



Manager's Minute

MARK SCOTT

LAST MONTH the Chamber held two successful events that we hope will become part of our blueprint for the future. The first event was the State of the City presentation by Mayor Janet Abelson held March 10th. The second was a very successful mixer at D'Jour Floral & Antiques on March 24th. Thanks to Judy Pope, a good number of people attended the mixer to support our new opera.

City Manager Scott Hanin will attend our next meeting of the Board of Directors of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce to discuss how the City and the Chamber can work together to support the business community.

We have tried new approaches to increase the attendance at our meetings and gatherings. Some have worked well, others not as well, but we'll keep trying. Under the leadership of President Stashik we are increasing our visibility in the community by taking active roles in the West County Chambers along the I-80 corridor. If you have not attended the West County Chambers Business Breakfast you are missing an excellent networking and business education opportunity. We have a reciprocal agreement with many local chambers that allow attendance at the member rate. We are beginning to explore ways that the Albany Chamber of Commerce and the El Cerrito Chamber can work together.

Tough times call for hard decisions and solutions, but sometimes you just have to maximize the benefits of your local Chamber. Hope to see you at one or more of our sponsored events!

CHAMBER MIXER
Tues., April 27 · 4:30 p.m.
 Chamber of Commerce office
 406 Colusa Ave., EC

Mixer D'Jour



John Stashik

Among the crowd at D'Jour Floral & Antiques March 24th champagne mixer were Paul Sugarman, President, Berkeley Opera; Marsha and Joe Conwill, Tradeway Carpets; Mark Figone, East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc.; and Alexander Kort, Production/Stage Manager of the Berkeley Opera.

Petition Drive Seeks to Stop State Raids

BY MARK SCOTT

CALIFORNIANS TO PROTECT Local Taxpayers and Vital services is a coalition of local governments, transportation advocates, business, labor, public safety and others that is working to place the Local Taxpayers, Public Safety and Transportation Protection Act on the November 2010 ballot. The Act would close loopholes caused by state machinations to raid local funds and prevent state borrowing, raiding, or otherwise redirecting local government, transportation, or public transit funds. Sponsors are hopeful that a favorable enactment of the initiative would end more than a decade of raids on local funds by the state.

Every lawsuit by joint local government has been validated by the courts. Every defeat by the court has found the legislature massaging judicial language to mount ever new unwarranted attacks usurping local funds.

The campaign to protect local services reached a major milestone this week as more than 850,000 signatures have been gathered in record time. The original goal was to gather 820,000 signatures by mid-April which would have provided a strong statement to Sacramento in itself. The petition drive is in full swing and well over one million signatures is not impossible.

Petition drives of this strength often signal great public dissatisfaction with the status quo. To obtain a petition, sign a petition or to get more information: www.SaveLocalServices.com. Petitions can be signed in the Chamber office.

New Members

Cerrito Printing
 1600 Kearney St., EC
 (510) 232-3200

Salesian High School
 2851 Salesian Ave., Richmond
 (510) 234-4433

Self Sustaining Communities
self-sustainingcommunities.org
 (510) 527-6202

Reinvestments

Gate View Painting Co.

Good Stuff Thrift Shop

Unique Law



The
**President's
Palaver**
JOHN C. STASHIK

D'JOUR FLORAL & ANTIQUES hosted a champagne mixer last month and it was a winner. I counted about 35 people attending which made for productive networking; and that's what these events are mainly about. Representatives of the Berkeley Opera, which now performs here in El Cerrito, were also present. Superb food, raffle prizes (including a \$100 gift certificate at Trader Vic's), and plenty of friendly people made for a great evening. Look for more of these super mixers in the coming months.

State of the City

Mayor Janet Abelson attended our March luncheon meeting and provided an update on happenings around City Hall and town. Your Board of Directors decided to increase publicity and attendance by notifying *every* El Cerrito business and inviting members and non-members alike. Much of the background work involving publicity was handled by First Vice President Michelle Blackwell. The turnout made the extra effort worth it. Business people want to be in the loop and after a good lunch and the Mayor's talk, everyone leaves much more informed.

El Cerrito's Newest Park

At press time, workers are busy at the corner of Lexington and Potrero Avenues completing construction of the Bruce King Memorial Dog Park. The dedication and grand opening will be on Saturday, April 17, at 1 p.m. Offering to participate in the gala event providing free hot dogs, popcorn and drinks is park neighbor, El Cerrito Royale. A real community effort, much of the construction cost has been covered by donations from citizens and local businesses, including Safeway, Abbey Pet Hospital, and East Bay Sanitary Co.

The new park is fenced with two sections (large and small dog areas), will have water and lighting, and be a great place for citizen canines and their people to socialize. Along with a ribbon cutting there will be a commemorative gift for



El Cerrito Mayor Janet Abelson

Shoot On Site/Photo Services

the first 50 dogs and an appearance by Dr. Ian Dunbar of Sirius Dog Training fame. This park kicks the city up a notch with a recreation facility that will be much appreciated and heavily used.

