This is it, my last Byline column as your Chamber president. Truth be told, I’m not the greatest communicator in the world. If you don’t believe me, just ask my wife. I’ve often joked that coming up with something interesting or entertaining for this column every month has been the hardest part of the job for me. I’ll confess, it is quite a relief knowing that this is the last one.

It has been a privilege to serve as president of the Chamber board for four of the last five years. Those of you who have been members since the ’80s and ’90s will remember what a fantastic job Sewall Glinternick, Pat Berndt and the Chamber board did raising funds and organizing large and enthusiastically attended mixers and other Chamber events. But just as the Internet changed the way many of us do business, it also changed the way we network as business owners. Subsequently Chamber membership and participation has suffered.

When I started participating as a board member, we were struggling with membership declines and a lack of funding needed for outreach to stop the decline. But over the past five years I am comfortable saying that we have managed to turn the corner. We have gotten back to a place where membership is growing again, and we are now able to have a paid staff member to do the necessary outreach.

As I step down there are many who deserve not only my thanks, but thanks from every Chamber member. Specifically, I’d like to thank all the dedicated individuals who have served alongside of me as directors. I’ll begin with those who served but no longer hold a board seat. Thank you, Judy Pope, Michael Roberts, Marty Kaliski, Matt Khadavian, Kanti Patel, Melanie Mintz, and Bill Kuhlman. It was an honor to work with you all.

Marty’s Motors: 19 Years and Goodbye

By Chris Treadway

Marty Kaliski is realistic about the fate of his auto repair shop and the reasons behind it. “They’re tearing down the building to build housing. I believe the only way to get enough housing in the Bay Area is build enough to saturate the market,” he said.

Kaliski is familiar with the issue as a member of the city’s Economic Development Committee from 2003-11, and a joint Richmond-El Cerrito committee guiding the future of shared stretches of San Pablo Avenue.

“When we need housing. On that level I can’t object to it,” he said.

Kaliski, 72, has built a loyal clientele operating Marty’s Motors at 10929 San Pablo Ave. since 1999, but finally set a closing date of December 21st for his business to end the uncertainty of waiting to find out when the building, which also houses Connors Overhead Door, would be demolished.

The date has changed four times, he said, with the latest projection being more than a year away. Kaliski said he searched for a new location for five years, but that rents are at least twice what he is paying now.

“They don’t want auto shops in their backyard,” he said. “The only way you can have an auto shop is if it existed before and is grandfathered in.”

The Bay Area economy and housing issues played another role in his decision to close.

“It’s difficult finding technicians,” he said, because students who once took auto shop classes are now drawn to the tech world. And even though the pay is good, “they still can’t afford to live in the Bay Area. They’re all commuting.”

Election Results

Ballots have been counted for the five open seats on the Chamber board of directors. Here are the winners that begin a two year term on January 15, 2019:

- Aissia Ashoori (new director) City of El Cerrito
- Russell Doi (new director) Retirement Funding Solutions
- Mark Figone East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc.
- Sonja Givens-Thomas El Cerrito Royale
- John C. Stashik Premier Graphics
Nibs no more! The new name on the building at Orchard & San Pablo reads H&J’s Restaurant and it is ready to open soon. As I mentioned in September, Hung Tran (who owns Inn Kensington), decided to open a restaurant in the former Nibs building. Completely renovated, the new establishment will serve breakfast and lunch with a menu similar to Inn Kensington where I’ve been a happy diner for 30 years.

As some may recall, Nibs itself closed after a fire in 2013. The new H&J’s Restaurant will add to dining options in our midtown area. City Hall employees will have an additional place for lunch.

More food. Another eatery ready to open is Burgerim Gourmet Burgers at El Cerrito Plaza. Located on the San Pablo Avenue side between Dentists of El Cerrito Plaza and Miller & Stolarczuk optometry.

New housing. Hana Gardens is nearly ready to accept tenants and the new building, next to City Hall, is a major enhancement to the avenue. Stroll around the property and note the signs and pavers telling the story of the Japanese flower growers that were once a major industry here.

Congratulations. El Sobrante CoFC will honor their business of the year on January 12th. That would be Nerd Crossing. Those Nerds keep our computers running at the Chamber.

Crab feed. El Cerrito RecPark is holding this popular event on Saturday, January 26th. $50 gets you lots of crab, salad, pasta, and dessert; plus all kinds of raffle prizes. Tickets on sale now at the Community Center.

