



Manager's Minute

MARK SCOTT

HEALTH CARE is one service used by everyone in our community. There is a national debate underway in this country regarding health care reform. Regardless of on which side of the aisle you sit you probably have a health care issue that could use some reform. My family is no different. Collectively, our family has a number of issues we would like to see resolved.

A number of years ago a close friend lost his job due to a health care condition. He lost his health insurance and later died leaving hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid bills. The surviving spouse later lost her home. According to the health care industry they did not take her home or sponsor the liquidator who sold everything including the family wedding albums. But who hired the collection agency? That experience introduced me to a new term: medically indigent. *Reformers save me from that fate.*

As my own children went away to college, both ultimately seeking advanced degrees, another issue arose. Reaching the upper age limits of our

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Expo August 20th

STEVEN K. BUSTER, President and Chief Executive Officer of Mechanics Bank will be the keynote speaker for the West County Business Expo on Thursday, August 20th. Mr. Buster will open the event with his keynote address at 4 p.m. Additional elected officials and local dignitaries will also be in attendance. The event will take place at the Pinole Shores Business Park.

The Expo features free admission including free food and beverages. West county businesses may showcase their business at a reserved booth. Entertainment and music will be featured. A por-

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Abbey Carpet of El Cerrito, a long-time Chamber member, was the firm selected to provide new carpeting for the landmark Fox Oakland theater. Story on page 2.

Editorial

State Budget: A Ponzi Scheme?

BY MARK SCOTT

WE HAVE A BUDGET. We don't have a budget. The *West County Times* newspaper headline read "A Budget, Sort Of." The state budget is apparently \$27 billion shy on a \$100 billion budget. Lawmakers are feeling the heat for sure. Regardless of which side of the aisle you are on there are a lot of painful decisions to be made. Unfortunately it seems that there is great reluctance to actually solve the budget dilemma. When too few dollars meet greater demands for service something must give. Or so it would be in your house or mine.

After the obligatory words serially blaming the economy and the dysfunctional provisions of the state constitution the Legislature got down to the business of the people and promptly (*heh-heh*) cobbled together an agreement that punishes students, delays current year expenses and raids city and county coffers. By press time the impacts to local governments are just emerging.

Locally, the so-called pushdown will cost the City of El Cerrito \$800,000 in general fund money in the form of a "loan." The state will also appropriate \$2 million or more from the Redevelopment Agency.

In that case, my wife and kids appropriate my funds all the time. As the

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Theater Re-opens

THE HISTORIC Cerrito Theater in El Cerrito re-opened on July 15th under the management of Rialto Cinemas. Truly one of the City's hidden treasures, the Cerrito now features first run and special events in the restored art deco style building of the 1930s. Adult admission is \$9. Seniors, children and bargain matinees are \$7.

Currently showing is "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince." Offering standard movie snacks, Rialto plans to expand the food and beverage menu soon.

For information and showtimes call (510) 273-9102.

Abbey of El Cerrito Rolls Out the Carpet for the Fox Oakland

RON CODRON sees his work walked on all the time. As the owner of Abbey Carpet of El Cerrito for thirty-five plus years, that is not too unusual. However, a recent job has brought more than a little welcome notice.

Abbey Carpet of El Cerrito was selected to provide the carpet for the Fox Theater in Oakland. The job was rather large when compared to the average home totaling just under 8,000 square feet. Abbey feels that the job was a “huge success” for them.

The special order carpet that fills the lobby, common areas and aisles, gives the theater the style and opulence of the Bellagio in Las Vegas. Fox theater developer Phil Tagami spared little in the restoration of the landmark 1928 queen of the Fox movie house chain.

The Fox closed in 1966 and fell into a declining spiral of disrepair despite attaining landmark status in 1978. The totally restored

jewel, which was at one time described as the “largest urban urinal,” will once again be an entertainment destination marked by rich colors, gold leaf, luxurious appointments and beautiful designs.

Many years in the making, the restoration project has gone through 28 public hearings and three dozen community outreach meetings. Tickets for all showings, beginning in early August, are available through usual sources. The theater is located at 1807 Telegraph Avenue in downtown Oakland.

Abbey Carpet received an award for the outstanding work on the project and permanent note will accrue in the company name. With more than a little understated pride, Ron Codron describes the his business as good as one can expect in this economy. The secret to his success is treating customers fairly and with respect. Longevity helps, as does the branding of El Cerrito, as a regional draw.



John Stashik

MANAGER'S MINUTE

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group plans their coverages were terminated. My youngest was able to get health care through a university sponsored student plan. After her Ph.D. she was no longer eligible for the student plan and spent five nail biting months before new employment brought her health care coverage again. When my son matured out of our health plan we opted to obtain a personal medical plan at prevailing rates. He spent multiple years with dual coverage because the state had made student medical coverage mandatory (at a cost). *Reformers save children's children from that fate.*

STATE BUDGET

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details of this grab on local money emerge I'm sure the consequences will be devastating as local agencies have already adopted (by law and on time) the pared back budgets that these economic times allow.

WEST COUNTY EXPO

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tion of booth rental charges will be rebated to local chambers of commerce.

