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NEIGHBORHOOD

# West Portal MONTHLY

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**Dump the Pump Art**

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**My, Oh, My - OMI**

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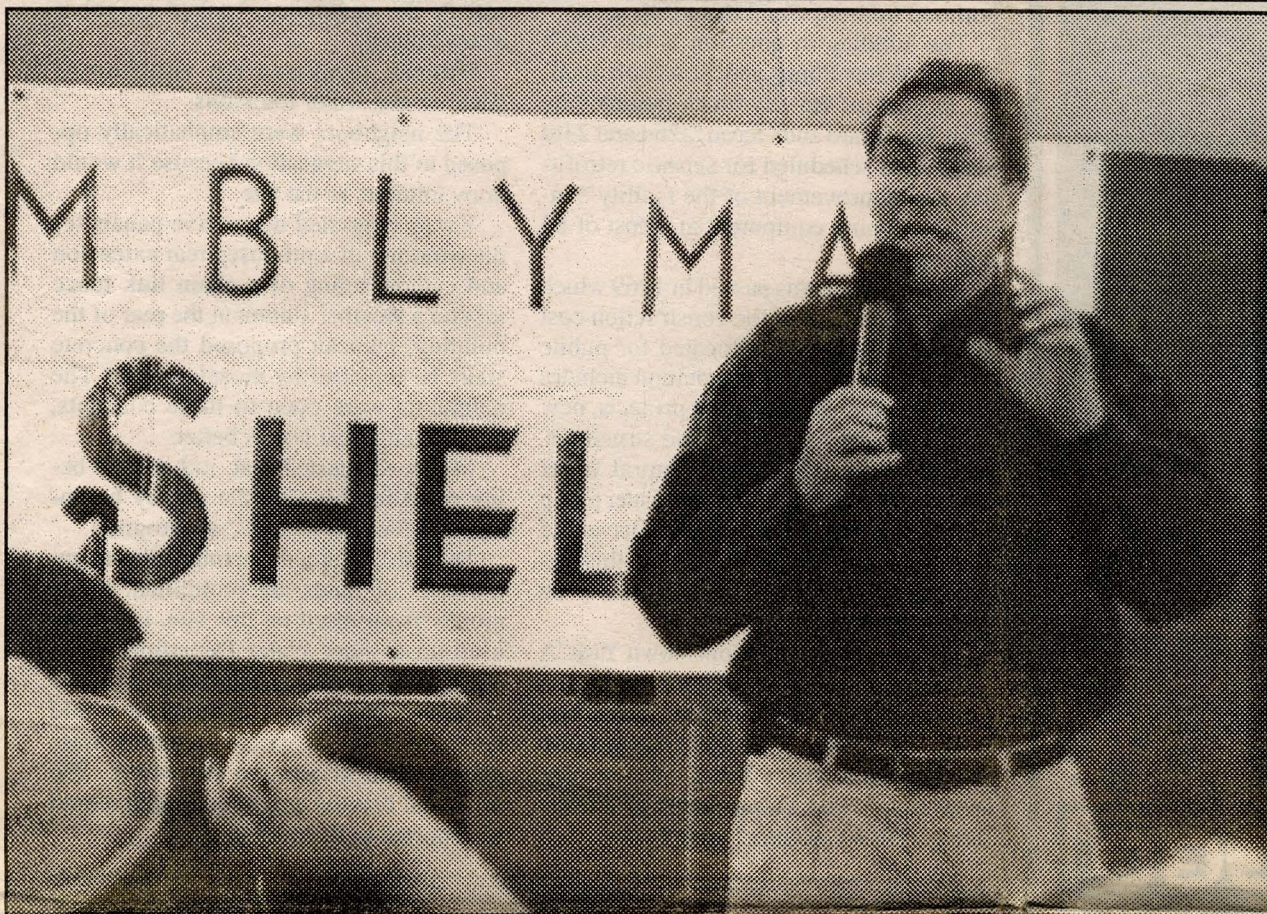
**Library Branches Out**

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**Re-tracking the Ocean K**

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JUNE 2000



Assembly Majority Leader Kevin Shelley discussed a variety of issues at a lively town hall meeting at West Portal Elementary School's auditorium May 20. At the conclusion of the meeting, a pair of NRA gun enthusiasts were escorted from the building.

