
NEBA News

NORTH EAST BERKELEY ASSOCIATION

Spring 2009

★★★★★ **EDUCATION EDITION** ★★★★★
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN MAY

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION--BERKELEY'S CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Thursday, May 28, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

AT NORTHBRAE COMMUNITY CHURCH, HAVER HALL
941 The Alameda (at Los Angeles)

President's Message

The enormous cost of public education is matched only by the immense importance of quality public education to all of us – children, parents, the community, employers, and each individual who lives here, in a million ways. This is why NEBA is devoting most of the newsletter to education: costs, benefits and challenges!

Priscilla Myrick's informative article is a very readable and yet comprehensive view of the education money – where it comes from and where it goes. You will want to read it before you vote on the May 19th Special State Election Ballot Measures!

Sophie Hahn gives us a close look into a Berkeley school that she knows well. Her article is both a joy to read and an eye-opener!

We willingly pay for education because we value it, and we cannot afford to waste our finite resources anywhere. Every penny must count! Read the article in this newsletter about City Manager Phil Kamlarz's salary and retirement benefits. Is this the way we want to spend that amount of money? We do have to make choices.

Read an article linked on the NEBA website about the 20% increase in city refuse fees in a controversial and unusual "majority protest" mail-in voting process that automatically counts votes not received as "yes" votes! If 50% plus one of 31,000 property owners **do not vote**, it will pass! What do you think about that? Be sure you vote!

And read about Berkeley's plan to force **all homes** to be audited for energy efficiency and then to

comply with aggressive, costly, required modifications! Then, come to the **NEBA spring meeting, May 28th**, to hear more about this and **ask your own questions!** We care very much about the environment, and the actions we take must actually bring a benefit!

Whether you agree or disagree, you and your neighbors will have your opportunity to join the discussion about our climate action, Thursday, May 28.

Please join NEBA. Your membership dues support the newsletter mailings and public meetings where our voices can be heard! We need your support. If you have not yet renewed or joined, **NOW IS THE TIME!** Visit: www.northeastberkeleyassociation.org.

Sharon Eige

NEBA Board Election, May 28, 2009

The Nominating Committee, composed of members in good standing, Donald Meyer and Ginger Parnes, and chaired by Board Director W. D. Hermann, proposes the following slate of Candidates for the Board of Directors of the North East Berkeley Association for the term of office from 2009 to 2012:

Sharon Eige, Pat Mapps, Eleanor Pepples, John Stolurow.

Members in good standing may nominate or be nominated by eligible members according to the by-laws of the NEBA.

THE NEW CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Berkeley's city staff and council members continue to surprise us! Carolyn Jones of the San Francisco Chronicle alerted us to their latest plans in an article titled "Hot debate ahead on Berkeley's energy plans". In 2006 Berkeley voters passed Measure G, setting the laudable goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Since then the measure has been used to justify high density housing and increased building heights in neighborhoods throughout the city, and now it is being used to create ambitious new requirements on single family homes.

The article stated "Within the next few years, the city is likely to mandate that all homes meet strict energy standards. In many cases this would mean new double-paned windows, insulation in the attic, walls and floors, a new white roof that reflects heat, a forced-air furnace and high-efficiency appliances. The cost: upward of \$33,800." (Why a white roof when our energy cost in Berkeley is for heating, not for cooling?)

The City currently requires energy audits and energy improvements in residential buildings at the time of sale and when renovation or remodeling occurs, capped at 0.75% of the sale price. The new plan would expand that concept to require that homeowners must hire an energy auditor to inspect their homes, with the owner required to improve the home's energy efficiency to meet city standards. According to the article, the costs could include: New dual pane windows at \$500-\$1,000 per window; a new white roof, \$12,000-\$15,000; additional insulation, \$3,000-\$4,000; new forced air furnace, \$7,000-\$8,000; Energy Star appliances, \$4,000.

