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Oakland Post

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..." Proverbs 29:18 -



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City Passes \$2.4 Billion Budget, Leaving Some Residents Angry and Dissatisfied

Gallo seeks more funding to curtail prostitution and rescue sexually exploited minors

By Ken Epstein

The Oakland City Council this week passed a two-year \$2.4 billion budget based on a local economy that is rebounding from years of recession.

With input from councilmembers and the community, Mayor Libby Schaaf and Council President Lynette Gibson McElhaney put together a budget that closes an estimated \$18 million annual funding gap without making cuts to city services or staffing and pays for 40 new police officers.

The council also set aside \$617,000 to pay for a new Department of Race and Equity.

In the final discussions leading up to the council vote on Tuesday night, the money was spread around so a lot of local needs ended up receiving a little of the city's growing resources.

Mayor Schaaf praised the budget, saying it benefited from



Rebecca Kaplan



Noel Gallo

the collaborative input of many people.

"We closed the deficit. We kept our promises. We increased compensation for our workers and were able to make some strategic investments," she said.

Six councilmembers voted in favor of the budget. Noel Gallo voted no, and Desley Brooks abstained.

Some people in the community were happy that the new spending plan is funding all or part of the programs that are



Councilmember Noel Gallo, who has been organizing safety walks along International Boulevard to deter crime and prostitution, was able to secure funding in the new budget to create a shelter for sexually exploited girls. But, he says the money is still inadequate. Photo courtesy of East Bay Citizen.

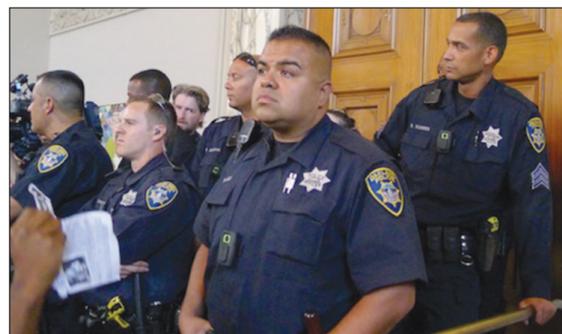
important to them.

But the final budget left some of the hundreds of residents who spoke at council hearings over the past few months dissatisfied and angry that their neighborhoods and their needs are still being neglected.

"It is heartbreaking the number of things we cannot fund," Council President McElhaney said.

Among the major issues were the inequitable division of services among the city's neighborhoods, lack of resources for jobs for the long term unemployed, youth and the formerly incarcerated, the need for more staff to aggressively enforce the minimum wage ordinance and an afford-

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Community members complained that they were being locked out of City Council meetings. Photo courtesy of Ella Baker Center.

Judge Orders Schaaf and Staff to Stop Denying Access to Public Meetings

By Post Staff

An Alameda County judge has issued a temporary restraining order requiring the City of Oakland to reopen public access to the second-floor galleries overlooking the council chambers.

The balconies had been closed for two months, after over 75 peaceful demonstrators took over the City Council chambers to prevent the council from voting to sell public land on East 12th Street near Lake Merritt to a developer to build a luxury apartment tower.

The city administration's decision to lock the galleries drastically decreased the number of people who could physically attend and participate in council meetings.

Once the council chambers had filled up, those attending were forced to wait in overflow rooms if they planned to speak, watching the meeting on television screens.

Many members of the public spoke at council meetings, expressing outrage at the closing

of the galleries, arguing that the city was illegally reducing public space in violation of Oakland's Sunshine Ordinance and the Brown Act.

"This is the house of the people," and the city has no right to keep the public out, said community activist James Vann, speaking at a recent council meeting.

City officials cited safety concerns as their reason for restricting the public's access to the upper-level galleries. But the excuse did not appear to carry much weight with the judge or the public.

Prior to the judge's ruling, Councilmembers Desley Brooks and Rebecca Kaplan had spoken out against the restriction.

The decision to close the galleries was made by city staff, according to Kaplan, and was never discussed or approved by the full council.

