
NEBA News

NORTH EAST BERKELEY ASSOCIATION

Spring 2012

★★★★★ *BERKELEY FINANCES EDITION* ★★★★★

UNFUNDED LIABILITIES & NEW TAXES

President's Message

Unfunded liabilities, fewer services, pay more for less? A financial impact report on future costs seems only reasonable! Read here about the Cukor murder and read our interview with Councilmember Susan Wengraf, too.

Please join NEBA. Your dues support the newsletter mailings and public meetings where our voices can be heard! We need your support now more than ever. If you have not yet renewed or joined, **NOW IS THE TIME!**

Sharon Eige

THE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE

By Barbara Gilbert

The Committee for FACTS has completed a signature drive to qualify its proposed Berkeley FACTS Ordinance of 2012 for the November ballot. At this time, signatures are being counted to determine whether the measure will qualify.

FACTS stands for Fiscal Accountability, Clarity, Transparency, and Sustainability.

The ordinance would require the City of Berkeley to prepare and publish, by March 1, 2013, a Certified Financial Report specifying the City's financial obligations for a twenty-year period for employee-related expenses and prudent capital improvements. Additionally, it would require a substantiated determination of the present value of these long-term obligations and of the annual monetary resources necessary to pay them down. The Ordinance, which requires bi-annual updating, would also restrict the City's ability to incur new debt or impose new taxes, assessments or property-related fees, or raise certain existing taxes, assessments or fees during any period that the Report is not properly prepared and certified.

The City's unfunded obligation for employee-related costs and capital improvements is estimated at more than \$1.2 billion. According to attorney David Wilson, a principal of the Committee for FACTS and of Berkeley Budget SOS: "Over the last twenty years, while inflation has been about 166%, the City's

budget has increased by about 226% and employee costs have increased by 279%. These employee costs have risen from about 64% of the budget to 80%. Meanwhile, basic funding for capital improvements declined from 10% to 4% of the budget, and inadequate monies were reserved for long-term employee costs, capital improvements, and emergencies. Now the City appears to have no money for the long-term expenses, and even its annual revenues are not keeping up with annual costs. Funding decisions have been made in a vacuum and the FACTS ordinance will at least provide City officials and residents with a solid framework within which to make decisions."

Ironically, by unanimous vote on January 19, 2010, the Berkeley City Council, at the urging of Berkeley Budget SOS, unanimously passed a resolution with many of the same features (but not including the constraints on new taxation). The Council's resolution was ignored as if it never happened. Now, as a pre-emptive response to the pending citizens' initiative, four Councilmembers have proposed, for the May 15 Council agenda, a substantially similar measure but without the important certification requirement and without the important constraints on new taxation. The Councilmembers proposal also omits mention of parks

and recreation facilities and other pieces of physical infrastructure.

An ordinance passed by Council can be changed or undone at any time by a simple majority

vote. An ordinance passed by the voters may only be changed by the voters.

The NEBA board urges your support for the FACTS initiative in November.

FAIRY TALES IN THE LAND OF PENSION LIABILITIES

By Chuck Smith

History suggests that financial crises brought on by high levels of debt, such as the 2008 crisis, are followed by periods of slow economic growth and low investment returns. The Zero Interest Rate Policy (ZIRP) of the Federal Reserve, also called "Financial Repression", is just one manifestation of this. Bondholders and savers, and, incidentally, pension funds, will have a hard slog. And with interest rates near a 40-year-low, the 30-year-long spectacular appreciation of Treasuries is probably over. Returns over the next ten years will be meager.

In light of this, the decision in March of 2012 by CalPERS to reduce their expected annual rate of return on investments to 7.5% from 7.75%, despite recommendation of its own actuary to go to 7.25% seems laughable. The annual rate of return for the five years ended June 30, 2011 --- a more normal investment period than we are in now -- was only 3.4%, less than half the assumed rate of return.

Most experts think a rate of 5 to 6% would be much more reasonable. Warren Buffet has suggested 6 to 6.5% might be appropriate; The Economist of 3/17/12 suggested 6% on equities and much less on bonds.

