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## Pleasanton Weekly News

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### Council approves BRE housing project for Hacienda

5-0 vote for non-union project comes as 100 union leaders, members crowd council chamber

by **Jeb Bing**  
Pleasanton Weekly Staff

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Facing a packed meeting room of more than 100 construction union leaders and their members, the Pleasanton City Council Tuesday night nevertheless voted 5-0 to approve a multi-million-dollar housing project in Hacienda Business Park to be built by BRE, a national affordable housing developer that uses non-union labor.

Union members applauded speakers who urged the council to insist that BRE agree to use union members, although they also endorsed the project and recognized the council's inability from a legal standpoint to add that provision in the final approved measure.

Both council members and union leaders said that efforts to come to an agreement with BRE over mixing the workforce complex with union and non-union labor had failed.

The vote came after two hours of discussion and ended more than a year of public hearings, workshops and task force considerations on the mammoth housing project that will help meet the city's court-ordered requirement to provide more affordable, workforce housing here.

BRE will build a total of 18 three- and four-story buildings on two separate sites in Hacienda that will have just over 500 rental units ranging in size from studio apartments to three-bedroom units, although most will be two bedroom apartments. Of the 500 apartments, roughly 15% will be reserved as subsidized units for low income households, in accordance with the court-approved settlement agreement.

BRE representatives told city officials that the company has financing available to start construction after permits have been issued with groundbreaking to take place later this year.

In terms of the council's consideration of the BRE project, there was little that was new in Tuesday night's final public hearing. Details of the project had been discussed at scores of public meetings involving hundreds of people. In addition to the months of meetings by a council-appointed Hacienda Task Force, the project also went through environmental reviews and hearings before the city's Parks and Recreation, Housing and Planning commissions.

BRE agreed to keep the apartment densities at 30 to the acre, not much higher than in other Pleasanton apartment and condo complexes, and far under the high density housing seen across I-580 in Dublin. Even so, with their somewhat stark, four-story architecture, the new buildings may not have "that Pleasanton look," as some critics suggested.

The two building sites include a mixed-use, high density residential and commercial development containing 251 residential units, four live/work units and approximately 5,700 square feet of retail space at the southeast corner of Owens Drive and Willow Road.

The second, similar project will have 247 residential units, another four live/work units and a half-acre public park at the northern corner of Gibraltar and Hacienda drives.

The project is an outcome of the settlement agreement between the city and Urban Habitat, an Oakland-based affordable housing coalition that successfully sued the city over its 1996 housing cap and lack of adequate affordable, workforce housing.

Much of the discussion Tuesday night centered on union and non-union labor on city construction projects. Labor leaders said that by using below-scale non-union construction workers, those working on the BRE project will not have incomes sufficient to actually ever live in the buildings. Health care and other benefits also will likely be below union standards, which union leaders said always includes "fair wages," health insurance, pension plans and often 401(k) savings plans.

"We're a key player in this area in providing benefits for our workers and in supporting projects benefitting the area, such as BART to Livermore and our Friendship program for training apprentices," Rick Silva of the Sheetmetal workers' union said. "Beyond this BRE project, I know that Pleasanton will be building some 1,600 new homes in the future and we hope you'll work with developers to make sure they consider union labor."

Another union leader told the council that BRE is "a wealthy company and they need to learn to share."

"The development agreement should say that you expect BRE will hire a certain number of union workers," he added. "You should make sure they pay fair wages."

But Frank Capilla, whose Pleasanton-based Can-Am Plumbing business is one of the largest in the area, said that although he was

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a long-time union supporter and booster, he became disenchanted when he found that union rules prevented him from using his local workforce in other counties as his business expanded. He was required to hire workers from local union halls, workers he didn't know and whose skills might not have been as good as his own workforce. Eventually, he said, he abandoned his closed shop policy and began using non-union labor.

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## Comments

Posted by steve, a resident of the Parkside neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 8:38 am

You've just gotta love the irony in the story above. The hits just keep on coming.....who is leading whom around by the nose?

