

SF local-hiring bill turns blind eye to Peninsula

By Gina Papan

More often than not, legislation is crafted with the best of intentions. As elected officials, we all have responsibilities to protect the people we serve and to enhance the economic and social health of our municipalities, counties and the region as a whole. Having the best of intentions, however, is not a substitute for meaningful, well-thought-out policy.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors recently passed an ordinance to establish a local-hiring policy for city public works projects that are paid for with taxpayer dollars. The ordinance requires contractors and their subcontractors to perform certain percentages of project work hours using San Francisco residents. While I wholeheartedly support providing opportunities to local residents and increasing apprenticeship programs to individuals in order to develop the skills necessary to gain full-time employment, this legislation turns a blind eye to the seriousness of our current economic situation.

I represent the city of Millbrae, which hosts the San Francisco International Airport. San Francisco has jurisdiction over the airport; however, each county has separate rules pertaining to contracting and hiring of workers. With more than 10,000 San Mateo County residents employed at SFO, it is the county's largest employer. On average, the airport performs in excess of \$100 million in capital improvement projects annually. These public works projects provide a significant amount of jobs for Peninsula residents. For example, in April the airport will complete the renovation of Terminal 2 and is working towards building a new air traffic control tower. These projects not only benefit public safety and

modernize our airport, they put people back to work.

To the author of this bill, Supervisor John Avalos, I pose a number of questions I suggest you consider before passing legislation on its second reading this coming Tuesday: Does San Francisco have enough people trained and prepared to take on these jobs? What happens to the many trained workers who live on the Peninsula with experience to do this work? Will progress and development be stymied; will well-trained contractors on the Peninsula be overlooked while San Francisco takes the time to train an adequate amount of workers to complete these important projects? Finally, will workers be mandated to take BART or other methods of public transportation to travel to the work site, or will additional cars be added to our already congested freeways which will increase carbon emissions?

These are the questions to be asked when developing legislation that impacts the entire Bay Area. It is our responsibility as public servants to reach out to our partners and ensure everyone has a seat at the table. San Francisco officials need to reach out to neighboring cities and counties when trying to establish public policy that affects the region.

I agree that contractors and subcontractors need to work towards providing opportunities for local residents on all public works projects. We should put systems in place that provide incentives to companies who hire locally and invest resources to train our next generation of workers. Yet San Francisco's legislation is not thoughtful, not inclusive and outright arrogant.

While this legislation was passed this week, there is still an opportunity to do the right thing. I call on
Supervisor

Avalos to exempt the San Francisco International Airport and potentially other parcels outside of the city limits. This legislation should ensure that we are not creating another layer of governmental bureaucracy that will stifle economic growth on projects that fuel our economy.

Prior to Tuesday, it is my hope that we can find a solution that promotes local hiring, does not create unnecessary bureaucracy, and protects the jobs of individuals who live in other municipalities who also have mortgages to pay and families to feed. If our call goes unheard, I urge Mayor Gavin Newsom to do the right thing and veto this legislation.

The goal of hiring local residents is admirable and one we should work on together. I will gladly offer my services and ask other elected officials, building trades' representatives, contractors, subcontractors and community leaders to come together to craft a policy that makes sense. I believe during these challenging times that the public does not want San Francisco working against the greater interests of the region. We need to work collaboratively to provide working opportunities without creating unnecessary bureaucratic barriers that are an impediment to economic growth.



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