



From the President

JEFFREY WRIGHT

LAST MONTH, my column could have been titled “If You Start on Time You’ll Be on Time.” I referenced that statement in the column as it pertained to my grandfather and the fact that he was never late to work because he built in a margin of time to deal with unexpected circumstances. I went on to explain how I was trying to get to a dental appointment, cutting it much too close, and then had a vehicle mechanical failure. Needless to say, I was late, in part because I did not start on time.

That vehicle failure also prodded me to take faster action on a plan that I already had in motion, which was to replace a vehicle with one that was bit more efficient and friendlier to the environment.

Granted, I like cars but from a practical standpoint owning too many inefficient six and eight-cylinder vehicles that guzzle gasoline is not the best example of “stewardship.” I would periodically receive notices from the DMV encouraging me to retire vehicles, so I decided to investigate all the various programs. I found one that made it worthwhile for me to retire a gas guzzling, 5.7-liter 8-cylinder, 1991 Chevy Cargo van that was basically my “go to Home Depot” special projects vehicle. It ran like a

■ See *From the President*, page 7

Welcome New Member



El Cerrito's First Cannabis Dispensary
 Open daily 8 a.m.-10 p.m.

11888 San Pablo Ave. (at Conlon)
 510-984-9201
nug.com



Courtesy of NUG

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

HISTORY WAS made on August 12, 2021, as El Cerrito's first retail cannabis dispensary opened for business. Known as NUG, the opening of this retail outlet in El Cerrito marked the culmination of five years of effort by ECWC Partners, Inc., to start a cannabis business in the city. The El Cerrito facility has 14 employees and that number can grow as business increases. Per the operating permit issued by the City in September 2018, the business provides a local-hire preference to El Cerrito residents.



City officials were invited to the opening of the store located at 11888 San Pablo Ave. (across from The Home Depot). In attendance were city manager Karen Pinkos, assistant city manager Alexandra Orologas, police chief Paul Keith, council members Gabe Quinto and Tessa Rudnick. In addition, this writer, representing the Chamber of Commerce, was also present. Co-founder and CEO Dr. John Oram and general manager Esther Montoya gave a tour of the site, explained the various products available, and discussed security measures.

In a statement, City Manager Karen Pinkos said: “We’re happy to welcome NUG as the first cannabis business in El Cerrito. I’m impressed with how the store turned out — stylish, friendly, and with many safety measures in place to create a welcoming environment. NUG has committed to being a good neighbor and community partner, and I’m looking forward to seeing their business thrive.”

Financial benefits to the City from NUG will be considerable. Their permit requires the business contribute five percent of annual gross receipts to the City. In addition, NUG will pay one percent of annual gross receipts to the City, funds that will be available to co-sponsored groups, non-profits, or other organizations “to be used for specific purposes that support the City’s goals and objectives towards the improvement of the quality of life.”

In addition to El Cerrito, NUG operates stores in Sacramento, Redding, San Leandro, and Oakland. An Alameda location is to open soon. Warehousing and distribution are out of Oakland. NUG has 220 employees and was founded in 2014.

■ See *NUG Opens in El Cerrito*, page 3



Past Prez Palaver

JOHN C. STASHIK

ON SATURDAYS, Twin Trees Coffee is now offering hot coffee made to order. Phil (roaster and owner) will be brewing pour-overs with the roast of your choice for \$4. Samples will also be offered so you can try before you buy your bag of beans. Visit the Farmers Market at El Cerrito Plaza to get your caffeine fix. Open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

□

New sneakers. Eager to open at El Cerrito Plaza, Foot Locker quickly wrapped up construction of their new store and opened for business on August 27th. This is good for both El Cerritos and our neighbors, and also for other Plaza businesses. #ShopEC.

□

Boo! Filling the former Bed, Bath & Beyond space at El Cerrito Plaza, Spirit Halloween is moving in, just in time to mask up and get costumed for the big day. The one day a year people actually enjoy wearing a mask.