"BRE is "a wealthy company and they need t learn to share." LOL...hilarious. Do these guys work in the real world or some socialist utopia of their own making?

"Labor leaders said that by using below-scale non-union construction workers, those working on the BRE project will not have incomes sufficient to actually ever live in the buildings. Health care and other benefits also will likely be below union standards, which union leaders said always includes "fair wages," health insurance, pension plans and often 401(k) savings plans."

You just can't make this stuff up.....oh, the humanity....yet the union agreed to the plan. Where are the violent protests and picketers? Are they being magnanimous and sacrificing their own personal interests in favor of the greater good?

Not likely...their union bosses are getting a kickback to stay quiet and go along with the plan, all at the behest of urban habitat.

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Posted by ca94566, a resident of the Another Pleasanton neighborhood neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 9:47 am

We just welcomed the tenaments to beautiful Pleasanton.....Thanks Jerry, you won.

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Posted by Curious, a resident of the Avila neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 10:01 am

@\*"...yet the union agreed to the plan. Where are the violent protests and picketers? Are they being magnanimous and sacrificing their own personal interests in favor of the greater good?"

Not likely...their union bosses are getting a kickback to stay quiet and go along with the plan, all at the behest of urban habitat."

Steve, can you explain how the union agreed to the plan? And doesn't the article say union supporters were vocal at the meeting? So why do you say they tended to "stay quiet"? And where is evidence of this "kickback" you refer to? Did you read the article? It seems to me that at least reading the article would be a minimum requirement for those seeking to comment. Sorry if my suggested requirement seems too onerous for you.

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Posted by resident, a resident of the Downtown neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 10:23 am

The problem with Section 8 housing is that the tenants are not held liable for the care of the property. They have no money invested and they have no pride of ownership. Within weeks of moving subsidized tenants into the property you will see an immediate trashing of the buildings and the grounds.

It's one thing to have taxpayers pay for their housing costs. The problem is that these tenants put up no security deposit, they are nearly impossible to evict and they have no financial responsibility to repair their damage when they move out.

These buildings will start to look like the projects in Chicago within months. And that will just attract more low lifes. It's a downhill slide now for Pleasanton.

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Posted by Anon, a resident of the Another Pleasanton neighborhood neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 10:32 am

Please get over yourself resident. I've lived before in a \$1M+ single-family housing development that had a few smaller low-income units as well, and there were never any issues in the neighborhood.

In this case, I have to believe that the management company will be careful about the property, otherwise the 85% non-low-income units will be vacant, and they will lose many millions -- it's just not in their self-interest to let the place go.

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Posted by Hmmm, a resident of the Another Pleasanton neighborhood neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 10:50 am

Missed the point. There were more non union workers in the chambers than union workers. Associated Builders and Contractors were there. An official of theirs spoke to the city council. ABC is a nonunion association. Jeb made the assumption they were all



union.

FYI there is section 8 housing in Pleasanton now. It's the law.

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Posted by P\*town Truth Tellers, a resident of the Another Pleasanton neighborhood neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 11:29 am

Pleasanton is on the path to urban ghettopia - just like Hayward, San Leandro, Castro Valley, Union City and Fremont. It may take 10-20 years for a full downfall, but it will eventually happen.

Of course BRE was going to get the contract - just look at their contributions to our esteemed council members. Public record folks.

Unions, developers, and poverty pimps all provide support to the city council - and when it comes to deciding what's in their financial interests - council members just look at who has directly supported their own financial interests (e.g., campaign contributions) and the largest contributor wins. It's pretty simple to understand, but most people are unaware or apathetic - hence we keep electing the same corrupt morons time and time again.

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Posted by Curious, a resident of the Avila neighborhood, on Apr 18, 2012 at 11:50 am

I don't see any problem with the contract going to the highest bidder. In a free market society, aren't politicians supposed to be bought and sold according to the laws of supply and demand? When I shop at Walmart I do so to save pennies on my purchases. Using the same logic, were I a politician, I'd sell my vote/influence to the highest bidder. Hey, that's capitalism. Live with it!

