



# *San Francisco Tomorrow*

*Working to Protect the Urban Environment*

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*Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow?*

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## **WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE CIVIL GRAND JURY?**

*By Howard Wong, Civil Grand Jury Association, San Francisco Chapter*

With newspaper and television fanfare, Civil Grand Jury Reports spark scrutiny of the status quo by the Mayor, Board, department heads, city officials and media. The Civil Grand Jury has stirred passionate debate on timely issues that have included emergency medical preparedness, disaster planning, permit processes and technology in government. After a year of devoted work, a jury is rewarded by publication of its findings and recommendations. In the process, jury members interact with City leadership, agencies and organizations and receive an incomparable education in local government. Jurors visit City facilities and attend official meetings, gleaning insights into the inner workings of government. The legally mandated inspection of the City's jails is particularly eye-popping, giving jurors an insight into a very different part of society, with budget and space constraints, despite innovative programs and a state-of-the-art new San Bruno Jail. Jurors also dine on a typical jail lunch (alas, a one-star rating).

Often considered the people's "watchdog", the Civil Grand Jury can choose to investigate any operation of the officers, departments and agencies of the City and County of San Francisco's government. Still, for anyone who has served on a civil or criminal jury, individual jurors have wide-ranging and valid perspectives of the same evidentiary evidence. Like the 1957 movie classic, "12 Angry Men", where emotions and interpretations rise from diverse life experiences and motivations, a 19-person Grand Jury can have similar strains---although the consensus process seems to work. Today's juries are fairly diverse in gender, race and economic background, but a need for greater

representation of youth, minorities and lower income groups exists.

The Civil Grand Jury has been called a "fourth branch of government", acting autonomously as governmental checks and balances---without the political constraints that can affect the Executive, Legislative and even Judicial branches of government. The press and citizenry can also be constrained by economic and political filters. As a body, the jury independently determines the governmental issues that it wishes to study. The jury forms committees to pursue each area of county government it decides to investigate. During investigations, jurors can interview just about anyone germane to their research, audit records and financial expenditures, and inspect government facilities. There are substantive meetings with the Mayor, Board, officials, professionals, private organizations.... The Grand Jury's empowerment to procure facts and testimony, including the seldom-employed right to subpoena, creates fertile dynamics for consensus and change.

Not for the faint of heart, the Civil Grand Jury serves one-year terms. Some jurors find great satisfaction and status, volunteering for second terms. However, there has been a significant drop-out rate, due to intense periods of preparation and interviews. The Superior Court estimates that grand jurors should expect to spend a minimum of 500 hours during their year of service. There's flexibility but substantive work requires concentrated moments. Ultimately, Grand Jurors find the camaraderie, status and access to high officials challenging and rewarding. Jurors carry a prestigious business card too, adorned with the State Seal.

## **Announcing a "Don't Miss" Hike**

**MARCH 29, SATURDAY, 1 pm**

***A Green Butterfly Still Flies on the Dune Islands of the Sunset***

**(San Francisco County)**

**Hike Leader: Liam O'Brien**

A little jewel of the city still perseveres in a tiny corner of our town. Unbeknownst to many, the type locality (the place initially collected and brought to the world of science) of the Green Hairstreak (*Callyphors dumetorum*) butterfly is "the hills of San Francisco..." Once covering much of western San Francisco, its dune habitat has retreated primarily to the upland remnants in the Sunset District: Hawk Hill, Rocky Outcrop, and Grandview Terrace. Starting at Hawk Hill, Liam O'Brien (a lepidopterist who has spent much time monitoring the butterflies of San Francisco) will show you this emerald green beauty among its host plants: coastal buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*) and deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*). He will discuss its life cycle and how the area's dune topography comes into play. The walk will then move along a proposed "butterfly corridor" to the other major population on Rocky Outcrop, just a few blocks away. By connecting these two disjunct populations with an avenue of host/nectar plants, we may be able to link these two populations and thus prevent the inbreeding implosion which has claimed so many of our butterfly species. Meet at the corner of 14th Avenue and Rivera Street. Bring good hiking shoes, long pants, and layered clothing. Poison oak is prevalent along the trail at Hawk Hill, so dress and plan accordingly. Also bring a camera--the Hairstreak is a fabulous "poser-of-a-butterfly." Heavy rain will cancel, with a rain make-up date scheduled for Saturday, April 5 at 1 pm. Contact Liam O'Brien at <liammail56@yahoo.com> for more information.

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### **HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE CIVIL GRAND JURY:**

Application deadline is **April 18, 2008** for service from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. For Grand Jury details and application form, go to [http://www.sfgov.org/site/courts\\_page.asp?id=3680](http://www.sfgov.org/site/courts_page.asp?id=3680)

(or [www.sfgov.org](http://www.sfgov.org) and "Search" for "Superior Court, Civil Grand Jury").

Applications are also available at the Grand Jury office, 400 McAllister Street, Room 008 (lower level) or by phone at (415)-551-3605---weekdays 8 am to 4:30 pm.

On the website, you can read past **Grand Jury Reports**---many featured in newspapers, radio and television news. Take a gander! You may be a perfect candidate for the Civil Grand Jury!

**CIVIL GRAND JURY FACTS:** California state law mandates all 58 counties impanel a Grand Jury for each fiscal year. The presiding judge of the Superior Court impanels the 19-person Grand Jury, randomly selected from a pool of 30 applicants. The remaining 11 applicants serve as alternates, quite often replacing jurors who can not continue service. The jury scrutinizes the conduct of public business by county government. Grand Jury Reports are issued with findings and recommendations, followed by presentations to the Board of Supervisors and media.