"It was the administration's idea," said Kaplan. "I never supported it."

"There was never a vote of the City Council," she said, "but now a judge has ruled, and it's not up to City Hall."

Council Set to Choose Developer to Renovate Kaiser Convention Center

By Ashley Chambers

The Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center, a historic Oakland landmark that has been shuttered and vacant for a decade, will undergo a transformation as the City Council is expected to vote next week on which of two developers will restore the building.

The convention center previously housed large-scale events, concerts, and prominent speakers — Dr. Martin Luther King who spoke there in 1962, Stokely Carmichael in 1968, the Grateful Dead, James Brown, and the Oakland school district's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Fest.



One Lake Merritt hotel rendering, courtesy of Lowney Architects.

The building includes a 45,000-square-foot arena that seats up to 6,000 people and the Calvin Simmons Theater that seats 1,900, two banquet rooms and a ballroom.

City staff is recommending that the city enter into a contract and long-term lease

with Orton Development, Inc., which is based in Emeryville, to rehabilitate the convention center and its historic architecture.

Under the city plan, the developer would foot the bill for the entire project and would recoup its investment by using

at least part of the building for profit-generating purposes.

The city's RFP requires restoration of the Calvin Simmons Theater as a performance space and for the entire project to include "as many communi-

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OUSD Proposes to Change Fremont High School's Name to Innovation High

By Quenajonay Frazier, Green & Gold



Fremont High will no longer be Fremont High after next year — it will be called Innovation School of Oakland.

This change is one of many outlined in a 37-page document that the Fremont Design Team submitted to the Oakland Unified School District on May 20.

It was the only proposal made in response to Superintendent Antwan Wilson's "Call for Quality Schools," which asked for groups inside and outside the school district, including charter companies, to compete to recreate Fremont.



Four other schools also were put out to bid for new designs.

The school board was expected to vote June 24 on the plan for Innovation School of Oakland, which would open in August 2016. Construction for a new facility would start at a later date.

Members of the design team said that the name would better fit the goal of the new school, which will focus on "design thinking," technology, engineering, health and international studies along with the three main career paths it now offers.

But not everyone likes the

new name or the concept of the new school.

"I am disappointed because I wanted to be an alumni [of Fremont High]," said senior Jessica Lindemulder. "Little did I know, I would not be able to return to the school I know."

Under the plan, Media Academy, Architecture Academy and Mandela Law & Public Service Academy will stay on campus but will be broadened into pathways with additional courses.

Media will be part of the Digital Media & Technology pathway; Architecture will be part of the Architecture & Engineering pathway; Mandela will be part of the Public Service & Global Studies

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The Misapplication of Jurisprudence

"Everybody should be safeguarded by the rule of law."



By Richard Wembe Johnson, Folsom Prison

There have been some new positions taken with regard to changing the laws that would allow some prisoners the opportunity to be released according to the "time fitting the crime."

These positions are opposed to someone being given an essential life sentence if the person's crime doesn't warrant it.

At the same time, just the opposite is happening. This is not representative of the entire criminal justice system, but rather in certain courts and among prison boards that have the power to release people from prison.

Since new changes are taking place to release only those who are qualified, some courts and board members have tak-

en it upon themselves to impose new language and stratagems that makes it harder for prisoners to be released, even though they may meet all the necessary criteria for release.

The two most prominent roadblocks to a release are first, the so-called "Release Risk Assessment," which determines that you are a potential risk to society if you are released even though your case isn't violent, or if there is no history of violence in the record, and even if all indicators point to you not being violent.

Secondly, they can deny you freedom if they don't think you have "insight" into your life, your crime, or your predictive future.

This is just as dubious as the first one because now they have their own views on "insight" and what it means. If your view does not comport

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Fremont High's Student-run Newspaper Shuts Down After 104 Years

By Ken Epstein

Fremont High School in East Oakland has shut down its award winning school newspaper, the "Green & Gold," which has been training young writers and reporting school news for the past 104 years.

