



Search on for New Chamber Staff

A SEARCH COMMITTEE has been named to find replacements for Chamber Manager Sewall Glinternick and Secretary Pat Berndt, both of whom have announced plans to retire at the end of this year. Named to the group that will interview candidates for the Chamber staff positions are President John Stashik, Jean Lipton, Larry Seidell, Michelle Blackwell and Lisa Cain.

As their first order of business, the search committee asked that any individual interested in either of the two part-time positions immediately apply by submitting a resume to the Chamber at 10848 San Pablo Avenue.



Glinternick is retiring after 13 years as manager. During his term in office he played a key role in initiating and organizing such

Chamber projects as a new membership directory and buyers' guide, the Taste of El Cerrito, the semi-annual city-wide Round-Up business promotions, and the publication of a new city map.



Photos: Short On Sidel Photo Services

A veteran of 22 years as Chamber Secretary, Pat Berndt in the mid-1960's helped co-found the short-lived Women's Division of the Chamber, which helped plan the 1967 Golden Anniversary Ball. She began as a fill-in worker, and in 1986 was hired as secretary, and has been running the Chamber office ever since.

In announcing his plan to retire, Glinternick said: "Guided by a long line of dedicated, hard-working presidents and directors, for the past 13 years Pat and I have helped make the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce a vital resource for its members. However, the months

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New City Street Map Now Available



Produced by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, this new full color map of the city shows roads, parks, important buildings and other points of interest in our community. In addition, the map contains information about the Chamber, the city and a complete street index. Copies are available at the Chamber office for \$2 each.

Big Holiday Party Tuesday, Dec. 16

THE ANNUAL El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce gala Christmas party and gift giveaway will be held Tuesday, December 16, at the Mira Vista Golf and Country Club. (This event is being held one week earlier than usual due to the fact the fourth Tuesday of the month falls so close to Christmas.)



Open to all members and their guests who make reservations on or before Friday, December 12, the party

will get underway at noon with the traditional champagne reception hosted by Jeannie and Michael Klinger of the Sunset View Cemetery Association.

The luncheon will be followed by the highlight of this yearly event: the awarding of valuable prizes and merchandise orders donated by local business people. In addition to the holiday festivities, the results of the election for seats on the Chamber's 2009 Board of Directors will be announced and officers for the coming year will be elected.

Chamber Manager Sewall Glinternick urges anyone interested in donating an item to the gift giveaway to telephone him as soon as possible at (510) 233-7040. The e-mail address is sewall@elcerritochamber.org.

Cast Your Ballot

IF EVERYTHING runs smoothly, all Chamber members in good standing should have received their ballot containing the names of candidates nominated for this organization's 2008-09 Board of Directors. You are urged to mark your ballot return it to the Chamber office at 10848 San Pablo Avenue on or before Monday, December 15.

The names of the winning candidates will be announced at the Chamber's annual Christmas party on Tuesday, December 16.

Welcome
NEW MEMBER

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WESTERN HOME SERVICES
Walter Backes

2189 Mt. Diablo St. • Concord 94520
(925) 705-0765 • CMI1@pacbell.net

WHS Joins Us

WESTERN HOME SERVICES, the latest firm to join this organization, stands ready to provide fellow Chamber members with a wide variety of electronic services. Among the items available to local businesses and homes are design, engineering and installation of surveillance systems, security alarms, audio and visual lighting control, business telephone systems, structure wiring, access control, home theatre surround sound, and plasma and LED installation.

The firm, located at 2189 Mt. Diablo Street in Concord, is headed by Walter R. Backes, who has 30 years sales and engineering experience in the telecommunications and security industries.

Assisting Backes as Director of Services is Jeffrey Chan, who has 28 years experience in designing, installing and maintaining low voltage systems for both business and residential clients.

Western Home Services may be contacted by telephoning (925) 705-0765 or by fax at (925) 798-1866. CMI1@pacbell.net is their e-mail address.

URM Building Status

EVALUATIONS ARE NOW underway on 24 unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings here, all of which are in the city's commercial zone. Community Development Director Mitch Oshinsky reports that the structural engineering firm hired by the city has already evaluated eight buildings, with evaluation of the remaining 16 URM buildings expected to be completed by mid-December.

After that, evaluations will be made of a second group of buildings in the commercial area that are not constructed of unreinforced masonry and are not a structural risk, but are limited to potential risk due to veneers, facades and mansards.

According to Oshinsky, earthquake warning signs have been installed or distributed to 18 URM buildings. City staff, he added, is waiting on the evaluations of six other buildings to determine if those structures already contain sufficient reinforcement to not warrant the placement of a warning sign.

ExCellent Shirts



EL CERRITO tee-shirts are now available in limited sizes at \$20 each including tax. The new shirts are a joint effort of Kathleen Glenn, The Glenn Custom Framing and Gallery of Art and Tom Panas of the El Cerrito Historical Society.