So why is CalPERS staying with 7.5%? It is hard not to conclude that political considerations trump economic reality. Assuming the more likely, lower returns would require much larger contributions by the state, cities and counties. It would also bring the true size of pension promises forcefully to the taxpayers' attention. The attitude is, let's deal with it, just not right now. If you've followed the crisis in Greece and the rest of Europe, you should be familiar with this concept.

David Crane, a lecturer in the Public Policy Program at Stanford University, stated recently that politicians guarantee absurdly high returns in order to keep upfront costs low. Future generations are left holding the bag.

California pension spending has been growing at 11.4 % a year since 1999. This is the fastest growing cost of local governments. Neither city revenues nor return on investment can grow this fast.

While it is always dangerous to extrapolate any trend into the future, it is clear something has to change

Either public employee benefits will have to be reduced or city services cut, or some combination of both. Generally, negotiations with public employee unions have been relatively unproductive, so the primary avenue forward has been the reduction in city services. In Berkeley, as Jacquelyn McCormick of Berkeley Budget SOS points out, over the past 20 years capital improvement investment has decreased from 10% to 4% of our budget, while salaries and benefits have increased from 65% of the budget to 80%. Yet, there is an obvious limit to this approach.

And as the number of city and Muni employees decline rapidly, there will be few workers to carry the pension load, at the same time retirees are living longer. Gov. Jerry Brown is not alone in calling this a Ponzi scheme!

Massive cuts in public services are already upon us. The other reality is a cascading string of bankruptcies in California, which started with Vallejo, is moving to Stockton, and ultimately on through San Jose, Los Angeles, to San Diego. (San Jose officials have already discussed bankruptcy as a possible option despite the fact the city staff has been cut to 5400 from 7450. Vallejo did declare bankruptcy and also cut police from 155 to 90! Antioch cut city staff to 245 from 401. Many other cities will follow.)

CalPERS has drawn a line in the sand, declaring that public pension liabilities are not dischargeable in bankruptcy. Vallejo did not have the resources to argue the point in court, so, although most of their other creditors got cents on the dollar, their pension liabilities are as large as ever. As larger cities find themselves with no other way out, we will certainly see this question litigated.

Footnote: Several articles and other literature have suggested the retiree medical liabilities, which are generally almost entirely unfunded, also present a large problem.

THE CUKOR MURDER: THE COMMUNITY NEEDS THE FULL STORY

By Barbara Gilbert

As time has passed since the Cukor murder on February 18, 2012, more questions keep arising and few or no questions have been satisfactorily answered. The community is entitled to and is demanding a full, honest and accurate account of the events that transpired. Following are some of the issues that must be addressed:

Misinformation About First Call by Peter Cukor to Emergency v. Non-Emergency Line

The community was repeatedly told that the initial call was to the public safety non-emergency number 981-5900 whereas, according to the Cukor family, the call was actually made to the emergency number 981-5911, which was programmed into his cell phone. This matters even if the calls end up with the same dispatcher, since the choice of numbers reflects the caller's perception of the situation.

Failure of City Officials to Release the Peter Cukor Call Transcript but Instead Release a "Draft" Transcript

Purportedly, the non-release of the full transcript was at the request of District Attorney O'Malley and the Cukor family. This claim has never been substantiated and it is unclear whether this is a legally tenable position and one contrary to the public interest. In any event, by definition a "draft" transcript serves no purpose other than to confuse matters as its accuracy is unknowable.

It is more understandable that the transcript of the second call by Mrs. Cukor has not been released, as she was in the throes of watching her husband being attacked, and such a release could truly be an invasion of privacy.

Questions As to Why Officer Not Immediately Dispatched After First Call

From what we do know of the Peter Cukor call, it appears that he regarded the intruder DeWitt as spacey and suspicious and asked that an officer be sent right away. Mr. Cukor had every reason to think that he would have help without undue delay.

That evening, there were thirty-six officers on duty. Twenty-four were at the Public Safety building downtown being prepped for the Occupy march from Oakland to UCB along Telegraph Avenue. Twelve were available for general public safety calls. Around

the time of Cukor's call there were apparently four other calls, only one that was even vaguely a possible emergency. Yet the dispatcher specifically advised the nearest officer, who was ready, willing and able to speed up the hill to the Cukor residence, not to respond.