EDC. According to a city communique the Economic Development Committee has some vacancies. (Our Chamber president has a seat on the EDC.) If you want see more business in El Cerrito, this is your chance to do something. Apply by calling Sherry Kelly at 1-510-215-4305. You can also email our own Mark Figone at m.figone@elcerritochamber.org.

BART alert. Beginning February 11th, morning train service will begin one hour later to accommodate earthquake safety work on the transbay tube. Alternative bus service between 4-5 a.m. will be provided from the El Cerrito Del Norte station. This change is expected to last for over three years. More information is available from BART.

New mayor. Rochelle Pardue-Okimoto has the title for this year and wields a mean gavel.
The Chamber just wrapped up the annual holiday themed fundraising event and I believe a delightful time was had by all 46 attendees! The Berkeley Country Club’s environment is tasteful, the view is splendid, and they did an outstanding job on the buffet.

There were many generous contributions for the auction and raffle from both stalwart veterans and brand new members which the Chamber appreciates highly. On behalf of the board and from myself, our deep gratitude to you. Also, warm thanks to those guests who bid and outbid each other for these gifts! Everyone’s support is appreciated and indispensable for the Chamber to keep helping our local business community.

Special thanks to Al Miller, Eileen Libby, Walter Schweikert, John Stashik, and Sela Vee, for your valuable assistance before and during the event.

This year, I’m looking forward to having new faces and energy on the Chamber board, and in El Cerrito’s City Hall. The Chamber has been on an upward path the last few years, and as that continues, I believe our role as a voice for business, especially “mom and pop” businesses, will become more influential with city policy making. I’d like to trust that city leaders will be open to listening and compromising if necessary when it comes to reforming business issues.

The last few years seem to have brought an onslaught of regulations and issues upon many of the micro businesses in El Cerrito that they are truly struggling with. Drinking straws, plastic bags, smoking, curtains in the windows, signs, trees, bikes on sidewalks, sick leave, and of course, minimum wage hikes. Businesses must not be asked to absorb the brunt and cost of everything without giving something back in return. The Chamber is ready to work with city staff on developing ideas on how to do that.

Again, this should be an interesting year in El Cerrito, not just because women will be at the helm of both city council and staff, but because having new city leaders hopefully means new perspectives and energy committed to working together to attract, maintain and strengthen our business community. El Cerrito residents deserve it.

The Chamber has been on an upward path the last few years, and as that continues, I believe our role as a voice for business, especially “mom and pop” businesses, will become more influential with city policy making. I’d like to trust that city leaders will be open to listening and compromising if necessary when it comes to reforming business issues.

The development boom we are about to experience here in El Cerrito presents a tremendous opportunity not only for our business community but also for our Chamber. We must rally the new membership resources it will bring and continue to grow as a vibrant voice for our business community and to develop an influential voice in our community as a whole.

My family’s roots here in El Cerrito go back to the early 1900s. I am very proud of our history here. My grandfather and father were always Chamber members and supporters and I am very happy to have continued the tradition. So though I will no longer be your president, I will humbly continue to serve as a director in the coming term and beyond as you see fit. Thanks for your confidence. I do not take it for granted.
Community Police Academy: Behind the Scenes at ECPD

BY LISA MARTINENGO

I f you’ve ever been curious about the El Cerrito Police Department, how it functions, what its various departments and duties are, who the people are and what they deal with on a daily basis, I strongly encourage you to attend the upcoming Community Police Academy (CPA), a free program totally designed and produced by our police department personnel. The current plans are to offer it twice a year. The first session for this year will begin February 6th and run through March 13th on Wednesday evenings.

If you fully participate in the series of six weekly sessions and weekend field trips, you’ll come away with a deeply enhanced knowledge of and appreciation for the team of people who work hard in El Cerrito day and night to maintain a safe, peaceful city. I absolutely did!

After hearing positive things from a city employee who attended the first ever CPA, I signed up for the fall class which brought together a diverse group of 22 El Cerrito residents, each with various reasons for wanting to learn about our department and police work in general.

The sessions are about two and one-half hours, once a week, usually divided into two parts with a break complete with various snacks, coffee and water. The content and curriculum is truly an in-depth experience covering all the nuts and bolts. Currently, Officer Sarah Perez designs and coordinates the entire program, enlisting the participation of over 20 fellow officers of all ranks. Every session was taught by a member of the department who has had years of experience and training in their particular specialty.

After a warm introduction by Police Chief Paul Keith, the first session covered an overview of the department hierarchy, structure, jurisdiction, authority, entry and training requirements, patrol areas, and an insider’s tour of the building, including the “drunk tank,” holding cells and evidence room. This was a real eye-opener, as the interior of the building is definitely showing its age (60+ years?).

