

City Manager's Weekly Report
For the week ending May 9th, 2008

1. Meeting Notes

The next City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 20th, with the start time yet to be determined. We are tentatively planning for a 4:00 PM budget session in advance of the regular City Council meeting that evening (a budget overview). We are also tentatively planning on a budget review session on Tuesday, May 27th on the Council's normal monthly study session night for departmental budget presentations.

2. Update on Toluene Spill at Reaction Products, 841 Morton Avenue

As you know, on Monday, May 5th, a hazardous chemical spill was discovered at Reaction Products, 841 Morton Avenue in Richmond. A storage tank that was vandalized during the weekend caused a significant spill of Toluene, approximately 3,300 to 3,600 gallons. The product flowed into a nearby drainage ditch and seeped under the railroad tracks into the Parchester Marsh, which opens into San Pablo Bay, with a resulting impact on fish and wildlife in the area. As of Wednesday, May 7th, at least 400 fish and three mallard ducks had been found dead. The U.S. Coast Guard federalized the incident on Monday afternoon and is now in charge of the spill site. They are also overseeing the cleanup effort by Clean Harbors Environmental Services with assistance from the State Department of Fish and Game, Office of Spill Prevention & Response (OSPR) and the East Bay Regional Parks District. The Parchester Community Center was utilized this week as a meeting and staging area.

One of the major concerns during Monday's incident was the lack of notification to the City of Richmond. Fire Department staff reviewed the timeline and found the following:

- 8:15 AM – The spill was discovered by business owner, Dwight Merrill. His first call was to Clean Harbor Environmental for clean-up services.
- 9:30 AM – Clean Harbor Environmental arrives on scene. Rick Boden a Field Service Specialist for Clean Harbor informs Mr. Merrill that he should contact the State Office of Emergency Services (OES) and report the spill.
- 10:39 AM – OES is notified by Mr. Merrill that 500 gallons of mineral spirits leaked into the ground.
- 10:45 AM - Contra Costa County Health Services, Hazardous Material Division (County Haz Mat), is notified by Mr. Merrill that 500 gallons of mineral spirits spilled. He also told them that a private clean-up contractor was on scene dealing with the situation. County Haz Mat did not respond because it assumed the spill was being handled by the clean-up crew.
- 11:09 AM – U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) receives notification from OES about the spill and sends a federal on-scene coordinator and team to the site.

- 12:00 noon – USCG Team arrives at spill site.
- 1:00 PM – USCG notifies County Haz Mat that the spill is much larger than first reported. They also need the County Haz Mat Team to conduct air monitoring and to implement a shelter-in-place order for local residents.
- 1:30 PM – USCG notifies the Richmond Police/Fire Communication Center about the spill at the Reaction Products Company, 840 Morton Avenue.
- 1:34 PM – Richmond Fire Battalion Chief and Haz Mat Team, as well as Richmond Police Watch Commander, all respond.
- 1:40 PM – Richmond Fire Battalion Chief establishes a unified incident command – Morton I.C.
- 2:00 PM – Contra Costa County Health Services activates the warning sirens and declares a Level III Shelter-In-Place order for the Parchester Village area.
- 2:20 PM – City of Richmond staff activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in City Hall.
- 2:55 PM – Contra Costa County Health Services issues an all clear and the shelter-in-place order is lifted.
- 3:40 PM – City of Richmond staff deactivate EOC.
- 3:45 PM – Unified command transferred to USCG.

Based on this timeline it is clear that the business owner, Mr. Merrill, downplayed the magnitude of this incident and failed to call 911 for an immediate local public safety response. The Fire Chief and Emergency Services Manager are still investigating the lack of timely notification from Contra Costa County Health Services Department, Hazardous Materials Division to the City of Richmond.

We will keep you informed.

3. **Anti-Graffiti Kick-Off**

This past week marked the kick-off of the City’s comprehensive anti-graffiti program.

As you may recall, the City Council approved a contract with Boyles & Associates to assist the City of Richmond in enhancing our current abatement efforts. The consultants at Boyles & Associates were previously involved in the highly successful implementation of an anti-graffiti program in the City of San Jose.

