

PANIL Notes

Volume 29 Issue 7—Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League—PO Box 20375—Oakland CA 94620—June 2004

AC Transit – the past and the future

By Bill Manley

Long time PANIL activist and current District At-Large AC Transit Director, Chris Peebles, spoke at the last PANIL meeting and gave an overview of AC Transit, where it has come from and where it's going.

Chris recounted the story of the remarkable Key System that was the backbone of transportation in the East Bay. He told how it had trains that went to the end of the Berkeley pier – a mile out into the Bay – and connected passengers to ferries to San Francisco. And after the Bay Bridge was built, the trains ran on the lower level of the Bridge to the East Bay terminal.

He recounted the infamous conspiracy of the Firestone/GM consortium that bought up municipal rail systems and systematically ran them into the ground, paving the way – so to speak – for the automobile age.

In 1959, AC Transit was formed to serve Alameda and western Contra Costa counties. For a long time it was financially a very solid system, with high ridership and a small amount of property tax funding. So solid that for a period of time it maintained a reserve of 70-80% of its annual operating budget.

The notorious Prop. 13 took away property tax funding, and in 1992 federal funding for operating expenses was discontinued. On top of that are rising payroll and benefit expenses. For every dollar drivers earn, they receive another 71 cents in benefits. Health care costs have risen 60% in the last two years. Measure B in 2000 helped some; but because it is based on sales tax, the economic slumps severely reduced the

anticipated revenues. Now to pay for education obligations, the governor is looking to extract millions of dollars from counties that would normally go to AC Transit. (But we don't have to pay those exorbitant license fees on our humvees!)

Needless to say, this means cutbacks for AC Transit. Cutbacks originally scheduled in December will become a reality in June. It is no secret that service will be diminished, especially for the hills. AC Transit has taken a triage approach – the routes with the lowest ridership will be the first to be cut. It's an unfortunate situation, but until public policy raises the priority of transit over single-occupancy vehicles, bus riders will have to suffer.

But not all the news is grim. AC Transit has a new fleet of very efficient white and green busses. And 100 more will arrive soon. Some routes are equipped with busses that allow the driver limited control over traffic signals. On San Pablo Avenue, this capability has greatly reduced trip time and has contributed to a 45% increase in ridership in just a few months.

AC Transit is also introducing the TRANSLINK card – a single proximity-sensitive pass that can be used on all transit services in the Bay Area. When fully implemented, such a card would allow you to take a trip on AC Transit, ride a BART train into San Francisco and transfer onto a Golden Gate Transit bus to Novato.

Thanks to Chris Peebles for an entertaining and informative presentation. We probably could have continued for another hour if we had the time. Chris was kind enough to stay around after the meeting to answer questions.

For more information, go to: www.actransit.org. And get on the bus!

Zoning updates

By Valerie Winemiller

Fentons status report: At the request of Councilmember Jane Brunner, the City Council's Community and Economic Development Committee heard a formal staff report April 27th on Fentons' compliance with its Conditions of Approval for reopening the restaurant.

In July of 2003, Council had given Fentons 30 days to complete its rooftop compressor soundproofing and a number of other items. Most were still not complete 274 days later. Instead, Fentons has sued the city, claiming that the city did not have the right to impose the conditions (although soundproofing is required by city codes).

Neighbors present at the April 27th hearing pointed out the numerous errors in the staff report. Councilmember Henry Chang (At-Large) expressed surprise that so many simple conditions had not been met.

Brunner did a skillful job as chair, bringing out the facts and keeping the meeting on track. Staff were requested to come back by June 8th with a progress report on enforcement.

Mountain View Cemetery – the suit and new construction: PANIL, the California Preservation Foundation, and Mountain View Cemetery have signed settlement papers in the suit brought by PANIL and CPF against the cemetery and the City of Oakland over proposed construction in the historic cemetery. The settlement must be approved by City Council before it becomes final. Details of the agreement

Continued on page 3

PANIL Meeting

Wednesday, June 9, 7:30 pm, Piedmont Gardens, 110 41st Street, 11th Floor, Sky Room

Topic: Oakland's finances

Speaker: Jane Brunner, District 1 Councilmember

To place an item on the agenda, please call Ronile Lahti at 655.1723 or email rklahti@aol.com

**Piedmont Avenue
Neighborhood
Improvement League**
PO Box 20375
Oakland CA 94620
www.panil.org

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**Steering Committee
and Working Groups**

Arts/Culture/History/Media
Jim Ploss
420.0570, jopl@mindspring.com

**Finance/Membership/
Underwriting**

Bess Ellinger
923.1748, eaellinger@earthlink.net

Library/School/Parks/Gardens

Joan Dark
339.6460, Ext 1316

Public Safety/9X NCPD Chair

Bill Manley
658.2419, bmanleynow@yahoo.com

Zoning/Building

Valerie Winemiller
653.4552

PANSA

John Woodbury
654.6591, drjohnw@ix.netcom.com

PAMA

Ann Kraynak
428.2698

City Government

District 1 Councilmember

Jane Brunner
238.7001, jbrunner@oaklandnet.com

District 1 School Board

Representative

Kerry Hamill
879.8653

kerry.hamill@secmail.ousd.k12.ca.us

**Oakland Police
Department**

Sandi Mauricio
Neighborhood Services Coordinator
615.5929, smauricio@oaklandnet.com
Lt. Lawrence Green
238.7147, lgreen@oaklandnet.com