Local Lore and Exercise

Living in El Cerrito for 34 years, I still find new things to see and do. David Weinstein, of the El Cerrito Historical Society, recently led a walk from Moeser Lane and Shevlin Drive, up the stairway path to Arlington Park, while pointing out some of the unique homes and architecture along the way. The outing then returned via our Hillside Natural Area. I thoroughly enjoyed the walk and encourage you to join the Historical Society. That way you'll be first to learn of any future walks. It's not only interesting to learn more about our city, but a great way to get some good exercise. Info: www.elcerritowire.com/history.

El Cerrito Business Round-Up

The Spring-Summer Round-Up advertising campaign has begun. This is a way to generate sales for your business and support the Chamber at the same time. The Round-Up section will appear in the June issue of *Contra Costa Marketplace* magazine. The publication is looking good after a redesign and is now printed on coated stock for better color. Manager Mark Scott will be contacting member businesses soon. "Shop local" is the name of the game. Tell potential customers throughout the west county area that El Cerrito is open for business.

EC Green Community

BY MARK SCOTT

YOU DO NOT want to play chicken with this woman! Among our new members this month is El Cerrito Green Community headed by Linda Schneider. At a recent Rotary luncheon Linda informed members that she did not start out to be a rebel, or even for that matter, a leader seeking social change. A soft spoken classically trained concert pianist who teaches piano, Linda's path to social action includes stints as a Montessori teacher as well as work in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Oakland.

You may have read about Linda Schneider in the *West County Times* as she has recently become known as the "Chicken Lady," an appellation that doesn't even come close to describing her commitment to social change. Linda is leading a movement to change El Cerrito's ordinance to allow homeowners to keep chickens.

When is a chicken ordinance not a chicken ordinance at all? When the keeping of chickens is limited to three six-ounce chickens which, of course, is a physical impossibility. [I love governmental absurdities. Don't you?]

"You must lead by your actions" she told the Rotary Club. She is speaking from her heart and leading with her actions. Social change through physical transformations of environment. A multitasker for sure, Linda's more recent project to transform communities with gardens includes an effort to establish fruit bearing trees in every corner of the urban environment including parking strips, apartment complex commons and backyards.

Linda has acquired the distribution rights to thousands of homeless bare root trees donated by growers. I'm sure that she will find a loving home for every tree. After all, isn't that how one person transforms the world? Besides if you play "chicken" with this lady you will lose!

Artists at The Glenn

Reception on Sat., April 10 • 1-4 p.m.
7027 Stockton Ave., El Cerrito
(510) 558-1078

Ruth Beeve, Charlotte Britton, Anne Fallin,
Elaine Frenett, Jane Hofstetter,
Charlotte Panton, and Jean Warren

New Ordinance Targets False Alarms

BY MARK SCOTT

THE CITY COUNCIL passed the first reading of a new alarm ordinance at their meeting on March 15th. The law is intended to reduce the time that the Police Department spends responding to and investigating false alarms. The Department now receives an average of 1600 such false alarms annually. Conservatively estimating the manpower cost of responding to these alarms, approximately 1200 police hours are spent each year on false alarms.

The ordinance will require that alarm owners register their home or business alarms with the Police Department within 10-days of the alarm installation. It will also mandate an alarm response fee to the owners of alarms with multiple false activations. The ordinance will not apply in any way to alarms resultant of criminal activity. The license permit fee will be \$26 dollars due initially and every two years upon renewal. The fee for a second false alarm in a year will be \$74.

The ordinance will require alarm companies to give alarm operators written and oral instructions on how to use the alarm. Monitoring companies will also have to make phone calls to the alarm operator prior to calling the police in an effort to prevent a police response to a false alarm.

Many business owners have installed highly reliable burglar and fire alarm systems which have given years of reliable ser-

vice. Other businesses are the source of repeated false alarms. A reliable system operates when needed and fails to alert when exposed to false triggers. Quality of workmanship, code compliance, completeness of coverage, accuracy, and suitability of systems all can have an influence on false alarm triggers. Maintenance (or lack of) and age of the system also influence false alarms. Building renovations can also cause hard to detect problems because modifications can obscure coverage areas, produce harmful dust and debris, and damage wiring.

Business owners will note that the fire code requires installation of a fire alarm circuit in all new burglar alarm installations. Once the second reading signals full adoption the full text of the ordinance will be posted on the City of El Cerrito Web page. It will also be available at the Police Department or mailed upon request. Lieutenant Robert De La Campa is coordinating the program. He can be reached at (510) 215-4415.

It is the intent of the Chamber to produce a booklet to help business owners increase the reliability of their systems and avoid those pesky false alarm charges. In the meantime, let's all do our best increase officer and firefighter safety by avoiding false alarms. Increased reliability of your alarm system can increase police officer and firefighter availability where it counts, *on the street*.