The event is sponsored by the chambers of commerce in west Contra Costa

It had always been our plan to retire to Arizona and live the carefree life of retirees. That was before we discovered that neither of our health care options offered nationwide (or even next state) coverage. I am the holder of pre-existing conditions (38 years of firefighting does take its toll) and thus not eligible to start with a health care plan from scratch. *Reformers save me from my pre-existing conditions. Reformers give my health care plan portability.*

Then we thought we might just domicile in the two states. But recently, good friends trying that gambit were advised to establish a single permanent

domicile within the coverage area. *Reformers let me determine where I will live.*

What are your issues? Send us an e-mail. I have been blessed with all of the excellence that our health care system delivers and am satisfied with the results. El Cerrito is filled with a fine stable of medical service providers many of whom belong to the Chamber of Commerce. I realize that the national health care debate tends to focus on costs and who pays those costs but there are real underlying issues that need to be addressed. I hope reform issues don't get dropped as a focus in the debate.

Less educational support and higher tuition and fees. Deferring year end payrolls into the next fiscal year. “Borrowing” from local governments with interest and principal payments to be paid in the future. Confiscation of

money from agencies charged with rebuilding local business.

It sounds like the solution for the fiscal crises is to defer solutions to the future. Now what exactly is the definition of a Ponzi scheme?

County, including the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. Information may be obtained from Deanna Million at (510) 724-4484.

Applications are available at the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce (www.elcerritochamber.org). Or e-mail directly to pinolechamber@yahoo.com.

Using A Professional License to Your Advantage

THE CALIFORNIA Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) reminds us that unlicensed business activity costs California consumers millions of dollars every year. The DCA issues more than 2.5 million licenses in over 250 professions and ensures that industry professionals meet minimum education, competency, and ethical standards. Licensing of professionals helps ensure a level playing field in the marketplace.

Those operating without a license are operating illegally. Unscrupulous operators can cost you money and time. Some victims of fraud-based business deals have lost their savings and reputations too. Many unlicensed operators are unskilled and dishonest.

Common practices among unlicensed operators include gross underbidding, failure to pay federal, state, and local taxes, and abusing employee wage and benefit protections.

According to the DCA, unlicensed business activity is rampant in California. Licensed professions include doctors and medical professionals, beauticians, contractors, veterinarians, cosmetologists, and roofing contractors. See the DCA Web site for a complete listing of licensed professions.

We have all heard of horror stories of those victimized. You can take simple steps to ensure that you avoid falling prey to unlicensed business activity.

- Protect your business and your good name by displaying your California license prominently.
- Show your license to prospective clients.
- Help clients understand that hiring a licensed professional protects them.
- Hire and subcontract with licensed professionals.
- Report known or suspected unlicensed activity to the DCA.

To check a license, report unlicensed activity, or file a complaint: call (800) STOPULA. The Web site is: www.InquireBeforeYouHire.ca.gov.

"Inquire before you hire," the slogan for DCA, is a good way to remember this important activity. Businesses should be able to use licensing requirements as part of their own marketing campaign thus reinforcing this important requirement in the eyes of the client.

Art on Pomona Ave.



The public was treated to an art exhibit and sale by members of the El Cerrito Art Association at the city's annual Fourth of July celebration.

Shoot On Site Photo Services

A Message from the Richmond Chamber of Commerce

BY JUDY MORGAN

THE RECENT DECISION by a Contra Costa judge, made at the request of Communities for a Better Environment, to halt Chevron's modernization project is having a deep impact on Richmond. In addition to stopping a project that the Bay

CR
CCO

Area Air Quality Management District concluded would have improved air quality in Richmond, the decision has cost over 1,000 local workers their jobs.

While some are claiming the court decision is a victory for Richmond, in reality, this is a difficult loss for the city at a time we can least afford it. I wanted to take this opportunity to share with chamber members a quote from an op-ed submission by city council member Nat Bates to the *Contra Costa Times*.

"By stopping this project these irreconcilable organizations, which are mostly non-Richmond residents, will kill 1,300 jobs, eliminate \$61 million in spending on programs that help

Richmond residents and prevent the refinery from making upgrades to its equipment that improve air quality. If you truly care about Richmond, you should be doing everything in your power to maintain existing jobs and create new ones, not take them away."

It's hard to add much to that comment. All I hear are dominos falling. This lawsuit and the stoppage of work are impacting small, medium and large businesses alike.

It's a bleak picture and it punctures my usual good humor and sense of hope for the "city of pride and purpose." In the last several years Richmond has turned it around. Their financial picture looked pretty rosy a few weeks ago. Now it's weighing layoffs and the business community is reeling. The longer this impasse continues the harder it will be for Richmond to recover.

I urge everyone involved to quickly resolve this. Add your voice and let your local leaders know how this will impact you personally.

Judy Morgan is President and CEO of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce.



El Cerrito

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Our deep appreciation is extended to Francie Esparza and the staff at the El Cerrito Mechanics Bank office for support in co-sponsoring the expense of printing and mailing this *Byline*.



Mechanics Bank

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Calendar of Events

- August 5** Chamber Board meets; Del Norte Place meeting room (next to String's Italian Cafe), 8:30 a.m.
- 8** Cinema in the Park showing "Back to the Future" at Cerrito Vista Park. Free, movie starts at dusk.
- 13** San Pablo Ave. Specific Plan community workshop; City Council chambers, 6 p.m.
- 17** City Council meets; City Hall, 7:30 p.m.
- 20** West County Business Expo; Pinole Shores Business Park, 4-8 p.m.
- 22** CPR/First Aid class; fire station 72 (1520 Arlington Ave.), 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Advance registration required. Call (510) 215-4450. (Next class: Sept. 19.)

Byline

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