The community needs to understand dispatcher protocols and as a result may well demand changes.

BERKELEY EMERGENCIES

Call 911 from home phone (landline)

Call 981-5911 from cell - *program into phone*

OTHER JURISDICTIONS

For Albany, El Cerrito, Emeryville, Kensington, Oakland: Advised to first Call 911 from Cell—however, may be bounced around a bit depending on phone carrier and cell tower locations

GENERAL DISPATCH

Albany 525-7300

El Cerrito 237-3233-then press 0

Emeryville 596-3700

Kensington 236-0474

Oakland 777-3211

Call 911 For California Highway Patrol for elsewhere

FORCEFULLY STATE THE NATURE OF THE EMERGENCY AND NEED FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

Questions About the Force Deployment to the Occupy March

It is totally understandable that the community might need police presence at an Occupy march into Berkeley from Oakland along Telegraph Avenue where some of the participants were not necessarily committed to a peaceable protest. However, it is not clear why the entire police contingent of thirty-six officers was held back from responding to a call on the emergency line specifically asking for help in dealing with a spacey person lurking about on private property in a remote part of the City.

Questions About Police Chief Meehan

Prior to a community meeting on March 8, City officials, the police force, and the public seemed to be in a waiting mode, at least publicly, although there was undoubtedly much going on behind the scenes. In general, it felt like the officials at least, had confidence in the Chief and assumed that the storm would blow over.

However, at the March 8 community meeting, attended by about 250 residents, the Chief seemed excessively focused on public “perception” as opposed to the facts of the murder. This impression, shared by many citizens, was borne out by the bizarre episode of the subsequent midnight call on reporter Doug Oakley by Public Information Officer Mary Kusmiss, during which Oakley was strongly urged to change his reportage of the community meeting.

When this episode blew up, there were various conflicting statements as to who ordered the visit and how Oakley’s address was obtained.

Subsequently, Meehan apologized to the community, Kusmiss got her own attorney and returned to patrol duty. An outside investigation was commissioned by Acting City Manager Christine Daniel. The formal written scope of the investigation is remarkably terse and vague, i.e. “conduct an investigation and prepare a written report regarding allegations of employee misconduct”. Clearly, there is more to the investigation than stated, but since the Contract for this investigation is a public document, its content was probably deliberately limited so as to reveal as little as possible to the public. At this point, the police union also weighed in, in a manner expressing substantial non-support for Chief Meehan. The union claimed to be seeking equity in the investigation of the chief vis-à-vis investigations of misconduct on the part of rank-and-file officers. Some sources claim that the union position is self-

serving and reflects the very tense contract negotiations with the Chief and the City, as well as distaste for the “outsider” Meehan. I strongly doubt that the public will ever learn more about the inner workings of the police union.

Questions About a Cukor Family Lawsuit

It is unclear whether the Cukor family will sue the City over the untimely death of Peter Cukor. It is possible that the City’s misinformation and non-information arose out of concern about a potential costly lawsuit. Is this concern adequate justification for misleading the public?

Questions About General Police Coverage in North Berkeley

Through the Cukor case, more residents of North Berkeley have become aware of the policing inadequacies in North Berkeley. A large swathe of District 6 has the highest burglary and auto theft rate in the City and there is very limited police presence to cover a very spread-out geographic area. While generally non-violent, these crimes bring large numbers of felons into North Berkeley and they apparently roam around looking for opportunity. The tragic Cukor murder may provide an occasion to re-assess local police deployment as between neighborhoods and in relation to the frequent political demonstrations in our community.

These are just some of the issues raised by the Cukor murder. As we learn more, there will undoubtedly arise further questions. The community is entitled to a full accounting, as of course is the Cukor family. We expect and demand to be safe in our homes and on our property, and that our police will timely respond in an emergency. Unfortunately, the Cukor events have instilled many doubts in the public.