"We are working off a limited budget — We received a substantial cut in funds and personnel," Principal Emiliano Sanchez told Green & Gold staff reporter Nelia Mungia, as reported in the June 10 edition of the newspaper.

The newspaper is produced by Fremont's Media Academy, which pays for printing costs but not the adviser.

Next year, the school will no longer offer the newspaper production class. The major cost to the school is paying for one teacher to work on the paper for two class periods during the school's eight-period day.

"That is crazy and stupid because we (have had) the Green & Gold for a while," wrote one



Fremont High School Media Academy juniors Kammi Bauzon and Willie Williams spoke on NBC News in 2014.

junior on the paper's staff. "I think we should have a newspaper because then everybody (is) going to know what is going to happen."

The Post contacted Oakland Unified School District administration to ask if OUSD is going to find the money to save the newspaper.

According to district spokesman Troy Flint, "OUSD's central office staff only recently

became aware of the decision to shutter the Green & Gold and will evaluate it to see if other options are available within the confines of the school budget and district finances in general."

"No outcome is certain at this point, but a full review will be conducted in the next few weeks," said Flint.

When the school's Media Academy was at its height,

students produced nine issues a year. Over the years, the prerequisite classes for working on newspaper staff have been eliminated, including instruction in basic reporting skills and digital newspaper layout and design.

In the past two years, students and their advisor put out three issues a year.

According to Green & Gold writer Quenajonay Frazier, the newspaper has made a difference in her education.

"The newspaper is one of the main reasons why people on the newspaper (staff) got good grades in English," she said.

"It also helps with the community," she continued. "People get to know more about the school."

Frazier said she decided to join the Media Academy "because I am into writing."

"And I got better," she said. "I wasn't very good at grammar, but the teacher took the time to help me."

City Youth Make Their Voices Heard on Police Reform

By Tulio Ospina

The City of Oakland's Youth Advisory Commission, which serves as a liaison between local policymakers and young people, recently released its recommendations on improving relations between local law enforcement, the communities they police and the city's youth.

Several young people presented the recommendations at last week's Public Safety Committee meeting, advising councilmembers about issues impacting their lives.

The Youth Commission brought together nearly 75 participants between the ages of 13 to 21 from many community-based organizations.

The young people discussed among themselves what steps can be taken to ensure the welfare of their communities.

"We asked each of the groups to come with five recommendations ready, and then the entire assembly chose their top five," said Chantal Reynolds, a member of the commission's staff.

"Now they're having those conversations with city officials, and some of the youth met with the Chief of Police and went through the recommendations with him," she said.

Brooklyn Williams, a youth



Young people work on their police reform proposals.

leadership advocate who helped convene the youth meetings, said she was responding to the absence of young people's voices in many hearings and decision-making meetings.

"What adults need to understand is that when you partner with youth, you automatically increase efficiency and maximize resources because they are our most valuable resources," said Williams.

Mack McGhee, who was a Student Voice Ambassador for Oakland Unified School District's All City Council at the time, was one of the students who spoke with Chief Sean Whent and presented at the Public Safety Committee.

"Before going through this process, I wouldn't have even

spoken to a police officer unless there was no way around it, because of the way things are happening throughout the country," said McGhee.

"What the experience did was it re-humanized police officers for me but also taught me there's a lot that needs to change with law enforcement as a system," he said.

The top five recommendations selected by the youth were:

Create a committee to retrain law enforcement officers to use non-lethal force when subduing suspects. Also, implement Youth Lead Trainings that would help teach officers about the culture and lives of Oakland's inhabitants;

De-militarize the Oakland

Police Department (OPD). The report states that, "OPD should not use weapons used in war (e.g. tanks, military trucks, other military weaponry, etc.) against the residents and citizens of Oakland;"

Youth should be asked to serve on police hiring panels and committees;

The city should hold "Know Your Rights" trainings throughout Oakland for residents to understand the proper ways to "safely navigate encounters with law enforcement officers;"

Police officers should be required to live in the communities they patrol for a certain number of days per week, and that law enforcement agencies develop a more diversified police force.

