

Preparing for new Dumbarton

Each week, as the construction of the new Dumbarton Bridge comes closer to the Peninsula, the question of how it should link up with other major roads looms larger.

Those decisions will have a major effect not only on East Palo Alto, which wants to avoid getting all the traffic on its part of University Avenue, but on other Midpeninsula cities, which fear hordes of cars trying to get through residential areas to the industrial parks.

As of now, the approved connections are Willow Road, Marsh Road and University Avenue. Suggested, but not part of the current plan, is a southern connection at or near Oregon Expressway.

Intercity cooperation will be essential if approach route decisions are to avoid turning neighboring communities, particularly Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, against each other. That's why we're particularly concerned over last week's "special" meeting of the East Palo Alto Municipal Council.

Despite the ongoing work of a planning committee of city, county and state officials which will soon make recommendations on the approach route question, the Municipal Council, with barely 24 hours public notice and without even informing Palo Alto city officials, met in a special session last Thursday to take a formal position.

The meeting was drummed up by Councilmember Henry Anthony and Ed Becks, an East Palo Alto resident who is also chairman of the San Mateo County Economic Opportunity Commission. Becks and Anthony wanted to get the Council on record as urging state legislation mandating an approach route to Embarcadero Road and Oregon Expressway.

Fortunately for both East Palo Alto and Palo Alto, the Council backed off the proposal out of concern that Palo Alto would bitterly oppose the Oregon connection, which it surely will.

Regardless of the merits of a southern approach, bogus emergency meetings of government bodies are no way to build solutions to a complex regional problem. They create suspicion and hostility.

We hope the affected communities will strive to work cooperatively on this and other issues. We may be getting a bridge nobody now wants, but it's coming and we'd better all start preparing for it.

The Trailer resignation

The recent resignation of Tim Trailer from the Human Relations Commission is an example of how well-intended state initiatives can become an illogical restriction on public service.

Trailer, who has served on the HRC for more than four years, is a partner in Stanford Financial Corp., and owns and manages scores of rental housing units in Palo Alto.

The potential conflicts between his business and the housing-related work of the HRC, particularly regarding rent control, are obvious. Trailer has appropriately dealt with the problem by disqualifying himself from those HRC actions on rental housing.

But now Palo Alto has implemented the provisions of the Political Reform Act, passed by California voters in 1974 and designed to require full disclosure of all potential conflicts of interest.

In Trailer's case, the fact that he owns a specific number of properties and has disqualified himself from HRC deliberations regarding rental properties should be sufficient to allay the fears of conflict-conscious Palo Altans.

Unfortunately, there is no local relief available from the state law. Since the Political Reform Act was passed by statewide initiative, any change in the law would have to be approved by the same statewide initiative process.

This case of a state initiative campaign aimed at "reforms" which itself produces ill effects is perhaps a comment on the predilection of Californians to rush to the ballot box to correct all they perceive as wrong.

Faced with having to list the names and addresses of all his tenants, which he believed to be an unjustified invasion of his and their privacy, Trailer submitted his resignation.

Although one can argue that Trailer had a clear choice—either disclose income or don't participate in city government—we think his case raises some serious questions about the reasonableness of disclosure requirements and, perhaps more important, the wisdom of writing too much into the state constitution through the initiative process.