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Posted by steve, a resident of the Parkside neighborhood, on Apr 19, 2012 at 8:59 am

Curious, I did read the article, did you? Did you miss the second paragraph?:

"Union members applauded speakers who urged the council to insist that BRE agree to use union members, although they also endorsed the project and recognized the council's inability from a legal standpoint to add that provision in the final approved measure."

See that part about endorsing the project? Words mean things...understanding them proves too onerous for the likes of you, so I'm providing this service to you free of charge.

Next time, get your foreman to interpret the article for you. That's what you pay dues for...so the union can tell you what to think. Live with it.....adios.

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Posted by Curious, a resident of the Avila neighborhood, on Apr 19, 2012 at 10:18 am

I don't understand why you're so dismissive of me, Steve. I raised five questions, but you only addressed one of them and did so in a very rude way as if you're waging constant battle with stomach indigestion. BTW magnanimous, not magnanamous. (Comes from being a reader, I guess.)

But since we're both capitalists, surely we agree that in the free unregulated marketplace kickbacks are a good thing. It keeps the system lubricated, the heroic job-creating ones can continue to supply the grease, and capital is able to do its work without being gummed up by organized workers who hate America.

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Posted by Moving, a resident of the Castlewood neighborhood, on Apr 19, 2012 at 6:12 pm

Pleasanton is absolutely on its way to joining Hayward, Castro Valley etc.

Have you seen the thugs in Stoneridge and the surrounding areas lately?!

And what about overcrowding our schools?!

Bye Bye Pleasanton

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Posted by steve, a resident of the Parkside neighborhood, on Apr 20, 2012 at 3:14 pm

Good article in the CC Times today about the misguided policies and terrible consequences of social engineering, such as this ghetto-ization of our town:

[Web Link](#)

Very pertinent comments in the article about those of us trying to halt this travesty: "complaints usually fall on deaf ears. People convinced of their own superior wisdom and virtue have no time to spare for what other people want, whether in housing or health care or a whole range of other things."

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Posted by Curious, a resident of the Avila neighborhood, on Apr 20, 2012 at 5:02 pm

That's not an article you point out in the CC Times, Steve. A newspaper article tends to provide information and be fact-based. In contrast, an opinion piece -- as the one by Thomas Sowell you misname as an "article" -- tends to be just that, an opinion piece written by someone with an opinion. Funny, but it does not surprise me that you know not the difference.

Thomas Sowell, the author of the opinion piece you wrongly label as an article, used the same hackneyed and tedious arguments, drawing upon discredited 1930s sociology, when he argued against the Civil Rights Movement and against integrated education in this country. Last time I checked his bio, he was completing his great American novel: "Loathing One's Own Race: I May Look Like a Black Man But I'm as White as You Are."

Poor Steve. Do you get ANYTHING right? Is it any wonder why your claims fall on deaf ears?

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Posted by Steve, a resident of the Parkside neighborhood, on Apr 20, 2012 at 6:27 pm

Curious, you certainly are one pompous, little puke. It's good to see that the link I posted hit the target and drew you out as the contrived little leftist you are. Let me guess, your daughter is in an interracial marriage and you are still uncomfortable about it, but won't admit it, so you lash out at your superiors in the neighborhood. Good. For you...let out all that pent up anger. It's therapeutic. How else do you explain your racial hostility towards Mr. Sowell?

In closing, if my claim fell on deaf ears, I suggest you take up lip reading.

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Posted by Curious, a resident of the Avila neighborhood, on Apr 20, 2012 at 7:01 pm

Yes, it's all about us "contrived little leftists" who have supported and continue to support racial integration. Yes, and we do so because we're angry at our "superiors in the neighborhood."

Someone's severe conceptual confusion is revealing a lot of mental confusion. Add a goodly dose of anger, and it is not at all a pretty picture. I'm very sorry, Steve.

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