



# City Manager's Weekly Update

Week ending March 23, 2012

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 3/26** Ad Hoc Committee to Review Future of SL Hospital and Community Healthcare, 4:30 p.m., Sister Cities Gallery
- 3/26** City Council Work Session, 7:00 p.m., Council Chambers
- 4/2** City Council Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Council Chambers
- 4/6** Finance Committee Meeting, 8:15 a.m., Sister Cities Gallery
- 4/9** City Council Work Session, 7:00 p.m., Location TBD
- 4/9** Facilities Committee, 4:00 p.m., Sister Cities Gallery
- 4/12** Community Development Committee, 4:00 p.m., Sister Cities Gallery
- 4/16** City Council Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Council Chambers

**To:** City Council  
**From:** Chris Zapata, City Manager

## Mark Your Calendar

### Upcoming Big Read Events (reminder)

- The San Leandro Library, which is fortunate to be the recipient of a second Big Read grant, has kicked off an exciting series of Big Read events for 2012. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest. The Big Read provides people the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their community. The San Leandro Public Library has selected for its community to read an anthology of some of Mexico's finest authors titled *Sun, Stone and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories*. The Big Read 2012 program will run from March 2012 through May 2012.
- Other Big Read 2012 events include:
  - A Panel Discussion with Mr. Hernández and the Bibliotecas Para la Gente on Saturday, **March 24**
  - A field trip to the Mexican Museum in San Francisco on Saturday, **March 31**. Tickets are available at the Main Library for \$30 per person.
  - Grand Finale Fiesta on Saturday, **May 12**, which is by special invitation to those that participated in a *Sun, Stone and Shadows* book discussion group.
- For more information about any of the Big Read 2012 program events, please call the Information Desk at (510) 577-3971 or click [here](#).

## Council Information

### Commissioner Dale Reed Passes Away

- It is with sadness that we report that Planning Commissioner Dale Reed, husband of Library-Historical Commissioner Donna Reed, passed away suddenly at his home this morning.
- Dale was first appointed to the City's Board of Zoning Adjustments in 1979, then was appointed to the Planning Commission in 1987 where he has served faithfully till this day.
- We will share memorial service information with you when it becomes available.
- Dale will be sadly missed by many City staff, the residential community, and especially San Leandro's business community. Our condolences go to Donna and their family.
- Flags will be flown at half staff at City facilities until after his memorial service.

### San Leandro High School Spring Classic at Monarch Bay Golf Club (Staff report attached)

- Each spring, since 1999, the San Leandro High School Spring Classic has been played at Monarch Bay Golf Club. High school boys' golf teams from around the Bay Area participate in this annual one-day event.
- This year's event will be held on March 28, and Public Works and American Golf Corporation continue to assist the San Leandro High School Boys Golf Team in hosting this event.

### The San Leandro Police Department launches tip411.

- To send a confidential tip to the San Leandro Police Department text your tip to 847411 (TIP411). This process is 100% anonymous.
- **tip411** allows anyone with a cell phone to provide information anonymously to the San Leandro Police Department via text message. This kind of "on demand" capability enables the public to provide immediate information while maintaining anonymity.
- This process is 100% anonymous. Add tip411 to your contact list for quick access.
- Messages can be responded to in real time creating an instant two way live "chat."
- The system allows citizens to provide information without having to say a word, providing an unprecedented anywhere, anytime, silent, and anonymous approach to crime reporting.
- Tips may be submitted via the Internet. However, you must register with Citizen Observer first.

[REGISTER WITH CITIZEN OBSERVER](#)

[SUBMIT TIP VIA THE INTERNET](#)

## **Businesses in the News**

Powerhouse California Law firm Based in San Leandro (article attached)

- The Recorder, a daily legal journal, highlights a San Leandro law firm in a March 16, 2012 article titled "With Deep Ties, Long Memories, Remcho, Johansen is Always in the Race."
- Remcho, Johansen and Purcell relocated to San Leandro in 2000 for our reasonable rents which allow the firm to be selective when taking clients and to practice law consistent with their values. Their cliental are California's power players and they are often found in the middle of headline making cases.

# CITY OF SAN LEANDRO

## STAFF REPORT

**Date:** March 22, 2012  
**To:** Chris Zapata, City Manager  
**From:** Michael Bakaldin, Public Works Director  
**Subject:** **SAN LEANDRO HIGH SCHOOL SPRING CLASSIC**

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### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This report is for information only, and no action is required.

