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West County Newsletter

JULY 2013

A message from Supervisor John Gioia



Clean Air—Locally, Nationally, Globally

Summer months bring nice warm weather to the Bay Area, but also more smog and in turn, more "Spare the Air" days. While air quality here has improved over the years, there is still plenty of work to do to make our air healthier to breathe.

I'm honored to have a new role in my fight for clean air and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Recently, I was appointed by Governor Brown to the California Air Resources Board to represent the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Air Resources Board is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Among its many important roles is providing leadership in addressing climate change, and implementing and enforcing air pollution control rules.

The groundbreaking environmental work of the Air Resources Board has established California as a national air quality leader by setting the most stringent vehicle emission standards in the United States.

I look forward to working with the other board members in tackling critical upcoming issues, including investing the state's cap-and-trade revenues, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, advancing clean energy, and increasing air monitoring of industrial facilities.

I continue to serve on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board and feel well positioned to advance policies to improve air quality at the local, state, and national levels.



6/27/13—Senators Mark DeSaulnier, and Loni Hancock administer oath of office to Supervisor Gioia.

My beliefs are simple: Everyone deserves to breathe clean, healthy air, whether they live in the city, suburbs, a rural area, or next door to an oil refinery or a freeway.

I also believe that global warming is a major threat to our quality of life, including to our public health, and that it's imperative to reduce the emissions that we know contribute to the problem.

I am committed to do all that I can to address these serious challenges, and I invite you to join me in this effort, including providing me with your thoughts and ideas. For good information on reducing your carbon footprint, check this website: www.carbonfund.org/reduce.

- John

“Free App, for iPhone and Android, gives residents inspection results from the past five years for more than 4,200 Contra Costa food facilities.”

Restaurant Inspection Results on Your Smartphone



Want to see if your favorite restaurants are clean and sanitary?

Results from the County Health Department’s regular restaurant inspections are now available on your smart phone with a free app.

The free app, for iPhone and Android, gives residents inspection results from the past five years for more than 4,200 Contra Costa food facilities.

Health inspectors regularly check eating establishments to protect the public from foodborne illnesses and promote safe food-handling.

It’s common for county environmental health inspectors to find violations on their unannounced visits, but most are minor infractions, which are corrected on the spot.

The public should be most concerned by restaurants with repeat violations.

The app also shows which establishments have been forced to close due to health violations.

Inspection results are also available on the Health Department’s website, or visit www.cchealth.org/eh/

To download the app, which is called California Food Inspector, visit your iPhone or android app store.

For more, see the Health Department’s web page on the program at <http://cchealth.org/eh/retail-food/smartphone-app.php>.

Supervisor Gioia Co-Chairs United Way’s Major Anti-Poverty Initiative

The United Way of the Bay Area has embarked on a major mission to cut Bay Area poverty in half by 2020. The effort, involving many community partners and civic leaders, focuses on three drivers: jobs, education, and basic needs. Called the Roadmap to Cut Poverty, its goal is to lift 220,000 Bay Area families out of poverty by helping them reach economic stability.

Supervisor Gioia is a co-chair of this major initiative, which is moving from a year of planning to developing priorities and strategies. The effort is focusing on six population groups: female heads of household, families with young children, men and boys of color, immigrants, and seniors.

The aim is to build on the efforts of the Bay Area’s many existing organizations working on decreasing poverty by enhancing collaborations, partnerships, and communication and in doing so creating a broad-based movement to make a significant impact.

The approach is based on the belief that economic success hinges on a complex web of factors including increased education, technical skills and training, and better access to childcare, healthcare and housing. United Way hopes to energize a collective effort to address these vital needs as a means to build sustainable family finances.

To learn more, check United Way’s website www.uwba.org or contact Terrance Cheung @ terrance.cheung@bos.cccounty.us or 510-231-8688.



County Library Turns 100! Launches Planning Process

The Contra Costa County Library is 100 years old this year, and in addition to celebrations, it's embarking on a strategic planning process covering the next two years. An important part of this process is listening to public input.

