

## Your City Council Report - Jan 15, 2008

YCCR - January 15, 2008

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Example  
moves the world more than doctrine.

-Henry  
Miller

A  
light night-finally!-but illuminating discussion  
nevertheless. The council in their deliberations with Safety Unions  
should take the Transportation Department's negotiations for  
bus service as an exemplary example of excellence (EEE!).

Presentations:

Not  
on the agenda and to comply with the Brown Act, the council voted  
unanimously (required a 2/3 majority) to add a proclamation that  
honored the Vallejo chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority on  
this, their centennial anniversary. The Alpha  
Kappa Alpha Sorority  
was founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University and is the  
oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American  
college-trained women.

Consent  
Calendar:

Comments  
from the Audience (John Osborne, only speaker):

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Item  
6.A: Complained again that "absent, excused" is not allowed by the City Charter (apparently, Intintoli was "absent excused" the meeting for which the council minutes were about).

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Item  
6.B: City is shifting water fund capital funds from one project to another to cover increased costs-like last week, Osborne wants to know if there are negative impacts to the projects losing some of their funding (no comment from staff). Wants the work being done on Mare Island to be paid by Public Utilities since there is hazardous waste.

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Item  
6.C: is a list of payments the City made by the City from Dec 5-27. Osborne asked why we are spending \$ when we might not meet payroll this year (my cash-flow calculations say that the City will run out of cash on June 8th). He also wanted to know what the \$24.5K payment for "furniture and fixtures" was; wanted to know why the City paid \$7K to Marine World was; wanted to know why the City is purchasing office supplies from vendors located outside Vallejo.

## Mayor

Davis reminded Osborne that these payments are already made; the council is only ratifying them. And Davis agreed that we should be using local vendors, but that we should "spread it around."

Good to spread it around, but with a \$22 million deficit looming, Osborne's nitpicking over these costs is wasting time--time in Osborne's own words that should be used to address the budget crisis. And, as much as we need to support local businesses, in the short term, the City should probably buy supplies and services using the general fund from the cheapest place-local or not. Why add to our deficit? It's also probably against the charter to purchase locally if it means paying more.

## Administrative

Items:

## Item

9.A:

## Approval

of a new contract with MV Vallejo and their subsidiary, Vallejo Citizens Transit Company (VCTC). Here's where the good examples (EEE!) were made: Staff for their keen negotiating skills-they set a good example for an approach with the Safety Unions.

## Gary

Leach, Public Works Director, started off the presentation by complimenting Crystal Odum-Ford and Greg Anderson for negotiating this new, "fixed fee" cost saving contract. Basically, these two staff told MV/VCTC (and the other applicant) what the City wanted to pay for bus services. The City now has a stable contract where they will not experience cost fluctuations. This is the best budgeting (when it's possible); now they know exactly what they will spend next year.

And,  
this contract has penalties for non-compliance, unlike our Firefighter contract that seems to have no consequences when Fire Union reps abuse union business leave by getting drunk and sleeping it off on City time. It also has performance incentives, unlike our Firefighter contract-did you know that they all automatically get raises, this year will be more than 10%!-without any performance evaluation what-so-ever? Wow...such a deal!

Again,  
fantastic negotiations on the part of staff. If only the council (or council majority supported by you-know-who) can adopt these negotiating skills.

Unfortunately,  
fuel had to be taken out of the contract, because fuel is not one of those items that can be budgeted exactly. Staff decided to separate fuel from the bus service contract so that they can track it. In the past, fuel costs were buried with other contract costs, and so it was very difficult to see how the escalation of fuel costs was impacting overall increases to expenses.

The  
City generally knows how much fuel the buses use, but we all know from experience that the cost for fuel is completely unpredictable. Staff has to budget what they think will be the impact of fuel cost inflation, and they are currently working on this projection which they will bring back to the to Council on January 29th.

Comments  
from the Audience

Again

Osborne, only speaker (Odum-Ford answered Osborne's questions, included below):

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Asked

about engine/transmission replacements due to smog requirements and how that would be paid for (City has a grant to replace 20 buses and believes that prop 1B funds will also be available) and is working with contractors to meet smog requirements

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Asked

who would pay for fuel. (Will be addressed on January 29th City Council meeting)

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Asked

if the contract will require the City to get by with fewer personnel. (This contract allows for the same amount of personnel with the same amount of services, that were already cut as of July 1, 2007 and they do not expect other cuts).

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Asked

if this would result in services being cut back and that bus service from the Ferry to Marine World on Sundays needs to be available during tourist season (The City is currently analyzing services to see what routes best suit the needs of the City).

Comments  
from the Council

#### COUNCIL

MEMBER SUNGA indicated he liked the fixed fee contract but-he is not comfortable approving anything not predictable (although he loved Bartee's wacky amendment a few weeks ago to slash Fire Department non-union positions). Councilmember Gomes assisted Sunga in clarifying what he was asking: that he was uncomfortable approving this contract because of the unpredictable nature of fuel. Leach responded by informing Sunga and the Council that if fuel prices were to increase to such a level that the City would have to cut back bus services, the contract they were being asked to approve can be changed-we are not tied to the services outlined and if services are cut, the contract fees can be cut.

#### COUNCIL

MEMBER WILSON (not recusing himself from anything this evening-a first in Vallejo's history) asked if the routes covered would include a new stop at the new Solano Community College campus in Vallejo. Odum-Ford responded by indicating that the route closest too it was already running behind schedule so they can't add that stop, but they are currently evaluating schedules that might help create a Solano College stop.