## Sutro Tower retroactive antenna permits waved

*Dramatic Board of Appeals testimony refutes story regarding a former zoning administrator's sudden resignation; FBI continues its investigation*

by Rae Doyle

In a May 24 decision that stunned Twin Peaks residents, the SF Board of Permit Appeals upheld SF Planning Dept. Director Gerald Green's controversial Christmas Eve reversal of a Dec. 17, 1999 determination issued by past zoning administrator Mary Gallagher. The Gallagher determination would have required that modern-day health and safety requirements be applied to a Sutro Tower Conditional Use Permit that hasn't been altered since it was issued in 1966.

On Dec. 17, 1999, Gallagher required that Sutro Tower Inc. obtain conditional use approval for installing up to 176 cellular and other antennas, along with two underground fuel storage tanks at the broadcast facility. The 977-foot-tall Sutro Tower is located in the midst of a residential neighborhood and within a couple of hundred feet of dozens of homes and two city reservoirs.

Sutro Tower applied for the building permits in late 1999, after neighbors complained to the Board of Supervisors and reported that Sutro Tower had unlawfully installed antennas and tanks on the property without any oversight or required building permits. Sutro Tower Inc. claimed the permits they received from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) precluded any requirement for City building permits. The Department of Building Inspection rejected Sutro Tower's claims, cited the corporation and ordered Sutro Tower Inc. to obtain retroactive building permits on all unpermitted installations.

"The FCC is a federal licensing agency that does not have the resources or authority to check the structural plans for additions to towers. The FCC has repeatedly advised that issues regarding building permits are local health and safety issues. Local health and safety oversight is reserved by the 10th Amendment to the states," explained TPIA attorney, Christine Linnenbach.

Before a large crowd representing almost 50 neighborhood organizations, the Board of Appeals seemed to ignore the express mandates of the Planning Code and the Wireless Siting Guidelines.

Sutro's lawyers argued that the 34-year-old Conditional Use Permit was open-ended. Green echoed Sutro Tower's position. At a May 16 hearing before the Public Utilities and Deregulation Committee of the Board of Supervisors, Green explained that he believed that if 10,000 antennae were to be proposed for Sutro Tower, the use permit would allow for such an expansion. Supervisor Sue Bierman, who sat on the Planning Commission for 16 years, stated that such a position was "sick."

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## Golfing public teed-off at the privatization of Lake Merced's muni courses

*Resident golfers are wary of latest proposal to upgrade Harding Park to attract PGA Tour Championship*

by Glenn Gullmes

The plan to privatize Harding Park and close the lakeside layout for a year in order to turn the city's busiest 18 hole track into a PGA-caliber golf course has the city's municipal golfers mobilizing to keep things as they are. Despite the promise of a grand new clubhouse and a major facelift for both Harding and the adjacent Jack Fleming 9 - and assurances that resident golfers will have preferential access and pay reasonable green fees - local linksters fear the worst.

About 75 concerned golfers came out to the United Irish Cultural Center (UICC) to address the situation in hopes of maintaining the status quo regarding their favorite recreational pursuit. The meeting was organized by Bob Killian, a Park & Rec employee of 34 years who worked in the golf division for the last 24 years. West Portal attorney Gerald Woods served as moderator.

"Some have questioned the wisdom of calling this meeting. I'm perceived as not being a team player," said Killian. "I did this completely on my own."

"I've been deliberately left out of the loop," he added. "I'm sure I'll be totally powerless by tomorrow. I was told it was an appropriate time for me to retire."

With the course in fairly good shape - given the heavy amount of use each year - and with municipal golf's consistent track record as one of the only revenue-producing programs administered by the Recreation and Parks Department, Killian questioned whether the privatization of San Francisco's golf courses was a good deal for city residents - especially those of the golfing variety.

"I just don't think the ends justify the means," Killian said as he reeled off a series of financial projections that didn't quite "add up."

According to Killian, the City's golf program first turned a profit in 1980 and has remained profitable ever

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## Dividing north and south in an east-west way CCSF, PUC agree to reconfigure Balboa Reservoir property lines

The Board of Trustees of City College of San Francisco and the SF Public Utilities Commission (PUC) have agreed to reconfigure the alignment of the Balboa Reservoir property lines dividing the north and south reservoirs so that both CCSF and the PUC will emerge with a parcel that can be developed to its full potential. Currently, both reservoirs are being used for student parking.

