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Shinn has also made himself available at Coffee with the Mayor, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Panama Bay Coffee at Todos Santos Plaza.

"Bill Shinn's support to the downtown as council member and now as mayor has been much appreciated by the downtown businesses," Weiss added.

One of Shinn's focal points is his strong opinion about the state of the city.

"People come before the council and say: 'What are you guys doing? This town is going downhill,'" he reported. "While you might not want to listen to that, you have to as a public official. I don't accept that the city is going downhill, because I get around the neighborhoods as much as the next person and probably more than most. Do we have our problems? Yes. Do we have areas we can improve upon? Yes. And does the council always agree? No."

Shinn recognizes that there are complexities to running the city that are not always positive, although he believes that his role, and that of the City Council, is to put things into action rather than just plan.

"I measure things by problem solving using a set of criteria. Is it the right thing to do? Is it legal? Can we afford it?"

Looking at the bottom line

Concord has a balanced budget, in part due to strategic planning that projects out a decade in order to meet goals. Because of this policy, there are few surprises that cannot be accommodated, although there are limitations on how the process takes shape. For example, 10 positions will have to be eliminated in the next few years to balance the budget.

"I'm not into visions," Shinn noted. "People use visions too much. What I do is problem solving. I always look for opportunities to create something that way. These 10 positions will be eliminated from the books so that we can balance the budget."

With an approximate \$80 million budget, Concord has a Rainy-Day Fund from which to draw during times of economic slowdown. With a decline in sales tax revenues, the city has dipped into that fund.

"We kept the fund at about 20 percent," said Shinn. "It's now at almost 18 percent, so unlike other cities, we have not depleted our reserves. What we hope to do is replenish it when the economy swings back up."

Shinn also is chair of the county Parole Board. And he is Animal

Services' hearing officer, making recommendations on dangerous animals that may need to be euthanized. He has held 50 hearings since 2003.



COUNCILMEMBERS MARK PETERSON AND LAURA HOFFMEISTER STAND BESIDE MAYOR BILL SHINN as he accepts the Key to Infineon Raceway from Frank Gullum

Shinn has been part of the Mental Health Commission, acting as a law enforcement liaison as well as the Council for Homelessness, a huge issue that Shinn believes Concordians have trouble accepting.

"Regionally, we have about 15,000 people who are homeless," Shinn said. "Most are really seeking shelter. However, a small percentage, like the ones we saw in Baldwin Park, have substance abuse issues, mental illness or a combination and those cause problems for the police."

Recently, the city cleared out the Baldwin Park homeless by adjusting the sprinkler systems to saturate the grassy areas and by increasing the police presence. With the closure of a shelter that was serving meals, the park is no longer a focal point for those people.

Shinn does not like the perception that the police don't care about those they serve.

"In 2006, of the 1,400 people taken to the Contra Costa Crisis Center, less than 1 percent resulted in an injury from a confrontation," Shinn reported. "In December 2006 and October 2007, we had Homeless Connect. About 400 people were contacted and put in touch with services that could help them. We are set to do another one in Antioch in August."

Shinn, a retiree, contemplates his future. "There are days I wake up and say: 'Do I really need this?' It's been a good experience and if I do it again I'll be 71 when it's done, which is enough to figure out if I can play some more golf or something."

Shinn's next Open Offices will be 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday, June 3, and Wednesday, July 2, at the Concord Civic Center, 1950 Parkside Dr. Residents are asked to make an appointment by calling City Council Assistant Mary Nakamura at (925) 671-3158 during business hours.

New local band unconcerned with the secrets of success

By Genie Tjahjadi
The Concordian

When Matt Critchfield and Steven Salka decided to start a "screamo" band, they had no idea just how far they would go.

To Whom It May Concern began this past January and has already made a name as a rising star in the Bay Area. The band features ear-catching melodies and sounds that resonate with heartfelt passion.

In five months, the band has recorded a five-song demo and sailed easily into the semifinals of the May Bay Area High School Battle of the Bands. There, they were met with amazing audience response despite the fact that they did not continue on to the finals.

Their youth is an advantage. The members of To Whom It May Concern are lively and ambitious and have not even begun to tap into their full potential. As a small local band, they have truly started at the bottom of the ladder and have nowhere to go but up.

In addition to Critchfield and Salka of Concord High, the band includes

Riley Olacsi and John Falchetta from Clayton Valley, Mike Jenson from Freedom High and Ed Acua. Lloyd Ratalasky, a Northgate alum, occasionally joins the band as a vocalist.

"We all clicked instantly," Critchfield says talking about the band's humble beginnings.

Group members met each other in places like the Guitar Center and Clayton Valley Bowl.

"Not only are we friends," Falchetta says, "we're like family. I mean, I think I'm wearing

Matt's pants right now; we even wear each other's clothes!"

Their influences are vast, from rap artists like Eminem to "screamo" bands like Scary Kids Scaring Kids.

To Whom It May Concern has everything needed to succeed: great relationships, musical ability, charisma, personality and an ever-growing fan base.

But here's a warning to the band's female fans: "None of us are single," says Ratalasky. "We're all taken by beautiful girls."

To learn more about To Whom It May Concern, visit www.bandsofthebay.com/



Photo courtesy of TWIMC
TWIMC received one of the strongest audience responses at Battle of the Bands.

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With the EIS, the plan can be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to identify how the needs of the homeless can be accommodated.

At the end of the initial process, a final Environmental Impact Report will be published for review and comment during a minimum period of 45 days. The city's Community Advisory Committee will hold hearings and recommend an action plan to certify the EIR and approve the Reuse Plan to the City Council.

Wright expects about four years to pass before construction begins, assuming minimal delays. "This is not a fast process," he said.

According to Wright, the city probably will not own the property. It will likely be assigned to other agencies such as the East Bay Regional Park District and private developers.

"We can, however, put restrictions on how the process takes shape before the developers are allowed to place their bids with the Navy," Wright said. "Of course, there will be some flexibility built in."

In the meantime, Community Workshops will be held throughout the summer – 9 a.m.-noon June 14, Aug. 2 and Sept. 3 at the Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle. Additional information on the meetings and the project can be found at www.concordreuseproject.org.