A portion of the proceeds go to the El Cerrito Historical Society.

You can reserve a shirt by calling Kathleen Glenn at (510) 558-1078. The Glenn Custom Framing and Galley of Art is located at 7027 Stockton Avenue.

Building Permits Up

DESPITE THE current economic slowdown, the number of building permits issued in El Cerrito from July 1 through September 30 indicates people are continuing to invest in improving their commercial and residential property. According to a report issued by Community Development Director Mitch Oshinsky, if the current trend established in the first quarter of this fiscal year continues: "We might anticipate meeting or exceeding building activity in fiscal year 2007-08."

From July through September this year the city issued 348 building permits for a variety of commercial and residential improvement projects. Fees collected by the city for those permits totaled \$257,930.

This type of investment in existing buildings, according to Oshinsky, has tended to occur when the economy and the construction of new buildings has slowed. If the current trend continues for the remainder of the year, he added, that would result in approximately 1,100 permits and fees of approximately a million dollars.

Oshinsky's report indicates that 24 permits were issued in the first quarter of this fiscal year for commercial improvements totaling \$776,685.03 in

E-book Deadline Set

SHOP EARLY for the ideal holiday gift that keeps giving 365 days of the year, the 2009 Entertainment Book. Chamber members planning to buy their own new Entertainment Book or to give as a Christmas gift should know they're almost out of time to get one.

The sale of the \$25 books which offer hundreds of 50% discounts and 2-for-1 bargains on dining, shopping services, entertainment and travel will definitely end at the close of business on Monday, December 15.

Reserve a copy by telephoning Pat Berndt at (510) 233-7040 or stop by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce office at 10848 San Pablo Avenue.

SEEK NEW STAFF

Continued from page 1

ahead will be critical to both the Chamber and the city.

"Given the current economic meltdown, the Chamber is going to have to maximize its efforts to retain as much business as possible for its members. At the same time, our organization must, in every way possible, assist the city in combating its rapidly dwindling sales tax base. We must also carry out plans to relocate the Chamber office.

"The times and the tasks ahead call for a fresh, new approach on the part of the Chamber staff. While I am sure both Pat and I will miss working for the Chamber, we both agree this appears to be the right time to step down."

Environmental Mgr.

MELANIE MINTZ, who spent last year as manager of the city's Public Works Maintenance and Capital Improvement Program, has been appointed El Cerrito's first Environmental manager.

value, resulting in the collection of \$36,900 in fees.

The two most expensive commercial improvements were one for a \$250,000 solar electric project, and two permits for a total of \$205,000 in tenant improvements. Ten permits were issued for commercial improvements covering \$95,250 in repairs and two permits for \$90,000 in remodeling projects.

Business Video Camera Law Well Underway

EL CERRITO'S Video Surveillance Act of 2007 officially went into effect October 31st, and, as of mid-November, police report local businesses were well on the way to complying with the new law. A Police Department spokesman also reported requests concerning the law requiring certain local firms to install and operate video cameras had drawn attention and requests for information from "cities throughout the country."

The El Cerrito law reportedly covers 102 local business establishments. Of that number 32 have already installed cameras and received their police permit. Forty-six others are in the first to final inspection stage. A total of 14 have filed exemption claims, including 13 restaurants whose take-out income was less than 50% of the firms' total revenue. One gave up its license to avoid being required to install a video camera. According to police, negotiations are underway to bring the final 10 businesses into compliance with the new law.

The act requiring certain businesses to install and operate a continuous digital surveillance system that meets technical standards was enacted last year by the City Council to aid in the apprehension of criminals and to boost safety for businesses and customers here.

Types of businesses required to install video systems include stores that sell beer, wine and distilled spirits to go, sell firearms, pawnbrokers, second hand dealers, coin dealers, check cashing businesses, banks and credit unions, fast food restaurants, convenience stores, and shopping centers that include one or more of the fore-mentioned establishments.

At a minimum, the system must have separate cameras dedicated to each register/check-out stand, each entrance and exit, loading dock, and customer and employee parking lot.

These systems must operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and be in working order at all times. In addition, each business must keep a copy of the material that's recorded for at least 30 days.

The local Police Department conducted a pre-installation assessment of each business required by the act to have a system, and another inspection after they had been installed.

Once approved, the Police Department issued an approval notice that was placed inside the premises to inform customers and employees of the system's existence.

Each system is subject to regular inspection to determine if it meets the Act's requirements. If any violation is

not corrected within 30 days, the owner of the business could be subject to a penalty of up to \$500 per day.

The city of El Cerrito has established a financial assistance program for small businesses which are required or voluntarily want to conform to the law.

Independently-owned business owners or small chain store owners with no more than three locations may apply for a city loan to cover 50% of the cost of the video surveillance equipment, up to a maximum of \$5,000. (Corporate-owned chain retail stores and restaurants are not eligible to participate in the loan program.)

