

Center for Investigative Reporting, The Bay Citizen Announce a Joint Memorandum of Understanding to Pursue Merger

Combination will provide highest quality nonprofit journalism and investigative reporting locally, regionally, and globally

BERKELEY, CA and SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2012 – The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) and the Bay Area News Project (BANP), which operates The Bay Citizen, announced today that they have entered into a memorandum of understanding to pursue a potential merger. The agreement was unanimously approved by the boards of directors of both nonprofit organizations.

The conceived merger will bring together The Bay Citizen, an award-winning nonprofit news organization focused on covering the San Francisco and Bay Area, and CIR, the nation's oldest nonprofit investigative news organization, which operates California Watch. The merger will create a more sustainable foundation for their shared missions: to provide high-quality journalism that is essential to an informed and engaged democracy. The proposed merger will bring together the collective expertise, reputations, and innovative talents of both organizations.

A transition team comprised of members of both organizations will conduct a thoughtful, thorough review process and will make recommendations about integration, which will be subject to approval by both boards.

The combined organization will have a board of directors that will include an equal number of voting members from both of the current Boards. Phil Bronstein, current President of the CIR Board, will serve as the Executive Chair of the merged organization and Robert J. Rosenthal, Executive Director of CIR, will be the Executive Director of the merged entity.

Rosenthal will be in charge of editorial and overall strategies and will be responsible for its day-to-day operations. Bronstein also will focus on overall strategy, as well as audience engagement, board functions, fundraising and overseeing a variety of approaches to support the nonprofit.

Together, Bronstein and Rosenthal will work with the Board and the merged organization to assure that it is at the forefront of creating unique, high-quality accountability journalism on multiple platforms. A crucial focus of the strategy will be to engage the Bay Area community in the organization's new form of accountability journalism.

"This is an opportunity to take accountability journalism to an even higher level," said Rosenthal. "We will now be able to combine all the strengths of CIR and The Bay Citizen and have an outstanding team of journalists focused on the Bay Area. With California Watch, CIR does stories that have made a difference in the lives of people throughout California. We bring CIR stories to national and international audiences. The Bay Citizen has brought voice to local politics, community issues, and Bay Area news in an innovative manner. We will now be able to bring our combined strategies for engagement and accountability journalism to a region of the country that can best embrace it. Because it's the Bay Area, stories we do here will be of interest

to audiences across the country and around the world.”

The Bay Citizen is a nonprofit, nonpartisan member-supported news organization that provides in-depth original reporting on Bay Area issues including public policy, education, the arts and cultural affairs, health and science, the environment, and more, online at baycitizen.org as well as in print in The New York Times Bay Area report on Fridays and Sundays.

Phil Bronstein, said, “I've been a journalist in the Bay Area my entire adult life and have deep roots and affection for the extraordinary and unique culture here. There is more innovation, activism, and civic involvement in this region than anywhere in the country. This is the basis for engaging people where we all live. With our unified nonprofit model, we can bring together combined talent, technology, investigative power and creative skills to serve the public in dynamic ways.”

Jeffrey Ubben, Chair of the Board of The Bay Citizen, expressed his support for the new entity. “The Bay Citizen and the Center for Investigative Reporting are each stellar news organizations. We look forward to working out the details and joining forces. Together, we will draw on the vision and talents of each of our high-caliber staffs, and ultimately become stronger and more effective than the sum of our parts. This merger bodes well for an informed and engaged Bay Area.”

Brian Kelley, Interim CEO of The Bay Citizen, acknowledged the recent transitions in leadership preceding this announcement. “The Bay Citizen was the vision of the late civic leader, Warren Hellman. He appointed Lisa Frazier, who in less than three years catapulted the organization from an idea to an award-winning news force. This new direction builds on the creative and generous initiative of Mr. Hellman and the excellent execution by Ms. Frazier.”

“The Bay Citizen was started as an experiment in journalism,” said Susan Hirsch, a founding member of The Bay Citizen’s Board of Directors and the philanthropic advisor to the late Warren Hellman. “My earliest discussion with Warren centered on the need to find innovative and creative ways to investigate and report the news. We believe the future of the free press is to be found in collaboration and cooperation between news outlets with differing strengths and this belief has led us to discussions with the Center for Investigative Reporting. From the beginning, The Bay Citizen has been committed to high quality journalism, progressive use of technology, and a strong business model. This potential merger is another step on that path.”

The transition team plans to spend approximately 30 days working out the details of the merged entity, including staffing, board membership, and location(s). The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions, including notifying the California Attorney General.

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About the Center for Investigative Reporting

Founded in 1977, the Center for Investigative Reporting is the nation's oldest nonprofit investigative news organization, producing unique, high-quality reporting that has impact and is relevant to people's lives. CIR’s newest venture, California Watch, is the largest investigative

team in the state. The organization's stories appear in hundreds of news outlets including NPR News, PBS Frontline, PBS NEWSHOUR, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, Washington Post, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Sacramento Bee, The Daily Beast, MinnPost and American Public Media's Marketplace. CIR stories have received numerous journalism awards including the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Silver Baton, George Polk Award, Emmy Award, and Investigative Reporters and Editors Award. Its reports have sparked state and federal hearings and legislation, United Nations resolutions, public interest lawsuits and changes in corporate policies. For more information, please visit www.centerforinvestigativereporting.org and www.californiawatch.org.

About The Bay Citizen

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