

# SLCAN News & Views

A publication of the San Leandro Community Action Network

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We welcome feedback—e-mail us at [elist@slcan.org](mailto:elist@slcan.org).

## City Council Election

By Margarita Lacabe

The San Leandro City Council voted on January 22 to hold elections for city council on June 3, 2008. They previously considered adopting instant runoff and moving the elections to November, but the de-certification of electronic voting machines made that difficult. Elections will be held for three council seats: District 2, which includes the southeastern part of town, District 4 in the Washington Manor, and District 6 in the Marina.

Surlene Grant, the current city council member for District 2 and the only person of color on the Council, is termed out this year, so the District 2 election promises to be one of the most contested and interesting ones to watch. While no candidates have filed paper work yet, it is expected that Charles Gilcrest and Ursula Reed will be among the candidates.

Gilcrest is a political consultant, with a long history in local politics. He is a member of the Board of Zoning Adjustments, the Measure B Citizens Oversight Committee, and the Sentinels, a conservative political action committee. He also has a long affiliation with the San Leandro Chamber of Commerce. Reed, a former school teacher and principal, works for the Oakland Unified School district and is on the Library Historical Commission. Other names mentioned as possible candidates are Linda Perry, who is on the San Leandro School Board, and former mayor Shelia Young.

The District 4 seat is currently held by Joyce Starosciak, who will be running again for her seat. Starosciak is an engineer and mother of two; she has previously been on the School Board. She won her seat after a run-off election against Mike Mahoney in 2004, in what must have been one of the most expensive City Council campaigns in San Leandro history—she alone spent almost \$80,000. Much of her support came from developers and labor. It's expected that perennial candidate Lou Filipovich will run against her.

Jim Prola, a retired labor and senior activist, will be defending the District 6 seat to which he was appointed a year ago. At the time, he received overwhelming support from labor, the Democratic party, community groups, and SLCAN. Hermy Almonte, who works for a property management firm, has also withdrawn papers to run for that seat. Another possible candidate is Estelle Clemons, Manager for the City of Oakland's Community Action Partnership. SLCAN interviewed Estelle when she applied for the District 6 seat last year, and we were extremely impressed by her intelligence and knowledge base.

SLCAN would like to encourage any progressive potential candidate to enter the race. If you need information on what it entails to be in City Council or how to run for office, we invite you to contact us. The filing period for the June election opens on February 11 and ends on March 7.

## The Search for a New City Manager

By Tim Holmes

The contract for the City of San Leandro's City Manager, John Jermanis, is due to expire on June 30, 2008. Jermanis has been an employee of the City of San Leandro since the early 1970s, starting as an assistant financial planner, and has been City Manager since 1997.

Jermanis has intimated before that he will retire soon, and indeed his contract has been extended a number of times. If Jermanis chooses to retire this year, it will be a rare opportunity for our city.

City managers are the "CEO" of a city, while the City Council is similar to a board of directors. The City Manager can set a vision for the workings of the city and change how things run. Our City Council needs to cast a wide net in its search for the right candidate for this position to ensure San Leandro gets the best and most qualified candidate. We must be able to choose from candidates who are competent, visionary, and reflect the gender, ethnic, and

racial makeup of San Leandro.

Currently the process is not clearly defined. The City Council has to choose either to appoint someone on its own, seemingly without any process at all, hand the task over to the City's Human Resources department to go through its usual recruitment process (one assumes), or hire an executive search firm to find appropriate candidates for the position. In any of these cases, direction from the City Council will set the tone and breadth of the candidates to which we are exposed.

This critical position must be filled with the best possible choice. The process to select that person must be open, clearly defined, fair to all, and allow for the best possible candidate to rise to the top. Email or call your councilmember and let them know you want them to actively support no less than a full and open search for the best possible City Manager for San Leandro.

Contact information for your council member can be found at <http://www.ci.sanleandro.ca.us/slcycouncil.html>

# San Leandro School District Residency Verification Inefficient and Counterproductive

By Andrew Kopp

**T**he San Leandro Board of Trustees and the San Leandro Unified School District are facing some difficult choices in 2008. The District is currently in negotiations with

the teachers' union (the teachers have been working without a contract since last summer). Governor Schwarzenegger recently announced that state education funding will be cut by 10%. The district will be working with less funding while the teachers—the most important part of the educational process—are asking for more money. And this conflict is superimposed upon the backdrop of President Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act, an unfunded mandate which requires the District to meet certain criteria without providing the resources necessary to meet such goals.

In the middle of this conflagration is the District's residency verification policy, which is currently being reviewed. Residency verification is the process of verifying where a student lives to make certain that only San Leandro residents (and lawfully permitted inter-district transfers) are attending San Leandro public schools.

Residency verification is required by state law. The means by which residency is verified is, to a large degree, within the discretion of the individual district. The State's motivation for residency verification is almost totally economic. School districts receive funding from Sacramento based upon average daily student attendance. The more children that attend school

in the district, the more money the district receives from the State. Without verification, districts might hoard students to increase their revenues, to the direct detriment of their neighboring district's balance sheet.

