



From the President

JEFFREY WRIGHT

I RECENTLY heard from my grandfather, well not literally, inasmuch as he died in 1994, but more in the form of his past words “speaking” and resonating with me. We once had a conversation about his commute from his home on Potrero Avenue in Richmond to his job at Pabco in Emeryville. During our conversation, he sternly told me “In the 30 years that I worked at Pabco I was never late to work and that includes flat tires and all.” He then went on to say, “if you start on time, you’ll be on time.” He made it clear to me that he always built in a margin of time to deal with the unexpected and that he had a contingency plan in place. His manner of thinking and planning was solid.

On Monday, July 19th, I had a dental appointment at 11 a.m. in Pinole. Time was getting away from me and at 10:48 I exited my house and chose my 1990 Mercedes 190e 2.6 because it is a zippy little reliable car even though it has some miles and age on it. I fired up the car, dashed down the hill and proceeded to get on the freeway marveling at the peppiness of that little old car, and the growing rate of speed on my speedometer, all while glancing frequently in my rear-view mirror. I exited at Appian Way, turned left, and proceeded to the left turn lanes for Tara Hills Drive. I was

■ See *From the President*, page 7



City Hall is open again
9-1 Mon.-Thurs.

John C. Stashik

Getting Back to the Avenue

BY MAYOR PAUL FADELLI

NOW THAT El Cerrito has gotten through a tough budget year and we’ve hopefully seen progress on COVID-19, it’s time to finally turn our attention to the center and heart of our community — San Pablo Avenue — and begin assisting and enhancing our businesses and developments so we can improve our city and our long-term financial sustainability.



On June 22, the City Council passed a balanced budget with a small surplus and no new taxes. But we are far from out of the woods financially. Even with major new directives passed by Council to get us back on track, our city needs to make important long-term structural changes and refocus on ways to bring revenue to our city coffers.

That means we need to literally look up and down our major thoroughfare and around our two BART stations to see where we can help — by assisting planned developments, helping the businesses who barely survived the pandemic, seek new retail or other businesses that can fill newly vacant properties, and spend time and get the community involved to plan for significant new growth that will enhance our city.

There are a variety of things we can do and be aware of to ignite greater economic development. I’d love to hear more ideas in the coming months, but here are few things that businesses, our city and residents can do to jump start our lagging economic development:

- Assist our local businesses, landlords and tenants in the post-COVID-19 environment by providing information on state and federal financial assistance. Aissia Ashoori of city staff is available to discuss grants that are available; contact her at AAshoori@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us (510-215-4361).
- Work to shore up our city permitting process so critical improvements and changes needed by businesses can proceed in a timely fashion.
- Encourage local residents to buy local. A new program established by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, **I ♥ El Cerrito** (elcerritochamber.org/shop-local),

■ See *Back to the Avenue*, page 2

**Welcome
New Members**

Bay Area Rapid Transit
bart.gov

Quad Republic Skate Co.
New Location:
10036 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito
415-960-QUAD
quadpublicskateco.com



Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK

MEET THE Mayor on Thursday, August 19th. Paul Fadelli will be at the El Cerrito Natural Grocery Annex between 9 and 11 a.m. He's there to talk with constituents, so stop by.

On Thursday, August 5th, City Council member Tessa Rudnick will have a meet, drink, and greet, at the Little Hill Lounge from 6 to 8 p.m. That's at 10753 San Pablo Avenue.

□



John C. Stashik

New on Stockton. A neighborhood space to work, meet, and create, Juku is open at 7019 Stockton Avenue (opposite 7-Eleven). A large room is also available for meetings. The \$8 per hour fee includes drinks, snacks, and Wi-Fi. Open Monday-Friday, 9-5. Jordan Mayer (a guy with Gaucho roots pictured above) is the general manager. Contact: info@thisisjuku.com.



John C. Stashik

Our big annual EC event. The El Cerrito Historical Society will hold a Zoom meeting on Saturday, August 21st at 4 p.m., telling the story of El Cerrito's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. parade and rally. Patricia Durham, founder of the 32-year old event, will conduct the meeting. Find Zoom login information at elcerritohistoricalsociety.org.

□

BACK TO THE AVENUE

■ Continued from page 1

seeks to encourage purchasing from local businesses in ways that improve our economic stability.

• Like the two new tax generating cannabis dispensaries opening soon on San Pablo Avenue, we should seek to find and encourage new businesses to open in this corridor where several future housing developments will be home to new residents – with new retail demands.

