

The INAUGURAL AWARDS FOR THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY FOR CONTRA COSTA TAXPAYERS

For the first time, CoCoTax has selected a number of people and agencies that we feel deserve the spotlight. Members submitted nominees, the Executive Board chose finalists and the Officers selected the winners.

We were pleased and surprised at so many potential nominations for the “Good Governance Award” and, despite our original idea to have 3 honorees, we chose to expand the kudos for our inaugural year.

*We separated the individuals from the agencies for top honors.
We then determined the Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal recipients.*

In the tradition of “Golden Fleece” awards, our “Bad and Ugly” categories are intended to openly prompt those people and agencies who are not giving a square deal to taxpayers and discovered there was also a place for a Dishonorable Mention category.

Our Awards are planned as an annual event and is something of a work in progress. But we will aim for a fun, informative and thoughtful presentation of “honors” in the years to come.

GOOD GOVERNANCE INDIVIDUAL HONORS FOR OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVICE

ROSA MENA

Anyone who has ever filed a ballot argument, run for local office or tried to navigate the elections department has probably met Rosa. She was selected for the Good Governance Award for her dedication, expertise and excellence in serving the public on all matter concerning elections. With a heart bigger than her paycheck, with her incredible patience she calmly explains the requirements, deadlines and & minutia to people with no previous exposure to the system as well as exhibiting continued good grace to experienced & savvy political factions. When you think of County employees who toil daily to serve the public, Rosa is the one who sets the bar high and offers the example to follow.

DENNIS CLAY

A quiet and modest man, Dennis is a powerhouse of skill and persistence. When he discovered inconsistencies in the construction program records for his employer, the WCCUSD, he notified his supervisor. Because his repeated failures for attention & correction as he went up the chain of command, he finally chose to break silence and went public, resulting in the Clay Investigation Commission and a forensic audit of the Bond Program of the West Contra Costa Unified School District. In the audit, his findings were confirmed along with a number of other financial and procedural improprieties. In an age-old tale of letting no good deed go unpunished, Dennis was forced into taking retirement. Recently, Dennis works with the CoCoTax pension committee. His expertise was an integral part of our studies and he has proven himself a valuable asset wherever he goes.

DEBORA ALLEN

You already know Debora Allen as the fiscally responsible member of the Bart Board of Directors. She's not backing down on her criticism of the silly fare gate replacement apparatus and pushing the crackdown on fare evaders.

But you may not know her significant influence on the Contra Costa Employees Retirement Board. During her tenure, Debora was instrumental in convincing CCCERA to take the unfunded pension liability issue seriously. The current 90% funded status is a tribute to her persuasiveness and diligence.

CoCoTax thanks and appreciates these incredible individuals for their unwavering dedication, contributions and service well above and beyond the norm.

THE GOOD GOVERNANCE AWARDS BY AN AGENCY

THE GOLD

The CalPERS Public Pension obligation is a true crisis. CoCoTax has been studying the causes & current status on the pension debt for over two years and included a 5-year projection. Many cities & their residents in this county will be severely impacted by reduced services, threats and filings of bankruptcy and you can anticipate many tax measures.

As revealed in our Pensions study, three cities have avoided the disastrous unfunded pension liability that now threatens basic services and fiscal solvency in virtually all other county cities.

FOR their excellent judgment to be fiscally responsible and still provide a pension policy for their staff,

WE AWARD THE GOLD MEDAL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE TO THE CITIES OF:

- **LAFAYETTE**
- **DANVILLE**
- **ORINDA**

THE SILVER

COUNTY CONNECTION- CC maintains essential bus and para-transit service to central county residents at affordable cost. This is a serious challenge, as the vast majority of transit funding in the Bay Area is allocated to BART and Muni, yet CC is often called upon to provide "bridge" service in the all-too-frequent event of BART failures. Salaries of management and compensation of represented workers are carefully controlled by the board and GM, whose salary of the GM is way below that of counterparts in the region and still effective.