Wilson

then asked Odum-Ford about the contract flexibility, referring to her as "and I don't remember your name" which the way he said it really struck me as rude-maybe he's just getting used to being up there? He should have added "excuse me for forgetting your name."

He

asked about advertising on buses-a current contract is in default and the City is taking it back in order to rebid it.

He

gave the staff kudos for the performance-based contract. Said he is a big fan of incentives and penalties, and bonuses based on performance. Even wants the council to approve any waivers for penalties. I hope Wilson is bringing these ideas that he loves so much into contract negotiations with the Safety Unions! Let's place bets on whether he does or not...

#### COUNCIL

MEMBER GOMES pointed out a conflict of dates with the contract commencement date (April) and the end of the current contract (January) and also reminded the new staff members of the recent cuts; indicated that she understood Sunga's question was posed in order to get assurances that services won't be cut, which the staff is not able to do because of unknown fuel costs. Gomes requested that if cuts to services are required, that it be done in a public meeting. She also requested that the City look into buying smaller buses, less pollution, smaller impact on streets.

She

also reminded staff and council that most Cities subsidize their public transportation from the general fund, since it is a public service. Vallejo can no longer subsidize bus services with the General Fund (perhaps because of the \$ needed to pay for that 10%+ raise to Firefighters?);

#### COUNCIL

MEMBER SCHIVLEY requested that the City come back sooner rather than later with any fuel cost increases that impact the budget, also indicated she thought that bigger buses are actually cheaper and asked the City to look into this. She also thought that the bus service should pay the city for the impact that the big busses have on our city streets. This is similar to the recent increase the city charges the garage company-the increase was based on impact on streets. But, the increase, which went into the general fund, went almost entirely to Firefighter pay increases. If the bus service pays us for the impact, I suppose the revenue would also get used in this manner, since it seems we might now have to give them even more

than 10% this year...

#### COUNCIL

MEMBER BARTEE asked what the difference was between this year's contract and last year. Odum-Ford stated that the contract was reduced by \$1 million from the original proposals, but that it the two contracts could not be compared since fuel was embedded in last year's costs. But that the contract is within revenue limits, and this contract does not require general fund subsidies.

#### MAYOR

DAVIS offered the resolution, unanimously approved.

Lee

Giles, president of VCTC, then thanked staff for their professionalism and he was happy with the result.

There  
were no appointments

There  
was no written communications



No  
City Manager report

No  
City Attorney report

Community  
forum comments came from:

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David  
Corbett ROCKED the house with his fact-laden comments regarding Bartee's (Batenke's) proposal to abandon the binding arbitration lawsuit, and he urged the council not to abort this effort. Corbett described the harm that will be caused by the Council to the City if the Council decides to abandon the lawsuit against the Fire Union contract. You can read his full comments on this weeks "Primal Scream."

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John

Singleton again urged the Council to add a community forum segment at the beginning of the meeting and that council members have a lot to learn from speakers at the podium. He also asked that the council host town hall meetings with the community, to get input on items such as the new bus contract. This way, the community can educate the council, including the upcoming budget discussions. Davis reminded Singleton that the City has been hosting study sessions on the budget cuts.

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John

Osborne requested the Council discussions take place before Community Forum, since public comments would be more intelligent with the benefit of hearing council comments. He also was very concerned that tonight's light agenda did not include a budget discussion and/or a discussion of a 5-year plan or at least a report out of the discussions taking place. Davis assured him that although it's not being discussed at Council meetings, work on the budget is taking place.

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Sam

Kurshan stated that he takes the ferry midday and the boats have less than enough people to warrant the trip, or the #200 buses, or the #80 bus to El Cerrito. Kurshan wants a bus to stand by, so that if there are so few people for the ferry, the trip should be cancelled and folks loaded onto the bus. And not run the 80 bus every fifteen minutes since, according to the drivers, the 80 buses are always empty. (Its not clear to me that a bus-standby system would save \$ either, since what would the deckhands do if the ferry was cancelled? They have to stick around for the next boat, and sometimes an empty boat to SF is full on the way back...)

Reports  
from Council Members:

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Mayor

Davis reminded Osborne that the reports are not discussions, but are reports. This item was not set up for discussions (I think Osborne meant council comments on particular agenda items).

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Council

member Gomes reported the follow-up she has been doing regarding the elimination of graffiti in Vallejo, work that resulted from the Front Porch meetings and all the folks that are now interested in helping. The City will most likely be adopting a volunteer program similar to one in SF, one that has neighborhoods adopt an area, sort of like "adopt a street" and paint over graffiti that is painted on public property. Mayor Davis indicated that he supports this effort and wants to get Caltrans involved in keeping their properties clean of graffiti.

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Council

member Schivley reminded the council that a magazine has examples of anti-graffiti programs that have received grant money, and that we might be able to get grants as well.

The  
public portion of the meeting was then adjourned--at 8:00 pm, yippee!

Like

last week, the Council went into closed session, with the Firefighters Union, the Police Union, the Electricians Union and the Management Professionals Union and apparently the discussion didn't

end. Again, what are the four Henkettes cooking up and why haven't we heard a peep?

That wraps number 6 of YOUR City Council report! No council meeting next week as the City honors the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and they actually never meet on the third Tuesday of the month unless absolutely necessary. See you on the 29th!

--ADQ--