I n the past, I have spoken and written about the importance of attitude on numerous occasions. A good attitude is such an important component to living successfully, that many decades ago I adopted as my motto, the saying “your attitude determines your altitude.” I expanded that saying to include “I want to soar therefore I have the attitude of gratitude.”

Maintaining a positive attitude and being grateful for conditions being as well as they are comprise important factors in sustaining good mental and physical health. I was grateful to have attended the November 13th Chamber of Commerce event at Elevation 66 because it represented so many elements that I embrace.

It was a gathering to celebrate and acknowledge the holiday lights on San Pablo Avenue, and to also support a great El Cerrito business, Elevation 66 Brewing Co., great beverages and food. Even though the weather was cool and wet all who were in attendance had a great attitude, the evening was festive, and the Elevation 66 owners, Esther and David Goodstal, were most gracious.

Los Mole Beer Garden has spacious patio seating with heat lamps, keeping diners warm and safe.

### New Wage Rate

**Effective January 1, 2021,** the minimum wage will be $15.61 per hour for all workers in El Cerrito.

Employers must post the official El Cerrito Wage Bulletin which informs employees of the current rate and explains their rights. You can get a copy from the City or the Chamber. See el-cerrito.org/wages for more information on employer responsibilities.

### Los Moles and the Great Outdoors

**By Georgina Edwards**

It’s a crisp and bright December day in El Cerrito and Lito Saldana, owner of Los Moles Beer Garden at 6120 Potrero Avenue, is eager to talk about how the restaurant is adapting to current times, transforming and expanding outdoor spaces to continue to delight residents with delicious organic food and a welcoming and inviting place to gather safely.

Chef Lito Saldana moved to the United States from El Aserradero, Jalisco, Mexico, in 1989 and helped his brother open and run Berkeley’s Cancun before launching his own restaurants which now include locations in San Rafael, Emeryville, El Cerrito, with Walnut Creek under way. An additional location in Albany, called 5 Tacos & Beer, offers a more limited menu.

With warmth and a palpable sense of purpose, he shares that the restaurant is a way to connect people, to give neighbors and friends a place to share and experience a sense of belonging and generosity, like he experienced in El Aserradero growing up. With just 400 residents, the families in town would share, making meals with ingredients from each other’s gardens, freshly made salsas emerging from one family’s tomatoes with another’s peppers.

Restaurants have been struggling to operate and adapt to the impact of COVID-19. Initially, as Lito consulted with the employees, the restaurant closed for Taco Tuesday, made to order.
Good riddance 2020. Next year will be better because nothing could be worse than this one. Events of last March will forever be etched in my brain. From that point on, Coronavirus shutdowns and health orders have ruled every single day.

Businesses that have survived so far have done so with resilience and lots of plastic sheeting plus masks and plenty of hand sanitizer. It's called adapting.

Federal assistance in the form of PPP and EIDL loans helped keep businesses open and employees working many months ago. More help is needed. However, since then, our federal government has become oblivious to the plight of the nation's workers and businesses. The great FDR is probably rolling over in his grave. This federal inaction is pathetic. Contact your Senator.

On the other hand, local government (city and county) response to the crisis has been amazing. Yet this is government that has suffered huge declines in tax revenue coupled with an enormous increase in costs dealing with the virus. Local government is obviously who has your back and many of those workers still work from home.

From a Chamber perspective (looking back) I am very grateful to city management (especially Maya Williams) for sharing important information about pandemic assistance that we, in turn, passed along to members. Community Development, always keeping us in the loop, providing list upon list of resources for business within our county. Also, a nod to Public Works (my favorite city department) and their essential workers on the job every day, pandemic or not.

What’s next? I’ll toss my 2020 calendar in the trash. Then await news of a COVID-19 vaccine which should happen early in 2021. I have hope for another federal stimulus package as I like to be optimistic. That should include bailout money for El Cerrito.

Meanwhile, keep those damn masks on, stay healthy, and beat this thing.

Not so fast. Often a great source of misinformation, Nextdoor, had some lengthy comments on a proposal to develop the El Cerrito Plaza BART station property with apartments and retail. One person claimed it was a done deal and construction equipment was already in the parking lot! To be clear, EBMUD is leasing space to store their heavy equipment while doing pipeline work in the area. They were using the lot at Waldo and San Pablo until Delaney Street returned to set up their annual Christmas tree lot. They get first dibs.