• Now is the time to get involved and make your voices heard on BART plans to develop the El Cerrito Plaza Station with tax-generating new housing, possible retail space and a new library. On August 17, the El Cerrito City Council will focus on this development and how best to access the station with less parking.

• Public input will be encouraged on forthcoming plans to improve San Pablo

Avenue by the city of El Cerrito, when we update the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Also, the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC), along with the Alameda County Transportation Committee (ACTC), is seeking significant public input into how San Pablo Avenue can be improved – from Oakland all the way to Hercules – in ways that will make our main thoroughfare more pedestrian-friendly and more amenable to all modes of transportation.

This is exciting stuff. El Cerrito must have an extended time for planned frugality and healing after COVID-19 and its own budgetary problems. But, as we focus on getting back on track, attending to the economic assets of San Pablo Avenue and our two BART stations can help set plans for a better economic future.

Only one left. The new Cerrito Vista apartments at Jefferson & San Pablo, a 50-unit building, has 49 apartments already leased. That's proof: El Cerrito is where people *want* to live. The ground floor commercial space is still available for lease. A nice restaurant would be the perfect fit.

□

Grand opening. The new Foot Locker store at El Cerrito Plaza, mentioned last month, has an opening date of August 20th. *Welcome to El Cerrito!* I think the store will be very popular.

□

New office. Opening this month will be New Horizon Real Estate at Bank of the West Plaza, 11100 San Pablo Ave. Reach broker Alice Chan at 510-710-7718.

□

Delay. The 514 Lounge, that great little bar at 11236 San Pablo Ave., really wants to reopen. But they've got to deal with some mechanical issues first (to keep the beer cold). So be patient.

□

Also delayed. The Bishop Center cannabis shop (Conlon and San Pablo) to be known as NUG is *still* under construction. Not sure of what's happening but I have an approval letter signed by City Manager Scott Hanin dated September 19, 2018! Pace yourself folks.

□



John C. Stashik

Off to rehab. El Cerrito Fire rigs get a lot of use and our community depends on the equipment and the firefighters who man that equipment 24 hours every single day. So when Engine 71 takes a ride on a flatbed tow, it's an unusual sight; photo worthy for sure. A 27-year old reserve engine filled in during repairs and no alarms were missed. Fire apparatus gets very good care but doesn't last forever. A replacement plan is on the minds of those in charge of such things. Engine 71 was manufactured in 2006.

□

Phone trouble? A new business known as Insta Fix can repair all smart phones. The store is at 10572 San Pablo Ave., at the Moeser Square Center, nearby Copy Central. Call them 510-705-1762 (if your phone works).

□

■ See Past Prez Palaver, page 3

Mixing In-Person Once Again

WHILE WE aren't out of the COVID-19 woods yet, cautiously we are embracing a wider range of daily activities. As a chamber, in July, we started venturing into in-person activities, all outdoor ones, of course!

We were invited to participate in a "mega mixer" organized by the Bayfront Chamber at the Old Homestead, a California, a historical landmark in Crockett constructed in 1867 and carefully looked after by the Carquinez Women's Club. With a number of local chambers, we had a lively evening of sharing, reconnecting as peers, and with local businesses.

Thanks to the San Francisco Bay Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, we even had an event photographer, a gift that

captured many special moments and even a group shot!

On a Saturday morning at El Cerrito Plaza, we welcomed Chamber member BART for community members to learn, ask questions, and provide ideas for the Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan (bart.gov/beccap). Neighbors, business owners and leaders of community groups came by and shared concerns as well as ideas for the project. Thank you to BART representatives for spending weekend time with us!

In August, we look forward to dusting off our giant scissors as new businesses open in El Cerrito. We're eager to welcome them with ribbon cutting celebrations.



Community Matters

GEORGINA EDWARDS

PAST PREZ PALAVER

■ Continued from page 2



Walk in, skate out. Our local roller skate and accessory emporium, **Quad Republic Skate Co.**, has made the move into larger quarters. 10036 San Pablo Avenue, next to **Noodles Fresh**.

□

Vitamin V. I've little time for excuses about why some people, actually a sizable number, have not had a COVID-19 vaccine. By their inaction, these selfish, ignorant folks mess up life for the rest of us. I am eager to get the hell out of Dodge and enjoy life but now there is a Delta variant to fret over. Get the damn shot. Maybe the vaccine could be mixed into a Bloody Mary cocktail that people would happily pour down their throats. Then, problem solved. Cheers.