City College Trustee Rodel Rodis - a longtime Ingleside Terrace resident and former Chairman of the

PUC - called the reconfiguration a "win-win situation." The details of the realignment are currently being worked out by the staff of the PUC.

City College will end up with the easterly one-half of the North Reservoir and the easterly one-half of the South Reservoir, comprising all of the land that fronts on Phelan Avenue.

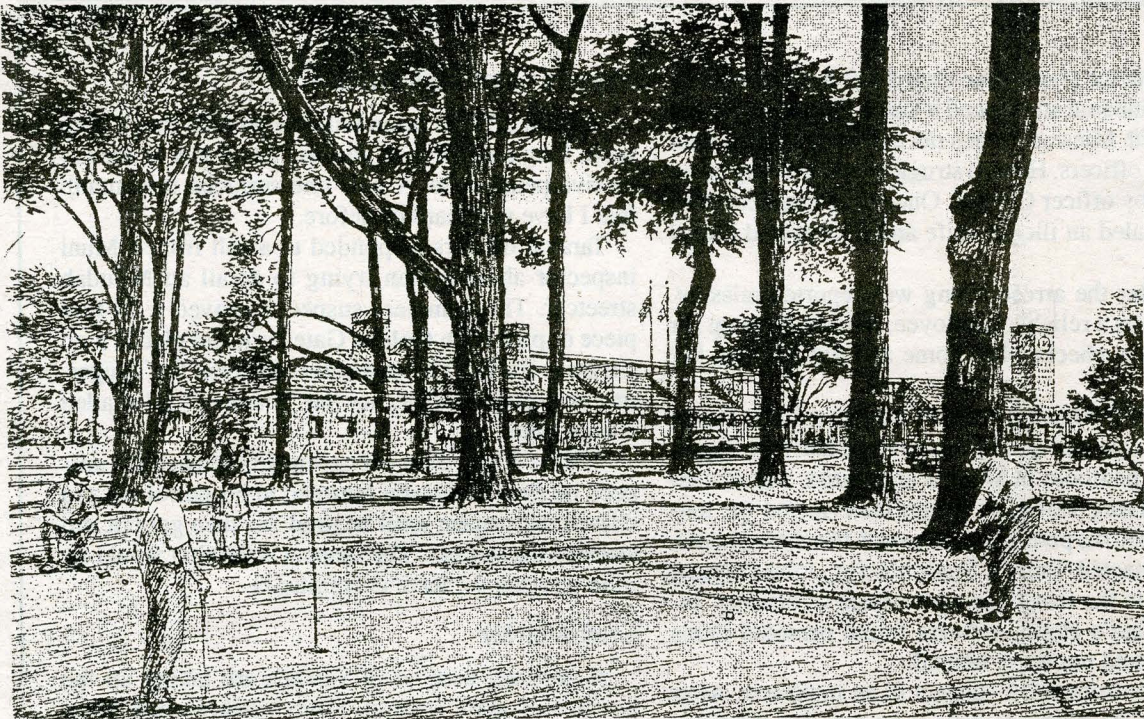
In addition to expanded administration facilities and student bookstore, plans for the new complex include a performing arts center, visual arts gallery and a state-of-the-art technology center.

The PUC will receive the westerly half of each reservoir to build a holding tank for the SF Water Dept. The PUC land would serve as a buffer zone between the college expansion and the residential neighborhoods to the west of the Balboa Reservoir.

Rodis says the college has developed preliminary plans to construct several buildings on the newly acquired property. CCSF hopes to eventually construct a Phelan Avenue tunnel so students can walk from one side of the campus to the other without crossing a city street.

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This preliminary sketch shows a view of the proposed Harding Park clubhouse from the ninth green.

## Harding renovation ... continued from page 1

since — even during years of drought and massive storm damage. Killian explained that the revenue surplus has been growing steadily over the past decade. In the fiscal year 1988-89 green fee revenue was over \$3.5 million — by 1993-94 the take exceeded \$5 million. However, while revenue was up, golf expenditures in the 1992-93 budget were lower than in 1988-89.

"By 1995, revenues were exceeding operating costs by two to three million dollars a year," he said. The current golf budget calls for approximately \$3.5 million, which includes \$480,000 for capital improvements.

"I project a profit of \$2.5 million," said Killian, assuming that current weather and golfing trends continue.

Millions are generated each year by the City-owned golf courses and the profits are dispersed into the Recreation & Park general fund, instead of being directed towards course maintenance and improvement.

