

## City must get its act together over mall plan

Fidelis CEO Alan Hassenflu thought it was a night to celebrate when he came before City Council to announce plans to officially re-start the San Jacinto Mall redevelopment after securing the property rights to longtime hold-outs Macy's and JCPenney.

It should have been, but some on council took the occasion to lodge complaints and unfounded accusations at the developer and the plan. Some on council said they do not trust the developer, others were frustrated by the delays, another demanded "to get what we want" or nothing, and others said the plan was not ideal.

Before council's verbal onslaught, Hassenflu explained how the plan — six years in the making — complies with the city's requirements and/or desires for restaurant space, retail space and more.

Clearly, there's a disconnect. City staff, council and Fidelis are not on the same page and still a ways apart.

The unnecessary vitriol isn't productive. Fidelis deserves better than to be left wondering if this major project will be allowed to go forward.

Is not working with Fidelis worth keeping the mall in its current condition at the city's front door?

Yes, the city has spent \$8.5 million on the mall so far with little show for it, but all the ingredients for a successful resurrection are present: Ideal location, a growing population and regional job creation equals more shopping, more spending.

The redevelopment of the decaying San Jacinto Mall is one of Baytown's most pressing civic issues. Instead of knee-jerk complaints and grandstanding, council members must take clear — and public — positions on where they stand on mall development plans.

The final two stores at the mall will close in February and March, and then those buildings will be demolished.

A new deal must be completed ahead of that so that work can begin promptly.

Baytown has a golden opportunity with a major developer (the owner of the mall) to redevelop the mall site. This is their expertise, as they have accomplished upscale redevelopments at other mall sites.

But, as with anything, there may be areas where we need to compromise, but rather than rejecting the entire project because it doesn't meet everyone's exact specifications or desires.

To us, working with Fidelis is our best chance to attract the investment to turn the mall site into a vibrant economic center again. Don't mess it up, Baytown.

— David Bloom

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Believe me now?

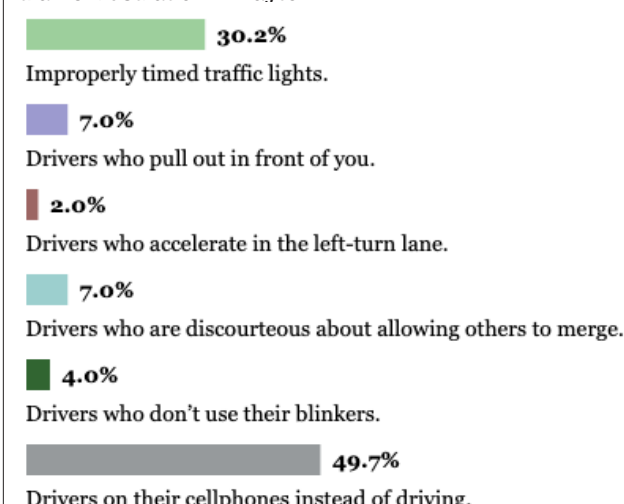
I recently quoted a Rasmussen and ABC poll that said one in six Democrats would change their vote if the presidential election was held today and I was chastised by the Democratic town crier as not being true. The state of Virginia just turned red. Looks like the poll was indeed wrong and it's more than one in six. Looks like Virginia doesn't like critical race theory, high gasoline prices, higher crime rates, illegal immigrants, abandoning Americans in Afghanistan and out of control spending.

Joke Biden continues to embarrass the American people on the world stage by falling asleep at the climate summit. Biden's push to reduce fossil fuels in the U.S. now calls on OPEC to ramp up production when we were energy independent just 10 months ago tells you all you need to know about Democratic social policies.

Raymond Martin  
Mont Belvieu

## Baytown Sun Weekly Survey

Last week, readers were asked, "What is your biggest traffic frustration in Baytown?"



This week's question: "Do you plan to holiday shop early this year?" Respond at [www.baytownsun.com](http://www.baytownsun.com) If you have a suggestion for a future question, please send it to [david.bloom@baytownsun.com](mailto:david.bloom@baytownsun.com).

## When West League met Monterrey

By the way, the Atlanta Braves won the World Series and the Houston Astros lost. "Don't remind us," say Astro fans.

Understood: End of discussion about the Major League World Series in 2021. So, how about the Little League World Series in 1957? Longtime local fans may remember that Hap Marshall's West League All Stars -- in a state playoff game in Fort Worth -- came nail-biting, heart-stopping close to beating a team that went on to win the Little League World Series. Baytown was the only team that had forced Monterrey into extra innings.

Of course, the Ortons "just happened" to be in Fort Worth for the Monterrey game. Skeeter, who managed the Rotary Cubs, had two players on the All Star team -- George Ferguson III and Johnny Peet -- but he wouldn't have missed the game anyway. Publisher Fred Hartman knew we would be going to Fort Worth (he knew Skeeter) so he assigned me to cover the game.