INTERVIEW WITH COUNCILMEMBER SUSAN WENGRAF

By Isabelle Gaston, PhD

This November, Councilmember Susan Wengraf will be running for re-election for her seat representing District 6 in Berkeley. Councilmember Wengraf was first elected to a four-year term in 2008. She has a long history of community involvement, service, and accomplishment in Berkeley, including serving as the aide to former Councilmember Betty Olds and as a planning commissioner for many years.

Susan was raised in Brooklyn, New York, where she trained at the Bank Street School and received a Masters in Special Education from Hunter College. She was a classroom teacher for many years, first in New York City and later in Richmond, California, specializing in teaching children with special needs. Susan is also very interested in film, especially social change documentaries. Her award winning documentary about the songwriter and folk

singer Malvina Reynolds, LOVE IT LIKE A FOOL, was filmed here in Berkeley.

Susan is currently the Visuals Editor at the Emma Goldman Papers at UC Berkeley, where she oversees the photographs that are used in publications and creates presentations and exhibits.



Susan first came to California in 1969 and has lived in North Berkeley ever since. She and her husband, Mark, have two grown children. In her spare time Susan enjoys reading, hiking with her two dogs (Stella, a standard poodle and Smokey, a flat coated retriever) and watching and discussing movies.

Susan graciously offered to be interviewed by NEBA and to share her thoughts on her experiences the last several years representing District 6.

How would you describe your time on the Council? How do District 6 issues compare to other districts?

I was elected to the Berkeley City Council in November of 2008. I am honored to represent District 6 residents. The census data reveals that District 6 residents are very well educated. I know from personal experience that they are also very smart. They keep me on my toes and I take my charge seriously. I work hard and try to serve my constituents well. Unlike other council districts, District 6 currently has no commercial area, with retail shops and restaurants. A majority of the district is low density, single family homes but in the southern portion, close to the campus, it becomes higher density with multi-family apartment buildings and group living accommodations like the student coops. District 6 has many neighborhood parks and pathways; one public school and one fire station. The area also has some unique physical challenges: The narrow and curvy streets create emergency vehicle access issues. The fact that the Hayward fault runs through the district makes it all the more critical that neighborhoods be prepared to deal with the aftermath of a major earthquake. In addition, proximity to Tilden Park puts District 6 at high threat of a wildfire.

What is your typical working day like?

Each day brings new concerns and new challenges. I'm not sure there is "a typical day" but let me describe today, a fairly typical Monday. I met with the City Manager, as I do every Monday morning. We discuss the upcoming council agenda and any other issues that are relevant. These can include land-use matters, budget issues, staffing, changes to policy or process, etc. After lunch, I met with two residents who have a pressing land use concern. Later in the afternoon, I met with a council colleague about developing legislation together. At 7:00 pm I attended a meeting with a neighborhood group who invited me to bring them up to date on the City. It is now 11:00 pm and I am writing the answers to the NEBA interview.

What do you believe is one of your greatest strengths as a Councilmember?

I would say one of my greatest strengths is maintaining my sanity and sense of humor. I take great pride in being a voice of reason and common sense, unswayed by the dogmatic political rhetoric that is so often associated with Berkeley. I am proud to run an office that is responsive to the needs of my constituents. My aide, Anna Avellar, and I like helping residents navigate what seems to be an almost Byzantine bureaucracy.

The City is facing many challenging issues. Are there any that you have taken a particular interest in?

Land-use issues are a special interest because I served on the Planning Commission for many years. I have considerable knowledge and understanding of the concepts, vocabulary, and tensions and conflicts that come with land use policy and decisions. But this is by no means my only interest. Currently I am immersed in studying the budgetary challenges that the city faces and in finding some creative solutions. Berkeley, like most cities in the state, faces serious unfunded liabilities in pensions and health plan costs. We also suffer from a huge backlog of deferred maintenance in our storm drains and sewers, streets, parks and city-owned buildings. I am currently working on a strategy to address these critical issues. I discovered that before I can tackle the broader problems, I need to have access to reliable, up-to-date and accurate information. Although this may seem obvious, I am finding that it can be very difficult to piece together all of the required data easily. So, as a

first step I will be addressing the “access to information” challenge.

What are your thoughts on property crime in Berkeley?

