

Patrick ready to pack it in

After 12 years representing north Bakersfield, she says: 'It's absolutely time'

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2006

Barbara Patrick will walk into her last meeting on the Kern County Board of Supervisors at 9 this morning.

Barbara Patrick, who retires as Kern County supervisor today, sits on a fence in Panorama Park in northeast Bakersfield where she was instrumental in getting the park completely renovated. The massive oil fields loom in the background.

She was nervous about being nervous today. But that has passed.

"I thought, 'Oh, Barbara, you're going to be emotional. You're going to wish you weren't doing this. You're going to change your mind. You're going to regret (it),' " she said. "Not a bit. It's time. It's absolutely time."

Patrick has done what she wanted to do. She's checked off nearly every item on her running, mental to-do list.

"I don't feel like I'm leaving anything unresolved. We worked hard to leave a clean slate for (Supervisor-elect) Mike (Maggard). I certainly didn't want him to be in the position of having to clean up after me," Patrick said.

Today she'll vote in favor of contract revisions that could settle controversy over deals with eight Kern Medical Center doctors. Then she'll check that task off her list, pack up her office and be done. She has no plans for the future -- at least none that she's talking about.

"I'm not telling anyone," she said.

What she is talking about is what she's been doing in the last 12 years for her constituents in north Bakersfield, Oildale and beyond. She took office in 1995, hoping to buck the stereotypes of female politicians only being concerned with social services.

Patrick worked on those. But she also started learning about air-quality issues in the hopes she could get onto the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Board. She got a seat and earned respect for her work.

"She's helped make a difference in the air we breathe not only in the county but in all the valley and the state," said Pauline Larwood, Patrick's friend and predecessor on the board's 3rd District seat.

Patrick also used her leadership to improve Panorama Park in northeast Bakersfield and helped the county build the new William M. Thomas Terminal at Meadows Field Airport. Bureaucracy sometimes slowed the work.

"I didn't go in with a vision of how we were going to do Panorama Park. It just kind of evolved into that being *the* project. And it took me 12 years to do it," she said. "I was not familiar with bureaucracy. And I'm always kinda the one who wants to do things yesterday. I get as frustrated sometimes as the public does with the way things move slowly."

But her service to the county extended to the small things, as well as the high-profile work.

"I've painted out graffiti. I've done community cleanups. I've picked up mattresses out of alleys. That has never bothered me. I'm a mom. I'm used to cleaning up other peoples' messes," she said. "You do what needs to be done."

Her co-workers and the people she led said she is kind and friendly and tough.

"I found her to be a decisive leader. She studies the issues. She's worked very hard on behalf of her district," said Supervisor Ray Watson. "I know the people in her district are very close to her and I think that is a mark of a good representative."

Nonsense was not a part of her character and nobody pushed her around, Watson said, and certainly not because she was the only woman on the board.

"People often wonder what happens in closed session. Does she get intimidated by us (boys)?" he said. "She comes in and says, 'OK, boys, chop-chop. We've got a lot to do.' Instead of us pushing her around, she pushes us around."

Patrick said the board has at times had a "men's locker room" feel to it. But she handled it fine, she said.

"It's been great. The guys are wonderful. On the one hand, I'm treated like one of the guys. On the other hand, they're very deferential to me," she said.

The boys get "really deferential" when she gets steamed up about an issue, Patrick said.

She's been known to dress down staff or members of the public when they step over the line in public meetings. She calls them her "little fits."

Larwood said they are the legacy of Patrick's previous career as a public schoolteacher -- a firm hand in a tense situation.

Knowing how to handle troublesome children is a handy skill to have in government, Larwood said.

But Watson said disagreements were never personal with Patrick.

"She's also just a great, wonderful, positive person to be around and I'm really going to miss her," he said.

Patrick feels she's done a good job in her 12 years. She's built a legacy. She doesn't define it in conventional ways.

"It's less a legacy of buildings than it is a legacy of what has been important to me," she said. "Legacy is knowing you did the right thing."

**Air district issues advisory on burning
Less driving is also advised by Bay Area officials**

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, December 19, 2006

As temperatures were forecast to drop into the 20s Monday night — tempting Bay Area residents to turn up the heat in their homes — residents were being asked to help reduce unhealthy levels of particulate pollution by refraining from burning wood.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District issued its eighth Spare the Air Tonight advisory of the season — and it's a virtual certainty it won't be the last.

In addition to the request not to burn wood, the district also was asking residents to drive less.

There is no free transit component to the Spare the Air Tonight campaign, according to district spokeswoman Karen Schkolnick.

The district has issued many more advisories already this year than it has previously this early in the season, because of a new federal standard for acceptable levels of particulate matter. The new standard effectively halves the previously recommended acceptable levels, Schkolnick said.

"People seem to burn more wood when it's cold out and around the holiday seasons," she said.