There may be other reasons for residency verification. Some people believe that when students travel to schools outside of their neighborhoods and cities there is a greater likelihood

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for discipline issues, since traveling students lack a tie to the community. If this were true, however, one would expect private schools to have greater discipline problems, since so many of their students travel from remote locations. And it is just as likely, for public and private schools, that if a student is motivated enough to travel to have a better opportunity to learn, that student is probably worth having in your school.

Unfortunately, other calls for residency verification stem from less virtuous interests, such as racism. There are members of the community who recall the days when San Leandro was almost exclusively Caucasian. Some of those residents resent the influx of children of color over the past 30 years, or associate the increase in diversity with an unwanted migration of children from Oakland and Hayward.

It is ironic that those who support residency verification cite economics in support of the policy. Worried more about San Leandro property tax dollars funding the education of Oakland students, these critics overlook the fact that more children (who attend school regularly) means more operating money for the district, regardless of where they come from. Under-enrolled schools create financial problems for school districts. It is more efficient for a teacher to teach 20 children than 18.

There is a tipping point at which the financial benefit of greater enrollment fails to offset the demands upon District infrastructure. For instance, if a school is designed to hold 1,000 students, adding another 10 students will increase the district coffers, but not so much as to fund construction to increase the capacity of the school.

Residency verification is, to a large degree, counterproductive to the district and to society in general. Residency verification is an impediment to education—a roadblock for a student seeking to attend school. Some may argue that residency verification only addresses which school the student attends, not education in general. This argument is shortsighted.

Residency verification is expensive to enforce, it is harassing and,

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**If a parent demonstrates that his first grader actually lives in San Leandro, is it necessary to check again in second, third, fourth, and fifth grades?**

## Residency Verification

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in some cases, humiliating to the family. It is also an impediment to the student. Perhaps worst is that when successful, the residency verification process has the effect of reducing district revenues and blocking the enrollment of motivated students and involved parents. A student who wishes to leave his home district and travel to another district is demonstrating a commitment to his or her education. We want students like that in our schools.

Currently parents of enrolling children are required to submit documentation each year which proves their residency within the district's borders. District employees must take time to review the documents to ascertain whether the documents are sufficient, genuine, and accurate. And this is for the easy cases.

The more difficult cases are those children of parents which have trouble documenting their residency. Currently the District requires either a deed or a rental agreement, plus utility bills. If you are a parent who lives without a lease, or are not on the lease, proving your residency becomes more difficult. If you are not on the lease, there is a good chance that the phone and gas bills are not in your name, decreasing the number of utilities bills that you might present as proof of residency.

The unfortunate nature of verification is that the process is more difficult for those who are less equipped to meet their burden. The more marginal your existence, the more hoops you must jump through to satisfy the residency verification requirements. Not surprisingly, this impediment results in delayed enrollment. There are children who, for a period of time, do not attend any school because their parents have difficulty verifying their residency.

In some cases the district must perform home visits to verify residency. This involves checking for clothing, toothbrush, toys,

**Worried more about San Leandro property tax dollars funding the education of Oakland students, critics overlook the fact that more children means more operating money for the district.**

and other indicia of residency. District employees who already have a full plate of administrative tasks must travel from home to home, confronting parents and cohabitants who may be justifiably humiliated or confrontational. It is ironic that the government obtains entry in to the home of the parent and cohabitant through District policy when the police could not obtain similar access without a warrant signed by a judge.

Article 9 Section 5 of the California Constitution provides that, "The Legislature shall provide for a system of common schools by which a free school shall be kept up and supported in each district at least six months in every year..." This provision of our Constitution must be read in context—there is no purpose to establishing a "system" of free schools if the children of the state cannot attend them.

While some process of residency verification is necessary to ensure equity among the districts, an annual, burdensome and invasive policy serves almost no one. If a parent demonstrates that his first grader actually lives in San Leandro, is it necessary to check again in second, third, fourth, and fifth grades? Is it really appropriate to condition a child's education on the surrender of privacy rights which the policy could not demand absent reasonable suspicion of the commission of a crime?

The District is currently reviewing its policy, and the changes will be discussed by the Board of Trustees on February 4. Interested parties should attend and make their thoughts known.

## Burrell Field for Shoreline Landfill?

By Mia Ousley

The City of San Leandro would like to trade the San Leandro Unified School District land at Oyster Point in exchange for the land currently occupied by Burrell Field. The school district could develop the land at Oyster Point into a new sports facility, while the City developed the Burrell Field land as a commercial enterprise.

Not surprising, some San Leandro high teachers and coaches prefer to keep Burrell Field and turn it into a professional quality stadium rather than try to ship kids across town to former landfill at the shoreline for their athletics. Some opponents oppose the swap because they believe Oyster Point should be protected wetlands. Others say if the City doesn't want to develop Oyster Point because it used to be a dump, why should the school district want to make it a kid's playing field?