According to the report, youth feel that law enforcement does not reflect the population it comes in contact with, and many officers are not from Oakland. Instead, they come to Oakland to police residents and then go home.

"This does not lead to vested interests in a community or sustained relationships with residents," says the report.

OUSD Proposes to Change Fremont High School's Name to Innovation High

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pathway. And a new Science, Health and Forensics pathway will open in the new school.

This excites some students, including freshman Bianca Ramirez, who helped with the design in part by visiting several schools in Southern California.

"I love the new labs because that means more hands on," said Ramirez.

Other students who were involved in a fight to keep Fremont from turning into a charter school were not happy with all parts of the final plan.

"Students felt betrayed and did not like the fact that the school's name is changing," said senior Angel Cornejo. "The teachers were too busy trying to fit in someone else's norms that they forgot the real purpose of the fight."

One thing members of the Leadership class generally like about the plan is the flexibility it has for students.

Newcomers and special education students will be able to join all classes and pathways. Students can take classes in other pathways, not just their own.

"We can take the class we want for our career," said freshman Janet Chavez.

The plan calls on everyone

at the school to be learners and for teachers to use technology for blended learning in their classes. That would mean that students would do most of their work independently on computers and they would move at a pace that fits their learning style. The teacher would be roaming the room to help students wherever they are in their learning.

"I do not think that it (blending learning) is the greatest idea," said senior Loata Fine of the Architecture Academy.

"No child should be left behind. Everyone should learn together at the pace so they can learn and build off each other, rather than working on a computer alone," said Fine.

Along with asking teachers to adopt blended learning, the proposal gives teachers other new roles.

"Teachers will have advisories," the plan states. "Advisory curriculum will serve to personalize learning for all students and support them academically, socially and emotionally."

Richard Charlesworth, a Media and Mandela history teacher, said one of his concerns about the plan is not understanding what "design thinking" actually means.

He also worries about

teacher turnover. Students cannot learn with different teachers each year, he explained.

But he sees positives aspects of the plan.

"We are good at keeping the strong staff and most of the new plan we have already been doing," he said. "We do not throw the baby away with the dirty bath water."

Nidya Baez, co-leader of the design team and a Fremont alumni, said the name of the new school is still pending.

Baez said she believes it is necessary for the name to change because there are many people who view Fre-

mont High negatively and the design team wants people to believe that there will be an actual change on the campus.

However, Baez said just because the name will change does not mean Fremont will no longer be Fremont.

"The name change doesn't erase the 110 classes" that have graduated from Fremont, said Baez, who hopes the new school will keep many Fremont traditions.

The design team dropped at least one controversial idea from its original plan. It no longer wants to add sixth, seventh and eighth grades to the campus.

The Misapplication of Jurisprudence

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to theirs, denial of release becomes the expected recourse.

Both of these excuses are a mere pretext, cloaked in deception as preventative measures.

This is so very important because these practices undermine the essential premise of jurisprudence, and it denies justice to all who not only deserve it, but it certainly questions the fairness of law, justice and any sense of equality as it is articulated and practiced.

\$2.4 Billion Budget Passes

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able housing crisis that is impacted by tenant protections that are not enforced.

Speakers at the hearings called on the city to focus on the desperate conditions facing the most vulnerable residents: meals for some of the 200 Oakland seniors who go each day without food; shelter and support for homeless girls and sexually exploited minors; and funding for Central American children living in Oakland who need lawyers to help them win refugee status to avoid being forced to return to homelands they fled to escape violence and death.

Others called for brush removal to prevent wildfires like the firestorm that devastated the Oakland hills in 1991. Supporters of the Oakland Animal Shelter pushed the city to fund services to protect dogs and cats.

Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan, who supported the budget, was pleased with some of the programs that were funded.

