

The Platform

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MGO DEMOCRATIC CLUB presents



FEAR, CRIME, OUR KIDS AND OUR MONEY

Guest speaker: Michael Roosevelt of Oakland Think Tank

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

DIMOND LIBRARY, 3565 FRUITVALE AVENUE, OAKLAND;

We will also be holding our MGO Election on the Club Name Change at this meeting. Members will have a chance to vote to change to "Oakland Democratic Club", to "Oakland Dems" or to keep "Metropolitan Greater Oakland Democratic Club".

Directions: BY CAR-580 East to the Fruitvale Avenue exit. Turn left onto Fruitvale Avenue. 580 West to Coolidge Ave/Fruitvale Ave exit, merge onto Montana St and turn right at Fruitvale Ave. **AC Transit** 53, 57 or NL to Fruitvale and MacArthur. **BART** to the Fruitvale station. AC line 53 up Fruitvale to MacArthur. Walk East (toward the hills) one block. **Library is on the left across from Safeway.**

For more information go to www.mgoclub.org.

And as usual non-members are always welcome to attend at no cost!



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: WHAT ARE THEY THINKING? February 2009

Sometimes, it's hard to know what our elected officials are thinking, or if they are so focused on getting through an agenda that they aren't thinking very clearly at all. Cases in point:

- City Council on Feb. 3 passed new three-year funding for Measure Y violence prevention programs without reading the outside evaluation or getting input from the oversight committee.
- Are we the only ones that have heard that old one about government of the people, by the people and for the people?
- Three Council members forgot to nominate members of the Measure Y oversight committee, in a town where crime is the number one concern of every citizen.

The recent anti-nepotism ordinance forbade supervisor/direct report relationships between friends, and will ask city staffers to disclose such relationships. Yet, business relationships, where income may be affected in a major way, do not need to be disclosed. Go figure!

These examples, major and minor, show why MGO and other community organizations need to be vigilant on a regular basis to make sure the Oakland's citizens' interest are kept uppermost.

That makes for some late nights at City Hall, and for hours spent in meetings analyzing reports and draft legislation. However, some responsible body has to go to this trouble, and we have nominated ourselves at MGO to watch over—and out for—Oakland.

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Events, activity notices and articles of interest to Democrats to the Platform Newsletter. Submission limit- 250 words.

FEAR, CRIME, OUR KIDS AND OUR MONEY

If you live in Oakland, I think it would be fair to say that you, at one time or another feared the prospect of being a victim of a crime. Just last night while walking on Piedmont Ave., after a movie, a strange man walking by stopped and asked me if he could ask me a question. "Was this a robbery set up?" For a moment I feared so I just kept walking.

A gardener friend tells me he's been robbed at gun point 4 times in the last 2 years. My friend feels that Asians are thought to carry cash and, hence, are the targets of street robbery. A couple of times he was patted down by the robber, to make sure he wasn't "holding out" on the robber. Unfortunately, my friend, because of fear, is very seriously thinking about moving his business, his family and his tenacity to Alameda.

Fear brought on by crime and or the perception of crime. Well, I would also say that the fear is exacerbated if we think nothing is being done to address the crime. If we believe that resources and money are not being wisely spent to address the challenge of crime, I would say the fear exponential increases. If the fear escalates to a cacophonous pitch, we may move---like my friend the gardener.

Well the following vignettes look at 3 areas in which the City of Oakland and the Oakland Unified School District may be exacerbating our fear. How their management of a resource or our money is not alleviating our fear but making our fear grow:

Is Measure Y, the crime fighting measure that taxes all of us, being used as promised or squandered?

Who do we believe?

Why does each Oakland City Council member need a discretionary fund of \$150,000 each per year when that money could be used to fight crime and bring down our fear? We will discuss this issue at our February membership meeting.

Why isn't the Oakland school district talking about Oakland's astronomical truancy rate in a straightforward manner?

Are daytime home burglaries related?

Gregory Chan, MGO Board Member

NEXT MGO E- BOARD MEETING

February 22nd, 2009, 7:00pm-9:00pm

Piedmont Gardens-Crestmont Building

Main floor-Small Dining Room

At 41st Street (off Piedmont) Sign in at the 41st Street desk

OAKLAND BREAKS A PACT WITH ITS VOTERS

When Oakland's voters passed Measure Y in 2004, they authorized \$20 million to be spent every year for 10 years for public safety. Violent crime was, and still is, plaguing the city, killing its residents and driving out its businesses. The voters wanted to be sure that their tax money was spent effectively and so they saw to it that Measure Y required an independent oversight board, popularly called the Measure Y Oversight Committee (MYOC). It consists of 11 members, three appointed by the mayor and one each appointed by each councilmember.