My experience is that up until Chief Meehan came to Berkeley, property crime was not taken seriously. If you had a car break-in or a car theft, you were told that you should be grateful that you live where you do because other parts of the city were experiencing much more violent crime. Under Chief Meehan’s leadership, we are now able to obtain much better information about what is actually happening in our neighborhoods. And property crime is being taken more seriously. I recently learned that our police department uses a 40-year-old model to determine the police beats. I am advocating for a re-evaluation of those standards because I feel that the hills are understaffed. I believe that if you look at current density in combination with accurate crime stats, we can make a case for increased police patrols. In addition, residents need to improve the lighting around their homes and they need to learn to empty their cars of valuables every time they park it. I encourage residents to actually put their cars in their garages if they have one. As bucolic as the Berkeley

hills may seem, the truth is that we are sandwiched between Oakland and Richmond, and our city seems to be a great playground for those looking to steal and rob. Our police department is doing a very good job of catching the thieves, so I am hoping that word will spread that if you commit a crime in Berkeley, there is a good chance that you’ll get caught. It is essential to report all crime to the police department, no matter how trivial. If there is no report, then the police do not know it occurred and no data is recorded.

What is the best way for a Berkeley resident to contact you?

When possible, I like to meet with my constituents in person. This part of my job is a lot of fun because we have interesting and extraordinary people living in District 6. If people have busy schedules, I communicate with them via email or telephone. My office is very open and accessible. We pride ourselves on returning constituent phone calls quickly and trying to help them with their city-related problems. Residents are encouraged to email me at: swengraf@cityofberkeley.info or to call me at: 981-7160 if they have any questions or would like to receive my quarterly newsletter.

BATES: LET’S TAX GASOLINE AND NATURAL GAS IN BERKELEY (NEWS ANALYSIS)

By Zeld Bronstein

(This article first appeared in the Daily Planet on April 6, 2012. The author sat on the Berkeley Planning Commission from 1997-2004, and served as Commission Chair from 2002-2004.)

The city of Berkeley is falling apart. Deferred maintenance on the town’s deteriorating infrastructure—streets, public pools, street lighting, parks, recreation facilities and community centers, storm drains, seismic retrofits of city buildings—has led to \$523 million worth of identified, unfunded projects. Between March 14-19, likely Berkeley voters were polled over the phone about possible bond measures for the November ballot whose passage would go toward paying for the repairs. On April 3, the council viewed the sobering results: none of the proposed measures came close to the 67% required to pass new property taxes. Grasping for alternative sources of revenue, Mayor Tom Bates proposed that a follow-up poll ask about a “green tax” on petroleum and a “carbon fee” on natural gas in Berkeley.

(http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/uploadedFiles/Clerk/Level_3_-_City_Council/2012/04Apr/2012-04-03%20Worksession%20Item%2001%20Community%20Survey%20Results.pdf)

The city paid Lake Research Partners \$24,000 to poll 430 voters in a 17-minute survey. Though a majority of the respondents acknowledged the need for infrastructure improvements, and 68% rated both streets and storm drains as important or extremely important, the highest approval rate was only 59% for a \$25 million bond for storm drains and water quality. A parcel tax that would raise \$1 million for homeless services received a 58% yes response.

Lake Associates’ David Mermin told the council that if tax measures face well-funded opposition, they generally lose. If there’s no opposition, “you can lift the yes vote” to the 67% threshold needed for approval. “It’s hard to lift,” he said, “but it’s possible”—if you’re starting at 62 or 63%. “That’s a lift that can be done.” But if you’re starting at 56 or 57%, reaching 67% is “pretty tough.” He also emphasized that undecided voters “tend to break toward a no vote in a bond election.”

Mermin also explained that in the interest of maximum predictability, the sample of likely voters

was weighted toward the hills (41%), homeowners (62%) and people who've lived in Berkeley ten years or longer (76%)—percentages that are not representative of the city's entire voting population. In response to a question from Councilmember Wengraf, he said that the hills are defined as Districts 5, 6 and 8.