City staff and Mayor Bates were anxious to rebut the Chronicle article, calling it misleading, and stating that any possible requirements "would be subject to substantial public review and comment, as well as in-depth consideration by the City Council and appropriate City Commissions."

The Council held a hearing on the plan on April 21, at which some council members said they'd back off language that would require homeowners to upgrade. According to the Chronicle, at the hearing City Planning Director Dan Marks stated that the \$33,800 figure cited in the paper was an exaggeration. "Right now we're talking more in the \$10,000 range," he said, noting that the improvements would only be required when a home is sold or remodeled, but that in the future, the improvements would be required of all homes. "If we're going to meet these Measure G goals, we've got to get into people's homes."

Dramatic steps will be required to reduce climate change. Should Berkeley city staff direct and control the process? Join us at the NEBA meeting May 28 to share your views.

Go to www.northeastberkeleyassociation.org to see the full text of the San Francisco Chronicle article. And come the NEBA meeting to learn more about Berkeley's Climate Action Plan.

COME TO THE NEBA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN MAY
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MAJOR CRIME DATA FOR BEATS 1 AND 2 (roughly coincident with Council Districts 5, Capitelli, and 6, Wengraf)

CATEGORY	2007 4thQTR	2008 4thQTR	% CHANGE
Auto Burglary	102	110	8%
Auto Theft	29	54	86%
Residential Burglary	40	34	-15%
Robbery	10	8	-20%
Totals	181	206	14%

Source: Berkeley Area Coordinator Officer Casimiro Pierantoni. Councilmembers Capitelli and Wengraf are holding a meeting to discuss local crime on Monday, June 1, 7PM, at Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (at Los Angeles).

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FINANCE ISSUES by Priscilla Myrick

Editor's note: This article was edited for the newsletter. See the full article: northeastberkeleyassociation.org.

Overview: Like other K-12 public schools in California, Berkeley schools are financed with a mix of federal, state and local tax revenues. BUSD must make allocation decisions based on funding restrictions and our community priorities. Most of the funding for California public schools comes from the state. California spends about 40% of the state budget on K-12 education and community colleges. With the state facing an ever-increasing budget deficit, it is not difficult to see that cuts to education will be part of the “solution” to addressing the state budget problems. The current proposals make substantial cuts and deferrals for K-12 education and also loosen the requirements on how local school districts spend their funds during the current recession.

In addition to state funding for Berkeley’s public schools, Berkeley voters have passed two parcel tax measures that contribute significantly to the BUSD operating budget. The two parcel taxes are Berkeley School Tax (Measure A of 2006) and BUSD School Maintenance (Measure BB of 2000). Funds from the Measure A 2006 tax are used to reduce class sizes and provide enrichment programs. Funds from Measure BB of 2000 provide for school safety and essential maintenance of BUSD buildings and grounds. Both parcel taxes are based on building square footage and are included in property taxes as fixed charges and/or special assessments.

In order to support adequate school facilities, Berkeley voters have passed BUSD Bond Measure A of 1992 (\$158 million) and BUSD Bond Measure AA of 2000 (\$116.5 million) to finance school construction over the past sixteen years. The voter-approved debt service for these two BUSD bond measures is included in property taxes as a percentage of assessed value.

Berkeley public schools serve approximately 9,000 students K to 12 and an additional 1,700 through its adult education program with an annual budget of over \$100 million. BUSD maintains 17 school sites plus additional facilities that support school administration and transportation.

School Finance--California’s budget crisis and Berkeley schools: On February 20, state legislators enacted a budget package to address California’s budget shortfall, which had been projected to reach \$42 billion by the end of 2009-10, and as a result BUSD must reduce its General Fund budget by \$3 million for this school year, and an additional \$4.9 million in 2009-10. In addition, many categorical funds (special purpose funds) are being cut 15% this year and an additional 4.3% in 2009-10.