Here's my first (and last) attempt at sports writing:

"It's all over now except for memories of the Little League state playoff with Monterrey, Mexico.



WANDA ORTON

Hap Marshall's All Stars were about to call it quits in the last inning with Monterrey leading 4-3.

But George cured that. Like all other players on his team, he didn't give up easily. He hit a homer and tied up the score 4-4. That meant going into extra innings. Final score turned out 6-4 in Monterrey's favor, but the South of the Border boys had to put up one big fight. In all other playoff games Monterrey has mauled their opponents.

"The behind-the-scenes story of Baytown's Little League team could be found that night at their motel. Players and their parents all were sick at heart -- sure. No one likes to lose. But there was more talk about the prowess of the Monterrey team than any moaning and groaning. "... Mrs. M.O. Parker, mother of

the ace pitcher Kenneth Parker, said the family vacation will be Little League. They will cheer Monterrey in Louisville and also will see the national game at that hallowed mound in Williamsport, Pa.

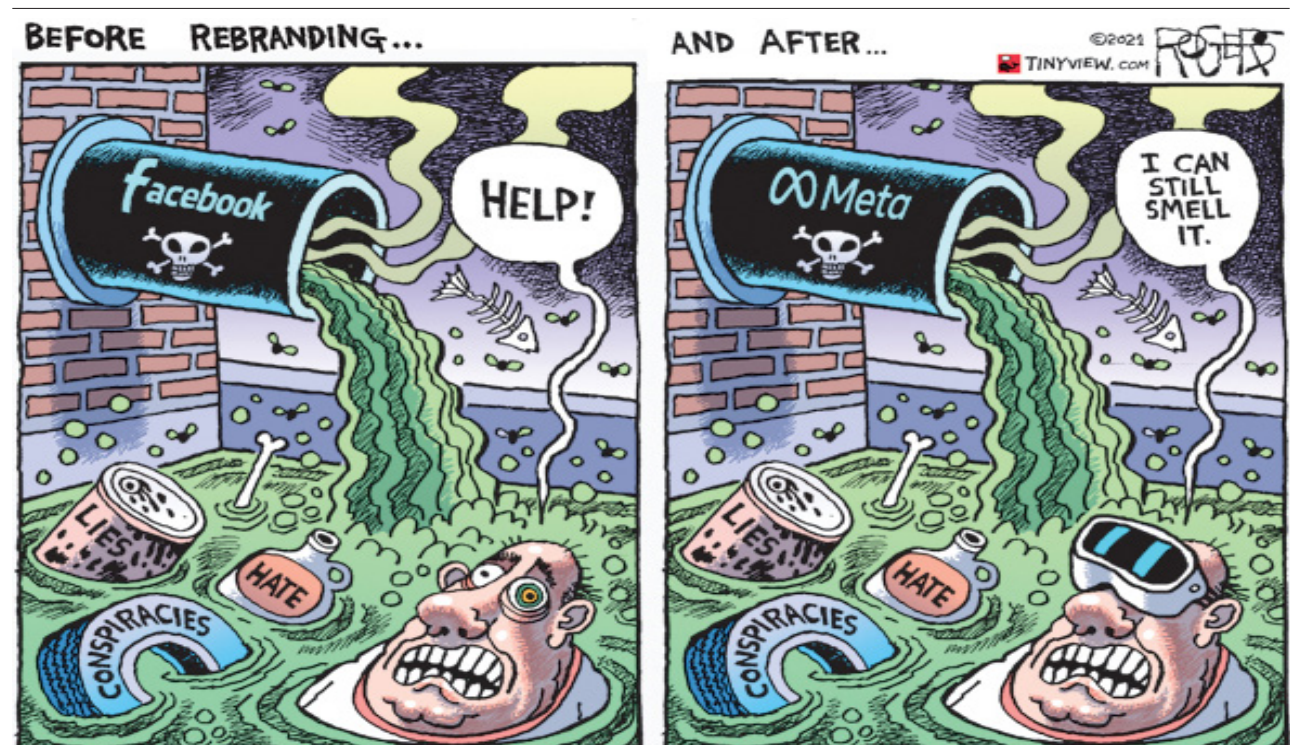
"Mrs. Ferguson's career as a Little League mother isn't over yet although 12-year-old George graduates from the team this season. Her son Larry follows in his footsteps on the Rotary Cubs team. And the youngest son Tommy probably will come along on the team in a few more years.

"The Fergusons are a baseball family. The man of the house is a Little League official and often helps with the team.

"Once when George was trying to round up fellow Cubs for a practice game, he was having trouble getting them to come out. 'That's all right,' he told his mother. 'If they want to sit around and play paper dolls, OK. I want to play ball.'

