



LOCAL NEWS...

“Total Recall” in Potrero

Pro-Blackwater planners booted.

by Raymond Lutz

The pro-Blackwater members of the Potrero Planning Group (PPG) were soundly booted out of office and replaced by a group against the project. The election was nothing less than a landslide with about 70% of the voters expressing their desire to replace those planners with residents who are against the project. The election occurred almost exactly one year after the PPG originally approved the Blackwater West project after a single presentation by Blackwater’s V.P. Brian Bonfiglio in

October, 2006, before a very few members of the community – only twelve people.

Conducted as a vote-by-mail election, all the ballots were due at the Registrar of Voters (ROV) office by 8 p.m. on December 11. They don’t honor the postmark—the ballot must be physically in their hands for it to be valid.

That makes it a bit difficult for voters on the last day or two of the election since it isn’t feasible to trust the mail to get the ballot in on time. After researching vote-by-mail elections, we found that it was standard procedure to provide drop-boxes throughout the communities—usually at post offices—on the last day of the election to make it possible to vote on that day without making a trip to the ROV office. It takes nearly an hour to complete that trip from Potrero (one way), and each voter has to do it personally (or have a friend carry a few ballots signed over to them to deposit.)

Our Registrar is now Debra Seiler, former employee of Diebold systems, and our assistant Registrar is Michael Vu from Cuyahoga County Ohio, forced out of his job as elections chief Feb. 7 after two of his assistants, Jacqueline Maiden, 60, and Kathleen Dreamer, 40, were each convicted of a felony count of negligent misconduct with regard to illegally "rigging" the recount.

We were all stunned in 2004 as we watched voters line up at too-few voting machines in Ohio and stood breathless as they announced that Bush would take the country based on the results in Ohio, all under the careful watch of Vu. (We didn’t appreciate the fact that

See Local News on page 2.

UPCOMING EVENTS

General Meeting, Jan. 13

The topic of this meeting will be the presidential primary. We will review recent speeches by the candidates, and discuss who would be best to support in the primary. A straw poll will be held, so if you want your candidate to do well, please show up!

Also, we will have officer elections for the club.

“Shadow Company”, Jan. 27

In the late 20th Century the distinction between soldier and mercenary became blurred. The recent use of private military companies (PMC) in Iraq has been more extensive (and more high profile) than at any time in modern history. The issues raised by the brutal killing of four PMC staff in Fallujah in April 2004 and the subsequent reaction of the general public and the US Army make it clear that these “contractors” are not merely workers in a foreign land.

James Ashcroft, 28, an employee of a large PMC currently under contract in Iraq, is our guide to this world. James’s job differs little from his colleagues in the Coalition Forces—there are many similarities in loyalty, honor, code of ethics, chain of command and operational conduct—but James’s salary, for one thing, tops that of a US soldier three times over. Through letters, photos and personal video, James provides an intimate introduction into his life as a modern day “soldier for hire”.

“Shadow Company is a must-see film for anyone who is concerned about our military and our security being privatized.” -- Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)



East County Democratic Club

Serving El Cajon, Rancho San Diego, Jamul, Lakeside, and outlying San Diego County since 1965

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Outreach *Tom & Kathy Lamb*
Refreshments *Bonnie Rawson*
Book Club *Jon Scanlon*
Newsletter *Madeline McDowell*
Publicity *(Open)*

CONTACT:

Telephone *619-820-5321*
Email info@ecdcweb.org
Mailing Address: *PO Box 252
El Cajon, CA 92022*

MEETING LOCATION:

*Rancho San Diego Library
11555 Via Rancho San Diego
El Cajon, CA 92019
(Unless otherwise noted!)*

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
IN PROGRESS!**

SCHEDULE

13 Jan 2008 (Sun) 2 p.m.
ECDC General Meeting
Rancho San Diego Library
Topic: Presidential Primary including straw poll. Arrive at 1:30 for snacks and networking.

