

VIEWPOINT

City needs to take Project Management seriously

By Donald Chandler, AIA

While cost overruns on public projects are sadly nothing new, the Pool project's overrun before construction bids have been received and after scope reductions have been made is hard to fathom and extremely disappointing.

With that in mind, consider that the City will soon have to face up to the State's mandate to bring Essential Services Buildings or ESB (police, fire and city offices) up to State code requirements. For comparison, consider that the Pool project is heading toward a \$22-23M price tag while the ESB project costs, as compiled by the City Staff in April 2020, was estimated to be between \$80 to 100M – and that was with very preliminary plans and scope. Without vastly better methods of cost control for the ESB projects, overruns of the scale of the pool project could easily cause a financial crisis for our small town.

A little background. In the lead up to Measure UU, the Pool project was represented as a \$15

million project with a \$4.5M Contingency added to cover latent conditions, change orders, scope changes, etc. That resulted in the \$19.5M Measure UU Bond. The \$4.5M Contingency was prudent and warranted given the status of the plans at the time. Now plans have been fully developed (and modified once to reduce the cost) and yet residents are still being asked to fund an additional \$2.6M to complete the project. There is also a separate special funding plan seeking \$500K to install Heat Pumps to make the project all-electric. So, the project is currently about \$3M over budget. If we add the original \$4.5M Contingency to the current \$3M overage, **we have exceeded the original estimate \$15M estimate by a whopping \$7.5M or 50%**. That is quite a miss and underscores my main message: Piedmont must adopt a more rigorous and professional Project Management model.

What is that model? It is one where the design team, the project management team and the estimating team all have equal weight and input into the project

from the very early stages. The team needs to avoid iterative design exercises - where a design is completed and then estimated and then often redesigned and estimated again.

The design and estimating processes must go forward simultaneously. This management model is not new. It is a model used by most major corporations or entities which have significant building programs. But these are top-down decisions. The Owner, in our case the City Council, must lead and require this model of Project Management if the City hopes to avoid replicating the Pool experience in the future.

Regarding the Pool project, it is up to the City Council to establish any accountability for how the Pool project got to where it is. I maintain that the issue is poor project management and **definitely not hyperinflation** as claimed by some. (Hyperinflation is defined as monthly inflation of 50% or more, and we are not experiencing that.)

No, our problem and our issue to resolve is our current method of Project Management. It is not serving us well. We should not and cannot continue to exceed our budgets and then go hat-in-hand to our residents to bail out our projects.

How Piedmont manages the Pool project moving forward and the ESB projects in the very near future will depend largely on the will of the City Council and City Staff to chart a different path.

and the electorate approves the City's current proposal to allow for additional multifamily housing in certain areas of the City, then we'd be right back where we are today, but at significant cost and detriment to the City, as described above.

• If a ballot measure is held and the electorate does not approve the City's plan to allow additional multifamily housing, then the City will be back at square one in creating a new housing plan to meet State law, while penalties pile up. And, most importantly, if constrained to accommodating multifamily housing in only the limited locations where it is currently allowed, the scale and density of new development that would have to be allowed along Highland Ave. and Grand Ave. would be much greater than what is currently proposed. How is that prudent planning?

The promotion of such an untenable proposition by these two City Council candidates is irresponsible and short-sighted, and hardly a model of wise leadership. I urge Piedmonters to confront this reality, and not be fooled by a catchy slogan and an appeal to voter rights.

OPINION

2 campaigns mislead voters on housing Issues

By Deborah Leland

I saw a lawn sign today that read, "Let Us Vote." This is a fantastic slogan. What upstanding American citizen would oppose voting? But when applied to the issue of housing planning, this approach is deeply flawed. City Council candidates Bridget Harris and Jeanne Solnordal are calling for a citywide vote on the City's housing plan, even though the City Attorney has stated repeatedly that the proposed zoning changes don't require a citywide ballot.

These candidates claim fiscal responsibility and smart planning. In fact, holding an unnecessary citywide vote would be expensive, counterproductive, and against the City's interests. To demonstrate this, let's walk through how such a vote would play out:

• First, the City would have to cover the cost of the ballot

measure. Unlike the cost of building housing, which is borne by private developers, this would be a public expense of tens of thousands of dollars borne exclusively by Piedmont's taxpayers.