□

It's a wrap. Known as Bola Wrap, the El Cerrito Police Department now has a new tool to restrain combative subjects while keeping officers safe. After aiming with a laser dot, the hand-held device deploys an eight foot Kevlar tether that, in seconds, completely wraps a subject from a distance of 10 to 25 feet. With no injury to the subject, an officer can then take the person into custody avoiding any physical altercation.

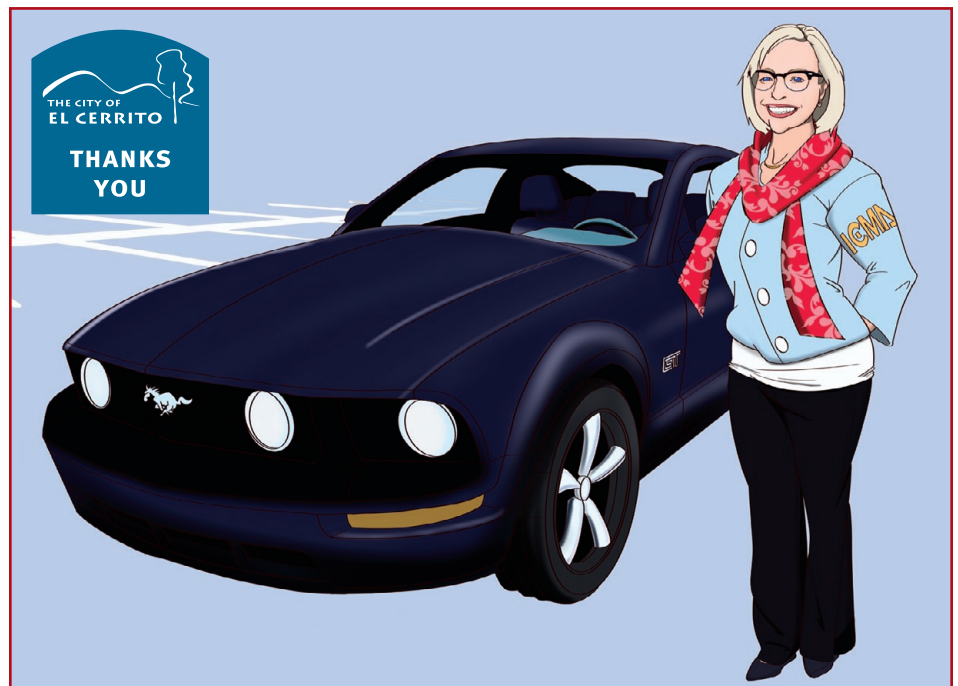
I was fortunate enough to witness a training session for supervisors who will be the ones carrying the Bola Wrap on each watch. Each supervisor took turns aiming and deploying the Wrap on their colleagues.

So the Bola Wrap is a pretty cool non-lethal restraint device and it's good to see it available for use in El Cerrito.

□

City Hall has been open to the public with limited hours since early July. So the next step will be in-person City Council meetings starting September 21st. Personally, I like Zoom. But that's your choice; wear a mask for sure.

20 Years Already?



One of the pleasant tasks of City Manager Karen Pinkos is to honor and thank the more than 160 employees of the City for their hard work, dedication, and service. At an employee appreciation event in August, Fire Chief Michael Pigoni received his 25-year service award, which firefighters quickly posted on social media. (Congratulations Michael on the quarter century mark.) Well, it just so happens that the city manager herself has reached a significant milestone with September 10, 2021, being her 20-year anniversary with the City of El Cerrito. Time flies when you're having fun, right? On behalf of 25,000 residents and businesses, the *Byline* offers heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Karen. #ElCerritoProud

□

UPS north. It's still under construction, in case you were curious. When it eventually opens, The UPS Store on San Pablo Avenue across from Safeway will be very handy for north end folks.

□

Credence. 13 units have been sold at our city's new 32-unit condominium building by Branagh at Eureka & San Pablo.