Cool your jets as there will be many opportunities for public input on the BART project. That includes parking and a possibility for a library. All this will take time. Good news: part of the team is Holliday Development and this city works well with them. Think Mayfair.

Delinquent? Mentioned in the August Byline was a reminder about El Cerrito business licenses. Due to COVID-19 the time period to renew was extended through September. By now, late pay penalties are accruing. All businesses including rental properties are required to have a license. If you haven’t yet paid the tax, deal with it immediately. tcasados@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us is the contact. Don’t wait any longer.

The action city. Four major residential projects (some with retail) are nearing completion in El Cerrito. There has been extensive coverage of Mayfair. Here are some more.

Cerrito Vista was a super fast project, now complete. A 50-unit mixed use building at 10963 San Pablo, builder Kevin “speedy” Wang broke ground on May 6, 2019.

Village 29, located at 5828 El Dorado Street, consists of three buildings, all townhomes. The first building is finished. See: laffertycommunities.com for more information. Total units: 29.

Credence, is showing skin at this writing with construction tarps being
It’s All About Community

Like so many residents, I love El Cerrito! Though it’s been my hometown for quite a while, I became particularly interested in contributing to our community when I became a mother. As my son (now 15) and daughter (now 11) became pre-schoolers, I began to more deeply appreciate how we humans come together to grow and share our journeys.

From each other, we learn everything: how to be friends, how to make things, how to face the ups and downs of life. What each of us experiences as we connect through hubs like schools, churches, clubs, business and civic organizations, is what we call our community. We associate and create our identity around our experiences as we connect through hubs like schools, churches, and the aforementioned pie, take a walk and the hike. This city is a fabulous place to appreciate how we humans come together to grow and share our journeys.

We marked El Cerrito’s 100th Anniversary in 2017, celebrating and honoring our history and the people who shaped it, many families who remain leaders in our town today. In joining the Chamber, I recognize our role in El Cerrito and appreciate the Board and the many volunteers and staff over the years.

As our dedicated and accomplished former manager, Lisa Martinengo, showed me, we have Bylines and newspapers from the 1960s featuring people and businesses that continue serving El Cerrito’s today!

In this new role, I am thrilled for the chance to work with friends in our community, business owners, civic leaders, volunteers and many others to continue creating the El Cerrito we love.

PAST PREZ PALAVER

Continued from page 2

removed. This is a Branagh development at Eureka and San Pablo, site of the old Guitar Center that will have 30 residences and two live-work units.

Pie time. Semi trailers come and go from Nation’s Pie Shop, at Madison and Kearney, a ritual happening this time every year. Cheesecake too.

Hike EC. After heavy holiday meals and the aforementioned pie, take a hike. This city is a fabulous place to walk and the El Cerrito Trail Trekkers offer a great full color map showing paths, stairways, and trails including the Hillside Natural Area. Send $6 to Pam Austin, 834 Kearney St., El Cerrito 94530 for your copy. Checks should be made payable to El Cerrito Community Foundation.

Popcorn. It’s no secret that concession sales keep a movie house in business. Our Rialto Cinemas Cerrito has been shut down since that dark day in March. Help the Cerrito survive by ordering popcorn, pizza, burgers, or nachos for takeout every Saturday from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Order online (rialtocinemas.com) or just walk up.

Meet Charlie. The Charlie Cart Project is a nonprofit food education program supporting hands-on cooking and nutrition education. This cart was donated to the El Cerrito Library by the El Cerrito Library Foundation, an Associate member of this Chamber.

Thanks for your service. Unlike many cities, our members of the City Council work essentially as volunteers as their small stipend barely covers gas. It is not an easy job and takes an enormous amount of time not only at council meetings but the prep work as well. They do it for the good of the city.

Greg Lyman has been a council member since 2008, serving as Mayor three times. 2020 could possibly be his toughest year with both fiscal and COVID-19 issues paramount. His final “shift” is December 15th. I’ve attended every council meeting this year and admire Mayor Greg’s knack of keeping the agenda moving while giving the public and colleagues ample time for discussion. Good job. I’m sure he’ll find other projects to occupy his Tuesday evenings.

Rochelle Pardue-Okimoto is a hard working mom, registered nurse, and for the past four years, City Council member. She was our Mayor in 2019 and her final day on the council is also December 15th.