Jack Nelson, a history teacher and assistant track coach at the high school, is one of those spearheading an effort to make a sports complex that supporters say could be rented out to professional soccer teams for specific events. The plans include a 6,000-8,000 seat stadium rebuilt on the current football field, which would support football and soccer and be surrounded by a track field. The current

parking lot would sport a four-story building with locker rooms, meeting rooms, an observation level over the stadium, even room for a restaurant. The development may go into the adjacent softball/Little League fields (owned by the City), and 1,000 parking spaces would also be needed. Nelson says this would be a shining diamond for the school district and a positive asset for the city.

While Measure B came relatively close to funding new money for Burrell Field, Nelson says a private developer has offered to build the \$20 million Burrell Field planned sports complex at no charge if he was given 5-6 acres elsewhere in the city for a housing development. "We're looking at a joint project where the city would give up land to this developer—I suggested 5 acres around the Blue Dolphin near the Marina—and he would build the new stadium for us," said Nelson. Rentals to professional teams, which he said Oakland gets all the time, would cover ongoing maintenance costs.

Supporters say they have the statistics to show the plan is feasible financially, adding that a professional football team's minor league has already contacted them about practicing at the new complex. Nelson says the superintendent has asked supporters of the new complex to wait while the district examines the Oyster Point trade. He says the results of the District's study should be coming up shortly.

## San Leandro Will Get Its Own History Book

By Margarita Lacabe

Former San Leandro librarian Cindy Simons has been engaged to write a history of San Leandro for the *Images of America* book series issued by Arcadia Publishing. The series has included books on the history of San Lorenzo, Castro Valley, and various sections of Hayward and Oakland, among other Bay Area locations.

Before her retirement, Mrs. Simons was in charge of the History Room at the San Leandro library. She published a booklet on the history of San Leandro for the Alameda County Historical Society. I think she's the ideal person for the job and trust that she will not shy away from writing about the blemishes in San Leandro's past.

San Leandro has an unfortunate history of racial discrimination, in particular against blacks. Until recently, over 90% of the population was white and blacks were kept out by an agreement of homeowners, neighborhood associations, and realtors to not show or sell homes to people of color. African Americans who crossed the

Oakland border into San Leandro were followed and harassed by the police. In 1967 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held hearings on housing discrimination in San Leandro, but it wasn't until the 1980s that the city started to become integrated. San Leandro is now one of the most diverse cities in the state, a fact which we should all cherish.

City officials, and in particular City Manager John Jermanis (who has worked for the city of San Leandro since it was an all-white enclave), have labored hard to hide this history from new residents. In 2005, Jermanis and library services director David Bohne commissioned a book on the history of San Leandro to mark the 100th anniversary of the city. The book was supposed to be comprehensive and be used in schools and at the museum. However, when the writer they'd engaged proposed to cover the issue of housing discrimination in the city and to interview *Not a Genuine Black Man* author Brian Copeland, Jermanis cancelled the project.

*The Images of America San Leandro* book is expected to come out by October 2008.



Connect with community, participate in stimulating discussion, and learn more about important social and political issues at SLCAN's monthly film series.

### FEBRUARY 7

#### **Made in L.A.**

Made in L.A. follows the remarkable story of three Latina immigrants working in Los Angeles garment sweatshops as they embark on a three-year odyssey to win basic labor protections from a mega-trendy clothing retailer. In intimate verite style, Made in L.A. reveals the impact of the struggle on each woman's life as they are gradually transformed by the experience. Made in L.A. is a story about immigration, the power of unity, and the courage it takes to find your voice. [www.madeinla.com](http://www.madeinla.com)

### MARCH 6

#### **Tying the Knot**

When a bank robber's bullet ends the life of police officer Lois Marrero, her wife of thirteen years, Mickie, is honored as her surviving spouse but denied all pension benefits. When Sam, an Oklahoma rancher, loses his beloved husband of 22 years, long-estranged cousins of his late spouse try to lay claim to everything Sam has. As Mickie and Sam's lives are put on trial, they are forced to confront the tragic reality that in the eyes of the law their marriages mean nothing. Tying the Knot digs deeply into the past and present to uncover the meaning of civil marriage in America today. [www.1049films.com](http://www.1049films.com)

Coffee and location generously donated by Zocalo Coffeehouse. The film series is not appropriate for young children. Films may be subject to change.

### APRIL 3

#### **King Corn**

King Corn is a feature documentary about two friends, one acre of corn, and the subsidized crop that drives our fast-food nation. In King Corn, Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis, best friends from college on the east coast, move to the heartland to learn where their food comes from. With the help of friendly neighbors, genetically modified seeds, and powerful herbicides, they plant and grow a bumper crop of America's most-productive, most-subsidized grain on one acre of Iowa soil. But when they try to follow their pile of corn into the food system, what they find raises troubling questions about how we eat—and how we farm. [www.kingcorn.net](http://www.kingcorn.net)

San Leandro  CAN  
COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

SLCAN is a grassroots, community-based group striving to improve the quality of life in San Leandro by ensuring quality education, smart growth, and an inclusive and equitable community. To learn more about the film series or SLCAN, visit [www.sclan.org](http://www.sclan.org).