□

BART. I pass by the El Cerrito Plaza station often. After the concurrent City Council-Planning Commission meeting last month discussing BART's devel-

opment plans for that train station I paused to take a look at the site which consists of a large, mostly empty parking lot. Some day BART will build their apartments with commercial space on the ground floor. Maybe a public library too. Then people will say "why didn't we do this sooner?" Just my thought.

□

I repeat. El Cerrito needs a seafood restaurant and one would think such a place would be a successful business. In particular, I really like The Fish Market, and the nearest one is in San

■ See Past Prez Palaver, page 3



John C. Stashik

It's 5 o'clock somewhere!

City Council member Tessa Rudnick's meet and greet at the Little Hill Lounge on August 5th attracted a decent crowd. Something tells me we might see this type of event happen again.

PAST PREZ PALAVER

■ Continued from page 2

Mateo (thefishmarket.com). El Cerrito has an ideal location available on the ground floor of the new **Cerrito Vista** apartment building at Jefferson & San Pablo. How can we make this happen?

□



Mayfair. As the scaffolding comes down the new look at Cutting & San Pablo becomes apparent. Still under construction with delays attributed to congested freight lanes, the project should be complete by year end. The ground floor will be commercial space at a high traffic location.

□

Going. “Lost our lease” signs are on every window, so when is **Big 5 Sporting Goods** leaving El Cerrito? A company spokesperson says “no iron clad date” but likely late this month or in October. The new tenant will be **Harbor Freight**.

□

Ha! Back in 2020 **Uber** and their ilk spent over \$200 million to ensure the passage of their own ballot measure [Prop. 22] to exempt their workers from being classified as *employees* under AB5. You see, employees have basic rights under state law that *independent contractors* do not. Translated: it's cheaper to hire low wage independent contractors to do the work of employees but compensate them as non-employees. It's also a ploy to stave off union organizing.

Uber, et al., got what they wanted from voters. One ballot argument they used was that defeating Prop. 22 would cause ride share and delivery prices to skyrocket. The companies raised prices anyway.

Recently, Alameda County Superior Court Judge Frank Roesch struck down Prop. 22 as unconstitutional. You can read the details elsewhere. I'm sure **Uber** and that bunch will appeal. It ain't over until it's over.

NUG OPENS IN EL CERRITO

■ Continued from page 1

The firm is a state licensed, vertically integrated cannabis company. With state-of-the-art cultivation, extraction, and distillation facilities, it's one of California's largest wholesale high quality cannabis distributors.

El Cerrito general manager Esther Montoya emphasized the company motto: *normalize the cannabis experience* with customer service always Job 1. Products are displayed in locked cases with consumers making their purchases at the counter. Online shopping is also available. Payment is by cash. An ATM machine accepts debit cards; credit cards are not accepted.

Security is a very important part of NUG's business plan and guards are on duty 24 hours daily. The premises are continually monitored by numerous cameras.

On the matter of security, Chief of Police Paul Keith said: “It was a pleasure to work with NUG on developing the security plan for their store. They came to the table with a mindset toward safety, not only for their customers and employees, but for their neighbors as well. They have a retail plan that takes advantage of the lessons learned over years of cannabis sales. The company has demonstrated a genuine desire to collaborate with the ECPD on safety matters.” The store could actually be the safest place in town.

The City Council has approved two licenses for cannabis dispensaries. The second store, to be known as **Authentic El Cerrito**, plans to open before the end of the year at Schmidt Lane & San Pablo Avenue in the former Batteries+Bulbs building.



General Manager Esther Montoya is welcomed as a new member of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce by Treasurer John C. Stashik.

