

Hastings puts garage on hold to weigh options

PHOTO: MARJORIE BEGGS

Hey, hey. Ho, ho.

The parking garage has got to go.

With that chant, a crowd of Tenderloin activists, residents and students assembled at Hastings College of the Law to protest the school's proposed eight-story parking garage at Larkin and Golden Gate. They carried home-made placards and three large cardboard "buildings" — symbols of their call for housing for people, not cars.

The April 23 noon rally followed a three-hour hearing at which Hastings' board of directors heard public comments on the final EIR for their proposed 885-slot garage. Their options were to certify the EIR — or not — and then approve the project — or not.

In the college's hushed, carpeted Alumni Reception Center, seven directors, plus Chancellor Mary Kay Kane, CFO David Seward and general counsel and board Secretary Susan Thomas, sat spread out at four tables arranged in an open square, each with his or her own mike, perhaps the better to hear each other as well as be heard by the audience.

Chairman Eugene Freeland told the 100 or so people attending that the months of controversy surrounding the project had "sent us back to the drawing board, and we're grateful for your interest."

Ironically, the very first speaker, San Francisco Tomorrow board member Norman Rolfe, told the Hastings board that it still needed to "go back to the drawing board. . . . You should review your policy of not providing nonstudent housing [because] we've reworked the numbers." If the project were to add housing, he said, the

cash flow would be almost comparable to the proposed, garage-only project.

Hastings has been given two alternative plans, one commissioned by a committee of the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, the other from private developer Art Evans.

Sixteen speakers followed Rolfe, all but two in opposition to the \$22.9 million proposed project.

Sierra Club Transportation Committee Chairman Howard Strassner said the project could lead to "future financial difficulties" and submitted his own spread sheet analysis of financial results of a comparison cash flow for a residential option (217 housing units above 145 parking slots, plus additional ground-floor commercial). The mixed-use option, he said in a letter to the board, showed "a greater annual cash flow. . . . Hastings' bonus for 'doing the right thing.'"

The day before the hearing, an editorial in the Hastings Law News cited the revenue stream of a garage only-project — \$947,173 a year for the first 30 years — as a puny 4% return on the investment.

To make that same return, wrote the editor, "Hastings need only admit an additional 40 students per year [or] sell the current lot (valued at around \$9 million) and invest the money with a 10% annual return." The editorial didn't explain how to reap such a reward from a low-risk investment.

The editorial did say the board was rushing to approve the project without considering options, a sentiment that was echoed at the hearing by Peter Winklestein, co-chairman of SPUR's Urban Policies Com-

mittee, and Tenderloin Housing Clinic Director Randy Shaw.

"We urge you to review the alternative proposals and not vote on the project today," Shaw said. The opposition in the community has neither the time nor the money to "put the brakes" on the project, he added, referring to marshalling forces for litigation that would inevitably result if the directors gave the project a green light this day.

Two Hastings students approached the board to voice their support. Paul Moll, a first-year student from Los Angeles, said, "The community has

transit, he equated public transit with more crime. Also, fewer parking spaces "means more cars circling, looking for parking, making more congestion."

At 10:15 a.m., the board asked the audience to leave while it went into closed executive session, "for a little while," said Freeland, to discuss how to vote.

People milled around in the narrow, stuffy halls outside the meeting room. They chatted in small groups, went down the hall for coffee and water, talked some more, leaned against the walls, walked around. Minutes and more minutes passed, sparking speculation about the outcome.

Besides the testimony from this hearing, the board also was considering a sheaf of documents opposing their plan: The city's supervisors had unanimously passed a Chris Daly-Mark Leno resolution urging Hastings to reject the garage-only project in favor of mixed-use.

Letters from state Sen. John Burton and Assemblywoman Carole Migden asked for the same, as did a letter from 100 religious leaders and another from Coalition for a Positive Hastings Development (California Futures Network, Hastings Alumni for Responsible Development, Religious Witness with Homeless People, St. Anthony Foundation, S.F. Network Ministries, San Franciscans for Reasonable Growth, Tenderloin Housing Clinic and TNDC). The Associated Students of UC Hastings also passed a resolution.