This past week, the consultants were on-site, training representatives from the City Manager’s office, the Police Department, Public Works Department, and Arts and Culture Division from the City, as well as the District Attorney, County Probation, and criminal court. There was also a graffiti “networking” session that included individuals from CalTrans, the Union Pacific Railroad, AC Transit, the School District, and County Public Works, and an evening volunteer orientation. A substantial amount of time was spent conducting a graffiti survey to establish a baseline against which to measure progress on dealing with this issue.

The next step – and first visible step – is tomorrow morning, Saturday, May 10th from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM, at which time there will be a community volunteer hands-on training session. Volunteers will convene on the Greenway Walking and Bike Trail, near 16th Street @ Chanslor Avenue, and will be provided with training and clean-up supplies. We are very hopeful that this will be the beginning of an ongoing, concerted effort to deal with the graffiti problem in Richmond.

Special thanks to Trina Jackson of the City Manager's office for managing the logistics of this effort, with noteworthy assistance from Rochelle Monk and LaShonda Wilson from the City Manager's office.

4. City Receives Upgrade to Issuer Credit Rating

As briefly reported by Finance Director James Goins at the May 6th City Council meeting, Standard and Poor's Rating Agency has raised the City's Issuer (General Fund) Credit Rating, from "A" to "A+". This represents a total increase of four levels since the City had its credit rating reinstated in April 2006. Specific credit strengths cited in Standard & Poor's report include the City's continued strong general fund cash position and fund balance, as well as the City's strong financial controls, policies and management procedures.

5. Union Bank of California Offers Letter of Credit to Wastewater Bonds

As reported over recent weeks, the City's variable rate debt portfolio has been experiencing unanticipated high interest rates, due to downgrades of bond insurers Ambac and MBIA. Union Bank of California has made a preliminary offer to back the 2006A Wastewater Bonds with a Letter of Credit, which will provide additional credit assurance to investors, above and beyond the current Ambac insurance policy. By combining this letter of credit facility with the Wastewater Enterprise's recent rating upgrade to "A+", the bonds' variable interest rates will be significantly reduced from the recent high levels. Union Bank of California is the Trustee of several of the City's other bond issues, as well as the Trustee for the City's Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) investments.

6. Kennedy High School's Y-PLAN 2008 Presentation

You may recall at the joint City Council/WCCUSD School Board meeting, during the presentation on the NURVE project, there was a representative from the University of California Center for Cities and Schools who briefly described the Y-PLAN (Youth – Plan, Learn, Act, Now) program. This is an award-winning initiative in which high school students are engaged as stakeholders in a local planning project, with the mentorship of UC Berkeley students in urban planning, design, and education, and with the cooperation and assistance of high school faculty. Approximately 25 students from John F. Kennedy High School, mostly juniors, took part in this program, which examined how the Martin Luther King Park and Community Center can be made a vibrant and family-friendly place.

This past Thursday, Rich Davidson and I had the pleasure of being “jurors” at the final presentation by the high school students in this program, along with Sandra Nathan of the Richmond Children’s Foundation, Stephanie Forbes of LISC, and other representatives from the School District, and Parks and Recreation Department. The students did an absolutely remarkable job of expressing their views regarding how they see Richmond today and what is needed to make it a better place to live, along with some very specific and clever ideas regarding how to redesign the MLK Park and Community Center.

Ariel H. Bierbaum, the Program Manager of the Center for Cities & Schools indicated that they are committed to working with Kennedy High School again next year to bring Y-PLAN 2009 back, and, hopefully, to work on the next step in the MLK or Nystrom development.

7. Office of Neighborhood Safety Program Update

The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) is currently facilitating focus groups with inmates at San Quentin State prison. The men involved are active participants of the San Quentin TRUST program and the Richmond Project housed at the prison. Both the TRUST program and the Richmond Project work with preparing men incarcerated at San Quentin for re-entry into the City of Richmond. While capitalizing on understandings, knowledge and experience of this important group, the focus groups represent one effort to collect information about how the City can more effectively partner and support re-entry as a strategy to prevent street violence (many times associated with parolees). The focus groups will be facilitated through June 2008.