Local Firm Cleans More Than Windows

BY CATALINA HU

EL CERRITO resident Vanessa Bell cares about her community and neighbors. When her elderly neighbors were no longer able to clean their windows and gutters, she volunteered



Vanessa Bell

to help. When she noticed many storefronts were covered in dust and soot, she had the urge to clean. When she realized there was no window cleaning business in El Cerrito, she started Five Star Windows in 2019 with the mission “to increase the value of our community by restoring, strengthening, and preserving health, safety, and beauty of its properties; furthermore, using effective techniques, fair pricing, and maintenance plans to enhance property values year after year.”



Vanessa explains how to use power washer



Using an extension pole to clean windows

Five Star Windows specializes in both residential and commercial window cleaning and power washing. In addition to cleaning windows, the firm offers gutter cleaning, dryer vent cleaning, driveway washing, deck washing, solar panel washing and more.

Power washing uses about 50% to 70% less water, which is a much more efficient way to clean versus washing with a garden hose. In addition to cleaning the surface, power washing blows away dirt and other debris that weeds like to take roots.

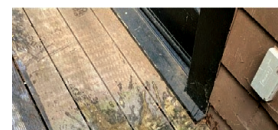
Regular washing of the cracks and crevices can prevent weeds from

growing and cause damage to the driveway or deck.

As a small business owner, Vanessa manages every aspect of her business. She handles all incoming calls and is on site for every project. Water fed extension poles and gutter vacuum poles are Vanessa's preferred equipment to clean. For the safety of everyone, she tries to stay off the ladder whenever possible even though heavy-duty ladders are available when they are necessary for the job.

Vanessa has recently hired two new team members and hopes to find a few more reliable locals to join her team. As a member of IWCA (International Window Cleaning Association), she is looking forward to attending the upcoming seminar.

Five Star Windows offers recurring appointments to business owners to help them by not only improving the visual appeal but also increase sanitation and take the strain off their employees, so they can focus on the customers and other responsibilities.



BEFORE



AFTER

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Mandatory Organics Recycling Regulations

Effective January 1, 2022

IN 2016, California Senate Bill (SB) 1383 was signed into law by Governor Brown and establishes state-wide targets to reduce the disposal of organic waste and edible food. *The regulations become effective on January 1, 2022, and apply to all businesses and households that generate organic waste.* As a part of this new law, all businesses and residents must be enrolled in organic waste or “green waste” and recycling collection services.

In addition, all businesses and residents will be required to sort materials for disposal properly, placing organics in the green waste cart, recyclables in the recycling cart, and

What is Organic Waste?

- Food scraps
- Food soiled paper, including:
 - Coffee filters
 - Pizza boxes
 - Soiled paper plates
- Yard clippings
- Vegetative matter

only garbage in the cart intended for the landfill. Later this year, the City will adopt a new ordinance requiring organic waste collection and recycling service for all customers, with some exceptions. The City is mandated by the state to both establish and enforce this ordinance.

□

For more information on the new requirements, please visit:

el-cerrito.org/MandatoryOrganicsRecycling
or contact the City's Waste Prevention Specialist,
Laurenteen Brazil, at lbrazil@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.
Telephone: 510-559-7686.

Proposed Expanded Foodware Ordinance

IN SUPPORT OF the City's goal to keep more materials out of the landfill, the City of El Cerrito is also proposing changes to the 2013 Foodware Ordinance. That ordinance prohibited Expanded Polystyrene Foam (“Styrofoam”) containers and has required foodware to be packaged for takeout in reusable, recyclable, or compostable containers. The proposed changes would phase out single-use plastic foodware items within the City of El Cerrito.

Single-use foodware includes all containers, bowls, plates, trays, cartons, cups, lids, utensils, forks, spoons, knives, straws, and other items that are designed for one-time use and disposal. If approved, all food providers in the City would be required to procure and use reusable or compostable foodware, with a limited number of exceptions for items where there is no available substitute. The City will assist food providers by providing training, technical support, and will continue to build public awareness to support a smooth transition.

Changes to the Foodware Ordinance were planned for 2020 but were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the impact of the pandemic on local businesses, the City is planning to phase implementation of the proposed ordinance and is seeking input on the implementation steps and timeline. The current proposal would have enforcement begin January 1, 2024.