Will the federal stimulus package help Berkeley schools? The federal stimulus package may provide some relief for California schools, including BUSD. Currently federal funding makes up about 5% of BUSD’s revenues. Preliminary estimates are that up to \$4 million in Federal funds spread over two years may be available for certain targeted areas in BUSD. Federal funds are generally targeted to categorical programs. BUSD is anticipating that these stimulus funds may be used to support existing Title 1 programs (for extra support for students who live in poverty) and to cover increasing special education costs. However, the state of California must “pass through” the federal stimulus money.

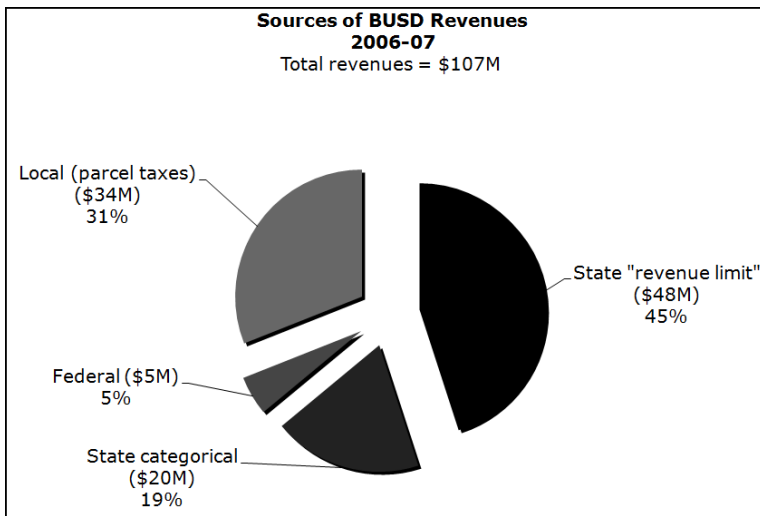
What kinds of cuts is BUSD making now? BUSD is largely dependent on state funding (64% of total BUSD revenues). According to BUSD Superintendent Bill Huyett, recent state education budgets are going from “flat funding” to much worse. BUSD is forced to cut back on expenditures and has frozen certain types of spending in the General Fund including hiring of new employees, travel and conferences, equipment over \$500, and consultants. In addition, the state allowed districts cut any unspent categorical funds. Therefore, the District has been able to reduce the current year budget by \$3 million in one-time cuts in 2008-09. The ongoing \$4.9 million in cuts will come from the \$65 million General Fund. A Budget Advisory Committee is working with the Superintendent to develop a list of recommended cuts to be made in developing the 2009-10 budget. The school board will make all final decisions and must pass a balanced budget by the end of June for the start of the fiscal year July 1. Well over 80% of BUSD’s budget is “people costs”—salaries and benefits. In order to cut the budget, layoffs are unavoidable.

Will BSEP/Measure A parcel tax help blunt the cuts? Currently BSEP/Measure A funds are not being proposed to be used for budget reductions. The district’s goal is to keep class sizes at the current levels as prescribed by BSEP/Measure A. However, use of some of the Measure A funds may be necessary as “backup funds” if planned use of federal stimulus money for essential programs and services falls through.

BSEP (Berkeley Public Schools Educational Excellence Act of 2006/ Measure A) is restricted in its use to smaller class size (66%), program enhancement, including school site programs, school libraries, music and arts (25%), and professional development and educational program evaluation (9%). According to Superintendent Huyett, in the event that the federal stimulus does not flow through to BUSD, certain “enhancements” may be eliminated or reduced.

The pie chart (Fig. 1) shows the proportionate contribution of sources of BUSD operating funds--state revenue limit, state categorical, Federal categorical, and local parcel taxes—for 2006-2007.

