



Democratic Directions

January's Meeting

Wed. Jan. 9

7 PM

Alameda Hospital.

Representatives from the presidential campaigns will make a pitch for their candidates.

Upcoming Events

Jan. 3 - Iowa caucuses

Jan. 8 - New Hampshire primary

Jan. 19 - Nevada primary

Jan. 26 - South Carolina primary

Feb. 5 California primary

Bringing charter into 21st century

Alameda city councilwomen Lena Tam and Marie Gilmore have taken on the daunting task of suggesting updates to the city's charter, and at our Nov. 14 meeting they talked about needed changes since the charter was last amended, in 1934.

For instance:

- A city can't require its employees to live in the city, as the Alameda charter still does.
- Specifics, like council meeting dates, should be deleted, for flexibility.
- \$50 per meeting might have been generous pay in 1934, but in 2007 similar-sized cities (like San Leandro) pay their councilmembers \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year.

The charter must be changed by voters, and the Tam-Gilmore subcommittee is aiming to place the charter revision measure on the November 2008 ballot.



Alameda city councilwomen

Lena Tam and Marie Gilmore

Tam and Gilmore also filled in club members about their recent council trip to China.

The councilmembers visited Alameda's Chinese sister city, Wuxi, which is about 100 miles east of Shanghai. They toured factories and attended cultural events.

Both commented on the remarkable pollution in Beijing, and Gilmore said the scope of construction going on everywhere was truly amazing.

A final word from the departing president

As my two years serving as the co-president of the City of Alameda Democratic Club draws to a close, I, of course, have many ideas about what to do about any number of issues in Alameda. (Have you ever met a Democrat who didn't have opinions about everything? Hopefully based on fact.)

I have become increasingly uncomfortable voicing these opinions, and that is why I won't be renewing my membership in the club. You see, I live in Oakland. But, despite my being an outsider, I have observed that the people of Alameda are more than capable of solving the problems of their lovely city. As an example,

the re-election of Frank Matarrese.

And in my Oakland district, as in Alameda, I also have two excellent officials: re-elected Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker and Assemblyman Sandre Swanson.

Having a propensity for lecturing, I am tempted to urge you all to vote as I see fit. However, I will forego this penchant and just wish the very best for Alameda. But not before I thank my two co-presidents, first Garrett Dempsey and then Rob Bonta, for the past two years of cooperation and mutual respect.

May 2008 bring us all peace,

Myrna Schnur

Opinions and editorials

USA: Warmonger or Schoolmarm?

By Mark Hamilton

How did we get here? The "most powerful nation in the world," hated as the worst of bullies by so many around the globe. Pushing our weight around, and why? Because we can? As author Joe Conason so eloquently lays it out in his book, Big Lies; The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How it Distorts the Truth, "compassionate conservatism" is neither "compassionate" nor "conservative." Uncaring and wasteful seems more like it. So, where can we go from here?

In my humble opinion, we, as a nation, must find a way to show concretely that we care about the advancement of all of our fellow human beings, especially the young ones, and especially in the Third World, if we want to be seen as having the wisdom to use our power wisely rather than foolishly. What

Minutes of Nov. 14 meeting

Meeting called to order by Rob Bonta at 7:30 PM .

Minutes approved from October meeting.

Dec. 2 luncheon meeting is at Pasta Pelican. Invitations sent by email. Price is \$25.

Slate of officers to be sworn in at meeting in December. Slate was voted and passed at this meeting.

Main Program: City council members Lena Tam and Marie Gilmore were appointed by city council to look at city charter and update it. Her are the points they talked about:

- 1916 adopted city charter; charter not been updated since
- city voters have to OK charter changes
- there are items that are now illegal, i.e. employees must live in city
- clean up language- date of city council meetings can be taken care of by ordinance
- pay of council \$50 per meeting- dates back to 1930's (in San Leandro it's \$23,000 per year)
- "secret police fund" -still in use--should it be?
- public utilities board has own budget--council has no power to change budget
- their bonding ability depends upon own assets--if default would reflect upon city
- About Alameda Point- Suncal appointed master developer; scheduled to come up with a plan to present to Navy. Consultants seem to be necessary because of the complexity of area.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan C. Robinson, Secretary

better way than to start building schools around the globe so people can gain the knowledge and training they need to better their lives?

Studies show that in Third World countries, especially those torn by internal strife or outside aggression, students and teachers are among the first to be displaced, to have their academic programs and educational efforts interrupted. Take Iraq, for example. We could use military and/or civilian personnel and equipment to deliver the modular components needed for construction of schools to the "safe" areas of the country, then turn them over to the educators already there, once they are built. I believe word would spread quickly that this was being accomplished, and that the people in surrounding regions would ask, "What do we need to do to get a new school here?" The answer, of course, would be, "Make your region safe," and a grass-roots effort within the population of

that region might just get done what our "invading troops" cannot.

Once we have the trust of the world back, we can start working on our OWN public education system. I've long felt the solution there is to require, by law, that all publicly-elected officials enroll their children in public schools. I bet we'd have the safest, best equipped and supported schools anywhere in a hurry.

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Holiday luncheon

About 60 club members and guests enjoyed a buffet lunch, socializing Dec. 2 at the Pasta Pelican restaurant.

On the program were the swearing-in of 2008 officers, a talk by former Assemblywoman Wilma Chan about her 12 political wishes for the New Year and an award to Norma Smith for her work as membership chair.



Norma Smith receives an award for her diligent work for the club.



Club officers for 2008: front row from left, Rae Lisker, Karen Green, Johanne Duffy, NakMin Oddie. Back row from left, Rob Bonta, Jim Oddie, Joan Robinson, Mike McMahon.

Below, featured speaker Wilma Chan.



City Councilman Frank Matarrese with two admirers.



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Any material to be considered
for inclusion in the newsletter
MUST be submitted to lcdennis50@earthlink.net
or mailed to 3104 El Paseo, Alameda 94502
14 days before the next monthly meeting

“My own country, the United States, is principally responsible for obstructing progress here in Bali. We all know that.”

- *Former Vice President Al Gore, at the UN climate Change summit Dec. 13 in Bali .*

Backers of electoral measure switch sights to November

Democratic voters take note: the battle isn't over. It has just been delayed.

GOP backers of an initiative to change how California's electoral votes are counted said Dec. 6 that qualifying for the June 2008 ballot is "unrealistic" and they will direct their attention to November.

The initiative has drawn national attention because it would assign California's electors on a district-by-district basis rather than award the statewide winner all 55 electoral votes.