

TELEGRAPH HILL SEMAPHORE

Publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers

NUMBER THIRTY NINE

JANUARY 1970

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS FIRST 1970 DINNER MEETING

JANUARY 29th.

SAVOY TIVOLI

1438 GRANT AVE.

COCKTAILS 6:45

DINNER 7:30

THE TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS ARE ORGANIZED TO REPRESENT YOU WHO LIVE ON THE HILL- - - - COME AND PARTICIPATE.

FOR TICKETS CALL VERA RANSOM 986-6033

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CRIME

Upper Grant Avenue is becoming the hunting ground for hustlers of all types. Drug peddlers, prostitutes, pan-handlers, con men all prey on the public. No longer is it safe to walk the street and admire the quaint shops.

Some of our members are very much aware of the increased crime in this area in the past six months or so, having been burglarized or otherwise victimized.

The Directors of the T. H. D. have set up a committee to work on this problem with other groups and with city agencies, and although progress is necessarily slow, we hope it will be effective. Members who are concerned, and would like to assist, are asked to give their names to our President or any member of the Board of Directors.

THE TRANSAMEPICA PYRAMID

Our hard working and dedicated attorney John B. Harman informs us that two Tax Payers law suits are on file involving the City, the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors and Transamerica.

The first one challenges the legality of the sale of the last 22-foot portion of Merchant Street which the City vacated. The basis of this suit is that proper notice of a Supervisor Committee meeting was not given.

The second one contends the sale of the other portion of 183 feet of Merchant Street was illegal and was not held pursuant to the charter, which calls for public bid after public notice. A second part of this suit, as well as the first, also claims that if the transfers are legal, the price was less than one-half of the true value.

The question of whether or not Transamerica is "under construction" and therefor qualifies for a state tax advantage will have to await the decision of the State of California. If the State holds that they are entitled to the tax advantage, the suing Tax Payers will institute a tax-payers suit to contest this.

IT OCCURS TO ME ! !

During the last four years hi-rise buildings have been constructed in San Francisco at unprecedented rate.

Many of these buildings, already constructed or about to be constructed, have required variances from the building code and have been opposed by concerned citizens. However, City Officials have enthusiastically accepted the plans of any developer with cash in hand.

Always, the excuse for the acceptance of questionable projects has been that San Francisco must increase its assessment role, with the implied promise to the small property owner that his property taxes will be reduced.

LET'S LOOK AT THE RECORD--For the period commencing with the fiscal year 1966-1967 through the fiscal year 1969-1970 my taxes have increased a total of 53% on a single family residence--this in the era of the greatest boom in hi-rise buildings San Francisco has ever known. I'm sure that my experience is no exception.

The City Planning Commission, the Port Commission, the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Permit Appeals all have an obligation to the citizens of San Francisco.

The resident property owner should have the legal right to depend on all provisions and restrictions imposed and provided by existing ordinances, zoning laws etc. - and not be the victim each time "COMMERCIAL MONEY" pulls the rug from under him by requesting and obtaining variances and sales of streets which jeopardize his values and privileges.

It is necessary that we consolidate our efforts to resist the destruction of the very values that make San Francisco a desirable place to live, and to see to it that each individual gets his due share of protection.

INTERNATIONAL MARKET CENTER TO BE RENEGOTIATED ? ? ? ? ?

According to an article in the San Francisco Examiner December 29, 1969, the agreement permitting Northern Waterfront Associates to buy portions of Montgomery and Lombard Streets, in order to build their proposed International Market Center, expires with the old year 1969.

Any action to renegotiate will have to go before the Board of Supervisors and full scale hearings will have to be held.

The Northern Waterfront Associates, because of a taxpayers suit still pending, have been unable to obtain financing. The taxpayers suit claims that the City can not sell any of its streets without putting them out to public bid.

The Northern Waterfront Associates claim to have an alternative plan which does not require the use of these streets.

This alternate plan would eliminate the use of roof gardens, which the Supervisors included as a necessary condition for sale of the streets.

Leonard Cahn, Northern Waterfront Associates Vice-President, claimed six months ago that ground would be broken for the project in October 1969.

The Market Center was opposed by the Telegraph Hill Dwellers along with many other organizations comprising an organization known as POW. (Preserve our Waterfront.)

When and if this project ever gets off the ground is now a matter of speculation.

Is the project dead? Mr. Cahn says no, but - - - - -
We must continue to be vigilant lest on any renegotiations some further "grab" is attempted.

THE EARLY DAYS OF TELEGRAPH HILL - WHAT WERE THEY LIKE?