Hastings got some letters supporting its plan — from two commissioners of the Asian Art Museum, several lawyers,



Protesters Ann Connery and granddaughter, Maya Rose, 3, live across the street from the proposed garage site.

several citizens at large and one student.

When the board reconvened, more than an hour later, Chancellor Kane explained that the directors had reviewed the EIR process and contents, found them adequate, and voted unanimously to certify the EIR.

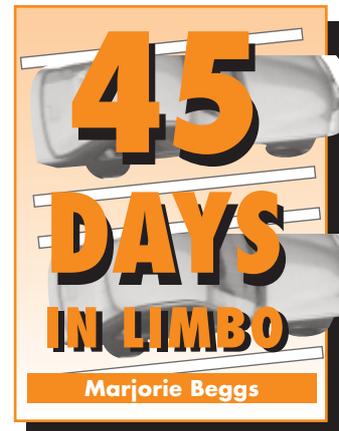
But, wondering whether this really is "the best project for the college to pursue," Kane said the board voted, also unanimously, to delay final approval until its June 7 meeting.

The 45-day continuance, she said, would allow the board to look at alternatives. But, she cautioned, any housing the board considered would be for students and faculty, not the public.

As another of the rally chants went:

No housing.

No peace. ■



needs, but the school does, too. We care about our school and we need more resources like this." (After the hearing, Moll told The Extra that he thinks students are evenly split on the garage issue. "It's simply not true that all students are against it.")

Third-year student Justin Bezis called himself "pro-choice, in favor of letting students decide how they get to school." He was not in favor of Hastings getting into the "low-income housing business," he told the board, adding that contrary to many speakers who urged dependence on public

Rigo's new mural is black and white and read all over

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la 3" T-shirt, also got a gift bouquet from San Francisco Art Commissioner Stanlee Gatti.

Educated at the San Francisco Art Institute and Stanford University, Rigo's works are all over the city and include the giant murals "One Tree" at 10th and Bryant streets, "Birds

and Cars" at 16th and Bryant, "Inner City" at Sixth and Howard, and "Sky/Ground" at Third and Mission. His first piece here, commissioned when he was a mere tourist in 1985, was at Ninth and Harrison for Club 9, which has gone the way of many dance-halls-of-the-month.

Rigo said, "Birds and Cars"

led to "Truth," "Birds and Cars" was done on pretty much a volunteer basis," Rigo said. "I had established a good relationship with the landlord in the building, Sam Haskins. After his mother passed away, he called me and said he had some money and wanted to collaborate with me.

"I started painting in December and we finished in March. We painted around the weather. The wind, the safety, the security — you're floating over someone else's private property. It's mostly rewarding, especially when you get into conversations with people on the street. Reactions are never predictable. Some even ask you for a job."

Though some Rigo murals have been paid for with public funds, "Truth" is strictly a private affair.

Landscape painter Richard Perri, an Odd Fellows tenant, told Rigo the building owners might go for a mural, and indeed they would. But Rigo and Perri could only come up with \$3,000, enough for materials.

Art patron Haskins, who owns the "Birds and Cars" building, put in another \$10,000. And Gatti, head of the S.F. Art Commission, which had co-sponsored "Sky/Ground," "helped get the mayor's proclamation and attended the dedication in lieu of an otherwise occupied Brown; hence, the bouquet.

Has he ever been worried about falling when painting murals up where seagulls deliver? "Almost always," Rigo admits.

"I have literally been scared for weeks," he said candidly. "But you do it anyway. It took seven weeks to be comfortable on 'Sky/Ground.' Getting by as an artist is not easy."

To his critics, who claim his works are signs and not murals, Rigo said: "I don't mind criticisms. I like it when people see my work in an urban environment. I don't want them to ignore it. I'd rather they look at it and say, 'What the hell is this?'" ■

PHOTOS: LENNY LIMJOCO



Rigo produced "Birds and Cars" with his patron Sam Haskins, who also made "Truth" possible.



"One Tree" is an artistic one-liner, like Warhol's Campbell Soup can — but with a living thing a significant part of the art.