27 Jan 2008 (Sun) 2 p.m.
Current Events Theater
Shadow Company
Arrive at 1:30 for networking, discussion following.

05 Feb 2008 (Tue)
Presidential Primary
(We will probably have a party to track the election, location TBA)

LOCAL NEWS (Cont.)

Kerry immediately conceded the election after promising not to do anything of the kind either.)

Needless to say, we were expecting some sleight of hand in this election, prompted by Blackwater and carried out by corporate operatives Seiler and Vu who now run our own ROV.

I asked the ROV if they were planning to have ballot drop boxes for this election, and they said no. After I published a "Position Paper" on the election, it seems they got the hint that there may be some liability in not following standard practice. In any case, a drop box was provided at the Potrero General Store, guarded by two county employees.

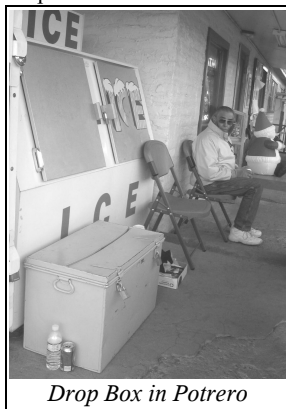
I drove out to Potrero to take a look at the drop box and was greeted by Jack Reider, the Potrero resident who sponsored the Pro-Blackwater counter-protest rally across the street from our rally on October 7th. He was snapping pictures of everyone who approached the drop box.

"Everyone who votes today is invalidating my vote," he said from the window of his tandem-wheeled pickup truck. "There should be no drop box because they didn't say there would be one, and that is not following the rules."

Of course Reider didn't seem to mind that he was likely considered intimidating voters as he sat snapping pictures of voters from within 60 ft of the box.

The drop box is an important ingredient to make elections fair, but there were only 10 ballots deposited there over the course of the day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

I arrived at the ROV office at about 7:45 p.m. and was let into the office by security guards. After signing in and completing an agreement



regarding behavior during the counting process, we were escorted to an inner-sanctum of the building where one worker unlocked a chain-link fence enclosure and grabbed a single tray, similar to those used by the Post Office, filled with 280 ballots and 281 empty envelopes.



Ballot Counting by the Registrar. Debra Seiler is on the far left. Ballot readers on the far right, talliers and observers along the far side of the table.

"We store the ballots in those locking cabinets," the worker said, as she hoisted the tray and pointed. "Here are the ballots, and here are the empty envelopes."

Later, I asked: "Why did you open the envelopes in advance? We thought we would see all the processing."

"Oh, we did that an hour ago," said the worker.

"You could have seen it had you arrived at 7:30," Seiler said.

"Oh really," said an observer. "They just said they did it an hour ago. If we got here at 7:30, that was only a half-hour ago. Plus, we weren't told to get here at 7:30."

Seiler was mum on the issue.

The final worker arrived at that point and they started the count. The issue with the open ballots was a bit unnerving but set aside for the sake of time.

To perform the count, they had two people to read the ballots, one who announced the vote and another who observed. They swapped roles every 20 minutes or so as the vocalization was tiring. Two more pairs of workers, one pair who tallied the first two seats (recall and replacement) and one set to tally the other three seats. One person tallied while the other observed.

Observing the count was quite hypnotic. The reader would say "Recall question number one. Jerry Johnson. Yes. Replacement: Terry Stephens. Recall question number two. Mary Johnson. Yes. Replacement: Janet Goode..." on and on for about 3.5 hours, not including a few breaks. If you are looking for a sure-fire way to fall

asleep, we have the whole thing recorded and available on the web site.

We were told later that this was one of the first times the public was allowed to record even the content of each ballot, a level of transparency we definitely appreciate.