BY BERNARD BOUR - HISTORIAN

In March 1956 the late Silvio Catelli began his annual Peach Blossom Festival at his then 102-year-old house on lower Alta. And the THD joined several dozen other improvement and merchant organizations in the Central Council of Civic Clubs, that met monthly at the Odd Fellows Hall at Market and Seventh Streets.

But the threat of future freeways was felt as early as 1957 and was reported in the Bulletin of January 1958 (No. 7). This same Bulletin also strikes the same familiar note of the severe parking problems caused by the restaurants (and their hustling attendants) on upper Montgomery Street. and the Bulletin of August 1958 (No. 9) has much to say about the night owl problems created by noisy Beatniks in the upper Grant area, and the question of adequate policing.

SOUTHERN CROSSING

The long heralded Southern Crossing that once was thought to be the answer to relieving traffic on the Bay Bridge may not be built, if conservationist groups are heeded. Conservationist groups, supported by Senator Dolwig, believe that it becomes increasingly apparent that rapid transit may obviate the necessity for the crossing, and that the ecology of the area would be severely disturbed by its construction.

TRANSPORTATION

President Gerald Cauthen has written to Supervisor Boas urging that a coordinated program for city-wide transportation be established.

Supervisor Boas has referred this matter to the Supervisors' Streets and Transportation Committee.

ONE WAY STREETS

In an attempt to alleviate the traffic congestion on Telegraph Hill, Kearny Street is to be established as a one way street, South, from Filbert to Vallejo Street. Castle Street is to remain a one way street South, from Union to Green Street.

The Telegraph Hill Dwellers do not believe that this is a good plan to have both these streets established as one way streets, South. The City has agreed that if the plan does not alleviate traffic movement, or if it proves to be too much of an inconvenience to local residents, the plan will be changed or abandoned.

MINI BUS FOR JULIUS CASTLE

Mr. Modesto Lanzone, the owner of Julius Castle, has instigated a mini bus operation to transport restaurant patrons from the garage at 1641 Powell Street to his restaurant at Montgomery and Greenwich. Parking space will be available in the garage for a reasonable fee.

Mr. Lanzone is to be congratulated for his foresight in establishing this service. Such an operation should do much to alleviate the almost impossible parking problem on that portion of the Hill.

Local Dwellers in this area would be jubilant, we are sure, if the Shadows Restaurant would emulate this fine example and win goodwill.



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"MANHATTAN-WEST", OR SAN FRANCISCO???

Based on years of study by the A. D. Little Co., by John Bolles & Associates, and by the Planning Department, the Planning Commission last June 19 adopted a new Masterplan for San Francisco's waterfront. Although the plan has some drawbacks, it is probably as good as could have been expected, given the present developer-oriented political climate in San Francisco. Among the Plan's best features was provision, north of Broadway, for some open space and a strengthening of existing height limit restrictions: ie, the existing 84-foot height limit east of Telegraph Hill was reduced to a sloping height limit of 84'-65' and 40'. Thus the existing 40' limit along the water's edge was preserved and extended southward to Broadway.

Unfortunately, in developing the zoning ordinance which would implement the Masterplan, the Planning Department introduced a highly objectionable loophole for the benefit of the large developer: in the new "variable height district", east of the Hill, developers with 3 acres or more in their project area, could exceed the 40' and 65' limits (up to 84'), with approval of the Planning Commission. This exception is likely to become the rule since 3 acres are not too hard to come by if one is adequately financed, and since the present Planning Commission seems to have established a policy of extreme leniency in such cases. (In response to our protest the Commission added a 3-year time limit to this exception.)

The zoning ordinance for the area north of Broadway was adopted by the Commission on October 16 and is currently being readied for presentation to the Board of Supervisors. In the forthcoming public hearings before the Planning & Development Committee of the Board, the Telegraph Hill Dwellers and other groups will certainly be asking again that the loophole referred to above be eliminated.

Zoning codes covering the waterfront area south of Broadway (to Harrison Street) were introduced at a subsequent Planning Commission hearing on December 12. The Planning Department proposes height limits in the 65 to 84-foot range for this area also, but, again, with unnecessary and unwise concessions to the large developer. Thus, between Broadway and Clay Streets, developers may build up to 125' on 15% of their project area, and between Howard and Harrison Streets, 175' on 15% of their project area. These exceptions are in direct contradiction to the Planning Commission's own Masterplan, adopted only six months ago, which states:

"In the Ferry Building Area, development east of the Embarcadero should preserve the dominance of the Downtown skyline and should protect the dominance of the Ferry Building and its tower. Between Broadway and Howard Streets, development should not exceed 84'. However, the maximum of 84' should be permitted only if development enhances the Ferry Building and view corridors."