The Measure Y funding cycle is again underway, and MGO has taken a close look at how oversight has been working out. We were shocked at what we found:

Although the measure provides that 1% to 3% of each police or social service program that receives grants shall be spent for evaluation of that program, including the number of persons served and the rate of crime or violence reduction achieved, the MYOC still has no budget. All evaluation has been done by outside research policy contractors, and the final December evaluation by Berkeley Policy Associates has not been even distributed to the Council. We pointed that out to the Council but they did not seem concerned, even though the BPA evaluation was significantly less positive about the programs than the internal one done by the City. *The Berkeley Policy Associates evaluation states "It does not appear that Measure Y violence prevention programs were making a substantial difference to the outcomes of the youths they serve."*

The very city staffers who recommend which programs should be funded also choose the outside evaluators who decide if the programs were good choices or not. There is an obvious conflict of interest, and we have urged the Council to address it. The Oversight Committee should select the contractor, not the staffers whose judgments will be reviewed by that contractor.

That's not all. Three members of the Council (Brooks, de la Fuente, and Nadel) failed to make appointments to fill vacancies on the Oversight Committee. It takes seven to produce a quorum, meaning that if even two of the remaining members are unable to attend a meeting, the committee cannot act. That has repeatedly happened, and we also called that to the Council's attention

Knowing all of this, in late January the Public Safety Committee made a new round of social program funding recommendations rather than wait until the MYOC vacancies were filled. MGO objected, but our concerns were ignored. Even though Measure Y specifically provides that the MYOC shall evaluate programs and make recommendations to the mayor and the city council regarding their effectiveness, the Public Safety Committee refused to wait. The same thing happened one week later when the full council also refused, over MGO's objection, to allow the Oversight Committee time to review and report, instead passed all the City recommendations as presented.

Even if the MYOC quorums had been present, it still could not
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have acted, because the assistant city administrator who staffs it has not been providing outside evaluator reports in a timely fashion. MGO has learned, for example, that this staffer received an outside report from the current social program evaluator, Resource Development Associates, on January 10th and did not provide it to the MYOC. The members did not learn about this until they met on February 2nd, and even then it was not provided.

Measure Y programs get a huge chunk of Measure Y money. City staffers are painting a much rosier picture than the outside evaluator. Careful scrutiny is needed to determine the reason for the discrepancies in the two evaluations. We told the Council the MYOC needed a chance to find out which conclusion is correct. No dice.

These developments are a slap in the face to Oakland residents. They deserve far better for the millions they are spending. MGO's Government Accountability Task Force will keep dogging Measure Y compliance, keep pushing for reform, and keep reporting to you.

Gary Sirbu, MGO Immediate Past President

OAKLAND TRUANCY

About 3,000 to 4,000 kids are truant from school every day in Oakland—truant is what you're labeled if you miss three days of school, and habitual truant is your category if you miss 6 days or more. A child or young person who is truant very often quickly come to be out of sync with what's going on in the classroom, which in too many cases results in dropping out. Students who leave after 9th or 10th grade (or earlier!) have no job skills and find it almost impossible to find legal employment, which makes them easy marks for those on the streets who are offering illegal employment in drug sales, robberies, etc.

On the other hand, studies indicate that increasing the graduation rate by 10% statewide would lower the homicide tally by an estimated 500/year and prevent more than 20,000 aggravated assaults.

What is at risk are two very important things: the lives of many young people in Oakland, which are being foreclosed by the truancy path; and, the safety of all of our citizens, as these kids, desperate for livelihood, turn to crime.

The school district has a truancy center in West Oakland, which is scheduled to close. It has robocalls made to the homes of students who are absent. And, it has attendance officers to work with families and children. The schools also have a Student Attendance Review Board process, which is designed to address the problem and plans to soon have a school district rep at Juvenile Hall, to help kids transition back to school after a stay in Juvie. There are School Attendance Review Teams (SART) at the school sites. Individual Oakland schools with the greatest problems (such as Garfield Elementary) have grant-driven programs which offer more intensive help to students and their families. Some Measure Y programs try to address truancy either indirectly or directly.

Still, these programs do not seem to be really getting a handle on the problem. What should we as citizens do?

Judy Cox, MGO President

OAKLAND AND PAY-GO

"Pay-Go" is a discretionary capital appropriation that allows Council members and the Mayor to fund special capital projects within their districts and citywide that is outside of the normal City Council approval process. The Oakland Municipal code requires that the City Administrator maintain a record of Mayor and Council Pay-Go grants and make an annual report to the City Council detailing the prior fiscal year's commitments.