The second week, we were introduced to the two police dogs, Roman and Denzel, and their handlers officers Cooper and Hernandez, whom they live and work with. This included two dramatic demonstrations of the K9 doing narcotic detection work on a “suspect car” and another of the dog apprehending a suspect (an officer dressed in thick garb) by running and forcefully biting the suspect’s arm. You definitely wouldn’t want to feel those teeth!

The second half of the evening was devoted to traffic enforcement techniques and demo of the LIDAR speed tracking device on San Pablo Avenue. As officers are required to do, we first had to guess the speed of oncoming cars then aim the device at the license plate to check the accuracy of the guess. Not easy!

The next week involved an exciting interactive role-playing at a “crime scene” to show how an active investigation occurs and evidence is collected. I have to say, this exercise really got the adrenaline pumping even though it was all pretend. I was constantly made aware of how much risk the officers are putting themselves into every time they answer a certain type of call.

In following sessions we learned about more facets of public safety/police work that many in the department have taken quite extensive extra training for, including Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT), hostage negotiations, safe streets task force, school resource officers mobile field force, search and rescue, and more.

One section was devoted to use of force policies, considerations and tactics. The floor was covered with thick mats and a hardy officer in protective clothing became the “guinea pig” for live demonstrations of both taser guns and baton to detain or subdue. Again, even though it was staged, the rising tension and sense of danger that officers must feel was undeniable.

For many class attendees, the highlight of the course was the field trip to the Force Option Simulator, which involved meeting early at the station and getting a ride to Buchanan

Continued on page 5
Field in Concord, where the police department has access to a special room within a big hangar. This room houses a computer and huge screen on which hundreds of filmed live action scenarios can be viewed to help officers practice different tactics or response choices for that specific situation. We each got the opportunity to interact with rapidly evolving scenarios on the screen, by assessing the situation and making choices as to what reasonable force options such as talking, taser, baton or gun, would result in best outcome, while reducing injuries or death.

On the final night, along with a talk about investigative procedures, we also heard from the VIPs (Volunteers in Policing), four local residents that regularly work several hours a month to help out the department. Then we gathered for group photos, had some ice cream and left with much more awareness and deep appreciation for what the public safety and police team does every day in service of keeping El Cerrito as safe for everyone as possible. Go ahead and sign up now, space is limited to 18 this time!

To register for the Community Police Academy, please contact Officer Sarah Perez by phone at 1-510-820-3115 before January 21st.

Email: ecpdpr@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

www.el-cerrito.org/701/Community-Police-Academy

Tenant Protection Ordinances Adopted

By Bill Kuhlman

At the December 18th meeting, the El Cerrito City Council discussed tenant protection measures. Four proposed changes were presented for consideration.

1. Rent Review Program. Mandatory, but non-binding, mediation of rent increases greater than 5% in a year, triggered by a complaint from the renter.

2. Minimum Lease Term. Requires property owners to offer a minimum of a one-year lease period. Renters and property owners can agree on shorter periods, but a one-year lease must be an available option.

3. Termination of Tenancy. Requires property owners to provide a copy of termination notices to the city within ten days of delivery to the tenant. Allows the city to collect data and potentially study eviction activity in city.

4. Tenant Relocation. Requires property owners to compensate renters who are compelled to move out due to remodel, renovation, demolition or repurposing of a property. The amount of compensation would depend on a number of factors.

After several hours of listening to impassioned speakers on both sides, the council approved the Minimum Lease Term, Termination of Tenancy, and Tenant Relocation ordinances. No member of the city council made a motion to approve the proposed Rent Review Program, so it was not voted on or adopted.

All three ordinances require a second reading by the council and then can take effect 30 days later. The next city council meeting will be on January 15th. Interested rental property owners can comment at that time.

Jeff Wright President

REALTOR Jeffrey Wright will become the president of our Chamber of Commerce effective January 15, 2019. Below are email addresses for all officers and directors.

President
Jeffrey Wright
Jeffrey Wright Realtors
j.wright@elcerritochamber.org

Vice President
Nic Tang
Marvin Garden Real Estate
n.tang@elcerritochamber.org

Treasurer & Byline Editor
John C. Stashik
Premier Graphics
j.stashik@elcerritochamber.org

Secretary
Aissia Ashoori
City of El Cerrito
a.ashoori@elcerritochamber.org

Directors
Sil Addiego
Coldwell Banker Bartels Realty
s.addiego@elcerritochamber.org

Russell Doi
Retirement Funding Solutions
r.doi@elcerritochamber.org

Fred Fassett
Minuteman Press of Berkeley
f.fassett@elcerritochamber.org

Sonja Givens-Thomas
Retirement Funding Solutions
s.givens-thomas@elcerritochamber.org

El Cerrito Royale
El Cerrito Royale
info@elcerritochamber.org

Chamber manager

January 2019

Page 5
Karen Pinkos has one housing issue solved — her own. The incoming El Cerrito city manager moved here over the summer and has settled in ahead of taking the top administrative post.

