DAILY REVIEW:

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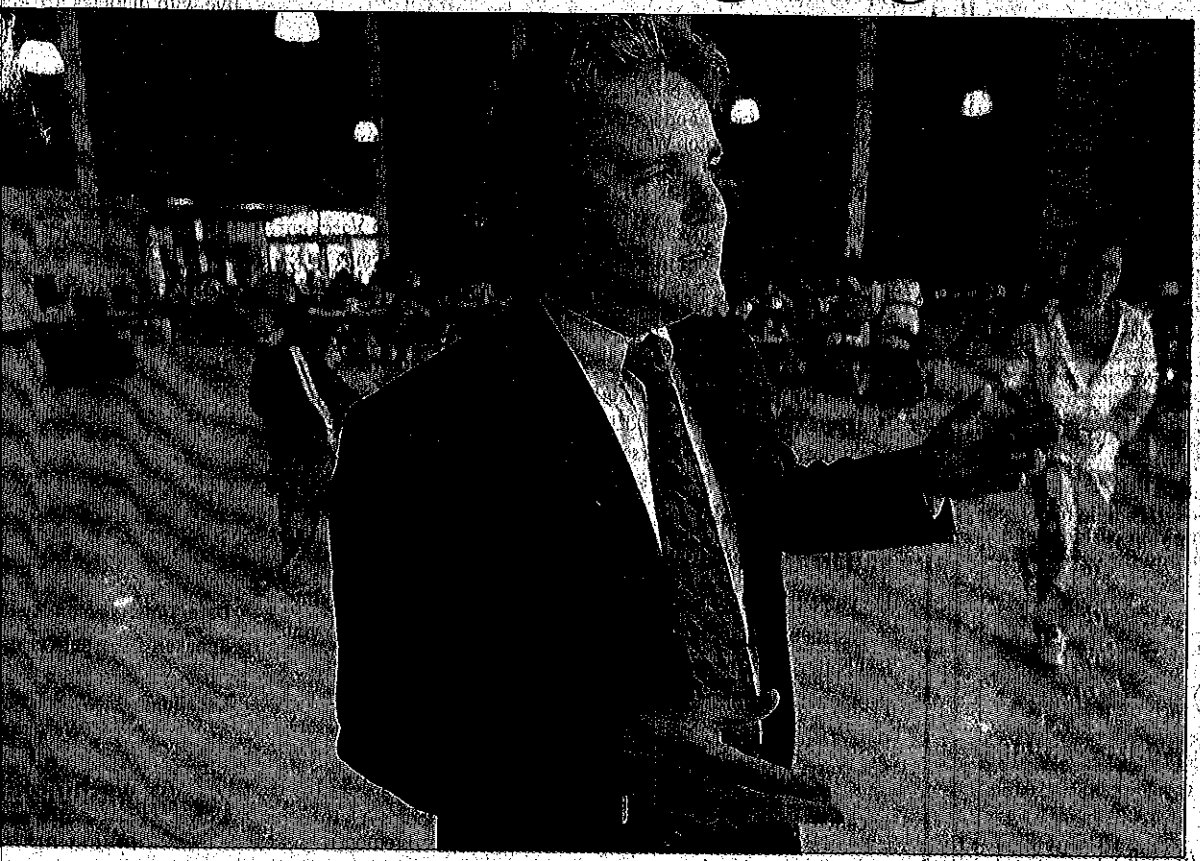
LOCAL NEWS

ELECTION 2010

Hayward candidate giving it the ol' college try



ARIC CRABB/STAFF

There's nothing for young people to do in Hayward. We need something that the youth can say is theirs," says Chabot College student Ryan Belden, who is a write-in candidate for mayor.

Chabot student seeking election to mayor's office as a write-in candidate

By Eric Kurhi
(ekurhi@bayareanewsgroup.com)

HAYWARD — Chabot College student Ryan Belden acknowledges that as a write-in candidate, he's a long shot in the race for mayor against incumbent Mike Sweeney.

But that doesn't mean the 24-year-old self-described politics addict thinks he has no chance at all.

"If you are in a race that you don't think you can win, you shouldn't be running in the first place," he said.

Belden said he decided to make a run because of something that happened while he was canvassing a Newark neighborhood for Assembly District 20 candidate Bob Wieckowski.

"One guy asked me where I was from, and I said Hayward," said Belden. "He said 'Have you invested in a bulletproof vest? Hayward is turning into Oakland Jr.' He told me that that's what people think of Hayward."

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Belden

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Belden said he's "not OK with that image" and wants to try to do something to change it.

"(Mayor Sweeney) is a really good guy, don't get me wrong," he said. "But I think it's time for new leadership."

Belden said that he's more in touch with youth and that since much of the violence that gives Hayward a bad reputation is youth-related, he would be more adept at tackling the issue.

"There's nothing for young people to do in Hayward," he said. "There used to be the bowling alley, but now there's nothing. We need something that the youth can say is theirs."

He said a youth center with various activities, properly supervised, would be a boon for the city and something he would push for.

Belden said that while he doesn't like the term "career politician," he sees himself pursuing other seats down the road.

"I prefer the term 'career leader,'" he said. "I can see myself in city government, and above that there's change needed on a state level. From there, national. Who knows? Maybe even president. Options are out there when you start young."

While it's rare for a write-in candidate to get elected, it does happen.

"The most notable write-in candidate in recent history was Gerald McNerney, who won the Democratic primary for the 11th Congressional District as a write-in candidate in March 2004," said Guy Ashley of the Alameda County Registrar of Voters. "He then went on to beat incumbent Richard Pombo, a Republican, in the November 2004 general election. McNerney still holds the seat."

Eric Kurhi covers Hayward. Contact him at 510-293-2473. Follow him at Twitter.com/erickurhi.