What is “revenue limit” income? State “revenue limit” and state “categorical” funds accounted for 64% of BUSD’s total revenues (\$68M in 2007). “Revenue limit” income (\$48M in 2007) is for general purposes and provides the base level of funding available to all students in a district. These general-purpose funds that California districts receive are based on a per-pupil amount set for each district. The total general-



purpose funds that BUSD receives depend on how many students attend district schools. The computation is called average daily attendance (ADA), the average number of students attending school over the year. This is based on attendance not enrollment. For example, in 2006-07 BUSD enrollment was 9,088 students but revenue limit ADA was 8,347 students. Thus, student attendance is critical for a district to receive the maximum possible revenue limit income. The total amount that BUSD receives from the state is the per student amount multiplied by the average number of pupils attending school over the year, or ADA (average daily attendance). In 2006-07 Berkeley schools received \$48 million (average daily attendance of 8,347 students multiplied by \$5,802 per student).

Source: Alameda County Dept. of Education (www.acoe.org) Fig. 1

What is categorical aid? All school districts in California receive state categorical aid, but the amounts can vary widely. Categorical aid is for targeted students and purposes. These funds come from more than 80 separate programs. Categorical allocations are the result of both legislative action and legal requirements based on court cases. Special Education is the largest state categorical program in terms of dollars and the second largest federal program. Other major categorical aid programs include: Class Size Reduction (K-3), Targeted Instructional Improvement Block Grant, Economic Impact Aid, and Adult Education. Other categorical programs include funds for instructional materials, English learners, and summer school/supplemental instruction.

What does federal aid support? Federal aid accounts for about 5% of BUSD revenues. Federal aid is almost exclusively categorical and is earmarked for particular purposes, such as Child Nutrition, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Special Education. Most federal funds flow through the California Department of Education.

What is included in other local revenue? The majority of other local revenue derives from Berkeley’s two parcel taxes that provide approximately \$27 million per year. Berkeley has two parcel taxes--Berkeley School Tax (Measure A of 2006) and BUSD School Maintenance (Measure BB of 2000). Funds from the Measure A of 2006 (over \$20 million per year) are used to reduce class sizes and provide enrichment programs. Funds from Measure BB of 2000 (approximately \$5 million per year) provide for school safety and essential maintenance of BUSD buildings and grounds.

	<i>BUSD</i>	<i>Aver. CA District</i>
Local (including parcel taxes)	\$4,041	\$491
Federal	\$632	\$722
State categorical	\$2,442	\$2,110
State “revenue limit”	\$5,802	\$5,600
Total dollars per student	\$12,917	\$8,923

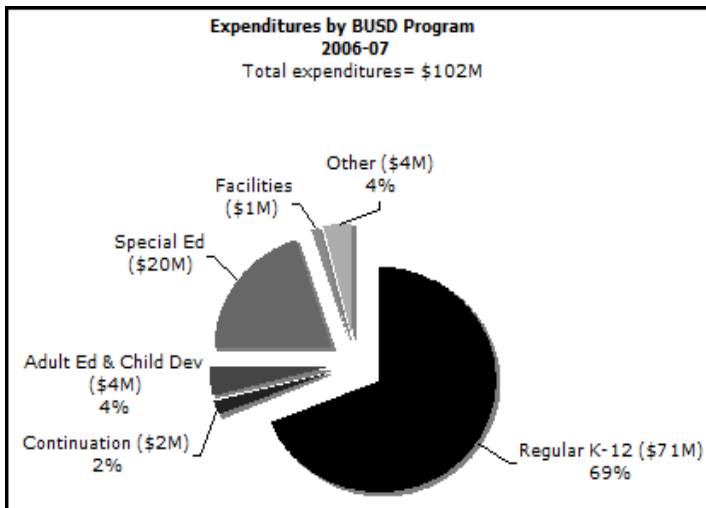
Source: Ed-Data for 2006-07 (www.ed-data.k12.ca.us)

Fig. 2

Fig. 2 compares BUSD with the average California unified school district in terms of revenues per student.

What are the uses of BUSD funds? The pie chart (Fig. 3) shows the proportionate

expenditures that are made by BUSD to support its major programs—Regular K-12 education, Special Education, Adult Education and Child Development, Continuation school—for 2006-2007.



