



Note New Address, Phone, Lunch Dates

YOUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE has a new office located at 406 Colusa Avenue (at Fairmount) in El Cerrito. The office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Manager Mark Scott will also be available on Mondays and Fridays by appointment.

The telephone number has changed. The new number is (510) 705-1202. To send a fax, dial (510) 705-1206.

E-mail contact for Manager Scott is: manager@elcerritochamber.org.

Luncheon meeting dates have been shifted, too. Monthly business luncheons will be held on the *second Wednesday* of each month at Mira Vista Golf & Country Club. Effective with this month's meeting, the cost will be \$20 for members who reserve in advance. For all non-members and members who show up at the door without a reservation the price is \$25.

New President Speaks

IN HER INAUGURAL address new El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce President Baylan Megino called on the membership to build new relationships and strengthen old ones. "The world," she told a packed house at this year's installation of new officers, "has changed and we must change with it. Old ways of doing business no longer are sufficient to succeed."

In these uncertain times, Megino declared, "we must be clear on why we are in business, and what we uniquely provide to our community." She pointed out that today's customers find the businesses they patronize on line, through print ads and other visuals, and through referrals.

"This year," Megino told the group, "I am focusing on providing opportunities for our members to gain exposure to the community and to each other, business to consumer, business to business, and business to government."

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Installation 2009



Deborah Stevens, Marketplace Magazine

Incoming President, Baylan Megino, accepts the gavel from last year's President, John Stashik, at the Chamber's 73rd installation meeting held on January 27.

Also installed were directors Nick Bolla, Marsha Conwill, Blaine Davis, Francie Esparza, Tracy Giles, Kent Langston, Judy Pope and Lori Treviño.

From Sewall Glinternick: A Word In Parting

AS I RETIRE as Manager of your Chamber I feel like a rat leaving the sinking ship. Thankfully, the Chamber leadership has granted me this last chance to ease my conscience. Now I can finally say out loud what so many in El Cerrito have said privately: While those at city hall are singing optimistic sea chanteys, this community's ship of state is headed directly for the rocks of economic disaster.

This city's leaders continue to concentrate almost exclusively on boosting housing instead of doing something to shore up our rapidly eroding tax base. It's time for them to forget about attracting more population which, in the end, will create a demand for additional expensive city services.

This is the time for city hall to concentrate exclusively on attracting more new businesses and additional sales tax revenue! The fact this city desperately needs more tax revenue was emphasized recently when the



Deborah Stevens, Marketplace Magazine

City Council was asked to consider paying EBMUD to collect a users' tax on water bills—something the city was legally entitled to do, but hadn't done since the UUT was established in the 1990's. In fact, the Council was asked to consider collecting this tax retroactively for the last three years—which they're also legally entitled to do.

Instead of dumping a big tax bill on the citizens and major business users of

► See A Word In Parting, page 2

Welcome
NEW MEMBERS

■

GOLDEN GATE FIELDS
Michael Roberts
1100 Eastshore Hwy., Berkeley 94710
(866) 928-7223
www.goldengatefields.com
mroberts@goldengatefields.com

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Alfredo Valencia
11252 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito 94530
(510) 307-4312

More from Installation 2009



Deborah Stevens, Marketplace Magazine

Alisha Manandhar and Kiana Ward were the two winners of the Chamber's annual scholarship award funded by A Taste of El Cerrito. Both received \$1500. The awards are made each year to El Cerrito High School students. Left: El Cerrito Mayor Sandi Potter and Mayor Pro Tem Janet Abelson attended the installation meeting. Mayor Potter installed the new officers and directors.

A WORD IN PARTING

Continued from page 1

water, it would be a lot smarter to let new businesses supply the needed money!

Rather than casting about for some developer with enough ready cash to supply the city with enough money to buy out the people who own the empty El Cerrito Target store (a buyer which the Community Development Manager admits would be hard to find), what's needed is a prospective tenant with enough

cash who isn't afraid to go head-to-head with the new Target store in Richmond.

That tenant is, hold on to your hat, *Walmart!*

Walmart wanted to come here years ago, but were rejected by a reluctant community. But, the economy has change a lot since those days, and we're willing to bet our already over-burdened taxpayers would be willing to welcome them now with open arms.