### BACKGROUND

Each spring, since 1999, the San Leandro High School Spring Classic has been played at Monarch Bay Golf Club. High school boys' golf teams from around the Bay Area participate in this annual one-day event. The event was originally organized by the Public Works Department to showcase the newly renovated Marina Golf Course and help raise funds for the San Leandro High School Golf Team. In 2001, the tournament moved to the renovated Tony Lema Course where it continues to be played today. Public Works and American Golf Corporation continue to assist the San Leandro High School Boys Golf Team in hosting this event.

### DISCUSSION

This year, the San Leandro High School Spring Classic will be held on March 28<sup>th</sup>, with a total of 15 teams participating. Each team consists of six players with scoring of the top five players. Awards will include the top three team as well as the top three individuals. Last year, the team champion was Deer Valley High School with a score of 378. Low medalist with a score of 68 was Elliot Busichino from Alhambra High School.

### CONCLUSION

The San Leandro High School Spring Classic continues to be a very important part of the San Leandro High School Boys Golf Team schedule and funding. The Public Works Department and American Golf continue to grow the game of golf by hosting various junior golf competitions at Monarch Bay on an annual basis. Other junior events include the San Leandro High School Girls Fall Invitational and the San Leandro City Junior Golf Championship. It is estimated that over 800 junior golfers compete on an annual basis at Monarch Bay Golf Club.

## With Deep Ties, Long Memories, Remcho, Johansen Is Always in the Race

Cheryl Miller [Contact](#) [All Articles](#)

The Recorder

March 16, 2012



Left to right: Remcho, Johansen & Purcell partners James Harrison, Robin Johansen, Thomas Willis, Karen Getman and Margaret Prinzing

Image: Jason Doiy/The Recorder

SACRAMENTO — Pick just about any state political issue in the headlines these days and chances are Remcho, Johansen & Purcell is in the mix.

The battle over tax initiatives? The firm helped write rival school-funding measures, including one favored by the governor, headed for the November ballot.

Redistricting? The state Senate president hired the firm to pen an *amicus curiae* brief supporting political maps drafted by a citizens commission.

How about the new 49ers stadium in Santa Clara? Remcho, Johansen is in the game there, too, recently helping developers kill a referendum on a new \$1 billion football palace.

It's a nice uptick in business for a political law firm that saw its litigation work ebb in a sour economy, said founding partner Robin Johansen.

"I've learned that when it's slow you should just enjoy it and the time off," Johansen said in a recent interview. "It's very hard to do, but I've gotten better at it because it's going to get crazy again."

Approaching its 30th anniversary, Remcho, Johansen & Purcell remains one of the elite political law firms in California despite its six-attorney size and oddball location in San Leandro. Its lawyers have a hand in everything from stadium fights to stem cell research. And it's still one of the main go-to law firms for Democrats in spite of — or perhaps because of — the constant churn of political turnover in Sacramento.

"In the era of term limits, they are the adult in the room," said Democratic strategist Gale Kaufman, who frequently works with the firm on education issues and initiatives. "Not only do they have the memory, they have the trust in the institution so that if they say something they actually know what they're talking about."

Their client list reads like a Who's Who of state political players: the California Teachers Association, the state Treasurer's office, the United Farm Workers of America and the League of California Cities have all come for help at one time or another. When Republicans challenged Jerry Brown's eligibility to become attorney general in 2006, Johansen went to court for him. They won.

And yet, for all its success, the firm has never grown larger than 10 attorneys. It's never branched into lobbying or public affairs.

"We've always wanted to stay small," Johansen said. "It helps us keep our rates reasonable and it means that we don't have to take cases that we're not comfortable with."

The small size also helps the firm track potential conflicts in this niche practice. Lawyers recently had to turn down a separation-of-powers lawsuit brought by legislative leaders against the state controller because the firm represents all three parties in different matters.

The close-knit office has created loyal lawyers and staff. Those who go to work for Remcho, Johansen tend to stay for a long time. Karen Getman joined the firm in 1989 when she was six months pregnant and already an alumna of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr. After a stint away from the office that included a term as chair of the state's Fair Political Practices Commission, Getman returned to Remcho, Johansen in 2003 and never left. "I understand the draw of" big law firms, Getman said. "And certainly financially there are different benefits," she said. "But this place is really unique. It's a unique combination of working with incredibly kind, smart people on really, really interesting issues that matter. It's being able to make a difference."