"And he did play ball in that homerun against one of the toughest little teams on this continent."

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## The great Fats Domino left many memories

(DISCERNING READER ALERT: This column was first published on Nov. 5, 2017.)

If you're my age (slightly past 55), listen while I sing you a song. You'll dig it. Ready:

"I want to walk you home/Please let me walk you home/I want to walk you home/You look so good to me, oh-oo-ee/I wish I was the lucky guy who could walk you right on down the aisle."

I could go on, but I don't sing as well as the great (now late) Fats Domino, who died last week at age 89. (I'm close but he's a little better.)

No one -- and I mean NO ONE -- could sing like Fats. He was the absolute best.

That's why some years back when I was selected (I selected myself) to pick the greatest singer of all-time, Fats was my choice. He finished ahead of No. 2 Elvis and No. 3 Dean Martin.

I make no apologies. If Fats ever sang a bad song, I didn't hear it, and neither did my Sweeny Bulldog classmates. We loved the Fat Man.

All these years later, I still remember his great songs (and pretty much all the words). Like: "Ain't That A Shame," "I Want To Walk You Home," "Blue Monday," "I Hear You Knocking," "My Blue Heaven," and "Blueberry Hill."

Plus many, many more. (Editorial Comment: Compare those to today's musical claptrap.)

In the 1950s and early '60s, Fats sold some 65 million "records" and



JIM FINLEY

rung up 23 Gold Record awards for songs that sold a million-plus each. He was that good.

(NON-EDITOR'S NOTE: We didn't know what musical tape cassettes or discs were back then because they didn't exist. We bought vinyl records.) A lot of the songs he sang hit home with we teen hunks. Take Blue Monday, for instance.

This was a song about having to get up and go to work on Monday. Work was something many teenyboppers tried to avoid, if at all possible. Listen:

"Blue Monday how I hate Blue Monday/Got to work like a slave all day/Here come Tuesday, oh hard Tuesday/I'm so tired got no time to play/Here come Wednesday, I'm beat to my socks/My gal calls, got to tell her that I'm out/Cause Thursday is hard workin' day/And Friday I get my pay."

Fortunately, Fats recovers for a fun weekend: "Sunday morning my head is bad/ But it's worth it for the time that I had/But I've got to get my rest/Cause Monday is a mess." Great lyrics, huh?

My most memorable Fats song, however, was "Valley Of Tears" (Goggle it). And for a heartbreaking reason. It starts like this:

"I want you to take me where I belong/Where hearts has been broken with a kiss and a song/Spend the rest

of my days without any care/Everyone understands me in the Valley Of Tears."

As I've written before, in May 1957 we took what was called our Senior Trip to Garner State Park. We arrived in late afternoon.

That night we danced at the outdoor pavilion along the Frio River. One of the songs played over and over was Valley Of Tears.

Sure it was kinda sad and not the usual rockin' music we were used to from Fats. Still, IT WAS Fats Domino, and, hey, you could slow dance with a real girl. Yea!

But the song was about to smack us in the mouth. Hard.

The next day one of our classmates, Jerry Massey, drowned in the Frio. And amidst the tears and sadness, I couldn't shake the words from Valley Of Tears.

I suspect I wasn't alone. No, I know I wasn't alone.

So Fats had a direct effect on our young lives. Not one that we wanted, understand, but nonetheless one that remains indelible in our collective memories 60 years later.

Perhaps my great friend and Bulldog classmate Billye Rose Chafin put it best in an email she sent me upon learning of Fats' death. I quote: "Sad day for those of us that love real music. Ain't That A Shame."

I can't top that.

I loved you, Fats Domino.

Jim Finley is a retired managing editor of The Sun. He can be reached at [viewpoints@baytownsun.com](mailto:viewpoints@baytownsun.com), Attention: Jim Finley.

#### On this date:

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt won an unprecedented fourth term in office, defeating Republican Thomas E. Dewey.

In 1967, Carl Stokes was elected the first Black mayor of a major city -- Cleveland, Ohio.

#### TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1972, President Richard Nixon was re-elected in a landslide over Democrat George McGovern.

In 1989, L. Douglas Wilder won the governor's race in Virginia, becoming the first elected Black governor in U.S. his-

tory; David N. Dinkins was elected New York City's first Black mayor.

In 2013, shares of Twitter went on sale to the public for the first time; by the closing bell, the social network was valued at \$31 billion.

One year ago: Democrat Joe Biden clinched victory over President Donald

Trump as a win in Pennsylvania pushed Biden over the threshold of 270 Electoral College votes; the victory followed more than three days of uncertainty as election officials sorted through a surge of mail-in ballots. Trump refused to concede, threatening further legal action on baseless fraud claims and ballot counting.

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