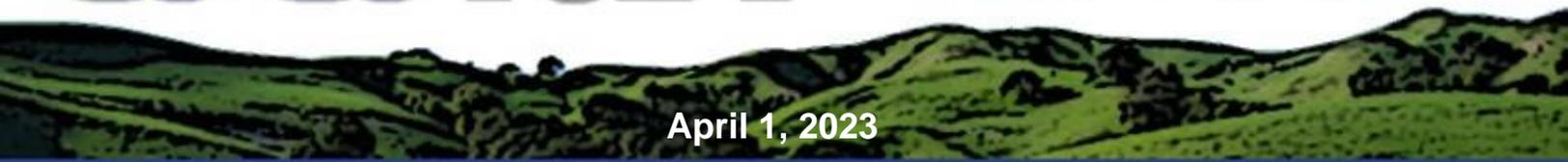




Promoting accountable, cost-effective and efficient government and opposing unnecessary taxes and spending



April 1, 2023

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Luncheon Speaker: Amy Worth

The guest speaker on March 24th was Amy Worth who has served 32 years in local government. She was a five-time Mayor of Orinda and has served on multiple county and regional agencies. She currently serves as Chair of the County Connection (also known as the Central Contra Costa Transit Authority).

She served on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), where she represented the Contra Costa Cities. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. She is past Chair of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, and served as a board member of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority and The California Council of Governments.

At the meeting, she was presented with a certificate of appreciation from Central Sanitary District by Mike McGill, Cent San, board member.

Amy said that ABAG, the Association of Bay Area Governments, develops a “Sustainable Communities Plan” for its 109 member governments. ABAG is involved in a “regional housing needs allocation” process abbreviated as RHNA. After regional needs are allocated, they are broken down into mandates for local communities. Communities are expected to locate candidate properties for development and approve high density development to meet RHNA requirements. She noted that these mandates have been “controversial” and have had considerable opposition.

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Luncheon Speaker Notes (Continued)

Amy advocated for more “low cost” housing recognizing that this will require subsidies from numerous sources.

She also noted the difficulty of designing for future transportation is the changing nature of business, locations and needs.

ABAG was formed in 1970 to strengthen cooperation and collaboration across local governments by providing planning services to local governments. It was primarily city managers who would attend meetings with ABAG.

MTC was formed to provide city, town, and county staff with technical assistance for energy, housing, land use, transportation, and infrastructure programs. The fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel was one example. They currently have \$1.4 trillion dollars budgeted over the next 25 years and the plan is reviewed every five years.

SB 375 Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act focusing on Housing and Transportation was passed to identify methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, land use planning and to improve housing. It was a planning measure and zoning measure with a public process. Every few years cities must produce a new housing plan. It includes measuring population, births and deaths. In Contra Costa County it’s a plan for 465,000 people. Efforts were made to encourage Industry along the waterfront, Richmond, etc. and suburban areas not along the water, which boomed after WWII. The voters supported an urban growth limit line and saved the perimeter of hills. Now, the Concord naval weapons station is the last large vestige of urban housing planning.

With COVID, the professional and tech skilled community stayed home, adversely affecting transportation planning. Tech jobs and office work became remote. Ridership declined. Service employees continued to commute but their destination was often not San Francisco. A quarter of a million people from the Altamont Pass commuted to jobs throughout the county. BART served the professional and tech skilled job community and by rail, but not the service community. It calls into question the need for a second bay crossing which has been the main component of the Link21 project. Amy argued that Link21 should refocus on commuting from the Central Valley to various points in the East Bay, and extending Caltrain service through San Francisco to connect with the Capitol Corridor.

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Luncheon Speaker Notes (Continued)

A separate problem is the cost of housing. In attracting teachers, the biggest factor is the cost of suburban housing. We can't find land for affordable housing for teachers. The federal government has tax credits not sufficient to subsidize housing if only 10%.

SB 9 California Home Act addressed infill, and rezoning single family residential zoning for homes. But there is no profit margin in individual family homes. ADUs and infill units are not affordable. You need more units. Another bill provides for the religious communities to build low-cost housing. But with building costs and PLA's, it's too expensive. The Carpenters' Union is supporting the bill, but Interest rates also are now slowing the housing market.

A number of questions ensued as to the costs of a double bore across the bay and the wisdom of integrating California Corridor with BART through the Link 21 program. The economics of such a plan are unattainable and the politics of planning has been upended by COVID which has changed transportation habits.

Further, an inflationary environment has escalated costs of housing. Housing is not affordable in the suburban or urban areas and the resistance to change through legislation has been strong. The changed habits of the population are dramatically different than the plans developed. Our assumptions appear to be wrong and we better go back to the drawing board.

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After Amy's presentation, Vice President Jim Pezzaglia called on Marc Joffe to report on a call between the Pension Committee and Patrick Wolff, a San Francisco based member of Govern for California. Joffe said that committee members described their investigation into the possibility of replacing traditional retiree health insurance with federally- and state-subsidized policies bought by retirees on Covered California. San Francisco's city/county government, school district, and community college district (all served by a single health system) have considerable OPEB debt. Wolff plans to discuss the pension committee's research with San Francisco City Controller Ben Rosenfield in the coming months.

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