For more information about the proposed Expanded Foodware Ordinance, please visit: el-cerrito.org/foodware. For additional information or to submit comments, contact Will Provost at: wprovost@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or 510-559-7684.

Want to Learn More?

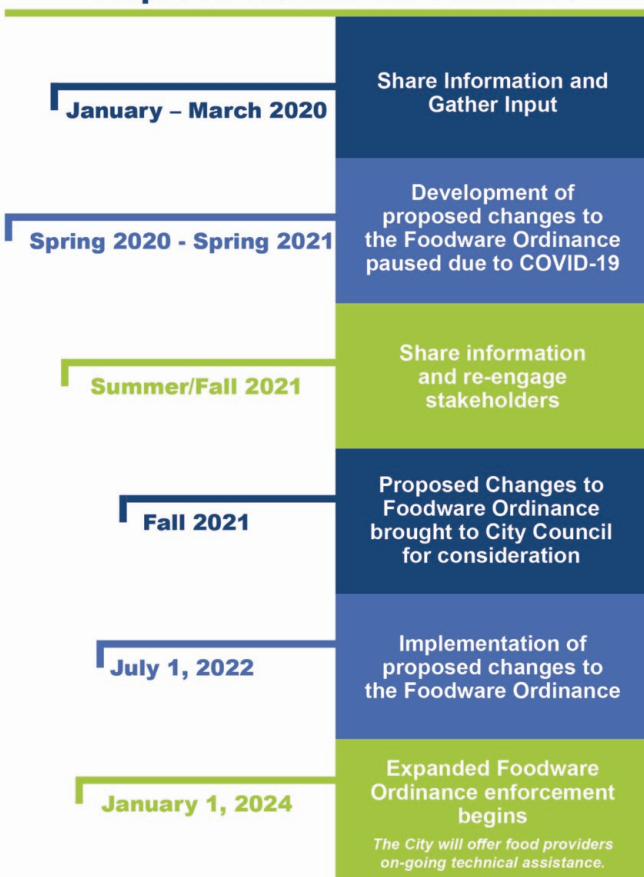
The City invites the business community to take part in a virtual meeting where we will detail the proposed changes to the City's foodware ordinance and the state-required changes to the City's municipal code mandating organics recycling. Community members will be able to ask questions and provide feedback to staff.

Join the meeting via Zoom on September 14th at 7 p.m.

How to Login to the Sept. 14th Zoom Meeting

el-cerrito.org/PublicMeetingZoomLink
Meeting ID: 915 6341 5388
Password: 2154350
To dial in: 1-408-638-0968

Proposed Timeline for Ordinance



Down with the Delta

AS WE round the corner towards Fall, children have returned to school. Certainly, our daily lives continue to be shaped by the impacts of COVID-19 and because of insufficient vaccination rates nationwide, we must continue our vigilance to contain the Delta variant while we look towards a different future. As a Chamber, we are resuming virtual events for the time being.

In El Cerrito, businesses have closed, unable to sustain the impact and severity of the burdens of these times. Others have been fiercely hanging on, relying on innovating ways to serve customers, loans, and personal resources. Entrepreneurs are

resilient and optimistic types, but the challenges continue to pile up.



Community Matters

GEORGINA EDWARDS

work and build our lives.

Certainly, none of us living will ever forget how these times are helping us shape a better awareness of the interconnectedness of our planet and learn about what matters most.

Perhaps with full FDA approval of vaccines, we can expect a greater acceptance of vaccinations and, soon, availability of vaccines for those under 12 years old. Meantime, we continue to practice all the behaviors that help us manage and weigh risks as we also learn,

Live Theatre Makes its Return to CCCT

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

CONTRA COSTA Civic Theatre will return to live, in-person main stage productions at 8 p.m. on Friday, October 1st. One of the giants of the American theatre, Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," will play for 15 performances through October 31st.