How do bond measures finance school facilities? In California school districts can seek voter approval for local general obligation bonds for school construction or renovation. The proceeds from these bonds may not be used for general operating purposes. These bonds are repaid through property taxes. Since Bond Measure A of 1992 (\$158 million) received 70.7% voter approval and BUSD Bond Measure AA of 2000 (\$116.5 million) received 83.7% approval, few oversight requirements are imposed by the state. The district did convene a School Construction Oversight Committee. The Committee prepared a report to the Board in 2005 and recently in 2009. Promised independent audits have not been completed on either bond measure to date.

Source: Alameda County Dept. of Education (www.acoe.org) Fig. 3

Following the Loma Prieta earthquake, Measure A was passed to build new schools and to seismically upgrade existing Berkeley schools. Measure AA was passed to repair, upgrade and add new classrooms at Berkeley High, King Middle School and other Berkeley schools. All of the Measure A and Measure AA funds have been committed or spent. The final two major projects financed by the bond measures are the Gilman Street Transportation Facility (\$10M) and the rehabilitation of the Bonar Street West Campus Building (\$15M) for use by BUSD Central Administration that is currently housed in the Old City Hall. However, the Berkeley High classroom building that was to replace the former B Building destroyed by fire in 2000 has not been built. Berkeley High is still short 15 permanent classrooms so the District is re-installing several portable classrooms on the campus. According to the School Construction Oversight Committee, a future bond measure will be required to fund the new BHS classroom building.

How does the May 19th Special State Election Ballot Measures effect K-12 education? The budget package passed by the state in February assumes that the state budget can be balanced through a combination of spending cuts of \$15 billion (the largest related to K-12 schools), \$12.5 billion in tax increases, receipt of \$8 billion in federal stimulus funds, and borrowing \$5 billion from future lottery profits. The spending reductions piece has been passed along to school districts. The federal stimulus funds are still uncertain. As part of the February budget solutions, six propositions were placed on the May 19th ballot. If the voters reject three of these measures (1C, 1D, 1E) the 2009-10 budget would not be in balance. New budget solutions would have to be negotiated. Even if the propositions pass, it is expected that the state will face multi-billion dollar budget shortfalls in future years. The ballot measures do not provide longer-term solutions, especially for education.

Author's note: The state budget process remains in flux for K-12 education for 2009-10. Every effort has been made to provide accurate information as of the end of Mar. Current updates on BUSD budget, check "A+ News Update" published monthly on the BUSD site: www.berkeley.k12.ca.us. Current updates on California budget, check "2009-10 Budget Analysis Series" on the Legislative Analyst's Office site: www.lao.ca.gov. Also: Education Data Partnership site: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us, EdSource at www.edsource.org, and the Alameda County Department of Education www.acoe.org. Comments? Contact: priscilla@myrick4berkeleyschools.com. Priscilla Myrick is a former chief financial officer and BUSD parent.

Volunteer at a Berkeley Public School

Community members are invited to tour King Middle School and, more importantly, to consider volunteering. Email Sophie Hahn, King PTA President, at mlkpta@sbcglobal.net. Other schools in Berkeley also welcome volunteers. See <http://www.bpef-online.org/volunteers.html> for more information.

Reflections on King Middle School *By Sophie Hahn, President of King PTA*

Editor's note: This article was edited for the newsletter. See the full article: northeastberkeleyassociation.org.

I attended King Middle School in the mid-1970s. It was a sad looking, run-down school. I remember kids tormenting a “retarded” boy and pouring milkshakes on him at lunch. Someone hit me in the head with a brick while I was leaning into my locker, and girls kept us captive in the bathroom until we took a puff on a cigarette, or submitted to a mild beating with a pair of “clackers,” a popular toy-of-the-moment with large Lucite balls attached to both ends of a string.