The following are the results as distributed by the ROV:

Total Registered Voters: 509		
Ballots Received:	306	
Ballots Counted:	280 (55%)	
Late Ballots uncounted:	10 (These were deposited in the drop box in Potrero.)	
Rejects 16 -- 2 signature mismatches. One signed ballot, etc.		
Recall Questions	Yes	No
Jerry Johnson	187 (67%)	93 (33%)
Mary Johnson	189 (67.5%)	91 (32.5%)
Gordon Hammers	196 (70%)	84 (30%)
Janet Wright	186 (66.4%)	94 (33.6%)
Thell Fowler	176 (62.9%)	104 (37.1%)
Seat 1:	Terry Stephens	176 (100%)
Seat 2:	Janet Goode	177 (100%)
Seat 3:	Brenda Wise	68 (28.5%)
	Carl Meyer	170 (71.4%)
Seat 4:	Edward Boryla	48 (21.3%)
	William Crawley	177 (78.7%)
Seat 5:	Tina (Brown) McCunney	161 (74.5%)
	Anita Meneses	55 (25.5%)

Of course, although this is a huge win for the residents of Potrero and the StopBlackwater forces, you'll hear Blackwater in the media act as if the election is completely meaningless.

If they were honorable, they would pull the project and not put the town through any additional agony. We only wish.

The new slate of members were confirmed by the Registrar on Thursday, Dec.



New Potrero planning group members taking the oath of office on Dec. 13th conducted by Jan Hedlun, Chair pro-tempore. From the left, William Crawley IV, Tina (Brown) McCunney, Janet Goode, Terry Stepens and Carl Meyer.

13, just prior to the already scheduled PPG meeting later that evening. After the county counsel informed Hammers that he was no longer the chair, Jan Hedlun was given the gavel and conducted the meeting at the Potrero Community Center.

With right hands raised, the new planning group took their oath of office, and the audience erupted in sustained applause with smiles almost extending past the borders of their faces.

Jan thanked the prior members for their lengthy service to the community, and the audience clapped again.

The feeling in the room had changed from prior meetings, from confrontational to friendly and accommodating.

During the public comment portion of the meeting, Steve Kowit asked if there was any way the panel could take some official action on the Blackwater issue. To that question, Crawley stated that the panel would not be able to address the issue but would put it on the agenda for a

future meeting, perhaps to be held within a week.

Meyer said that they would take up the question and consider all the issues which are on the EIR, including the community character issue, one which was set aside by the prior panel as a category that could not be addressed because it was subjective in nature.

Jeanette Hartman, chair of the Land Use Committee of the Sierra Club, made a comment that the issue of water contamination was one that was certainly going to be a big issue and that she was planning to have a thorough comment on that criteria after the EIR is released.

The meeting was adjourned after briefly considering the items that were on the agenda as originally set by Hammers. Again, the audience erupted in applause and hugs were passed around as well.

The entire meeting was recorded and available for review on the web site.

More info: see StopBlackwater.net.

Membership Campaign

Our club makes it easy to know when your membership expires: everyone expires at the end of the year unless you joined after October.

Now is the time to send in your dues for the next year! You will get a subscription to this newsletter, the right to vote at club meetings, and discounts on events, plus, the knowledge that you are supporting the most important resistance to our Republican neocon administration and local cronyism.

Also, our nominating committee will be looking for people who want to take leading roles in the club.

PLEASE VOLUNTEER!



Holiday Party Brightened with "an Emerald"

by Raymond Lutz

We had a great turnout at the Holiday Party, jointly hosted by the East County, La Mesa, and Santee clubs. There were at least 250 people in attendance.

Marti Emerald spoke before an enraptured audience who had just competed a healthy meal of pot-luck delicacies.

The final round of singing was humorous, to say the least, and was an unforgettable part of the evening.

Please send any comments to newsletter@ccdcweb.org.



From the President...

Don't forget! This is membership renewal time!

If you don't renew, you will no longer be getting this great newsletter, just about the only progressive media left in this county now that KLSD is gone and the East County Californian has been turned over to a new editor to gut it's coverage. Greg Eichelberger, the new ECC editor even said that the Blackwater issue was no longer an interesting story for the East County. Imagine that!