In normal times we’d be able to thank them in person but now it’s just another video meeting. So sincere appreciation to both of you for all you have done on behalf of 25,000 residents along with your steady support of the Chamber.

EDC. The City’s Economic Development Committee has vacant seats. Here is a golden opportunity for local business people to get involved and work for a more vibrant economy, pandemic or not. This Chamber, by long time agreement, has a seat on the EDC. Get involved by contacting our City Clerk: hcharlety@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

eNews. How do you think I stay informed? By checking the Community Development Dept. newsletter, of course. Get on that email list by sending to: community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

Happy Holidays!
Better Days Are Ahead.
For the second consecutive year the San Pablo Avenue “theater block” between Fairmount and Central Avenues was lit up for the holiday season. On December 13th, the Chamber of Commerce hosted a well attended holiday lighting event at the Elevation 66 Brewing Company.

Photos by Georgina Edwards
LOS MOLES BEER GARDEN

Continued from page 1

a time, but began re-opening with take-out service and limited dining options in keeping with health directives.

Thanks to the features of the El Cerrito location, Lito has been able to expand outdoor spaces.

The patio area is wider and wraps around two sides of the restaurant. The back parking lot area is now a beautiful space with ample tables, distanced 10 feet apart to ensure guest comfort. The design is warm and welcoming, much of it lovingly built from reclaimed materials.

Last month, Los Moles was able to re-launch the popular “Taco Tuesdays” with live music starting at 5 p.m.

Lito is optimistic that with support from the community and customers that Los Moles can weather the pandemic. But he worries that public messaging about indoor dining restrictions may dissuade customers from enjoying outdoor dining.

He is reaching out to local officials and urging advocacy for the restaurant segment, including clear and consistent messaging that encourages people to continue eating safely outdoors to gather and connect with friends and family.

We need to lean on each other during these times. El Cerritan’s can thrive as we come together to support each other and our businesses and build a stronger community.

Georgina Edwards

Meet Your New City Council

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

Two new members of the El Cerrito City Council will take their seats at the dais on December 15th. But not really. With City Hall closed until further notice they will actually be at home handling civic duties by Webex video conference. Here’s an introduction to both, plus incumbent Fadelli. All three join Council members Janet Abelson and Gabe Quinto whose terms expire in 2022.

New to City Council, elected for a 4-year term

Lisa Motoyama is a 14-year resident of El Cerrito and a senior affordable housing finance consultant at the nonprofit, Community Economics, since 2018.

Tessa Rudnick has spent the last decade working for municipal governments as an IT project manager and business analyst. Most recently, she was IT Director for the San Francisco Department of Police Accountability.

Returning to City Council, re-elected for a 4-year term

Paul Fadelli is starting his second term as a council member and will be Mayor effective December 15th. Now retired, he was employed by BART as Program Manager, Legislative and Government Affairs. He is an occasional contributor to the Byline.

December Zoom Mixer at Jenny K.

Tuesday, December 8th
5:30 p.m.

Get your Zoom link from:
info@elcerritochamber.org

Jenny K.

Your One-Stop Family Gift Shop
6921 Stockton Ave. · El Cerrito
510-528-5350
jennyk.com

TOYS FOR TOTS

Donation barrel at Jenny K.
6921 Stockton Ave., EC
Remodeled and now part of Hana Gardens senior housing in El Cerrito, the little building at 10848 San Pablo Avenue was the office of the Chamber of Commerce from 1991 until 2009.

It is still a local landmark, a one of a kind structure. The Round-Up page was supplied by Byline correspondent and local history expert Chris Treadway.

The photo below shows the “today” view.

Landmark Building Houses New Local Chamber Office

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
10848 San Pablo Ave.
El Cerrito
233-7040

While El Cerrito forge ahead with redevelopment plans, some of the city’s fascinating old buildings are experiencing revivals. One of those buildings, vintage 1926, is the new home for the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. Leased to the Chamber by Tradeway Furniture’s Joseph Conwill, who purchased the building in 1965, refurbishing of the quarters began last fall.

The building was gutted, a project which included knocking down 12-inch stone walls, according to builder Marvin Collins, who with his wife Marge, was actively involved in the move. Every attempt was made to maintain as much of the character of the building as possible, including the landmark quarry stone facing.

New walls were framed, the mildewed roof restored, wiring replaced and new windows and floor coverings put in. Collins, a member of El Cerrito Rotary Club, recruited fellow members and other trade and business people to contribute services and materials.