□

Elections. Chamber elections, that is. Every October a nominating committee develops a slate of candidates for Board of Director seats. It's not too early to bring up the subject. Those director positions are for a two year term. Officers serve for one year and are chosen from the elected directors. If any member has an interest in being a director, say so now. As with everything in life, what you get out of it is based on the effort you put in. Give it a try.

Just An Opinion...



John C. Sraehnik

Not the most inviting showroom for a Benz. At times this Broadway dealership on Oakland's fading Auto Row has been in a war zone with unruly mobs trashing both the building and inventory. Here's an idea: see if the firm would like to relocate to El Cerrito. Honda is absolutely great, for sure, but another automobile dealership would complement Honda and help the City as well. Where to put it? Try convincing the owners of the blight known as OSH to actually improve their property.

Finally, Open for Business



Uma Huang

El Cerrito City Hall opened to the public on July 6th for the first time since March 2020. Plastic barriers help keep both employees and customers safe.

Mike Branagh and Mayor Paul Fadelli Make the Cut



Photos: John C. Sushnik



THE OFFICIAL ribbon cutting at Credence was held on July 28th by Branagh Development for their new building at Eureka and San Pablo. Attending a delicious outdoor lunch were members of the City Council, Chamber representatives, and Branagh officials and guests, plus some new owners.

At this time 11 out of 32 residences have been sold. Flats and Townhomes in 2- and 3-bedroom plans are offered plus two 2-bedroom live-work units on the first floor.

In Real Life, Chamber Mixers Have Made a Comeback

BY GEORGINA EDWARDS

WHILE virtual gatherings have been in vogue thanks to a certain persistent pandemic, we human networking types know there's nothing better (or more fun!) than having conversations IRL ("in real life").

Thanks to gracious hosting by El Mono, we had our first live Chamber mixer on June 29th. Of course, the food and drinks were delectable (have you had the ceviche?) and the company was divine (a few drinks make just about everyone angelic).

Leaders from other nearby chambers showed up in support and to "take the temperature" as they plan their own re-emergence into live events. We were happy to see many members and local business folks, all pleased to have a chance to share happenings and ideas.

Next: August 25th at Elevation 66.



Georgina Edwards

Drake Zinns of Golden Road, Inc., Chamber president Jeffrey Wright, and Aissia Ashoori, Chamber secretary and Affordable Housing Analyst for the City of El Cerrito mix at El Mono.

Olivero Plumbing: 70 Years Young



On July 16th the Olivero Plumbing team received a special Mayoral Certificate of Recognition for building and serving El Cerrito the past 70 years. Gathered at the company office (left to right): David Olivero, Bill Halligan, Julie Blakeman, Kyle Blakeman, Steve Villata, Vince Olivero, John Olivero, Mayor Paul Fadelli, Debbie Pullin, and Jerry Olivero.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**MAYORAL CERTIFICATE
OF RECOGNITION**

in honor of El Cerrito business

Olivero Plumbing

*on the occasion of serving the El Cerrito
community for over 70 years*

Dated: July 20, 2021

Paul Fadelli
Paul Fadelli, Mayor



EL CERRITO MAYORAL CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING OLIVERO PLUMBING FOR 70 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

WHEREAS, Olivero Plumbing was established in El Cerrito in 1951, by John and Marie Olivero, having purchased the Soldavini Hardware business on San Pablo Avenue between Blake and Hill Streets; and

WHEREAS, in 1965 the Oliveros moved to their present location at 11360 San Pablo Avenue where Olivero Plumbing has continued to serve El Cerritans for the past 56 years; and

WHEREAS, Olivero Plumbing has continued to serve a wide variety of plumbing services including general service and repair on sewers, drains, water heaters, kitchen disposals, remodeling and new house plumbing installations; and

WHEREAS, some of Olivero's largest projects have been with new residential developments, such as Barrett Homes, Rose Park, and Wildwood, and at Goddard School in Brentwood, and

WHEREAS, Olivero Plumbing has ten employees, with two representing the fourth generation of the Olivero family, and

WHEREAS, Olivero Plumbing is one of the oldest members of El Cerrito's Chamber of Commerce with John Olivero serving several times on the Chamber's Board, and

WHEREAS, in 2007 the El Cerrito Economic Development Committee awarded a special recognition award for "industry achievement and contribution to the community," and

WHEREAS, the Olivero family has served this community with Olivero Plumbing for 70 years,

NOW THEREFORE, the Mayor of the City of El Cerrito salutes the Olivero family and Olivero Plumbing for seven decades of service in our city, for serving our residents in times of emergency and small and large repair in the time-honored tradition of local value and good service.