With one exception, the council appeared to write off new property taxes. "The property tax is poison," said Mayor Bates. "People have had it." The exception was Councilmember Arreguin, who said that when the council had discussed the questions for the survey, he had asked that people be polled about adding 2% tax on the gross receipts of owners of 5 or more residential rental units. He wondered why that question hadn't made it onto the survey and requested that it be included in the follow-up poll planned for May. Councilmember Wengraf asked the city attorney to see if such a levy would count as income tax, which, she said, would be illegal.

Mayor Bates and Councilmember Wozniak had a different idea: assess a "green tax" on gasoline purchased in Berkeley and "a carbon fee" on Berkeleyans' natural gas use. Revenues from the former would go to street repairs, from the latter to "climate action activities," in particular watershed services. When Councilmember Capitelli noted that a sales tax is regressive, the mayor agreed: "It *is* regressive." He went on to say, however, that rent, food and medicine are not taxed. Bates also said that if 67% of respondents in the follow-up survey were agreeable to the gasoline tax of ¼ cent, he would talk to other cities about imposing the same; otherwise, everyone would leave Berkeley to buy gasoline.

Councilmember Moore headed in another direction. Citing the reduced size of the Berkeley police force and "the need for more police officers," he said he'd "like to see a question on the follow-up poll about money that would go to hire more patrol officers."

City staff and the pollster will return to the council on May 1 with sets of questions to be reviewed for the follow-up survey. Should the council decide to place a bond or tax on the November ballot, it will provide direction on ballot language on June 12, review the final ballot measure language on July 10 and finalize the measures July 17.

The April 3 discussion could have been billed "Reaping What We've Sowed." For years, the mayor and council have lavishly praised each other and the succession of city managers and budget directors for their collective "prudence" in managing Berkeley finances. After the council has approved each annual budget, Bates, now in the tenth year of his mayoralty,

has triumphantly announced that once again, the city has balanced its budget.

But California law requires every city in the state to balance its budget. The question isn't whether you balanced yours, but what you had to do to balance it. At least, that used to be the question. Now, with Vallejo as the national poster child for municipal bankruptcy, with Stockton apparently about to follow suit and with many other cities grappling with multi-million dollar shortfalls, the question may be changing. The main reason Berkeley isn't in Vallejo's and Stockton's shoes—yet—has been its citizens' habitual willingness to tax themselves. There was a hiccup in November 2004, when Berkeley voters said no to four city tax measures. But that was the exception, as a glance at any property tax statement for a Berkeley parcel purchased after 1978 (the year Prop. 13 passed) will demonstrate.

If the results of the March phone survey indicated that the party is over, Tuesday's discussion suggested that our electeds are not prepared for that eventuality. Mayor Bates opened the meeting by saying, "This is unacceptable." What neither he nor any of his colleagues on the dais also said is that their inordinate generosity to city staff is a major source of Berkeley's fiscal woes.

Before asking likely voters if they're willing to pay higher taxes to fund more Berkeley police officers, the pollsters conducting the follow-up survey in May should inform respondents that in fiscal year 2012, Berkeley police officers' average salary was \$125,652; that their benefits (pension, health insurance plus workers comp) averaged 74% of their salary or \$92,242; and that their total compensation averaged \$217,894 a year.

Indeed, before posing any questions at all about new taxes, the pollsters should tell respondents that last November former city Manager Phil Kamlarz retired with an annual pension of \$250,000, joining 74 other city of Berkeley retirees who are getting pensions over \$100,000.

Also they should state that according to data obtained by the *San Jose Mercury*, in 2010 over a quarter of city of Berkeley employees—380 out of 1,529—had a base salary over \$100,000; and that when cash payments, including overtime, are added, 30% of city staff landed in the \$100 K club—and that's not counting their fringe benefits. Mention, too, that personnel costs account for 77% of city expenses.

Then and only then, ask those voters if they're willing to pay higher city taxes.

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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.

Contact your Berkeley city government with your questions and concerns. *They want to hear from you!*
City Council Roster Contact Information: <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=18496>

Please look for NEBA on Facebook!

City Councilmembers Laurie Capitelli and Susan Wengraf send email newsletters. To subscribe:

Email lcapitelli@ci.berkeley.ca.us with "subscribe" as the subject.

Email swengraf@ci.berkeley.ca.us requesting to subscribe to the District 6 e-mail news.