PANIL Notes

Editing—Gail Jara and Joan Dark
Coordinator—Ronile Lahti



So many burgers, so little time

Barney's

By David Martindale

You know it, you love it, it's perfect for a quick weeknight dinner or lunch on the weekend. It's Barney's, the raucous neighborhood burger joint that is usually packed and always delicious. Is there a better Piedmont Avenue standby?

If you're like me, you find a favorite burger and stick with it time and time again. But, variety is the spice of life, right? With over 20 burgers on the list, you can try a different one each week from now until Thanksgiving (and then start in on the turkey burgers!).

Barney's burgers are big, 100% USDA choice ground chuck, shaped with a slight oval. Or here's a radical idea: don't get a beef hamburger at all. Barney's also serves chicken burgers. Skinless, boneless chicken breast sandwiches, every bit as tasty as the burgers. And organic tofu patties and Garden Burgers are available for those who don't eat meat.

For a real treat, try the Falafel Salad: romaine lettuce hearts topped with feta cheese, tomato, peppers, cucumbers, olives and delicious, crunchy falafel. Served with French vinaigrette dressing, this, like all Barney's salads is available in full size and smaller.

And finally, the timeless philosophical question: Steak fries or Spicy Curly fries or the new skinny French Fries. The steak fries go with everything, but the curly fries are so delicious and fun, and the new skinny ones are a welcome addition. Each basket is its own little adventure: how many tightly wound tender "pig tails" are there? Who gets the last ultra crispy fries that settle down to the bottom? Dip them in the ranch dressing, or ketchup and honey mustard. The best solution to this sticky situation (as with most sticky situations) is compromise: get a half basket of each. Deep fried onion rings, zucchini and mushrooms are available, but disappointing. Stick with the curly fries if you want an appetizer.

For the perfect combination of sweet and spicy, order a chocolate shake (made with Dreyer's ice cream) to go with your spicy fries.

Barney's is open 7 days a week, Monday through Thursday from 11 am to 9:30 pm, Friday & Saturday until 10 pm and Sunday until 9 pm (hours are extended 30 minutes during spring and summer). Beverages include beer, wine, fresh lemonade, and freshly brewed iced tea. Kids menu available. Order burgers for take out by calling ahead: 655-7180.

Summer Fun

AT THE LIBRARY—160 41st Street

Between June 12th until August 13th, children and families can "Go Wild with Books" during the Oakland Public Library's Summer Reading Game. Children can win a free book and more by signing up for the program and reading eight hours. Parents and older children may read to children who aren't yet reading. Children who read eight hours will also be entered into a raffle for even more prizes. This year, for the first time, join us for a family literacy workshop to learn creative ways to make reading more fun.

The Piedmont Avenue Library will also be celebrating the Summer Reading Game with a series of performances. Join us on Mondays at 7:00 pm on the lawn for the following shows:

- June 14 Storyteller/Puppeteer, Willy Claflin
- June 28 Singer/Storyteller, Gerry Tenney
- July 12 Paddleball Expert, Daniel Volk
- July 26 Juggler/Magician, Timothy James
- August 9 Clown/Balloon Maker, Bitzy the Clown

For more information about the Summer Reading Game, contact Helen Bloch, Children's Librarian at 597-5011.

Regular family storytimes for toddlers and pre-school continue on Wednesdays at 10:30 am and 11 am.

"Great Performances"

PIEDMONT AVENUE SCHOOL

Both the recent production of the Wizard of Oz (in conjunction with Studio One) and the PANSA Owl Park Carnival were great successes.

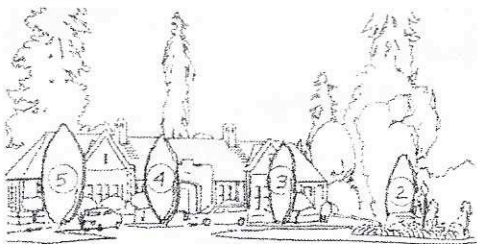
A big THANK YOU to all the school personnel (teachers and administration), School Site Committee members, members of PANSA and PANIL, neighbors, merchants, Piedmont Gardens, and (most especially) students who participated in and helped with these events.

If you weren't able to attend (and if you didn't you really missed out!), go to:

- www.kitshop.biz/piedmont/ for carnival pictures and
- www.panil.org for the cast of the Wizard of Oz.

Zoning updates, continued

will be made public at that time.