Despite all that, King – and all of my Berkeley Public Schools experiences – were deeply formative. I was aware that we were part of a noble experiment – an effort to rectify the racial wrongs of our country through integration and education. I was an enthusiastic participant. I spent three years (in elementary school) in a program called Equal One, where “White” students were purposefully a minority. We learned about African and African-American history. We learned Swahili and – yes – we even sang Kumbaya. The schools felt heady to me, as did my many cross-racial friendships. If we could bridge the divides at school, we would carry our success into adulthood and, as a generation, sweep racism and discrimination away.

When I returned to King Middle School with my eldest son 35 years later, I wasn't sure what to expect. Had things changed for the better? My first impressions of the King Middle School I returned to were – and remain – overwhelmingly positive, despite areas that pose significant challenges. Overall, King is a positive, caring, attractive and well run school, boasting many tangible and intangible assets.

On first glance, King's most striking improvements over the past 35 years are the physical plant and calm, safe, positive school atmosphere. The main building, renovated with tasteful, durable materials, boasts huge, sunny, well appointed classrooms, and the halls are orderly and clean, despite almost a thousand students passing numerous times each day. The presence of the Chez Panisse Foundation's Edible Schoolyard and Kitchen provide another truly world class learning environment, and elevate the school on many levels. Students benefit from the curriculum, the hands-on learning and the progressive, empowering philosophy of the program. The garden, chicken coop, compost area, brick oven and other features of this model farm are a delight. The final outstanding feature of King's physical plant is the brand-new Chez Panisse Foundation Dining Commons. Reminiscent of a lodge at an upscale ski resort, this airy space with signature copper light fixtures, concrete floors and rough hewn wooden tables is another model project of the Foundation. At noontime, each grade files in separately to lunch on mostly-organic, low fat fare, fresh cooked on the premises. The requirement that every student sit for a fixed amount of time has significantly increased the number of students eating a healthy lunch, with positive impacts on health as well as afternoon behavior and learning.

Also palpable at King is the energy and commitment of teachers, administration and staff. Jason Lustig, in his second year as King's Principal, knows the name of every student in the school (over 900!). So, what's not to like? The single largest challenge facing King Middle School today is the disparate educational outcomes for kids of higher vs. lower economic backgrounds; of parents with a college education vs. students whose parents did not attend college; and of white students vs. students of color. On all three counts, one group of students is doing very well – even exceptionally, while the other groups, despite some strong outliers, have very poor overall outcomes. People often “blame” this disparity in outcomes on parents. It is claimed that they are not supportive enough, not around enough, not on top of things. After all, if some kids are thriving, the fact that others are not must not be the school's fault! While I do believe that parent involvement is important and can make a difference for some kids, a good number of parents are simply unable to participate and for many other students, parent participation simply is not enough.

The job of schools is to take students as they come, and educate them. If having economically stable, college educated, English speaking parents is a pre-condition to academic success, one could argue that our schools really aren't providing much! So, how can King meet the needs of the approximately 1/3 of its student body that is chronically underserved?

First, as an important way-station between elementary and high school, I believe Middle Schools should provide intensive, targeted, proven academic support programs and services to bring all students up to, or above, grade level. A second important component of providing a full education for middle school students is to support the social, emotional, ethical and moral development of all students. Given the tremendous personal growth that middle schoolers experience, it is obvious that these grades should be infused with comprehensive programs and services providing guidance and support on a variety of levels. In addition to programs and

curriculum for the entire school, an increase in counseling/case management staff is imperative to meet the ongoing needs of the King's 300+ students who struggle (and the occasional needs of all students). With only two full-time counselors, there simply isn't enough to go around. Last but not least, our middle schools need to provide tools for families and students to envision and then work towards a successful future in high school and college, and beyond. Going back to the paradigm of schools that are most successful in meeting the needs of students with college educated, economically stable and/or empowered parents, we need to ask ourselves what those families are providing to support their students' success, and *replicate those things in the school setting*, making them accessible to all students.