Farmers Market
AT EL CERRITO PLAZA
Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SPONSORED BY



Sugar City Mega Mixer



Group photo of attendees at the “mega mixer” held on July 13th at The Old Homestead in Crockett. A decent size crowd, no doubt happy to be out and maskless.

**Best
Beer
in
Town!**



ELEVATION 66
Brewing Company

**CHAMBER MIXER at
El Cerrito's
Own Brewpub**

Wednesday, Aug. 25th
5 p.m.

10082 San Pablo Avenue • El Cerrito, USA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

■ Continued from page 1

the lead car in the outside left turn lane and before I could make the turn, the car hesitated and went dead. I restarted the vehicle only to have it go dead again. I decided to restart, put the car in neutral, keeping one foot on the brake while revving the engine, preparing to quickly put the car in drive when the light turned green. As soon as the light turned green, I shifted the car into drive with great anticipation and once again, the car went dead and would not completely start anymore. In my haste I neglected to bring my cell phone with me, leaving me unable to call the dentist office, nor could I call AAA. I felt like a “sitting duck” with my emergency lights flashing and my left arm extended out the window motioning for the other drivers to go around. It felt like an eternity, watching the traffic signal go through its sequence of lights while sitting there unable to move.

Finally, a good Samaritan to the rescue! A gentleman pulls up behind me in a company vehicle similar to an Amazon style delivery van and offers to push me to the gas station on the corner, “provided that I wouldn’t sue him.” I graciously accepted his offer of assistance. As we entered the gas station another motorist at a gas pump came over and assisted with pushing my vehicle to a parking space. I thanked them both; truly appreciative for the help.

I then entered convenience store at the gas station and explained to the management that I would have the vehicle towed out shortly. The gentleman that I spoke to was also gracious and understanding. I then walked over to the dental office which was less than a football field away. I was 25 minutes late for my appointment and stated that I knew that I was late and that we would probably have to reschedule. The front desk made an inquiry, and I was able to be accommodated without delay.

After my dental appointment was over, I asked if I could use the phone to call my wife. She did not answer, and I left a detailed message as to my whereabouts and my need to be picked up. I then returned to my vehicle, and as luck would have it, the car started up as if there had never been a problem. I was a little too skittish to drive it on the freeway

and elected to take the streets instead, arriving back home without incident. I was also glad that I made it home before my wife retrieved my message and came to my rescue only to discover that I was not at the location that I had provided.

Fortunately, everything worked out okay for me. The takeaway and greater message is one of humanity, consideration and compassion. These are attributes that we should all possess and employ with regularity. We need each other. I needed the help of others in my moment of distress. In our everyday interactions as businesspeople, we need clients and patrons just as they need our goods and services. We should all have a degree of sensitivity and humanity as we are interacting with one another. Things are going on in peoples lives that we are not aware of.

Humanity, consideration, compassion, and small acts of kindness, can mean so much. I count the car stalling incident as a reminder for me to do better. To have a greater sense of humanity in all areas of my life with a special emphasis on my professional life.

As for the car, two days after the incident I took it to my highly skilled longtime mechanic, and thus far he has not found a mechanical problem. The next day I bought another car, but that is a story for another column. Well, it is now 12:05 a.m. on Sunday, July 25th, with a column deadline of 12 noon on Sunday, July 25th. In closing I would like to offer a little advice that I received many years ago as it pertains to planning, scheduling and timeliness, and that is: “if you start on time, you’ll be on time.”

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Byline Online
elcerritochamber.org/byline



Little Ange's Is Looking Better



Supplies funded by: @thelittlehill patrons, East Bay Paint Center.



Known as a place where El Cerrito's movers and shakers once met and took care of business, this unofficial city hall has been closed for many years. Gambling, free pouring bartenders, and a legendary "mean" steak sandwich, are part of Little Ange's lore. Eventual plans call for a brewery and housing on the site. That's in the early development stages now. Meanwhile, the drab old building on Potrero Avenue near San Pablo gets a makeover on the west wall, part of an active movement to spruce up properties around the city with art.

Meet the artist. Kat Fosse is from Oakland and will be very happy to paint a mural on your building.

Byline

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