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Local News

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FINDING THE RIGHT PITCH

The movers and shakers of the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce had just heard former Mayor **Leland "Le" Levy** and his buddy, developer **Roxy Rapp**, give their pitch for refurbishing a downtown plaza, and were about to move on to another topic when Levy interrupted.

"Wait," he said. "I have a song." Those in the room who knew Levy either chuckled or groaned.

For 25 years Levy has been changing the lyrics of well-known songs to fit the situation at hand, and sharing his creations with captive audiences at city council meetings and elsewhere.

His serenading began years ago with a ditty that incorporated the names of all the applicants for the city manager's job.

"Sometimes everybody is very, very serious about issues," Levy told IA. "I try to find the lighter side."

At a recent morning meeting, he treated the chamber of commerce to a song about Lytton Plaza, sung to the tune of "Wouldn't It Be Lovely" from the musical, "My Fair Lady."

It began: "*All we want is a city square,*

Warm and friendly with people there,

Maintained in good repair,

Now, wouldn't it be lovely."

When it was over, Levy got a round of applause -- but no requests for an encore.

Several hunters from around the Bay Area showed up at Mountain View's city council meeting last week to persuade the council not to ask the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restrict hunting in salt ponds near the city's Shoreline Park.

Their message, in part, was: Hunters have feelings, too.

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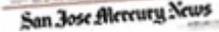
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"I think there are a lot of misconceptions about hunters," said **Mike Meyers**, 44, of Mountain View.

Meyers said hunting "is a great way to meet people from very diverse backgrounds."

Hunters are not just macho, gun-brandishing Republicans.

Decked out in a blue shirt covered in Labrador retrievers and duck calls, **John Roselli** of San Mateo declared: "I'm a Democrat."

"I don't find there's a contradiction in being a Democrat and being a hunter," said Roselli, who said his wife is a great hunter, too.

Councilwoman **Rosemary Stasek** insisted the issue isn't partisanship but safety.

"We have to keep people from walking through our parks with guns," she said.

Rising pay, deficits

Santa Clara County may be in the midst of one of its worst budget crunches ever, but it's hard to tell from the hefty raises County Executive **Pete Kutas** wants to hand out -- including a 4 percent increase for himself.

Kutas is recommending pay raises of up to 7.5 percent for some of the 165 members of his executive staff that would take effect next year at a time when the county is facing its third consecutive year of budget deficits and likely cuts to services for the poor. That's on top of the raises of up to 22 percent over three years that the county granted the Deputy Sheriffs Association union earlier this year.

Kutas defended the raises as a matter of fairness, saying that the county's top union, Service Employees International Local 715, is getting a raise next June after a pay freeze that lasted several months, and there's no reason executives should be treated differently. Never mind that Kutas and other county brass agreed themselves to lift that wage freeze.

Over at San Jose, which hasn't exactly shown itself to be a model of fiscal restraint (witness the new City Hall), City Manager **Del Borgsdorf** has kept an executive pay freeze in place since mid-2003.

The county board of supervisors is scheduled to vote Tuesday on Kutas' pay proposal.

Attorneys union keeps chief

Jim Shore, the embattled president of the Santa Clara County Government Attorneys Association and a possible contender for district attorney in two years, survived a tough fight last week to retain his union post.

Shore and other union leaders were challenged by a slate of candidates led by Deputy District Attorney **Mike Fletcher**. The contest was sparked by the November defeat of a ballot measure designed to boost the lawyers' leverage in contract negotiations. But the group spent about \$600,000 of union money and still lost overwhelmingly, after a bitter fight with county leaders that sent union-county relations to what many called a new low. Challengers said that could be problematic as the union prepares to negotiate a new contract.

But Shore made a persuasive case with a majority of members, noting, among other things, the 28.5 percent raise (over two years) he negotiated for them a few short years ago.

Shore's governing coalition, which also beat back challenges, includes deputy district attorneys **Paul Colin**, **David**

Soares and **Ann Huntley**, and **Thompson Sharkey** of the public defender's office. Fletcher's slate consisted of deputy district attorneys **JoAnne McCracken**, **Steve Lowney** and **Chuck Gillingham** (who's also been mentioned as a possible district attorney contender), and **Steve Bermudez** of the public defender's office.

Race tickets -- do the math

Shortly after telling his city council audience Tuesday how "pleased" he was with the negotiations to bring a grand prix race to San Jose -- the one in which he agreed to hand over four times as much public money as he originally intended -- Mayor **Ron Gonzales** declared to the public: "I have no tickets and I have no hotel rooms. You're on your own."

We pay only occasional attention to the mayor's hotel arrangements, but we do have some information on the tickets. The agreement he and the council approved -- besides requiring taxpayers to fork over nearly \$800,000 -- requires race sponsors to give the city 220 of the "highest price" tickets, gratis, each year. No rules have been established on what the city will do with those tickets. But note how easily 220 divides by 11, which just happens to be the sum of 10 council members and one mayor.

So, if you'd like to ask Gonzales for the tickets he said he doesn't have, or why the city needs 220 freebies, his staff will be happy to respond if you send a note to mayoremail@sanjoseca.gov.

Internal Affairs is compiled by the Mercury News Staff. Staff writers Dan Stober, Julie Patel, Putsata Reang and Mike Zapler contributed items this week. Send tips to internalaffairs@mercurynews.com, or call (650) 688-7554.



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