Directed by CCCT's Executive Artistic Director Marilyn Langbehn, the play features a diverse ensemble of eight actors who portray the 25-plus citizens of Grover's Corners.

A landmark in American drama, Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Our Town" tells the story of small town Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, in order to tell us the story of every town, the whole world over.

Narrated by the "Stage Manager," we follow the Gibbs and Webb families, residents of Grover's Corners, through twelve years of life changes — from the mundane ("Daily Life"); to the romantic

in ("Love and Marriage") and to the devastating in ("Death and Eternity").

Through the young lovers Emily and George, their strong and loving parents, and the many other Grover's Corners' locals, Wilder delivers universal truths about what it means to be human.

"Our Town" has been a touchstone throughout our country's history," says director Marilyn Langbehn. "Whenever we are challenged by earth-shaking events — war, terrorist attacks, and now a global pandemic that threatens to destroy our very sense of community — we instinctively turn to this deceptively simple narrative to help us understand it all."

Masks and proof of vaccination will be required for everyone in the theatre. Tickets are \$35 for adults, \$15 for youth 16 and under. Purchase tickets online at ccct.org. The theatre is located at the corner of Moeser Lane and Pomona Avenue in El Cerrito.

On their Bucket List



Painters were recently busy upgrading the buildings of The Village at Town Center, the midtown apartment complex in El Cerrito.

John C. Stashik



OUR TOWN

WRITTEN BY
THORNTON WILDER

Stay Informed

Community Development
e-Newsletter

el-cerrito.org/CommDev

FROM THE PRESIDENT

■ Continued from page 1

champ, but it needed tires, shocks and was looking a bit on the tired side. I owned it for 24 years and probably did not drive it more than a total of 15 days per year. I began to look for a “mule,” a term that my uncle uses to describe a vehicle that has the primary function of doing the running around, taking on the miles and relieving the other vehicles such that they can enjoy a more laid-back existence.

I established my criteria, a plug-in hybrid, preferably American made, pretty much loaded with features, low miles, and my price-point. Ideally, I wanted to make the purchase from one of our local, as in, El Cerrito based auto dealers. After the online research had been conducted, it was determined that a Ford Fusion was a good candidate. It also felt somewhat patriotic to “keep it at home” inasmuch as I was switching out a Chevy for a Ford. We do own foreign vehicles, however, we now also own a vehicle from each of the big three: Chrysler, Ford and GM.

As for my criteria, everything worked out as desired. While online, I noticed that **Auto Import Sales** at the corner of San Pablo and Potrero avenues had a Ford Fusion on the lot. The wife and I casually stopped by one day and were looking around on the lot when we were greeted by the owner Fam Fakhari. He directed us to a fully loaded Ford Fusion Titanium Plug-In Hybrid that was not advertised on his website at that time. He was extremely personable and very straight to the point and professional. That style of business resonates with me.

Within 15-20 minutes we struck a deal. My experience working with him has been great. He has followed through on everything that he said he would follow through on. Neither one of us

knew each other prior to the transaction. I kept my identity and Chamber affiliation to myself until we completed our transaction.

It was a pleasure doing business with Auto Import Sales. Furthermore, I like the family atmosphere and the fact that Fam's 10th grade son is motivated and really enjoys helping his dad with the business.

In summary, I retired a high emitting vehicle, purchased a fuel-efficient car with considerably less adverse environmental impacts, supported a local business, contributed local sales tax money, bought American and had a great experience with a small family operated El Cerrito business. You know, I am feeling pretty good about all of this!

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Byline Online
elcerritochamber.org/byline

Celebrate Del Norte Station



The public is invited to share the excitement with BART over the completion of the El Cerrito Del Norte station modernization project. Join the event which will include:

Food Trucks • Music • Giveaways • Station Tours

**El Cerrito Del Norte Station
6400 Cutting Blvd.**

Friday, September 10th • 4-6 p.m.



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Feedback Always Welcome

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Byline

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