## **'ONE HELL OF A BUSINESSMAN'**

The firm was created in 1983 by Johansen, Joseph Remcho and the now-retired Kathleen Purcell, three idealistic lawyers with a passion for education. They were veterans of the *Serrano* cases, landmark education finance lawsuits that attempted to equalize funding among school districts forced to rely on very different property tax bases.

The firm's early expansion into Capitol political law was aided by Remcho. Once a lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union, Remcho had found a friend and a client in master politician Willie Brown, the speaker of the state Assembly from 1980 to 1996.

"One of the first things I did when I became speaker was make Joe Remcho my attorney," Brown told *The Recorder* in 1997.

The relationship helped bring high-profile work to the firm. Remcho, Johansen, on behalf of Democrats, challenged voter-approved legislative term limits, redistricting plans and campaign finance rules. By the time term limits and the San Francisco mayor's job pulled Brown from the Legislature in 1996, the state

Assembly and Senate had paid Remcho and his firm more than \$5 million over 13 years, according to media accounts and Republican-led audits.

"I don't know what kind of lawyer [Remcho] is, but he's one hell of a businessman," a Republican assemblyman told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1996.

When Remcho died in a helicopter accident in 2003, some Capitol denizens questioned, mostly in whispers, whether the firm would survive the loss of the charismatic attorney. Lance Olson, founder of the Sacramento political law firm of Olson, Hagel & Fishburn, said he wasn't one of them.

"Joe was a smart guy and a smart lawyer," Olson said. "But one of the reasons he was such a smart guy was that he had great colleagues. Those of us who knew him knew who was doing the work behind the scenes. And often it was Kathleen and Robin."

## ***RIDING THE CYCLE***

Beyond its long-standing relationships with political powerhouses, Remcho, Johansen has thrived thanks in part to California's ongoing love affair with elections and initiatives. Well-funded interests need lawyers to write their ballot measures, to defend them from challenges and to interpret them once they're law. And lately they've needed those lawyers more frequently.

"We used to have cycles, where every two years you'd have an election," said Remcho, Johansen partner James Harrison. "But beginning in 2003 with the recall election ... we've had elections almost every year since. We had Gov. Schwarzenegger's special election in 2005. Again, an election in 2009. So we've had just an unending stream of elections, in part generated by the problems facing our state."

Harrison helped draft Proposition 71, the 2004 stem cell research initiative. He successfully defended the new law in court and he now serves as counsel to the research governing board.

Clients like the stem cell agency and the California Teachers Association don't come and go with term limits. And understanding the intricacies of Prop 98, the school-funding measure that shapes every California budget, is a commodity in Sacramento.

"We have done litigation over trying to protect Prop 98 that has resulted in literally billions and billions of school funding for K-12 education ... and that's high pressure," Getman said. "It's not just \$3 billion exchanging hands through multinational corporations. That's textbooks and teachers."

The firm has two other partners, Thomas Willis and Margaret Prinzing, and one associate. It charges a regular billing rate of \$450 an hour, with discounts for government agencies and nonprofits. It's a competitive rate for a Bay Area firm; partners say they can keep overhead low because most of Remcho, Johansen's litigation is, by the nature of election law, limited in discovery and short in duration.

And then there's the cost-saving location of the firm's main office. The partners decided to ditch their San Francisco digs in 2000 after the dot-com bubble led their landlord to triple the rent. They searched for space in Oakland only to be repeatedly beat out by high-flying but short-lived tech startups. So they finally settled on a former bank building in San Leandro.

With a piano warehouse and a martial arts studio nearby, it's not exactly the financial district. But then again, Johansen said, rent hasn't gone up in 12 years. The office includes a full kitchen, a shower and a conference room that doubles as a yoga studio a couple of times a month.

"San Leandro may not be my first choice of a neighborhood to work in, but it was a clear choice that the firm made to be able to continue practicing in the way that we do," Getman said. "Which means people work hard when they have to and nobody works just to churn out billable hours to make money. Nobody takes clients that they don't want to take just to pay too much rent in San Francisco."