CONTRA COSTA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY- CCTA has consistently demonstrated excellence in planning and executing transportation projects to support transportation within and among its operating territory and the region. CCTA has been able to immediately secure important transportation grants by maintaining "shovel ready" project plans. CoCoTax is pleased to have been approached by CCTA to elicit our input to the shaping of proposed tax measures; and note their exceptional handling of pension obligations.

THE BRONZE

CHAMBERLIN FAMILY FOUNDATION—The long waiting lists document the success of these schools, at operating costs far below that incurred by conventional schools. CFF has planned and funded the building and lease of several charter school campuses in West County, holding charter school leaders to strict lease performance criteria where the focus is on individual student learning and achievement.

SAN RAMON VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT Facilities & Operations – **They** pay attention to the advice of their Citizens Bond Oversight committee. They negotiated interest on Measure D bonds at an average of 1.9 % & wisely purchasing insurance to cover bond projects. In a recent project on the Alamo campus, they cut ties with the original contractor for failure to uphold the terms of the construction contract, and hired another firm to pick up the project. Using insurance proceeds, they saved taxpayers a bundle and were able to continue the project as promised.

CONTRA COSTA SHERIFF'S OFFICE – Realizing that the recommendation by CalPERS was never funded, the Sheriff's Office ended their financially devastating 3%@ 50 pension offering for Contra Costa, thereby improving County protections for both taxpayers and current & future pensioners.

IRONHOUSE SANITARY DISTRICT – For approving a fiscally conservative 2019/20 budget, providing the same rate structure for a **fifth** consecutive year. We salute their ongoing efforts in transparency for which they have received recognition by other organizations and cost effective management of public services. They publish a newsletter, which keeps their ratepayers informed, and frequently include their financial figures.

THE BAD

FOR implementing the wasteful & expensive Art on BART, lack of safety for patrons, giving freebie rides to employees and their friends, ignoring fare evaders now at 15% of ridership, paying the highest wages to transit workers in the nation while allowing panhandling, filthy cars w/o adequate ventilation, and maintaining grossly dirty stations while increasing fares. Additionally, they now want to develop something called “transit housing”.

**THE AWARD for SIMPLY BAD GOVERNING
GOES TO**

BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT

THE UGLY

FOR LONG TERM LACK OF SUCCESS AFTER TEETERING ON THE BRINK OF BANKRUPTCY IN THE 90'S,

FOR approving construction projects at elevated cost, consistently refusing to demand the District's largest vendor to comply with signed contract to provide documentation to the auditors for \$1.6 billion bond program,

FOR over-construction and over-improving many schools starting with LaVonya DeJean Middle School which at approx. \$60 million to excessively large Pinole Valley High currently in construction, while leaving about ½ its schools in disrepair, sticking taxpayers with bond payments that likely will continue to be borne even by grandchildren of current residents. And yet they are positioning for more.

FOR the consistent cries for more taxpayer dollars under the guise “for the children” and yet the dollars fail to reach the classroom or teacher support,

FOR failing to prioritize student learning above all,

Receiving more nominations than any other public entity, CoCoTax presents the

**THE UGLY AWARD for IRRESPONSIBLE
GOVERNANCE to**

**THE WEST COUNTY UNIFIED SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DISHONORABLE MENTION

The City of Richmond

Shot down efforts recently to establish an industry-accepted general reserve of 15% proposed by the city manager and rejected by the entire city council. Richmond has used its dangerously small reserve of 8% to give the appearance that the city has a balanced budget. The city has unfunded pension liabilities and excessive salary costs of \$500,000 in total compensation for leaders in public safety. The city was twice in state receivership.

A/C Transit

FOR repeated failure to disclose pension information as required by the Government Code since the inception of Transparent California.

East County Fire Protection District

FOR dangerously elongated response times, failing to provide appropriate services to East County residents and visitors, failing to procure funding without raising taxes, engaging consulting services without specific plans, closing a 4th station, failing to convince elected representatives at the city, county and state levels that they are in a state of emergency, failing to answer all emergency calls and “discovering” \$6.2 million of “hidden reserves” in unreported bank accounts. How does one “lose” \$6.2 million in taxpayer funds?