Library staff want to know what we want from our library -- what should change, what should stay the same? What does a community library mean to you?

Supervisor Gioia and County Librarian Barbara Flynn will soon host town hall meetings at West County libraries to educate residents about the strategic planning process, and collect feedback.

Input can also be provided by email, letters and an online survey. Look for it both on Supervisor Gioia's and the County library's websites.

District 1 in West County is home to five County libraries, in Pinole, San Pablo, El Sobrante, El Cerrito and Kensington. Community planning meetings will be held at the libraries in late summer and *early fall. (The City of Richmond also operates a great library system.)

The meeting dates and times will be posted on Supervisor Gioia's website and at each community library. Check back in a few weeks.

"Library Staff want to know what we want from our library... what should change, what should stay the same?"

Free Summer BART Passes to Cultural Events A Program of the County Library

The Contra Costa County Library and 511 Contra Costa, a one-stop transportation resource service, are again teaming up to offer free BART tickets to library cardholders traveling to attractions under the library's popular Discover & Go program.

Discover & Go is a unique library program offering discounts to library cardholders to a variety of Bay Area museums, art galleries and other educational and cultural events.

The BART program is good for tickets to the Aquarium of the Bay, the Asian Art Museum, Bedford Gallery, California Academy of the Sciences, California Shakespeare Theatre, Cartoon Art Museum, Children's Creativity Museum, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Habitot Children's Museum, Museum of the African Diaspora, Oakland Museum of California, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

This is the second summer of the popular program, which runs through July and August.

It is funded by the Countywide half cent sales tax for transportation and a grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to promote the use of public transportation. Supervisor Gioia supported this grant as a member of the Air District board.

For information on the program, including on how to get a library card and access Discover & Go tickets, check the library's website at www.cclib.org or by phone at 925-646-6423.

Neighbors Save Money on Automatic Gas Shut-Off Devices

“Installing one device can typically cost \$400 to \$500 per house. Group installations can lower this cost by \$100 or more”

To reduce the risk of fire after emergencies such as earthquakes, several years ago Supervisor Gioia co-sponsored a new county law requiring automatic gas shut off devices on all new home construction, major remodels, and upon the sale of property.

These requirements apply only to unincorporated communities (such as Kensington, El Sobrante, East Richmond, North Richmond, Montalvin Manor and Tara Hills) where the County regulates construction.

Many other jurisdictions such as the cities of Richmond and El Cerrito have their own, similar gas shut-off device ordinances modeled after the County's law.

Residents in some neighborhoods are coming together to jointly hire a contractor to install these safety devices on multiple homes at once in order to save money.

Many plumbers and others trained to install the shut-off valves offer group discounts. Installing one device can typically cost \$400 to \$500 per house. Group installations can lower this cost by \$100 or more.

East Richmond Heights and Richmond's Marina Bay community are two West County neighborhoods that have organized to save individual household costs by collectively installing automatic gas shut-off devices

To learn more about these safety devices, contact the County Building Inspection Division at

925-646-7200 or Terrance Cheung in Supervisor Gioia's office at 510-231-8686.

Free Home Improvements to Reduce Asthma Risks for Some West County Communities

Certain home conditions are linked to asthma including mold, dust mites, and pest habitats. Many of these can be mitigated through cleaning or simple construction.

Lower income West County residents may be eligible for free home improvements by the nonprofit Community Energy Services Corporation (CESC) to reduce or remove asthma triggers.

The organization, which is funded by grants from the County and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, inspects homes, and does a variety of improvements such as repairing leaks, removing pests, and installing ventilation fans.

The service is available to renters and home owners, with income verification, in the following cities; San Pablo, El Cerrito, Pinole, Hercules, and in the unincorporated communities of East Richmond, Tara Hills, Rollingwood, Montalvin Manor, Kensington, El Sobrante, North Richmond, Rodeo and Crockett .

For more information or to see if you're eligible, contact CESC at 510-981-7764, or visit their website at www.ebenergy.org.

Beautifying El Sobrante

There's a lot of activity underway to revitalize El Sobrante, with progress on two major community improvement projects.