She added that the district also wants to get the word out that cleaning out chimneys will make things easier for Santa when he drops into homes in less than a week.

Air pollution can be hazardous because tiny particles in wood smoke and vehicle exhaust can be inhaled and create serious health problems, particularly for the very young, elderly and people with respiratory or cardiovascular disease, according to the district.

Wood burning and driving are considered the major winter sources of particulate pollution. Cars pollute more when they start, and drivers are being asked to run all their errands at once whenever possible, the district reported.

"Air is a shared resource, and it takes everyone to help keep the air healthy," Schkolnick said.

Train scrubber debuts in Oakland Device complies with new emissions rules

By Erik N. Nelson, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, December 19, 2006

In another step to combat air emissions from the Port of Oakland and other U.S. freight depots, Union Pacific railroad on Thursday began testing a new scrubber that burns and filters soot from locomotive exhaust at its Oakland rail yard.

"It's part of our industry's continued effort in looking for cleaner, more fuel efficient locomotives," said Mark Davis, spokesman for the Omaha, Neb.-based railroad giant. "We looked at 14 different filtering technologies and this one made the most sense and best fit the rail industry's needs."

The ungainly sheet-steel-covered box was placed in front of the 1,500-horsepower General Electric switching engine, which was built in 1982. The locomotive was overhauled last year to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for pollutants such as nitrogen oxides, but not the small soot particles that can become lodged in human lungs and cause respiratory ailments such as asthma.

HUG Engineering, one of the world's top makers of pollution control devices for older rail and marine engines, made the scrubber and is testing it on six other locomotives in its home country of Switzerland.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway plans to test another such scrubber in Los Angeles, Davis said.

The test was no surprise to Margaret Gordon, co-chair of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project.

"The rail companies are only doing this because they've been sued twice, and last year the (California Air Resources Board) signed an exclusive (memorandum of understanding) with them," she said.

That agreement requires Union Pacific and BNSF Railway to reduce emissions and conduct health risk assessments for all of their major rail yards in the state.

To Lee Jones of North Richmond, another area that feels the brunt of locomotive, truck and ship exhaust, the railroads are moving in the right direction.

"I think it's great that they are looking at technology to cut down on the (soot particles) from the trains," said Jones, who has been active in efforts to reduce smog from freight traffic. "I was wanting to invite them to use the (BNSF Railway's) Richmond yard as a lab."

The diesel particulate filter attached to the yard locomotive will be tested for a year to determine its effectiveness — the manufacturer promises an

80 percent or more reduction in particulate emissions — and its durability, Davis said.

The filter is made up of small channels running through silicon carbide, which captures most unwanted carbon particles. A diesel-fired burner periodically heats the silicon carbide, burning the particles into a small quantity of carbon dioxide gas, which is released, according to Union Pacific's literature on the device.

"It's great to see individual fleet owners stepping up and starting to do their part in reducing their own impacts," said Swati Prakash, research associate with the Oakland-based Pacific Institute environmental group. "But it's also important to put it into the bigger picture."

People living around the area's ports are also subject to emissions from massive seagoing container ships and tankers, which have only recently begun to convert to alternative fuels and consider steps like "plugging in" to power supplies while in port instead of running their engines.

U.S. nuclear accord with India signed into law

From the Associated Press

In the L.A. Times, N.Y. Times and other papers, Tuesday, December 19, 2006

WASHINGTON - President Bush signed legislation Monday to let America share its nuclear know-how and fuel with India even though New Delhi refuses to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The exemption to U.S. law was made in exchange for safeguards and inspections at India's 14 civilian nuclear plants. Eight military plants, however, will remain off-limits to inspectors. The House and Senate had overwhelmingly approved the bill.

Critics worry that the agreement could spark a nuclear arms race in Asia by allowing India to redirect its atomic fuel to weapons production. They also argue that the measure undermines international efforts to prevent states such as Iran and North Korea from acquiring nuclear arms.

The White House said it was willing to make an exception for India, the world's largest democracy, because the country had protected its nuclear technology and not been a proliferator.

The Bush administration also argued it was a good deal because it would yield information about India's civilian nuclear program.

Bush said the law would make it possible for India, the world's fifth-largest consumer of energy, to reduce emissions and improve its environment. India, whose demand for electricity is expected to double by 2015, produces nearly 70% of its electricity by burning coal, which leads to air pollution and greenhouse gases.

"By helping India expand its use of safe nuclear energy, this bill lays the foundation for a new strategic partnership between our two nations that will help ease India's demands for fossil fuels and ease pressure on global markets," Bush said in a bill-signing ceremony.

The deal also could be a boon for American companies that have been barred from selling reactors and material to India.