"I'm glad we were able to support some very important things in this budget including enforcement of laws that protect people's rights: tenant protections and wage protections," she said, also praising the decision to fund her proposal to go after illegal guns and illegal gun dealing.

A major problem, Kaplan said, is that the city's tax income is not going up very

Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center

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ty benefits as possible," including "local and small business participation, commitment to living and prevailing wages, commitment to labor peace and opportunities for job training and mentoring, a high number of jobs created for a range of training and education levels, and provision of high quality public facilities and amenities," according to the city report.

The Orton proposal, which is in accord with the city RFP, includes restoration of the Calvin Simmons Theater as an event space, and use of the arena as a "multi-floor rehab combining office, flex, public access, and food uses."

The plan also proposes to use the surrounding outdoor space for community gardens, barbecue areas, public art and entertainment.

A coalition of community members and arts enthusiasts is opposed to the Orton proposal, saying the project would transform the arena — which is the majority of the interior of the building — into offices for private businesses.

The city's RFP has suggested that the building could be used for offices, technology, design and private commercial use as well as entertainment, conference and event space, retail uses, performance space, and light industrial uses such as a brewery, maker spaces, and artist studios.

The alternative proposal came from Creative Develop-

ment Partners (CDP), based in Oakland. It includes restoration of the Calvin Simmons Theater as a world-class performing arts center and use of the arena for sporting and other large events, and paying for the project by building a 15-story hotel adjacent to the Convention Center.

The hotel would be nestled in between the Oakland Museum and the convention center on park land that is presently a parking lot, incorporating a green design.

The CDP proposal is built around community benefits, including: creating more than 1,700 jobs and a career training program in partnership with Laney and Merritt Colleges for jobs in hospitality, culinary arts, creative arts, and landscaping, as well as a partnership with the Oakland Unified School District's Linked Learning program.

The CDP proposal, called "One Lake Merritt," envisions the building as a hub for local music, cultural and performing arts companies to use as rehearsal and performance space.

The proposal has garnered significant support from the local arts community. But while city staff found the CDP proposal "compelling," they are recommending that the city go with the Orton plan and look for other potential sites for a hotel.

The City Council is expected to vote on the issue on Tuesday, July 7.

much despite increasing rents and growing numbers of rental properties.

"If we don't fix the revenue situation, we'll be constantly in the situation where different vital needs are pitted against each other," she said.

When councilmembers ask the city's revenue department why revenue is not going up, she said, "They are told they can't give us the data because the computers don't work."

"Why is it that the amount of money (staff) says we will be getting in rental property tax lower than what we got in 2011?" She asked.

Councilmember Gallo said he opposed the budget, in part because of its failure to provide more resources to help sexually exploited girls and young women.

"The council set aside \$500,000 to build a shelter where the girls can stay," he said, "But we need the services that go with it."

"What the council offered was a good step, but it was a small step," Gallo said. "We have to get serious about dealing with human trafficking in Oakland."

"Everybody cries about it, feels sorry about, but it's still there — every day in the city."

Not waiting for the council to move ahead on this issue, Gallo is holding meetings with Catholic churches in the area to ask them to open their doors so girls will have a place to stay.

son would pose a risk. This is utterly ridiculous.

This is important to everyone because if you believe in the idea of justice for all, you should take a stand when it's abused and misapplied, especially for the most vulnerable in society.

When someone is convicted and is duly punished for their wrong doing, then their debt to society is satisfied, any additional extensions of time is an injustice. Regardless of your personal views on the merits of the criminal justice system, as a society of laws, everybody should be safeguarded by the rule of law, not

by the political applications of it.

Prisoners should be afforded the same expectations of eventual freedom after they've completed their sentences, and not held in bondage solely based on unscrupulous, questionable antics amounting to "abuse of power" and the discretionary application of it.

And, as we reflect on the roots of Independence Day, I ask you also to remember that slavery too was outlawed. Or, was it?

You can reach Mr. Johnson by letter: **Richard Johnson K-53293, CSP-SAC c7-106, P.O. Box 290066, Represa, CA 95671.**