Supervisor Gioia is working closely with several community groups on both projects. One will enhance the park area adjacent to the El Sobrante Library and San Pablo Creek and the other will improve sidewalks and landscaping along San Pablo Dam Road.

Expanding the El Sobrante Library Park Area

Planning efforts have begun to convert unused land behind the library along San Pablo Creek to a mini park with a walking path and native plants, building on the excellent work of the nonprofit SPAWNERS creek restoration group. The goal is to enhance the property to a family-friendly open space, joining the library with the creek. The project includes repaving the library parking lot with environmentally-friendly pervious material that allows for drainage. Groundbreaking is expected within a year.

The project is being funded through county dedicated park funds, and Measure WW funding from the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD).

Partners include the library, SPAWNERS, El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council, El Sobrante Friends of the Library and El Sobrante Historical Society.

Improving Sidewalks and Landscaping on San Pablo Dam Road

The second project aims to enhance walkability and pedestrian safety along San Pablo Dam Road from El Portal Drive to Appian Way. Sidewalks will be built or widened along various stretches. Dead or dying street trees will be replaced with Chinese Elm (chosen for its suitability for the area) and new bus seating and trash cans will be installed. The El Sobrante Chamber of Commerce plans to contribute sidewalk planters. This project is being funded by both local transportation sales tax and state funding.

For more contact Terrance Cheung at terrance.cheung@bos.cccounty.us or at 510-231-8688.

Vacant Land Growing Into Educational Urban Farm

Supervisor Gioia is working with Urban Tilth —a Richmond educational non-profit —to turn a 3.3 acre county-owned site in North Richmond into an urban farm and environmental and health educational center.

After visiting a similar project in Portland called Zenger Farm, Supervisor Gioia was inspired to work with a local non-profit to create an educational urban farm in West County that is designed, built and run by youth. The new project, called ROOTS Farm, will include an education center, amphitheater, animals and outdoor kitchen.

A Community Advisory Council of residents and stakeholders will help guide the effort. Urban Tilth has successfully run a variety of educational youth and community gardening projects for many years, including its groundbreaking work on the Richmond Greenway. The project will be funded through the County and foundation grants.

For more information contact Luz Gomez at luz.gomez@bos.cccounty.us or by phone at 510-231-8689.



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Other Elected Officials

House of Representatives:
 Congressman George Miller, III
 (District 7)
 (510) 262-6500 - Richmond Office

Congressman John Garamendi
 (District 10)
 (925) 757-7187 - District Office

State Senate & Assembly:
 Senator Mark DeSalunier
 (District 7)
 (925) 602-6593 - District Office

Senator Loni Hancock
 (District 9)
 (510) 286-1333 - District Office

Assemblywoman Nancy Skinner
 (District 14)
 (510) 559-1406 - District Office

Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla
 (District 11)

Commission & Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in community issues? Want to get involved? The County has numerous citizen boards that advise the Supervisors on a range of issues. For a complete list of openings check the county's website at <http://contra.napanet.net/maddybook/>. Click on Board Advisory Body Information. Applications are available on-line, or through our office. There are current openings on:

County Fire Protection District
 Vicki Wisher—925-941-3318

West County Alcohol Policy Working Group
 Luz Gomez—510-231-8689

Regular Public Meetings

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
 Meets at 9:00 a. m. every Tuesday at the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St, in Martinez

El Cerrito City Council
 Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of every month at the El Cerrito City Hall, 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito

El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council
 Meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month at the El Sobrante Library, 4191 Appian Way, off San Pablo Dam Road

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council
 Meets at 7 p.m. the last Tuesday of every month at the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council
 Meets at 5 p.m. on the second Wednesday of every month at 515 Silver Avenue in North Richmond

Pinole City Council
 Meets at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Pinole City Hall, 2131 Pear Street, Pinole

Richmond City Council
 Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday at Richmond City Hall, 440 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

San Pablo City Council
 Meets at 7 p.m. on the first and third Monday of every month at San Pablo City Hall, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, Maple Hall, Building Two, San Pablo

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