Unreinforced Masonry Retrofit Ordinance Update

BY MARK SCOTT

IN THE CONTINUING quest to secure some kind of aid to seventeen building owners facing deadlines for earthquake retrofit for their buildings the *Byline* published a letter last month from member Vito Wise to Congressman John Garamendi's office. With the rumored departure of the Guitar Center to Emeryville and the impending closure of El Cerrito Lighting, the shaky seventeen are increasingly fearful for mid- and south-town businesses.

It would seem that the URM ordinance is tailor made for redevelopment funds or aid. Even before the current theft of redevelopment money by our ailing state government the Redevelopment Agency claimed that there is no

money to aid the actual retrofit of the existing buildings.

The issue will surely be brought up at Contra Costa Council Small Business Task Force quarterly chamber executives and legislative representatives meeting as we endeavor to keep this vital small business issue in the public eye. The Chamber is also working with a local bank to educate loan officers and commercial lenders of the significance of the URM issue at the statewide level.

One of the criticisms of the present URM ordinance timelines is that by being an early adopter among the many communities facing this issue we would not be able to take advantage of evolving (cheaper) alternatives as they develop. No one wants earthquake

deaths related to building collapse, but then again, no one wants the center of town to be a ghost town. Especially with all the good work that has been done making El Cerrito a destination.

One promising technology, by all reports, in use in Iraq is a form of "wall paper" used to make unreinforced masonry blast proof. In buildings where this material has been applied, masonry walls subjected to external and internal blasts have bulged and returned to form without collapse.

Isn't this the point of the retrofit ordinance, to keep buildings from collapsing? Could wall paper replace retrofits? El Cerrito is too far out in front of a development curve to find out, which may be way too late for the heart of town.

Cerrito Printing New Member

ANew MEMBERSHIP for an old friend. Founded in 1960, Cerrito Printing is a full service printer that offers a complete range of design, layout, and printing services. Quality printing is their hallmark. From commercial jobs their repertoire includes brochures, NCR forms, flyers, and pretty much anything on paper.

Family owned and operated, the firm is known for personal service. Stop by 1600 Kearney Street and talk with Jayne Ramirez, or call (510) 232-3200.

"Great Expectations"
Opening Friday, April 9
Contra Costa Civic Theatre • ccct.org



Marty Kaliski mixing it up at D'Jour.



El Cerrito

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Linking Business and Community Since 1936

P.O. Box 538 • El Cerrito, CA 94530

Monthly Luncheon Meeting

**Wed., April 21 at noon • Post Meridian Restaurant
1568 Oak View Ave. at Colusa Circle, Kensington**
\$20 members with advance reservations • \$25 non-members
Please RSVP: (510) 705-1202 or info@elcerritochamber.org

Speaking: George E. Carter III

Business Services Representative
Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County

George is the only Business Services Representative for the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County. In that capacity, his role is to provide information and resources to the business and economic development communities. He has created a business engagement model that has received an award from the California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED). He has worked for Contra Costa County for the past 10 years in various capacities, mainly focusing on job/business development and community partnership.

The Berkeley Opera performing in El Cerrito

THE TENDER LAND

Saturday, April 10 8 p.m.
Friday, April 16 8 p.m.
Sunday, April 18 2 p.m.

El Cerrito Performing Arts Theater
540 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito

Tickets: (800) 838-3006 or berkeleyopera.org

Our deep appreciation is extended to the following Chamber member for support in co-sponsoring the expense of printing and mailing this *Byline*.

Tradeway Carpet Outlet

350 Carlson Blvd., Richmond
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Calendar of Events

- April 5 City Council meets; City Hall, 7:30 p.m.
- 7 Chamber Board meets; El Cerrito Royale, 8:30 a.m.
- 10 Friends of the Library book sale; EC Library, 10-5.
- 10 Free class: "How to Google"; EC Library, 10-11 a.m.
- 17 Loma Prieta Revisited; free, Cerrito Theater, 11 a.m.
- 17 Dedication of Bruce King Memorial Dog Park; Lexington & Potrero, 1 p.m.
- 19 City Council meets; City Hall, 7:30 p.m.
- 22 Carole Terwilliger Meyers will talk about her Bay Area adventures with slide show. EC Library, 7 p.m.
- 24 Free class: "Useful Web sites"; EC Library, 10-11 a.m.
- 24 Earth Day; 9 a.m.-noon. throughout El Cerrito. Pre-register by calling (510) 215-4354.
- May 2 Home Expo; Community Center, 1-5 p.m.
- June 6 Bike the Bridges Special Olympics benefit hosted by ECPD. (510) 215-4414, ext. 26, for information.

Chamber Officers

President	John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics
First Vice President	Michelle Blackwell, EBMUD
Second Vice President	Kent Langston, Honda of El Cerrito
Secretary-Treasurer	Charlie Weaver, Certified Public Accountant

Staff

Manager	Mark L. Scott
Secretary Emeritus	Pat Berndt

Byline

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