



MINUTES FOR JANUARY 8, 2008

A warming fire greeted members and guests as they entered the venerable Neighborhood House on a chilly, out-of-sequence meeting night. At sign-in, everyone received an agenda, and members were given a ballot (to be submitted after hearing the evening's speakers) and a membership renewal form. Pre-meeting treats and beverages were available at the back table, and everyone partook until President Joni Eisen called the meeting to order at 7:15.

After she welcomed our guests and thanked everyone for coming out on a night when they'd otherwise be home monitoring the New Hampshire Primary outcome, Pres. Eisen announced changes to the agenda, sought and got approval on the agenda and minutes from the last two meetings, and gave the treasurer's report, tallying the t-shirt sales and memberships which have resulted in a bank balance of over \$860.

The primary focus of the meeting was to hear speakers, pro and con, on the February 5th ballot measures. Attempts were made to cover both sides of the propositions, but some parties either declined or failed to respond.

First up was Gary Delagnes, President of the SF Police Officers' Association, who explained to us why a **yes vote on Prop B** (SFPD Deferred Retirement Option Program) would benefit the community and city budget. Because of the 30-40% drop in new police officers, the department wants to keep the older officers around, to extend their service for 3 years beyond their retirement (after which they will earn 90% of their salary), which Officer DeLanis called a win-win, explaining the multi-layered financial structure which ends up benefiting the cops, but, because it's "cost neutral," will not cost the City. This proposition has been endorsed by "everyone," including the Supes, the SF *Chronicle*, Kamala Harris, and the Labor Council.

Corinne Woods, **proponent of Prop A** (Clean and Safe Neighborhood Park Bonds), introduced herself as someone who lives in Mission Creek and is involved in various park and Port organizations. She said she spends a lot of time working toward getting Potrero Hill better connected with the Port. The waterfront is up for major rezoning which will increase the density 10-fold with no open space provision. The best bet for park space is on the eastern waterfront, but land is expensive. The Port has over a billion dollar capital obligation (crumbling piers, toxin removal, infrastructure problems), but no money. As part of this \$185-million bond issue, Prop A earmarks \$33.5 million to be absolutely dedicated to waterfront parks: "The Port needs Prop A badly." Woods acknowledged the controversy with the artificial turf proposed for athletic fields and said there's movement toward separating that issue from the overall bond measure. She begged everyone to vote for Prop A and to take window signs to show their support.

Equally passionate but **anti-Prop A** was Steve Ambrose, a neighbor whose objection to this bond issue relates to the obliquely worded issue of replacing grass fields with artificial turf. Regarding the turf's toxicity, he told us that the "crumb layer" contains hazardous chemicals, including butylated

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hydroxyanisole, a carcinogen, as well as lead, arsenic, zinc, chromium and cadmium. (The effects of long-term repeated exposure to children or the environment are unknown.) Per Dr. Ambrose, it has been well documented that there is a high frequency of turf burn injuries associated with synthetic turf, and these skin wounds present the perfect portal of entry for bacterial infections. With the emergence of methicillin-resistant staph aureus (MRSA) infections, the increased risk posed by synthetic turf cannot be ignored. Although disinfectants would be regularly applied to the turf, these chemicals also become part of the environment in which humans and animals recreate. He encouraged everyone to vote no on Prop A.

Next up, Eric Heins from the California Teachers' Association told us why we should vote **no on Prop 92** (Community College Initiative). Mr. Heins is an SF resident and 4th-grade teacher. As a representative of the CTA, he says this \$3 billion set-aside will create more problems than it solves, and how will it be paid for? The measure lowers community college fees from \$20/unit to \$15/unit, and significantly limits the State's authority to increase fee levels in future years. If passed, Prop 92 could result in unintended problems that would negatively impact the CSU and threaten funding for other critical California programs. He named organizations similarly against Prop 92: the NAACP, The League of Women's Voters, and the SIEU.

Ed Murray, representing the American Federation of Teachers, gave us reasons to vote **yes on Prop 92**: "Lowering community college fees is a good thing." Following the budget downturn after the dot.com bust, student fees were raised from \$11.5/unit to \$26/unit. Enrollment dropped dramatically and classes became considerably bigger. In attempts to balance bad budgets, the governor has cut community college funding and raised tuition, which results in massive dislocation and teacher layoffs. "The up/down budgets kill the community colleges." To stabilize campus funding, he urged us to help students by voting for Prop 92. When asked about 1988's Prop 98 (School Funding Initiative), he said the glitch in 98 is that only 10% currently goes to community colleges because the K-12 lobby is so much bigger. K-12 demographics are in decline, while CC demographics are increasing, so we need funding based on actual enrollment. Community colleges are underfunded, and we need them as a vital part of California's education system. "Community colleges are gems! Cutting them is penny-wise and pound-foolish."

State Assemblyman Mark Leno trekked from Sacramento to give us information on the remaining propositions. He said that because a law has already been passed that does exactly what Prop 91 proposes, Prop 91 at this point is moot Even its backers advocate a **No on 91**.

He's "passionately neutral" on 92.

Prop 93 concerns term limits and reflects back to 1990's Prop 140 term limits initiative which rooted out the career politicians and the special interests keeping them in office (i.e. Willie Brown). State legislators are currently limited to 6 years in the Assembly and 8 in the Senate. The Senate is only half the size of the Assembly and Senate vacancies occur less frequently, so most Assembly members, termed out after 6 years, never reach the Senate. Members are termed out before reaching their full potential. Prop 93 will reduce the limit from 14 years to 12, and will allow all 12 years to be served in the same house. Prop 93 means more continuity and experience in running the State. Leno is **pro Prop 93**.

Propositions 94 through 97 all pertain to tribal gambling. Adding 17,000 slot machines (largest ever expansion of Las Vegas-style gambling), pitting Labor against the tribes, lacking any kind of audit, benefitting only 1/3 of the richest tribes and leaving other tribes dirt poor, these four propositions represent a question mark regarding their alleged benefit to California budgeting. Since the tribes are

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sovereign nations, they can do as they please without being accountable to the State. Leno's position is to "be honest. Balance the budget without using gambling." Thus he recommends **No on 94 - 97.**

Last to present, on behalf of the Global Peace Foundation, was Dr. Da-Vid, a **proponent of Prop C** (Alcatraz Conversion Project). Currently, Alcatraz Island, sacred to Native American People, is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Department of the Interior and is used as a tourist attraction where people pay money to see a facility that represents misery, punishment and wasted lives. The proponents of this proposition see a golden opportunity to initiate a completely new use of the island which would instead represent peace, hope and beauty. While Da-Vid acknowledged the challenge in changing the focus of this popular location, his organization envisions a Peace Center which would bring people from all over the world to San Francisco for the purpose of positive endeavors, welcomed by a huge statue of St. Francis with beautiful architecture and inspirational gardens, changing the energy of the Bay and beyond.

After the presentations, members turned in their marked ballots. President Eisen then opened the floor to nominations for 2008 executive committee positions. The following nominations were made and seconded: President – Joni Eisen; First Vice President/Program & Membership Chair – Lauren Wechsler; Second Vice President/Political Action Committee Chair – Rachel Schapira; Secretary – Quint King; Treasurer – Patrick Doyle. Members can continue to nominate candidates during the first half of the February 5th meeting; then, the election of officers will be held. The January meeting was adjourned, after which the ballots were counted, resulting in the Club's endorsements, which can be seen on the website at <http://phdemclub.org/index.php?page=display&id=7>, and in the February *Potrero View*.

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M. Kate Hilsenbeck
Secretary