“It’s nice having a five-minute commute after driving from Oakland for 17 years,” she said. “Being able to be in town is everything. My whole life is here anyhow.”

Pinkos has been immersed in El Cerrito issues since 2001, when she was hired as assistant to City Manager Scott Hanin. In 2006 she was named assistant city manager, and this past summer she was selected as Hanin’s replacement, becoming the first woman hired for the job in El Cerrito. In late September she was also chosen as president of the International City/County Management Association.

Housing is one of the big-picture issues Pinkos will face as she assumes her new duties, a pressing issue shared by every jurisdiction in the state.

“It’s certainly one of the biggest challenges. With all the development poised to happen here, the idea is that the avenue could be completely transformed” over the next five to 10 years, she said.

Numerous projects are either approved or under construction, with more expected to come from private investment attracted by the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. The plan, which uses proximity to BART and bus transit lines as a selling point, encourages higher density development by easing the approval process.

“The transformation of the avenue is challenging in being prepared for what all that means,” Pinkos said. “Even just construction disruption. It’s going to impact El Cerrito in multiple ways. New residents are going to want services, including traffic, safety, police and fire, along with access to city parks, recreation and other programs.”

New residential development goes hand-in-hand with boosting the city’s commercial sector. Pinkos recalled that when she arrived in El Cerrito, “It was one of the hidden gems, a bedroom city where people could find affordable housing.”

People once tended to think of the city as “a great place to live and go somewhere else to dine or shop, but that’s now changing,” she said.

“Now people want to have an identity. They choose (El Cerrito) because it has a great quality of life. I feel like it has changed. A demographic shift to more families has made a difference.”

Additional population clustered along the city’s main commercial thoroughfare should help attract new businesses to town.

“We have a walkable, transit-rich corridor,” Pinkos said. “Maybe people don’t have to leave El Cerrito to go to a restaurant or buy what they want to buy.”

El Cerrito has been “ahead of the curve” in promoting transit-oriented projects, she said, an effort that has benefited of late because “BART has been more amenable to development.”

“Once it passed the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, the council wanted to make sure people knew we were open for business,” Pinkos said. At the same time, “The loss of the Redevelopment Agency has been one of the hardest parts we’ve had to deal with. It took away one of the main tools for economic development and housing. They took away redevelopment and we have a housing crisis. I don’t think that’s unrelated.”

The state’s decision in 2011 to dissolve redevelopment programs has had ripples elsewhere, including the ongoing effort to replace the city’s small and outdated library branch. Other pressing needs include a permanent replacement for the senior center (now renamed as “activity center”), police and fire headquarters, and parks and recreation facilities.

Pinkos said the city may have little choice beyond going to voters, who have approved two sales tax increases and a city charter measure that allows enactment of a property transfer tax. Voters in 2016 rejected a bond measure to fund a new library, however.

“Once it passed the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, the council wanted to make sure people knew we were open for business,” Pinkos said. At the same time, “The loss of the Redevelopment Agency has been one of the hardest parts we’ve had to deal with. It took away one of the main tools for economic development and housing. They took away redevelopment and we have a housing crisis. I don’t think that’s unrelated.”

The voters have absolutely been very generous, and we want to show residents their tax money has been spent as promised,” Pinkos said.

“There will be more on the ballot soon, as well. The council has been very vocal about trying again for a new library. The struggle from a city government standpoint is that it is so hampered in how it can raise revenue. The way it’s set up, we’re forced to ask the voters for revenue.”

The biggest challenge with a new library is finding a location. Land acquisition is expensive and could mean taking an existing site off the property tax rolls.

“We may have to buy land somewhere or be creative. Maybe we could fit it into a development in the pipeline,” Pinkos said. “The reality is we are going to have to figure out something with land we have or that we purchase.”

The city wants to convey a task force or focus group that includes critics of the last ballot measure to work on an acceptable solution.

“After the last election we heard a lot of really good feedback that we are seriously taking into consideration to move forward,” she said. “We will be working the next year
Some employees have already departed, leaving Kaliski to work 50-hour weeks.