Before civil nuclear trade can begin, several hurdles must be dealt with. U.S. and Indian officials need to work out a technical nuclear cooperation agreement, expected to be finished next year. The two countries must also obtain an exception for India in the rules of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an assembly of nations that export nuclear material, and Indian officials must negotiate a safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Chronicle local news blog

By Rachel Gordon

Monday, December 18, 2006

Don't let the clear Bay Area blue skies deceive you: There's danger lurking in the air.

The agency that monitors and regulates air pollution in the Bay Area issued a "Spare the Air" warning for tonight, meaning that the pollution level is expected to exceed federal health standards and poses potential hazards to the elderly, the very young and people with asthma and other respiratory ailments.

It was the eighth Spare the Air warning declared in the region this winter season, which began Nov. 20 and runs through Feb. 16.

The night-time hours are particularly bad, "when cold air basically sinks and compresses the pollutants," said Karen Schkolnick, spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

The biggest culprits: the stuff belched out of motor vehicles and wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.

The alert is triggered when federal air standards are expected to be exceeded. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in September revised the acceptable level of particulate matter as 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air. It had been 65 micrograms per cubic meter of air.

The pollution is not necessarily something you can see, but breathe it in and your health could be imperiled.

Short of everyone holding their breath for 24 hours, there are steps people can take to combat the ill effects of air pollution. Leading the list: Get out of your car and take public transit, or walk, if you're physically able.

And if you're intent on lighting a fire in your home hearth, make sure the wood is dry -- wet wood tends to smolder and creates more pollutants. Or better yet, convert your fireplace into one that burns natural gas to reduce air pollution or get an EPA-certified insert for a wood-burning fireplace. And if it is heat that you're after, not just the holiday ambiance a fire can create, there are other ways to keep warm. Don long johns and wool cap and insulate your home.

States Sue EPA Over Soot Levels

By Michael Gormley, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, N.Y. Times and other papers, Monday, December 18, 2006

Albany, N.Y. (AP) -- More than a dozen states sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Monday to lower soot levels from smokestacks and exhaust pipes, a move the state officials argue would save thousands of lives.

The states argue that the Bush administration is ignoring science and its own experts in refusing to slightly reduce the allowed threshold for soot. The "fine particulate matter" in soot contributes to premature death, chronic respiratory disease and asthma attacks, said New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. The pollution also leads to more hospital admissions and other public health costs, he said.

Officials from California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and

the District of Columbia joined New York in the action filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington.

"It is unfortunate that this coalition of states must resort to legal action to get the EPA to do its job - protect the environment and the public health," said Spitzer, the Democratic governor-elect.

The EPA said it considered new research cited by the state officials. But the agency decided research that prompted a previous reduction was more reliable and didn't justify a further cut, according to EPA statements. The agency said it will consider the new studies in the next five-year review.

"Where the science was clear, we took clear action," said EPA spokeswoman Jennifer Wood. "EPA significantly strengthened the previous daily standard - by nearly 50 percent."

The emissions, described as much smaller than a grain of sand, come from automobiles, power plants, factories and wood fires.

The states want to reduce the current limit by 1 microgram or 2 micrograms of soot allowed per cubic foot of air. The current maximum is 15 micrograms. The states contend the EPA has ignored their pleas and scientific evidence in choosing to continue the current standard.

The federal Clean Air Act requires a review every five years to determine whether air pollution standards should be adjusted. The states argue this compels the EPA to act.

Last week, a group called Earthjustice, which includes the American Lung Association, the American Medical Association and Environmental Defense, sued the EPA over the same issue.

Cold weather means wood-burning rules

Manteca-Lathrop Sun Post December 15, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued its first warning of the season, asking residents of San Joaquin and other counties to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning heaters and fireplaces. Between now and Feb.28, the Air District will issue daily alerts to tell residents when burning is prohibited or discouraged. Residents should call 800-766-4463 or visit www.valleyair.org to check daily restrictions and air-quality forecasts in English or Spanish.

To report violations of mandatory restrictions, call 800-281-7003. Air district inspectors will investigate complaints.

[Editorial in the Contra Costa Times, Tuesday, December 19, 2006](#)

Transportation Matters: Islanders have many public transit options

By John Knox White

Editor's note: this new monthly column for the Alameda Journal will focus on Alameda and the greater East Bay's transportation problems, issues and solutions.

ALAMEDA IS A special place, built in another time, when traffic concerns were reserved for muddy roads and the occasional backup when the bridges went up, not vehicle speed or traffic volume outside your front door.

Built around a regional rail network that allowed the Bay Bridge to carry as many people across the Bay as it carries today, Alameda grew up full of small-town charm. A major part of that charm is due to the local, walkable retail areas that are a direct result of the transit-oriented infrastructure that was in place in the first half of the 20th century.

Gone are the days when riders could board a train in Alameda and not get off until they arrived in San Francisco, but that doesn't mean that 21st-century Alamedans are lacking in options--the options are just a little hidden.

