of "special interests" in campaigns is one of the biggest challenges facing our democratic system. As time spent on fundraising has increased, the public's opinion of government and confidence in elected officials has decreased and voter participation has eroded. Voter anger with the current system has been fueled by the perception that "everything in Sacramento is for sale," and that major contributors have more access to our elected officials than do ordinary citizens.

I introduced The California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act to address this problem head-on by encouraging candidates running for the state legislature and statewide office to voluntarily participate in publicly-funded campaigns.

Thank you to all of you who have supported this bill and made the passage out of the Assembly Elections Committee a reality. The Clean Money and Fair Elections Act is now pending with the Assembly Appropriations Committee. I hope you will continue to support this legislation and join me in eliminating the corrosive influence of money in politics.

DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM

As California prepared for its second execution in less than two months, both the legislature and the public have engaged in substantial debate over the death penalty.

Assembly Bill 1121: The California Moratorium on Executions Act, which I have co-authored, was introduced by State Assemblymembers Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) and Sally Lieber (D-Mountain View) as a result of this public debate. The bill would place a three-year moratorium on all scheduled executions in California while the fairness of the state's justice system is

studied. The California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice, a newly established bi-partisan body, will conduct a thorough study of the state's criminal justice procedures to ensure that our system is fair, just and accurate.

Over 100 people nationwide have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence, some coming within hours of their execution. Despite an automatic appellate process in California, our legal system is not foolproof.

Besides being a co-author, I also had the opportunity to sit in on the Assembly Public Safety Committee and cast one of the deciding votes for the successful passage of Assembly Bill 1121. I believe executions should be suspended until we have had the opportunity to review the findings of the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice. As a state, we have the responsibility to ensure that our justice system is being applied correctly and fairly.

It is my honor to serve the constituents of 14th Assembly District.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LONI HANCOCK

THROW IT AWAY -- GO TO JAIL

FROM ASSEMBLY MEMBER LONI HANCOCK

I am writing to make you aware of a very important change in California law which will impact every household in the state.

As of February 9, 2006, it is ILLEGAL to dispose of waste batteries, electronic devices, fluorescent light bulbs and mercury-containing thermostats in the trash.

These waste items are known as "universal wastes" and must be recycled or taken to a household hazardous waste disposal facility.

Universal wastes are hazardous wastes that are generated by several sectors of society, rather than a single industry or type of business. Hazardous wastes contain harmful chemicals, which, if put in the trash, are harmful to the environment and public health. These items include:

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Televisions and computer monitors, computers, printers, VCRs, cell phones, mp3 players, telephones, radios, and microwave ovens. These devices often contain heavy metals like lead, cadmium, copper, and chromium.

BATTERIES

All batteries of sizes AAA, AA, C, D, button cell, 9 Volt, and all other batteries, both rechargeable and single use. These contain a corrosive chemical that can cause burns as well as toxic heavy metals like cadmium.

FLUORESCENT TUBES AND BULBS AND OTHER MERCURY-CONTAINING LAMPS

These lights contain mercury vapor that may be released into the environment when they are broken. Mercury is a toxic metal that can cause harm to people and animals including nerve damage and birth defects. If mercury is released into the environment it can contaminate the air we breathe and enter streams, rivers, and the ocean.

For more information on universal waste and how to dispose of it, please contact Contra Costa County Household Hazardous Waste Program -- www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/cd/recycle/ or call 1-800-750-4096.

See the adjacent article for information on getting rid of hazardous waste.

Real estate activity for the month of January 2006

Closed sales for the month of January are typically slower due to homes being ratified in the month of December. On average, it takes a transaction thirty to thirty-five days to close. As mentioned in last month's article, the average days on market has increased from previous months. Interest rates are still much lower than the historical average. Although there have been fewer buyers searching for homes overall, we are still seeing increases in the final sales price.

<u>Address</u>	<u>List Price</u>	<u>Sales Price</u>	<u>BR</u>	<u>BA</u>	<u>Sq. Ft.</u>	<u>DOM</u>
500 block of 42 nd St.	\$509,999	\$500,000	3	2	1148	13
3000 block of Maricopa Ave.	\$394,950	\$402,000	2	1	829	60
3300 block of Esmond Ave.	\$399,000	\$400,000	2	1	998	14
2400 block of Garvin Ave.	\$399,900	\$420,000	2	1	1135	14
600 block of 39 th St.	\$439,000	\$468,180	2	1	1036	21
800 block of 29 th St.	\$449,000	\$480,000	2	1	1039	16
600 block of 37 th St.	\$460,000	\$500,000	2	1	955	37
900 block of 33 rd St.	\$479,500	\$470,000	2	1	1150	33
2800 block of Gaynor Ave.	\$489,000	\$504,000	4	2	1152	n/a
800 block of 35 th St.	\$495,000	\$495,000	2	1	944	30
2300 block of Brooks Ave.	\$496,000	\$496,000	3	1	1423	44

Article provided by Darrell Hoh of Marvin Gardens Real Estate. Marvin Gardens believes all material to be correct but assumes no liability for its accuracy.

FREE HAZARDOUS WASTE PICK UP

Free home pickup of household hazardous waste from seniors ages 60 and older and disabled residents of El Sobrante, El Cerrito, Hercules, Pinole, Richmond and San Pablo is now available by calling (800) 449-7587 to make an appointment. This free collection service is in addition to West County's drop-off facility for household hazardous waste available year-round, every Thursday, Friday and first Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. (closed noon to 12:30 for lunch) at 101 Pittsburg Avenue in Richmond. The facility's phone number is (888) 412-9277.

Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council

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The North & East Newsletter

The North & East Neighborhood: West to 23rd St., East to San Pablo Ave., North to the City limits, South to Macdonald Ave.

<p>I support my Neighborhood Council! _ I enclose dues (voluntary) of \$10 for the 05 - 06 year. _ I enclose a donation of _____ _ I enclose a donation for the newsletter _____ Name _____ Address _____ City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____ email _____ _ I do not want to remain on the mailing list</p>	<p>Mail to: Ronnie Marty 950 32nd St. Richmond, CA 94804</p> <p>make checks to: N & E</p>
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North & East Neighborhood Council Meeting

Thursday, February 16, 2006

Third Thursday

7:00 p.m.

**Richmond Senior Center
2525 Macdonald Avenue**

Guest Speaker

Kathryn Gerk

Director

City of Richmond Office of Emergency Services

What plans does Richmond have for a disaster?

What can you do?