No sooner had these recommendations been made public, than SPUR unaccountably entered the picture and made matters still worse by proposing a yet more sweeping concession. SPUR recommends the removal of all height limits between the Ferry Building and the Bay Bridge, in exchange for a "guarantee" that present height limits north of the Ferry Building be respected (which of course will be fully protected in any event unless existing and presently proposed codes are deliberately relaxed by municipal officials) and that 50% of the Port area between Broadway and Taylor Streets be committed to open space and parks.

This recommended "trade" was obviously made to make way for a U. S. Steel Corporation proposal featuring a 50-story office building and a 1000 room hotel jutting out into the San Francisco Bay, in the area just south of the Ferry Building. This proposal (which contains some open space, although nothing very exciting in the way of significant public access to the Bay) calls for a new passenger terminal, located essentially out of the public view. The presently attractive and exciting passenger operation at Pier 35 would be eliminated. Moreover, the economic feasibility of this costly and certainly unnecessary new facility has been questioned by virtually everyone in town but the President of the Port Commission himself.

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We therefore consider the SPUR proposal a dangerous gamble with predictable results: San Francisco will get the U. S. Steel Tower but not the guarantee SPUR is asking for - and the City will lose its spectacular and much enjoyed passenger operation at Pier 35 in the process. Substantiation of these misgivings was not long in coming. As Mr. Magnin bluntly stated on January 2, "I couldn't guarantee them anything"!

It is plain that matters on the waterfront are not getting any better. The Port Commission, presumably backed by the Alioto administration, seems determined to go into the real estate development business, even to the extent of discouraging shipping itself, and is busily advertising the fact to large developers all over the United States. In short, our municipal officials are actively encouraging other vast projects as part of a terribly unwise and short-sighted Port give-away program at the same time that the naive talk of "guarantees" goes on!!

ONLY A THOROUGHLY AROUSED ELECTORATE CAN HALT THIS DISASTEROUS TREND TOWARD MAKING SAN FRANCISCO INTO A "MANHATTAN-WEST".

Under such citizen pressure San Francisco's municipal leaders might finally come to realize that the needs and desires of San Francisco's municipal leaders might finally come to realize that the needs and desires of San Francisco's residents DO NOT NECESSARILY PARALLEL THOSE OF LARGE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT COMBINES!! IN ANY EVENT, TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO. IF THE TREND TOWARD MANHATTANIZATION IS NOT HALTED SOON, IT WILL PROBABLY BECOME IRREVERSIBLE.

LITTER

Allen Lathrop, our Vice-President and able litter chairman, reports that many of the litter cans placed on the Hill by the Telegraph Hill Dwellers have either disappeared entirely or their tops are missing. Although some of the local residents have, on occasion, used the cans to deposit their own garbage, we feel that a considerable amount of the street litter has been placed in the containers, that otherwise would be blowing about the streets.

We have been promised by the street cleaning department that the missing cans will be replaced and the other containers will be repainted.

OUR ADVERTISERS HELP MATERIALLY TO DEFRAY THE COST OF THIS BULLETIN.

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OUR PARTY
THE ALCATRAZ ROCK

The party at Fred Kuh's Old Spaghetti Factory was a huge financial success.

Nobody knows how many people were there. Fred Kuh does not own a computer, so he based his counting system on how many plates were used. Unfortunately his system broke down completely, as most computers do when they are most needed. Some of the plates were used to serve the prize cake, which was shaped and decorated to look like Alcatraz. It is also rumored that some of the guests took plates home to use as frisbees.

The Limerick output was astounding, three guests who had a very intimate knowledge of "The Rock", having been former inmates, won with the suggestion that Alcatraz be turned into a Rehabilitation Center for Ex-convicts.

The cake island was created by Susan Landon of the Environment Work Shop; the M. C. for the evening was Mike Doyle.

Mary O'Gara was general chairman of the event and was responsible for its success.

If you enjoyed the party, or if you think you have better ideas, let's talk about it over cocktails. Please fill in this coupon and send it to Mary O'Gara, 104 Alta Street.

I want to be on the New party committee:

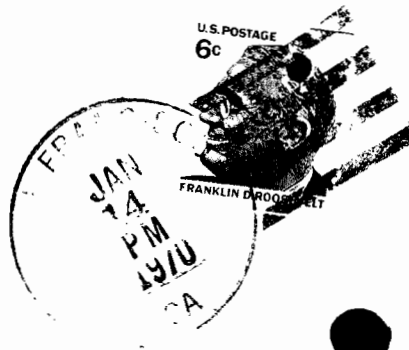
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