Today the building hosts a conference room, an office for Chamber Manager Del Wisenor, a reception area and storage space. A neat green awning identifies the Chamber as a tenant. According to Marge Collins the charming stone building built by Sylvain Cabrol was originally home to the Valley of the Moon Quarry.

A recent pancake breakfast raised money for the Chamber building fund to contribute to continued refurbishing of the new quarters.

Business people, mark your calendars: A Chamber mixer will be held May 15 at the rose garden next to the Freeway Motel. Call the office for details.
As a testament to community engagement and genuine interest in the success of our local businesses, city staff and elected council members were present on this rainy Friday evening. Council veterans Paul Fadelli, Gabe Quinto and fresh new face, Tessa Rudnick, who won a seat November 3rd was also present, along with City Manager Karen Pinkos, Community Development Director Melanie Mintz and Housing Analyst Aissia Ashoori. It was refreshing to see our city leaders along with our Chamber members and others supporting the cause. We recognize that challenges exist for all of us, be that local businesses or city government, however we are all in this together, and we are actively promoting an action-based effort of collaboration and support.

Along the line of collaboration and support, I want to publicly thank our local County Supervisor, John Gioia, for responding to my call for assistance. Our new Chamber manager, Georgina Edwards, who by-the-way is doing a great job, reached out to me on behalf of Lito Saldana, the owner of Los Moles Beer Garden, who had some very valid concerns regarding COVID-19 related regulations impacting the restaurant industry in particular. I asked Georgina to let Lito know that I would reach out to Supervisor Gioia to bring him into the discussion because he is extremely knowledgeable about the issue. When I reached out to Supervisor Gioia he was immediately receptive to the idea of communicating with Lito Saldana. We arranged a conference call and Supervisor Gioia was extremely generous with his time, listened to Lito Saldana’s concerns, offered suggestions and kept the door open for further dialogue.

In my capacity as the President of the Chamber of Commerce I interact with business owners, city staff, elected officials and the community at large. Elected officials and city staff are often the targets of an abundance of criticism. However, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to our city council members and our city staff as well, under the able leadership of City Manager Karen Pinkos for their solid commitment to the well-being of our city and business community. As for Supervisor Gioia, his district office is in El Cerrito, however, his responsibilities cover a large area of West Contra Costa County. Again, I appreciate his responsiveness to his constituency.

Remember, your attitude determines your altitude, so let us all have a mindset to soar, therefore let us begin with an attitude of gratitude. As a practical note, keep in mind that positive and gracious people generally have access to more “open doors.”

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Sales Tax Up April 1

Passed by voters on November 3rd, the half cent sales tax increase takes effect on April 1, 2021. This applies to all taxable sales in Contra Costa County. El Cerrito’s sales tax rate will become 10.25%.

Civic Theatre Play

Running through December 20th is “It’s A Wonderful Life: a live radio play 2020.” Performances are at 7 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays; 2 p.m. on Sundays.

Log into your Broadway On Demand account for the performance. Purchase tickets or get information at: www.ccct.org

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Eat El Cerrito!

Dine-Out Restaurants

Here are El Cerrito restaurants offering outside table service. This list is not necessarily complete and listings are not in any particular order.

El Mono, Fatapple’s, Los Moles Beer Garden, Mr. Pickle’s, Well Grounded Tea & Coffee, McBears Social Club (with food truck), Denny’s, IHOP, Macaroni Grill, Tashi Delek, Chipotle, Burger King, McDonald’s, Frannie Express, Zomsa, Kyoto Ramen, The Junket at EC Plaza, New Dumpling, Little Hill Lounge, and H&J’s Restaurant.

Get information about the above restaurants or any other business in El Cerrito by accessing the Open El Cerrito directory at the site shown below.

www.el-cerrito.org/whatsopenelcerrito

December Member Meeting

Chamber election results will be announced. Then selection of officers for the coming year. The meeting will be by Zoom video. Email: info@elcerritochamber.org to get a clickable link to access the meeting. The meeting can also be accessed by phone; email for the number.

Ballots were mailed to all eligible members on November 23rd. They must be received by noon on December 11th.

Meeting Details
Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at noon

Join the Zoom Meeting
To receive a clickable link, email Manager Georgina Edwards at info@elcerritochamber.org

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The City of El Cerrito

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