With no rails to point potential riders to stops, and a multitude of lines heading off into different directions, AC Transit's bus service requires a greater effort, initially, on the part of hopeful riders to find the right stop and route. Yet, whether you're heading to BART, to Oakland, to San Francisco, or beyond, the bus can take you from Alameda to where you want to go.

A well-run, usable bus system also provides benefits to those in the community who never get on board.

Drivers, for example, enjoy roadways with less congestion. Imagine the additional delay at the Posey tubes if the 60-100 people on each bus that passes through during commute hours were adding cars to the roadway instead. Even if peak-hour and total use of the tubes is lower today than it was when the Navy was in town (and in 1999), it's nice to know, sitting in the rush-hour congestion slowly creeping forward at 20 mph, that the additional 60 cars that each bus represents aren't there at the same time.

Further benefits include less traffic on neighborhood streets; less air pollution (AC Transit has retrofitted all diesel buses to new, clean diesel technology, which is why you don't see belching smoke when the driver hits the gas). The list goes on, and the benefits probably differ for each Alamedan.

With a lot of planned development on the horizon, Alameda will have even more reason to make sure that residents have usable transit choices. It is worth considering what experience and extensive study have shown makes transit feasible and usable.

First, we know that a system is more than the sum of its parts: stand-alone, point-to-point services are less useful than transit systems that offer riders many choices in terms of destinations and routes. The problem with some of the transportation solutions that have been proposed for the West End, such as aerial gondolas or private transit shuttles, is that they start in one place and have just one or two destination points, with no integration into a larger, regional system. The rider who wishes to go farther is required to juggle two separate transit services--and to pay two separate fares.

Second, we know that frequent service and convenient stops make public transit more usable. If riders have to wait too long for a bus, or walk too far to get to a

stop, they are less willing to bother. A local stop structure translates into stops convenient to as many people as possible, and this is what we now have in Alameda.

Our city's role in the regional AC Transit system is, for the most part, as a feeder to larger regional lines: most of our bus service exists to connect riders with heavier traveled routes and with BART. (Exceptions include the well-used 51 line and transbay service.) Frequency of local service is determined by the number of households in the service area (unless ridership on a particular route is unusually high)--so corridors with greater housing density, like Santa Clara Avenue, have more service than a corridor such as High Street.

When looking at development on the West End, we should keep these points in mind and look to Alameda's past for our future solutions. In designing transit options for our new developments, we should make sure to integrate stops and services aimed at current residents as well. By creating a transit system that benefits all Alamedans, we will increase the number of riders, thus decreasing the negative impact of new development on existing island neighborhoods.

As Alameda moves forward, we need to make sure that we protect our city's unique local flavor, and to remember that there are regional transit solutions that can best help us achieve that goal.

John Knox White is chairman of the Alameda Transportation Commission and is the TravelChoice program director for the Transportation and Land Use Coalition.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the use of wood boilers and a report last year by the New York attorney general's office found that they produce as much particle pollution in an hour as 45 cars or 2 heavy-duty diesel trucks. There are about 150,000 wood boilers nationwide. Next month, the Environmental Protection Agency expects to issue guidelines for states to follow in regulating the use of wood boilers. For more information, please call Maricela \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Preocupa a científicos uso de leña para calefacción en hogares de Nueva York

Un reporte de la Fiscalía Estatal de Nueva York encontró que el año pasado el humo de la leña produjo tantas partículas contaminantes como el que producen 45 vehículos de gasolina o dos camiones de diesel durante una hora

Marco Vinicio González, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Monday, December 18, 2006

El creciente uso de leña para calentar hogares en suburbios de Nueva York está desplazando a la calefacción con aceite, y muchos usuarios afirman que reduce en miles de dólares las facturas de energía doméstica, y que contribuye reducir la dependencia de petróleo con el exterior.

Esta 'moda' preocupa a un creciente número de científicos quienes señalan que el número de usuarios de leña se ha duplicado en los últimos dos años hasta alcanzar hoy a 150 mil en el nivel nacional. Sostienen que el humo de la madera

libera toxinas cancerígenas que congestionan los pulmones, de acuerdo con *The New York Times*. (12/18/06).

Vecinos de usuarios de leña afirman que el humo es tan grueso que sus hijos no pueden salir a jugar en el exterior de sus casas, además que se filtra al interior de sus hogares causando irritación en ojos y gargantas, por lo que se ha desatado una serie de demandas judiciales en el nivel local y nacional.

Un reporte de la Fiscalía Estatal de Nueva York encontró que el año pasado el humo de la leña produjo tantas partículas contaminantes como el que producen 45 vehículos de gasolina o dos camiones de diesel durante una hora. Por eso la Agencia de Protección Ambiental emitirá el mes que entra una guía para que los estados regulen el uso de la leña en los hogares.