Our city should move immediately to try and convince the company that one of their smaller core-city business models would be a perfect fit for the empty Target store. Even if they fail in their attempt, at least news that they were trying to deal with Walmart might just be enough to get Target working

extra hard on bringing in a new business to fill the space.

It would be a win-win situation for the city. If our officials can't pull it off, I suggest they call on former city councilwoman Kathie Perka for help. She has a proven track record for organizing community efforts that attract business. It was Perka who collected 10,000 signatures on a petition that prompted a

“That tenant is, hold on to your hat, Walmart!”

department store to attempt to locate here (it matters not that the firm was turned down by a city that later approved spending millions of dollars on a movie house in response to a petition with a mere 1,600 names).

It was Perka, who after being voted out of office by a bunch of voters who had been badly misled by a vicious hit piece, still managed to mount a public campaign which was credited for convincing Trader Joe's to locate here.

Perhaps, if the city asks her nicely, she'd be willing to try and get Walmart to move into the empty Target store. Then the city treasury would benefit, the citizens would have an interesting place to shop—and I could retire with a clean conscience.

PRESIDENT SPEAKS

Continued from page 1

To this end, she pledged to have, in addition to monthly luncheons, annual fundraisers and Day at the Races, more ribbon cuttings, mixers, and joint events with neighboring Chambers. “We will encourage you to think global and buy local,” she said. Pointing out that people do business with those they know and trust, the new Chamber president called on the membership to seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

“I invite you all,” she added, “to participate more in our Chamber's activities. Your active participation can only serve to help your business and strengthen the community.”

**Chamber Race Day
Wed., April 22**

\$35 includes Turf Club,
Valet Parking, Program,
& Delicious Lunch Buffet.



GOLDEN GATE FIELDS

Reserve now! (510) 705-1202

Call for New Theater Business Plan

THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY Board has given Downey Street Productions, operators of the Cerrito Theater, until March 5 to provide the city with a new business plan “that demonstrates that the theater can successfully operate.”

With the theater reported to be over a year behind in its \$10,000 a month rent payments, in late January the Agency Board wrote Downey Street’s Catherine and Kyle Fischer their review of the movie house’s situation was the result of the company’s “failure to submit rent payments as well as the failure to provide the Agency with timely financial reports.”

“The Agency goal,” the letter pointed out, “has been to ensure the continued operation of the Cerrito Theater, which arises from the belief that the Cerrito is a community asset and that it is in the city’s and Agency’s best interest to ensure the viability and success of the theater.” The Agency’s letter went on to say the theater has served as “a wonderful addition to the El Cerrito community.”

City Extremely Disappointed

However, the Board pointed out, it was “extremely disappointed that Downey Street has not fulfilled its obligations per the lease agreement.” The city’s letter said the Fischers had been unable to provide an accurate financial picture of the theater’s operations “so that the Board might understand the events and issues that have brought us to this point.”

“The Board,” the letter added, “is also disappointed with the lack of communication to the Agency regarding Downey Street’s inability to fulfill the terms of the agreement until the situation had deteriorated to this level.” The city’s letter goes on to say its review had presented some concerns, and that the Agency Board was placing Downey Street Productions on notice that an Event of Default has occurred under the lease and the Disposition Development and Loan Agreement.

“The Board,” the Agency wrote, “is not electing to terminate the lease at this time,” adding that it was their expecta-

tion that, while Downey Street and the Agency work to resolve these issues, Downey Street will continue to operate the theater as required by the lease.”

The letter mentioned that the Fischers had already indicated that, with restructuring of the current lease obligations and relief of some of the current debt obligations that arose as part of the theater construction, the theater can successfully operate.

Need To See Business Plan

“Before the Agency can consider restructuring the lease and debt obligation,” the city wrote, “the Agency needs to see your business plan, modeled with the relief you requested. If that business plan demonstrates that the theater can successfully operate, the Agency Board will consider your proposal”

The Agency Board also called on Downey Street to provide financial information no later than February 6, 2009, so that the accounting consultants can provide them with a complete financial statement for 2008. “If for any reason, you fail to meet these deadlines,” the city wrote the Fischers, the Agency Board will have no choice but to consider terminating the lease and pursuing its remedies pursuant to the lease...regarding the defaults, including full repayment of the loan.”

If Downey Street is not interested in pursuing the option outlined by the Agency, the city wrote that it was “willing to work with Downey Street to find a new theater operator following the provisions of Section 9 of the lease regarding Assignments and Subletting.”