• An election could not be held before the City's looming deadline to submit its housing plan to the State for approval, so the City would miss the State certification deadline, subjecting Piedmont to a host of penalties. The first penalty is that the City would have one year instead of three years to implement zoning code changes to facilitate housing development, making it extremely difficult for the City to create rational and well-designed zoning requirements that best respond to the community's needs. Failure to meet *that* deadline would lead to escalating penalties, including loss of local control over land use and, potentially, fines.

• If a ballot measure is held



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Quick Tips and priorities for Fire Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness ABCs

- A. Create and review evacuation plan with loved ones
- B. Assemble a Go-Bag appropriately-sized for each family member
- C. Evaluate your property's vulnerabilities: Piedmont's Fire Dept offers a FREE Fire Safety Assessment– call (510)420-3030

Homework: sign up for the following alert systems

- NIXLE: text any zip code to 888-777
 Zonehaven: <https://community.zonehaven.com/>
 County Alerts: <http://www.calalerts.org/index.html>
 Watch Duty: <https://www.watchduty.org/>
 Cal Fire: <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/>

Reading List

- New Yorker: *Annals of a Warming Planet: The Terrifying Choices Created by Wildfires*
- Sonoma County Gazette: *Preparing for year-round fire season*
- Ready for Wildfire: Cal Fire: *Wildfire is coming... are you ready?*

Emergency Planning Basics (click on following links)

- Emergency Plan Elements (<https://www.firesafesantacruz.org/images/FSCSCC-WildfireEvacGuide-10-16-19.pdf>)
- Go-Bag Essentials (<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-set/emergency-supply-kit/>)

Evacuate Early

- If you know a fire is close– load your Go-Bag and tune into real-time updates.
- If you receive an evacuation order, obey it without delay– minutes count.

Additional Tips

- Maintain your gas tank or EV charge at >50% capacity.
- Back into your driveway for easier evacuation quicker on busy roads.
- Keep your phone charged. Store an extra charger and battery pack in your Go-Bag and car.
- Sleep with your phone at hand & unsilenced in case emergency alerts are sent during the night.

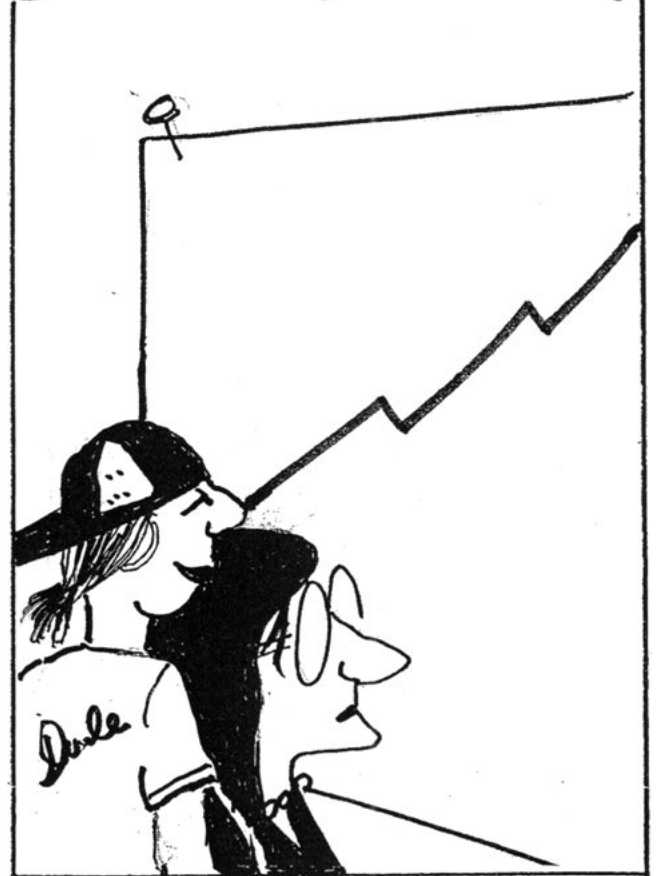
If questions and for more information, contact Hope Salzer at hopesalzer@gmail.com.

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Dude by Herb Stansbury



"Things are going too well. It's time to start worrying."