Meanwhile, more tree removal permits have been posted. This time, five evergreens are proposed for removal from along the entry circle in front of the cemetery offices. This is part of plans to relandscape the cemetery according to parts of plans drawn by Frederick Law Olmsted but never executed. This "false historicism" was criticized in a historic landscape consultant's report that supported PANIL's objections to the building proposal. A member of the city's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board added that the trees planted 50 to 125 years ago are now historic in their own right. Oddly, while the cemetery advocates installing Olmsted's tree plan, they are also laying new irrigation pipes, ignoring Olmsted's vision of the cemetery as inappropriate for Eastern-style lawns. Because the cemetery is not a formal landmark, there is no public comment on the construction underway. The public comment period on the tree removals ended May 28th.

Historic road configurations are again being altered (currently at the entry circle). Old building materials and techniques should be used in repairs, but may not be. Preservationists are concerned that the cemetery does not appear to have a full historic survey of existing conditions (plant materials, roadways, and structures) or a coherent master plan. There has never been a preservation and maintenance plan, as needed for a historic property of such national importance. A number of groups, including the National Park Service Historic Landscapes Initiative, are available with expertise on this, but the cemetery management to date has not taken steps to utilize their services. PANIL will continue to work on this issue.

For more information on zoning issues, call Valerie Winemiller at 653.4552.

**Helene Schmitt is PANIL's new
OPD Problem Solving Officer (PSO)
and can be reached at: 238.7517,
750.4556 (cell) or
hschmitt@oaklandnet.com**

PANIL Steering Committee seeks new members

By Bess Ellinger

The Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL) is run by a Steering Committee. PANIL is organized into different Working Groups led by a member of the Steering Committee. Each one includes neighbors who carry out the activities of that particular Working Group. Examples are keeping people informed of Zoning issues which affect the neighborhood, maintaining the PANIL website, and monitoring and helping resolve public safety issues (PANIL is the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council [NCPD] for Beat 9X).

As a whole, the Steering Committee makes decisions for PANIL. Examples are the decision to join the suit asking the Mountain View Cemetery to alter its construction and expansion plans.

The Steering Committee meets once a month, from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm, on the 1st Thursday.

Volunteers are needed for seats on the Steering Committee and on the Working Groups. Newcomers to the neighborhood are especially invited to participate.

Contact Bess Ellinger at 923.1748 or email eaellinger@earthlink.net.

Five good reasons to join the PANIL Steering Committee:

- You want to impress your neighbors
- You love folding newsletters
- You're looking for some good deeds to put on your resume
- You want to be the first on your block to hear the neighborhood news
- You care about the neighborhood.

UPDATED ON THE PANIL WEB SITE WWW.PANIL.ORG

- Zoning updates — CondoMania — are we vulnerable?
- The good, bad, and the ugly — liquor store report card — see how stores in our neighborhood are ranked.
- Updated real estate sales.
- Expanded restaurant reviews.

Illustrations: Valerie Winemiller, pg 3

Calendar

PANIL Meeting

6/9, Wednesday, 7:30 pm
Piedmont Gardens
110 41st Street
Sky Room, 11th Floor
923.1748

Steering Committee

1st Thursday of the month, 7 pm
923.1748

Glen Echo Creek Work Day

2nd Saturday of the month
9:30 am, Monte Vista Avenue
654.1930

PANSA

General Meeting and Book Care night

1st Tuesday of the month, 7 pm
Piedmont Avenue School
654.6591

Mountain View Docent Tours

2nd Saturday of the month
10 am, free,

Plymouth Church "The House of Soul"

Have fun, make new friends and
talk about important stuff
424 Monte Vista Avenue
Open to neighborhood youth
6 to 9th grade
3rd Friday of the month
7:30 to 9:30 pm
Call 654.5300 for information

Councilmember Jane Brunner's Annual Picnic

Sunday, 7/11
10 am to 3 pm
Bring a dish to share
Bar-B-Que and drinks provided
Lake Temescal
(North Picnic Area)
238.7001

To place an item on the PANIL
web or newsletter calendar,
email Minnie Sage at
mamsage@earthlink.net.

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League
P.O. Box 20375
Oakland, CA 94620
www.panil.org

Count Me In!

____ Here's my check for \$ _____ (minimum \$15.00) to join PANIL.

____ Please send me a safety whistle (\$3.50/each).

Name/s _____

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Mail to PANIL, PO Box 20375, Oakland, CA 94620
Contributions to PANIL are not tax deductible

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Thank you to new and renewing members:

Tal Levy-Chen, Candace and Fred Kling, Evelyn Velson, Susan Rogers, Vincent and Betty Janes, Elaine Allen, Sabrina Klein, Francisco DeVries and Sara Davison, Sharon Jobson and Ernie Rivas, Dan Eilbeck and Valerie Wong, and John Buchan and Alison Gabel

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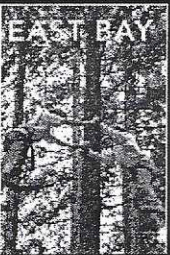
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General Meeting and Book Care Night
—first Tuesday of each month, 7 pm

Call 510.654.6591 for more information