"Nobody knows where the money goes," he said. Killian further stated that no money is budgeted for new golf equipment.

"Golfers are treated differently than everybody else," he said. "Rec & Park is not supposed to make money — they're supposed to improve the quality of life in the city," he said, adding that — for the most part — Rec & Park is a great system.

He went on to say that the City's courses are "mature, classic layouts situated on some of the most expensive real estate in the world. The courses are in the best condition I've seen them — not what they could be, not what they should be, but damn good, available, affordable muni courses."

As such, Killian seemed to suggest that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Presidio-based Arnold Palmer Golf Management is currently in the process of negotiating a long-term lease with The City to take over the operation of Harding Park and the Jack Fleming 9 at Lake Merced.

With most of the local political establishment strongly backing the privatization and upgrade of Harding Park in hopes of attracting the annual PGA Tour Championship and top dollar

tourist green fees, Arnold Palmer is widely perceived as having the inside track to secure the proposed contract within a few months.

Non-resident green fees would jump into the \$80-\$100 range; hotel guests would pay \$175 for 18 holes.

Arnold Palmer representatives hosted a public meeting to discuss the proposal May 18. In addition to questions about potential environmental impacts, local golfers top concerns focused on tee-time access and increased green fees.

The Palmer plan envisions a stately clubhouse situated closer to the finishing hole and featuring made-for-TV lake views. The new setup would also add guest amenities, a new irrigation system and underground cart parking. Other improvements include the addition of a snack shack in an area near the fourth tee, thirteenth green and fourteenth tee. A conceptual presentation is slated to go before the Recreation & Park Commission in mid-June.

Barring any significant setbacks, the three-phase planning process is slated to begin Phase II in July and Phase III in September, with a series of appearances before the Planning and Rec & Park commissions — and the Board of Supervisors — along the way. According to Arnold Palmer spokesman Brad Beanblossom, construction should be underway by Fall 2000. He pointed toward the improvements at Presidio Golf Course as an example of what the future holds for Harding Park.

Several sand traps will be reconfigured. All of the tee boxes and greens will be resod and rebuilt to USGA specifications. Perhaps the most notable change for those familiar with the course will be the redesign of the 13th hole.

Preliminary sketches of the new clubhouse are currently on display in the pro shop.

If the May 30 UICC meeting is any indication, the proposed changes are not being universally welcomed by the city's golfers. A number of those in attendance vented their frustration at a political process that favors big money interests over resident's recreational needs.

Describing Harding as a "gold mine" and citing greed as the main motivating factor, one irate golfer chided "Willie's stooges" for "giving us the cold shoulder."

Peter Chase remarked that the unfolding scenario might qualify for a Tom Brokaw expose on "the fleecing of San Francisco."

Killian stated that under the terms of the proposed lease Harding and Fleming will be closed and revamped at a cost of between \$12 and \$15 million.

"Under the terms of the proposed lease, the leasee will be obligated to pay the City more than \$2 million to cover the cost of salaries, loss of green fee revenues and capital improvements," he said. Consultants hired by the City estimate the annual debt service at \$1 million, based on a cost of approximately \$10.5 million.

"This means they (Palmer) will have to come up with over \$3 million, before they turn on the lights and open the gates," Killian concluded.

He cautioned that any shortfall in estimated tourist revenues could result in a hike in resident green fees.

With over 3,500 signatures gathered so far, organizers proposed the imminent formation of a new committee to slow the momentum of what is being perceived as a "done deal."

Sharp Park linkster Warren Miller, who has been following the situation for some time, portrayed the concerns of muni golfers to a round of applause.

Francis McCall, representing Friends of Muni Golf, saw the situation in terms of securing the support of six supervisors to overturn the deal.

"It's a longshot," said McCall. If the supervisors can't be persuaded to oppose the plan, the upcoming district elections presents a situation where "we've got to throw the rascals out," he exclaimed.

So far, supervisors Leland Yee and Tom Ammiano are the only high-profile politicians to back the grassroots efforts opposing the privatization.

Tom McGarvey, former proprietor of Red's Java House, conveyed his opposition to the privatization plan in no uncertain terms.

"As far as I'm concerned, Mr. Palmer can stay back in Florida."

Reportedly, Arnie's main involvement with the Arnold Palmer Company is allowing the use of his name. As one of the sport's all-time greats, the Arnold Palmer moniker generates considerable goodwill.



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