Fortunately for King, the current teachers, staff, parents and administration recognize these three needs – academic support, social/emotional/developmental support and pathways to high school and college -- and are working on programs to address them. Plans right now call for very tightly targeted academic and social interventions to raise students' scores, as measured within several of the District's ethnic group categories, in Math, Reading and "Habits of Work." Math and reading were chosen as target areas because they are the building blocks of all learning. Habits of Work ("HOW") is a measure of each student's engagement, work habits, attitude and participation in the classroom setting. Improvement in this area will require a series of supports that are currently being devised by teachers and staff. While these three targeted areas do not address all the school hopes to improve, they were selected as the school's first focus with limited resources.

Sophie Hahn is a King Middle School graduate and mother of two King Middle School students – 6th and 8th graders. She is currently President of the King PTA and is a member and former chair of King's School Governance Council. The opinions and analysis presented here are hers only.

Berkeley's Exploding Pension Expenses

The title caught our attention: "Public-employee pensions are unsustainable". It was a column in the Oakland Tribune by Daniel Borenstein analyzing public employee pensions, with the primary focus on the Berkeley City Manager's pension, which will amount to \$280,000 per year plus an annual inflator if he stays on the job until the end of 2011. That's \$280,000 a year *plus* for the rest of his life, while retired! Below is a summary; if you'd like to read the entire article, it's available at <http://www.insidebayarea.com/columnists> (along with another eye-opening column on how the Chief of the Moraga Orinda Fire District managed to "spike" his annual retirement income from \$185,000 to \$241,000 by selling back vacation time during his last year at work, at age 50.)

The column opens with "If you want an example of public employee pensions mushrooming out of control, consider the case of Berkeley City Manager Phil Kamlarz." In order to keep him on the job, The Berkeley City Council recently voted to give Kamlarz 5 raises over 3 years that will increase his salary by 17.5%, so that by the end of 2011 he will be earning \$260,000 per year. If he retires at that time, he will receive an annual pension of 108 percent of his last year's salary, a total of \$280,000 per year. Now, here's the amazing part: All of the same calculations that allow the City Manager to receive this inflated pension apply to all the other non-safety city employees, with the only difference being that they earn less than he so their pensions will also be lower.

In Berkeley pensions for firefighters and police were bumped up in 2000 and 2002, so, because "there was an issue of fairness", other city workers were granted a 35% increase in pension benefits in 2003, from "2% at 55" to "2.7% at 55". (That's 2.7% of salary for every year worked for those who retire at age 55.) And in some ways, the non-safety workers got a sweeter deal than the firefighters and police, whose pensions were capped at 90% of salary. There is usually no cap for non-safety employees, so they can end up with pensions of more than 100% of their salary. All of this plus an annual inflator!

Another interesting point is that the City of Berkeley pays both the employer's and the employee's share of the contribution for all its employees, a total of 8%, yet when it is time to calculate the retirement pension, that 8% is added onto the salary. So not only are Berkeley taxpayers paying the entire contribution while the employee is working, but they have to pay even more when the annual retirement benefit is calculated. Borenstein's column contains a detailed description of the various factors that go into calculating pensions in Berkeley, and it's worth reading, especially if you like to peer into the future in order to frighten yourself.

You will see a link to the full text of this article on www.northeastberkeleyassociation.org.

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North East Berkeley Association (NEBA) is a nonpartisan community organization whose mission is to inform, educate, and advocate for the interests of Berkeley residents of local electoral Districts 5 and 6 (roughly coincident with the 94707 and 94708 zip codes). Civic issues of particular interest and concern include municipal fiscal responsibility, local taxes and fees, public safety, public education, and basic neighborhood services. NEBA is informed and guided in its mission by the single-family zoning and homeowner status of most of NEBA residents. NEBA does not support or oppose any political candidates or parties. However, NEBA does hold candidate and issue forums, thereby stimulating interest and discussion. On occasion, NEBA will offer analysis, opinion, and a recommended position on important local issues. To accomplish its mission, NEBA publishes a newsletter and holds community meetings, each at least twice annually. Its Board of Directors meets monthly and Board subcommittees more often as needed.