The Office of Neighborhood Safety also met with leadership from the Pacific Institute. The Pacific Institute is currently facilitating the “West County Indicators Project.” The Project is a partnership of 9 community based and neighborhood organizations in Richmond and San Pablo. The purpose of the project is to enable community residents and organizations to develop a positive vision for their community, identify and research key concerns, develop solutions and access the information they need to be empowered to be more effective problem solvers within West County neighborhoods.

ONS and the Pacific Institute are having preliminary discussions to identify possibilities of working together to support the ONS NC-9 Project. The NC-9 Project is being designed in Partnership with 9 of Richmond’s Neighborhood Councils who are most impacted by street violence. One goal of this project is to identify ways that the identified Councils can effectively and collectively provide leadership towards preventing street violence. Planning for the development of a strategic work plan is in process.

8. Neighborhood Change Agent (NCA) (Street Outreach) Week in Review

Highlights for Neighborhood Change Agents (NCA's) include:

- Continued participation in the bi-monthly Parole and Corrections Team (PACT) meetings.
- Participation in meetings with the San Quentin TRUST Program (described above).
- Case management services to individuals released from confinement, with NCA case loads continuing to increase on a weekly basis. The ONS will build a data base to capture all relevant and important information in reference to clients supported.
- Participation in a joint meeting with the regional State Parole leadership and its agents. A training to be facilitated by State Parole to assist and build NCA's case management capacity is being developed.
- Participation in the Richmond Works client orientation process, with NCA's providing a walk through of what their potential clients will have to negotiate to reach a successful Richmond Works orientation outcome.
- Continued participation in the Front-Line Forum meetings. Front-line represents health providers/doctors from the County and community members committed to supporting victims of street violence.
- Facilitation of an assembly on violence prevention, choices, education, incarceration, Penal Code 186.22 gang enhancement, and the consequences of being involved in a gang at Richmond High School. Approximately 50 students were in attendance, and many students reported that the information provided was very impactful.
- Facilitation of an assembly on violence prevention, choices, education, incarceration, Penal Code 186.22 gang enhancement, and the consequences of being involved in a gang at Adams Middle School where approximately 150 students were present.

9. Middle College High School Emergency Preparedness Kits

You may recall that the City Council, during the Public Comment section of its meeting agenda, heard that Middle College High School was interested in securing emergency preparedness kits. Following this comment, the Emergency Services Manager, Kathy Gerk, and Andrea Ignacio of the San Pablo Police Department helped secure a \$2,500 grant from the Contra Costa County Community Awareness and Emergency Response (CAER) Committee to pay for these kits.

Funds will be used to purchase items such as water, emergency rations, emergency blankets, and flashlights, and will also cover the cost for safety brochures and emergency preparedness training. Additionally, Kathy and Andrea are working with the school to plan for some future Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

10. **Redevelopment Agency Receives Award of Merit**

On May 1st, the Redevelopment Agency's Office of Economic Development received the California Association for Local Economic Development's (CALED) **Award of Merit—Economic Development Promotions** for its innovative, bilingual business website: *RichmondCA4Business.com*. Presentation of the award was a high point of CALED's 2008 Annual Conference. Each year, the organization honors, celebrates and recognizes successful economic development programs, partnerships and promotions. The latter category—promotions— is where *RichmondCA4Business.com* garnered accolades as an effective, easy-to-navigate information resource serving English and Spanish-speaking businesspersons.

CALED is the premiere statewide professional economic development organization that supports its members through information, technical assistance, training, education, and research. Begun in 1980, CALED has grown to over 700 members, representing cities, counties, state and federal agencies, economic development corporations and the private sector.

11. **Watershed Nursery Seeking to Locate in Richmond**

The Watershed Nursery is a small business partnership that specializes in growing local native plants for use in public and private habitat restoration projects. The Nursery has approached the City about leasing the City-owned land adjacent to the wastewater treatment plant for a business location. Following a "fatal flaw" review by the wastewater plant manager and Planning Department staff, it appears that a suitable lease can be negotiated, and this lease will likely be on the City Council agenda at the first meeting in June.