Pay-Go allocations were initially established in FY 1999-00 as appropriations to be used by the City Council to fund supplemental, discretionary capital improvement projects within their districts or City-wide. In 2001, the City Council approved a separate Pay-Go allocation for the Office of the Mayor under the same terms and from the same funding source. Pay-Go monies are approved and allocated to City Council members and the Mayor during biennial budget adoption. Starting at \$250,000 per year per official they increased to \$300,000 per year and were recently reduced to \$150,000 per year when changes were made to the budget.

Initially Pay-Go expenditures were limited to capital improvements for the City. Over the years this has been changed to allow OUSD to receive funds and to loosen the restriction of Pay-Go to capital improvements only.

Pay-Go has often amounted to a political slush fund to curry favor with particular voters, and to fund pet projects. Examination of expenditures in the October 2005 report to the Council shows Council members and the Mayor committed a total of \$950,000 to Oakland Public Schools from Pay-Go allocations in Fiscal Year 2004-05, Parks and Open Space received a \$840,000, Traffic, Street and Sidewalk improvements \$630,000, and Crime Reduction \$40,000 to fund purchase of equipment to aid the Oakland Police Department and community groups in crime fighting efforts.

In Fiscal Year 2005-06 Council members and the Mayor's Pay-Go funds committed a total of \$70,000 to Oakland Public Schools; Parks, Recreation Centers and Open Space Improvements \$750,000; Traffic, Street and Sidewalk Improvement \$260,000; and Crime Reduction \$130,000.

The City Charter makes the City Council the policy making body for the City. Should individual City Council members be deciding how to spend money, or should it be the entire body making decisions based upon an established set of priorities that provide the greatest benefit to the residents of Oakland? With the critical crime problems facing Oakland, many of us question whether the Pay-Go system is the best way to be distributing over \$1,000,000 each year.

Over this two year period less than five percent of Pay-Go funds were spent on reducing crime. What does this say about the commitment to public safety in Oakland?

Ralph Kanz, MGO Board Members

FEAR, CRIME, OUR KIDS AND OUR MONEY

On Feb. 19th form 7:30-9:00



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

www.mgoclub.org

P.O. Box 11622, Oakland, CA 94611



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We hope you will play your part. For example, if you're as frustrated by the recent decisions made by City Council about allocating funding to Measure Y violence prevention groups without first hearing from the Measure Y Oversight Committee, give your Councilmember a call and let him/her know how you feel. When we give feedback about questionable moves our elected officials know that some of us are watching and care about what's going on.

If we just role over and turn on "CSI Miami", elected officials and employed staff can come to think that they own City government and can make the decisions that appeal to them, not necessarily those which a thoughtful observer would see as benefiting Oakland most.

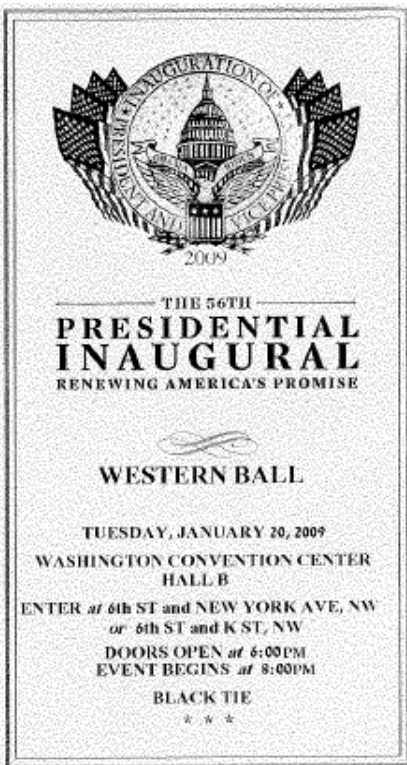
We need to be the good government vigilantes—are you ready?

Judy Cox, MGO President

IN THE NEWS:

A special election is likely for Oakland in June. The most crucial issue that seems like to go on the ballot is the repeal of Measure OO, the Kids First initiative which passed last November, after the Council had already voted to fund the original Kids First program again. The Measure OO campaign was deceptive and indicated (untruthfully) that kids programming would disappear without the measure.

If Measure OO goes into effect, the City will have to drastically cut all other kinds of services to provide for significantly more funding for kids. That means that libraries, senior services and a host of other things will be slashed. So, we have to get rid of Measure OO, and so the club will probably ask members to support the repeal measure. J.C.



Where were you on January 22nd, 2009?