The city’s letter concluded by saying: “Again, the intention of the Agency Board is to continue the relationship with Downey Street Productions by possibly revising the Cerrito Theater lease agreement...It is the hope of the El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency that terms can be agreed upon to ensure the continued successful operation of the Cerrito Theater, and we are optimistic that the relationship between the Agency and Downey Street will be successful for years to come.”



Completes Mayfair Block Purchase

THE CITY COUNCIL voted 4-to-1 last month to enable the development of the “Mayfair Block” adjacent to the Del Norte BART station by buying the last parcel of land in the area that it didn’t already own.

The city will pay \$3,333,750 for the one-acre parcel at 11600 San Pablo Avenue, giving the Redevelopment Agency full ownership of all the land on the block bordered by San Pablo Avenue, Knott Avenue, Kearney Street, and Cutting Boulevard.

The lone vote against the purchase was cast by Councilmember William C. Jones III, chairman of the Redevel-

opment Agency Board and member of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. Jones told fellow Board members that, in the light of current financial conditions nationwide, they would be paying a premium price for the land. “At this price,” Jones warned, “we can’t afford to hang on to this property very long. We’re going to have to get busy and find someone to develop this land right away.”

Over the past 15 years there have been numerous efforts to promote development of this area. From the earliest proposals, the inability of the Redevelopment Agency or any other party to control the entire block has obstructed

development. Early last month the Council was told that repeated attempts by developers to purchase this land have been unsuccessful and was a waste of time and energy for all parties.

In the spring of 2005 the Olson Company approached the city with a proposal to develop 58 condominium units and 11,000 square feet of commercial space on the entire Mayfair Block.

For over two years the city staff worked with Olson on a comprehensive development plan for this land. However, in the fall of 2007 Olson abandoned the El Cerrito project due to the downturn in the housing market.



El Cerrito
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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El Cerrito Roundup

IN MARKETPLACE MAGAZINE

Coming soon! Watch for details.

March Business Luncheon

Wednesday, March 11 • 12-1:30 p.m.

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

New prices: \$20 for pre-paid members only
\$25 admission at the door, and for all non-members

Guest Speaker: El Cerrito Mayor Sandi Potter
The State of the City

Reservations required by March 6
RSVP to info@elcerritochamber.org or phone (510) 705-1202

Basketball Ticket Giveaway

EL CERRITO LIONS CLUB, a member of the Chamber, is offering the public a chance to win an evening of Golden State Warriors basketball viewed from a luxury suite. In its effort to raise funds for Lions charities and senior eye screening, the local service club is staging a drawing March 27.

Tickets, at \$5 each or five for \$20, may be purchased by sending a check to Lion Vena Flint, 2212 Scenic Street, El Cerrito, CA 94530. First prize is four tickets and a VIP parking pass to the Warriors-San Antonio Spurs game on April 13. Second prize will be two tickets to the game with the Houston Rockets on April 10, and third prize will be two tickets for the game with the New Orleans Hornets on April 3.

Chamber Officers

President	Baylan Megino, White Light Associates
First Vice President	John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics
Second Vice President	Michelle Blackwell, EBMUD
Secretary-Treasurer	Charlie Weaver, Certified Public Accountant
Past President	John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics

Staff

Manager	Mark L. Scott
Secretary	Pat Berndt

Calendar of Events

- March 1** "Thirst" screens at the Cerrito Theater, 2 p.m., free. Sponsored by the El Cerrito Environmental Quality Committee.
- 2** City Council meets, 7:30 p.m., City Hall.
- 3** Jimmy Cox, Scholarship and Outreach Coordinator at Contra Costa College, talks on what teens can do now to start planning for college. EC Library, 4 p.m.
- 4** Chamber Board of Directors meets, 8:30 a.m., Coldwell Banker Bartels.
- 6-8** "Nine" at Contra Costa Civic Theatre. www.ccct.org
- 7** Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); new series begins. www.elcerritokeningtoncert.org
- 16** City Council meets, 7:30 p.m., City Hall.
- 26** Steve Fainaru, El Cerrito resident, Pulitzer Prize winner and foreign correspondent for the *Washington Post*, will discuss his book "Big Boy Rules." 7 p.m., EC Library.

Byline

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