Kaliski came to the Bay Area from his native New York in December 1969 to see the infamous free Rolling Stones concert at Altamont. He settled in Berkeley and drove for a low-budget “hippie cab company,” working on its cars as needed. He branched out doing auto repairs in Berkeley locations and “eventually I moved here.”

Kaliski, who still lives in a west Berkeley housing co-op he helped form in the 1970s, found new respectability in the El Cerrito business community and has served as president of the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of El Cerrito.

“I started dressing more professionally,” he said. “I made a decision to look like a businessman instead of a merchant and it worked. I got a lot more respect.”

Kaliski is thinking of writing a book about his experiences and in the meantime hopes to work a couple of days a week as a repair shop service writer.

Karen Pinkos

Continued from page 6

to figure it out so we can put it on the ballot in 2020, knowing that in 2020 there’s going to be a really high voter turnout.”

Pinkos said the Chamber of Commerce has a crucial role in promoting a thriving economy.

“The city wants business and welcomes business to be part of El Cerrito,” she said. “We are working hard to improve all processes and we want to partner with the chamber. We are on the same team, on the same side.”

While the chamber or its members might differ with city policy at times, “We do better when we work together,” Pinkos said. “We are each other’s cheerleaders and ambassadors for the city. We are going to continue working together and create a thriving business community.”

Mark Sifling

510-526-4407
mark.sifling@simplelifefinancial.com

Are you a small business owner?

Simple Life is here to help you with:

- Retirement plans
- Cash flow optimization strategies
- Comprehensive financial planning
- Free initial consultation

Simple Life Financial

Marcy’s Motors

Continued from page 1

Some employees have already departed, leaving Kaliski to work 50-hour weeks.

Kaliski came to the Bay Area from his native New York in December 1969 to see the infamous free Rolling Stones concert at Altamont. He settled in Berkeley and drove for a low-budget “hippie cab company,” working on its cars as needed. He branched out doing auto repairs in Berkeley locations and “eventually I moved here.”

Kaliski, who still lives in a west Berkeley housing co-op he helped form in the 1970s, found new respectability in the El Cerrito business community and has served as president of the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of El Cerrito.

“I started dressing more professionally,” he said. “I made a decision to look like a businessman instead of a merchant and it worked. I got a lot more respect.”

Kaliski is thinking of writing a book about his experiences and in the meantime hopes to work a couple of days a week as a repair shop service writer.
The Calendar

Jan.
2 Chamber Board of Directors meets 9 a.m.
   Location TBA.
10 Cerrito Classics: “Vertigo” at Rialto Cerrito Cinemas.
   7 p.m.
15 Annual Chamber installation meeting, noon,
   El Cerrito Royale. See above.
15 City Council meets, 7 p.m., City Hall.
21 MLK Day rally and parade. Meet at City Hall 8:30 a.m.
21 Deadline for Community Police Academy applications.
26 Crab Feed for Rec-Park, 6 p.m., Community Center.
   Ticket sales end January 10.

Feb.
14 Cerrito Classics: “Pretty in Pink” at Rialto Cerrito
   Cinemas. 7 p.m.
15 “Humble Boy” premieres at 8 p.m., Contra Costa Civic
   Theatre. cct.org

El Cerrito’s Contribution to Rock

THE EL CERRITO Historical Society will present author and
music critic Joel Selvin at their annual meeting on Sunday,
January 20th, at the Community Center. The event begins at
2 p.m. and the talk will focus on El Cerrito’s own Creedence
Clearwater Revival.

Selvin, who has “followed Creedence from the Monkey
Inn to the Oakland Coliseum” both as a fan and San Francisco
Chronicle music critic, will
discuss the band’s history, first
as the Blue Velvets in El Cerrito,
then the Golliwogs, and finally
Creedence Clearwater Revival. In 1970 they were the most
popular rock band in the world and outsold the Beatles.

“I knew the band,” Joel writes, “and actually attended
recording sessions for the final album by the original band,
‘Pendulum.’”

Refreshments will be served. For additional information,
contact Dave Weinstein: davidsweinstein@yahoo.com.

A complete directory of Chamber members
   can be printed from the website:
   www.elcerritochamber.org

Meet the City Manager
at the annual Installation Meeting

Karen Pinkos
CHAMBER LUNCHEON
Tuesday, January 15
Noon to 1:30 p.m.
El Cerrito Royale
3rd Floor meeting room
6510 Gladys Ave., El Cerrito
RSVP to info@elcerritochamber.org
$20 ($22 credit cards or PayPal)
Online reservation:
www.elcerritochamber.org

Lunch prepared by CAFE N!NE
Meeting space courtesy of El Cerrito Royale