Just as the recall election, an unprecedented event in County history is being conducted, Eichelberger decides that award ceremonies conducted by Joel Anderson should get more coverage. Well, we can kiss that newspaper goodbye!

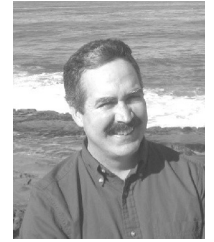
Meanwhile, observing the ballot counting was very instructive. The fact that I was able to video-record the entire event, including the marks on the ballots, makes you wonder. Why not just scan all the ballots using conventional (not custom made) scanners and post the entire set of images to Google's servers somewhere?

Then, we could pore over those ballots from anywhere, employ automatic recognition machines if we want, or just look them over and over, even adding comments to each one, official rulings and judgments.

The function of the Registrar of Voters would then be to handle the chain of custody of the ballots. The danger of the "central tabulator" disappears as there is then no single entity responsible for reaching a final conclusion. Each party—each citizen—can inspect all the ballots and decide for themselves.

This is the new age of information. There is no longer any reason to suppress the ballot images. I'm not talking about "Open Source" elections. I'm talking about "Open Ballot" elections – no more secrets at all. Maybe we can get our elections back!

-- Raymond Lutz, President. ✌



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ECDC MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Don't miss any future issues!)

	Single	Dual/Couple
Student/Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15
General	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Sustaining	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Sponsoring	<input type="checkbox"/> \$125	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200
Patron	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$750

Newsletter Only \$12 (free otherwise).
 I am a Democrat
 I am not a Democrat but wish to join as a non-voting Associate
 Please send newsletter as email (PDF).
 My name and address as shown on the label is incorrect, see corrections --->
Occupation: _____
(Req'd for FPPC Reports)

COPs NEWS

El Cajon fills Commissions

by Raymond Lutz

This time of year, a number of seats become available on the El Cajon City's commissions. These are appointments, and although you may get a large number of highly qualified applicants, the seats are given to insiders and friends of the Mayor.

Over the years, these commissions have become chock full of people who are members of the Mark Lewis fan club, and that's about it.

As a good example, you may remember that we forced out Jeff Hurley, the hand-picked replacement for ring-leader John Gibson (V.P. of Hamann Companies) because Hurley never did submit any financial disclosure statements and he had obvious conflicts of interest when he was interviewed for the position.

Now, another Lewis devotee was selected for the seat. Watchout!

If you take a look at the planning commission, for example, you see Tom Black,

the man who helped Bob McClellan broadcast the David Barton videos on the government access channel and who continues to be paid for that work even though no work is being done.

You also see Tony Sottile who consistently defends McClellan in doing his "constitutional moments" from the dais, or even praying, if that will get votes. These people are being groomed by the small set of people who are in power, so they can take the reins and continue to provide giveaways to their friends.

McClellan, who has abided by the suggestion of City Attorney Morgan Foley to omit his religious readings from the agenda, still disregards the Constitution by doing his readings from his seat. At least he does so during the public comment portion of the meeting, something that would not be the case had we not complained.

Now, we probably should sue the City over this issue, as he should provide public comment from the public microphone to avoid the impression that his comments are somehow endorsed by the City.

They've been warned, and they con-

tinue to disregard the clear meaning of the law.

On the other hand, it may be best if we let McClellan continue his pathetic readings without making a stink. You see, he is doing this because he has learned that he can get in the newspapers if he does it. If we complain, they can go back to their evang-unethical supporters and point out that Christianity is under attack by ECDC infidels.

This is a common tactic of this council. They ignore the \$3.8 million deficit, ignore the pleas of the underpaid police officers, and instead work on projects that have no real benefit but are media spectacles. Ban cigarettes. Sure, but I didn't see anyone handing out tickets during the Mother Goose parade. Ban dog walking. Now that's an important issue! How about clamping down on parking RVs. That's worth our time. All this while they ignore their budget problems and police get no contract. Insane!