Grand Jury eligibility includes U.S. citizenship, minimum age of 18, one year minimum residency in the City & County of San Francisco, ordinary intelligence, good character, and a working knowledge of English. Jurors take an oath of permanent secrecy to protect those interviewed from possible retribution.

***"Sustainability pertains to a balanced interaction between a population and the carrying capacity of an environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without adversely and irreversibly affecting the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends."*** Buckminster Fuller

## Here's the latest about MUSEUM PROPOSALS FOR THE PRESIDIO:

In response to the Presidio Trust's Request for Proposals to build museums at the heart of the Presidio, the Trust commented at its most recent meeting on the two proposals it had received: one was for a long-awaited History Center at the Golden Gate (HCGG) from the Presidio Historical Association (PHA), and the other for a Contemporary Art Museum at the Presidio (CAMP) proposed for display of the art collection of local multi-millionaire and former Presidio Trust Board chairman, Don Fisher.

Did the Trust approve Fisher's proposal at this meeting? The local press wrote it up as a victory for Fisher, using statements prepared by Fisher's publicist. The Trust did approve the placement of a Fisher museum in the Presidio but said the "location, design, size and configuration" were subject to further review and study. The Trust's press statement included "dream come true" quotes from the Fishers and a flattering description of the Fisher museum, but left questions as to what it had actually done and why.

Did the Trust approve PHA's proposal for a history museum? Did they disapprove it? The Trust put forth its own idea for a "museum without walls", plus the "walk through time" which it had also proposed many months ago. This "museum without walls" would be visited by individuals touring the Presidio, standing in front of a building or monument and dialing up prerecorded audio tapes from visitor cell-phones. The Trust, taking its cue from Director Craig Middleton, did not think the History Museum needed a building at all. This was the finding of "museum consultants" who met separately with Trust staff and Trust members.

Perhaps the most important question is whether the Trust will ignore its statutory mission to preserve the Presidio's history for

the public, or enable a completely extraneous force, the Fisher family art legacy, which has nothing to do with the Presidio or its history, to be located on the most prominent site at the head of the Parade Ground on the historic Main Post.

This is land owned by the federal government which was entrusted to the Trust to make it an historic park, while simultaneously leasing parts of it to provide revenue for its maintenance. Letting this prominent site be taken for the display of a single family's private contemporary art collection seems like a "theft" of historic land that belongs to all the people.

Furthermore, the site in question is very near the historic El Presidio, the archaeological dig that has been underway for the past few years and will be yielding even more precious artifacts over coming years. Here, at the Main Post, the early days could be further celebrated by a reconstructed 1776 fort and a history museum nearby. A cell-phone museum with tapes about the histories of individual buildings could not effectively teach about war or peace or the reasons the nation experienced them, nor about the brave and brilliant people who have served at the Presidio.

School children on tours of the Presidio need a building where hands-on displays would convey the full sweep of history from 1776 through to the wars of the twentieth century and today. A dial-up cell-phone museum would demean the profound nature of the historic message and not put the public's historic resources to their highest use.

The 1,800 member Cow Hollow Association recently stated that it was opposed to the Art Museum being put on the Parade Ground.

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"The proposed enormous size, incongruous style and outside art displays, they said, are profoundly inconsistent with the historical character of the Park." Would the national public, the true owners of the historic Main Post, prefer a unique history museum to having a third major display of contemporary art located in the City at the Presidio? They have not been asked.

The Presidio Trust is required to hold **only two public meetings per year**. The rest of their meetings may be held with no public permitted to attend. They may even hold their meetings on the telephone or by e-mail, a strategy originally conceived for the convenience of members who do not live in the San Francisco Bay area. There is no appeal from a decision of the Presidio Trust

## Solar-powered billboard at 1000 Brannan Street

Energy-sapping billboards, your days may be numbered. A California electricity supplier says it has installed the nation's first solar-powered billboard, which generates more electricity than it uses. The billboard—roofed with 20 solar panels—is located at 1000 Brannan St. in San Francisco, and is visible from the Highway 101 9th Street exit.

"The energy that is collected by the solar panels actually exceeds the amount used by it on a day-to-day basis," said Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) spokesperson Jennifer Zelwer of the standard-sized billboard, which proclaims: "This isn't a billboard. It's a power plant."

On sunny days, the sign converts sunlight into about 3.4 kilowatts of energy, which is almost enough to power the household of an average U.S. family of four during the day. Zelwer said the billboard generates about 2.5 kilowatts of energy during cloudy days.

Although the billboard does borrow electricity at night, she said it has other green-technology tricks up its sleeves to keep the ratio of energy produced to energy consumed in the positive. "We installed [light-emitting diode] lights on it, so it uses less than a third of the energy [that] billboards with halophane lights do," she said. PG&E's new solar-powered billboard isn't the first in the world, as both Canada and Africa already have them. But Zelwer said it is the first in the Americas to actually push power onto an electrical grid, like ones in Africa do. Zelwer cautioned that solar-powered placard is only for show at this time, but said she would eventually like to see similar ones replacing standard billboards up and down highways. "If these are going to be en masse in the future, that certainly would be a wonderful thing," she said. ([www.natureinthecity.org](http://www.natureinthecity.org))