The loan term is four years, at zero interest, to coincide with the estimated useful life of the equipment. Loans must be paid at 25% per year for four years.

In order to reduce the financial burden created by the ordinance, the Police Department will inspect each system annually, and the loan payment that year will be forgiven as long as the equipment is maintained and is in working order.

However, the annual loan payment will be required if the business owner's system does not meet police approval or if the business ceases operation prior to the end of the loan term.

Bad News for Business People

THE CURRENT economic downturn promises to create more problems for El Cerrito business people who presently both pay a waste management fee and also contribute material to the city's recycling program. Assistant City Manager Karen Pinkos reports that in recent weeks the value of most recyclable material has "dropped dramatically."

She points out material such as paper, cardboard and plastic are currently not being bought for remanufacturing, and other material is fetching a fraction of its previous price. "This trend," Pinkos predicted, "will affect the city's recycling program in significant ways."

The city's 2008-09 budget, she explained, calls for 20% of the city's recycling program to be offset by the sale of recyclable material. The possibility of a temporary marketing freeze

may force El Cerrito to alter its budget model and 10-year plan. "Staff," Pinkos declared, "will be analyzing options in advance of the upcoming annual public hearing on an increase in the integrated waste management fee which is scheduled for this month."

City staff, she added, is working to see that its recyclables are included should big recyclers be forced to store material in hopes that buyers re-emerge in the future. However, if conditions persist, it is possible that El Cerrito may not be able to take advantage of any joint storage opportunities.

In order to insure that El Cerrito's recyclables are actually recycled, not land-filled, staff is currently researching local storage options on the chance that it may become necessary for them to store this material themselves.

Lions Eye Screening

THE EL CERRITO Lions Club, an Associate Member, will host an Early Eye Detection Screening Program for residents of the local Eskaton Hazel Shirley Manor. The program, which will be held at the Manor from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, December 10, will conduct screening and referrals for degenerative eye disease for seniors living in subsidized housing.

Combined with a matching grant, the \$500 donated by the local Lions Club should be more than enough to screen every Eskaton resident who applies.

To help raise funds for their community projects, the Lions members will maintain a gift wrapping service at the El Cerrito Barnes and Noble book store from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, December 20, and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, December 24.



Chamber Officers

President John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics
First Vice President Baylan Megino, Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc.
Second Vice President Kent Langston, Orchard Supply Hardware
Secretary-Treasurer Charlie Weaver, Certified Public Accountant
Past President Blaine Davis, Edward Jones

Staff

Manager Sewall Glinternick
Secretary Pat Berndt

*You are invited to attend a
Chamber holiday luncheon*

Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2008 • noon • \$18 per person

Mira Vista Golf & Country Club
7901 Cutting Blvd. • El Cerrito

Reservations required by December 12th

Phone (510) 233-7040 • info@elcerritochamber.org

Calendar of Events

- Dec. 2 City Council meets, 7:30 p.m.
- 3 Board of Directors meeting, 8:30 a.m., Coldwell Banker Bartels Realty.
- 12 Stephen Linsley and Rose Stamm, "Held in a Whisper," 7-9 p.m., The Glenn Gallery of Art, 7027 Stockton Ave.
- 13 Holiday pancake breakfast, 9-11 a.m., Community Center. "One Wacky Winter" show, 10:30 a.m.
- 15 City Council meets, 7:30 p.m.
- 16 Open House Senior Center holiday party, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 6500 Stockton Ave.
- 16 Monthly luncheon meeting; see box above.
- 21 Hanukkah begins (at sundown).
- 25 Merry Christmas.

Drop In Serious Crime

ALWAYS AN ITEM OF interest to the business community, a serious crime went down during the first nine months of 2008, according to reports filed with the State of California.

According to Police Chief Scott Kirkland, a total of 1,023 Part One crimes (homicides, forcible rapes, robberies, assaults, burglaries, felonies and vehicle thefts) occurred here January through September. This was 48 fewer than reported during the same period in 2007.

A breakdown of the local 2008 Part One crime figures indicates there were 75 robberies, 107 assaults, 166 burglaries, 518 larcenies, and 157 stolen vehicles.

During the first nine months of 2008 there were 10,574 calls for police services here, 871 arrests (756 adults and 115 juveniles), 117 DUI arrests, and 180 malicious mischief cases.

Thank you!

Our deep appreciation is extended to Chamber board member **Jean Lipton** of **Early Childhood Mental Health Program**, for support in co-sponsoring the expense of printing and mailing this *Byline*.

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www.ecmhp.org

Byline

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Members of the El Cerrito
Chamber of Commerce

A Christmas Tale

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter.

Therefore, in every depiction of Santa's reindeer at Christmas—from Rudolph to Blitzen—you are looking at a female reindeer.

That shouldn't surprise you. Only a female would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost!