From the President

MATT KHADIVIAN

I WANT TO take this opportunity to extend a BIG thank you to our past president, Jeffrey Wright, as well as all the directors and members of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce for enduring an almost unimaginable past couple of years, largely because of COVID-19. Your hard work and efforts are greatly appreciated, and I am honored to be chosen for the role of president of the chamber of commerce moving forward.

As you know, the pandemic has taken its toll on many aspects of our lives and societies, and the Chamber has not been immune to its effects either. Unfortunately, many businesses did not make it through the pandemic; and many of those that did are barely putting the pieces back together. The Chamber’s vitality is directly tied in with the vitality of its local commerce. As such, although the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce is still here, it is also putting its pieces back together.

■ See From the President, page 7

Officer Installation

DIRECTORS listed below will be installed for their 2023-2024 term at the January 4th board of directors meeting at 9 a.m. by Zoom. They were reelected without opposition; with a fifth seat vacant, to be filled as soon as possible, per the Nominating Committee.

Aissia Ashoori City of El Cerrito
Mark Figoni East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc.
Scott Harris ClientClicks
John C. Stashik Premier Graphics

Officers for year 2023 serve a one year term and are as follows:

President Matt Khadivian
Vice President Kevin O’Neal
Secretary Aissia Ashoori
Treasurer John C. Stashik

January 2023

El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce
Linking business and community since 1936

10895 San Pablo Ave. • El Cerrito, CA 94530 • 1-510-705-1202

ElCerritoChamber.org

A Fond Farewell to a True El Cerrito Icon

Janet Abelson, city council member for a record breaking 23 years, and a long time member of this Chamber of Commerce, received an official El Cerrito street name sign from Byline editor John C. Stashik at her December 20th retirement meeting at a standing room only city council meeting.

BY JOHN C.stashik

TWENTY-THREE years of city council meetings requires stamina, commitment, and a sincere desire to do what is best for the community. A capacity crowd of friends, family, and City staff, packed the El Cerrito city council chambers on December 20th to witness the end of an era as Janet Abelson moved from the dais to the audience amid a hearty round of applause.

Abelson was lauded by her colleagues, public officials, and everyday citizens for her many years of service. The council adopted an official resolution proclaiming “extreme gratitude and recognition” for her dedication to the City. Mayor Gabe Quinto presented the document, mounted in a custom made frame, to Janet.

Six city council terms and a total of five years as mayor are records that will not be broken for many years, if ever.

The new El Cerrito minimum wage effective January 1, 2023, is $17.35 per hour. The new Richmond minimum wage is $16.17 per hour.
Happy New Year. After the COVID-19 fiasco of 2020 which ran into 2021-2022, I think this year will be great. Remember country singer John Conlee’s song “Rose Colored Glasses”? I’m wearing them. To be sure, the ‘rona is still out there along with myriad other viruses, but vaxx mixed with common sense will help you survive and thrive.

Appreciation. Atop my list of to-dos is soliciting some cool raffle prizes for the City’s annual employee appreciation party to be held later this month. The event recognizes the many City workers who keep El Cerrito running, even through furloughs and pay cuts—which, fortunately, are now in the rear view mirror. As raconteur Phil the Barber would say: “they’re the sticks that stir the drink.” So I will be contacting y’all very soon. Be generous.

Post-deli life. It was nice meeting Renegade Deli Heiress Schatzie Frisch at the North Berkeley Winter Festival last month. Readers fondly recall her from The Junket; her family owned the place for over 40 years. This time she was the Snoball Queen tossing Snoballs instead of headcheese. Bruno is happy at 91.

It’s finally over. The local emergency that began in March 2020 with the pandemic has now been rescinded. City Hall is open for business 8 to 4 Monday, Wednesday, and alternate Fridays; 8 to 6 Tuesday and Thursday.
The new El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce president knows what it takes to best serve local businesses.

He runs one of the city’s most popular eateries and has managed to thrive in challenging times.

He is Matt Khadivian, the owner of El Mono Peruvian Restaurant at 11720 San Pablo Ave., Suite B, and he’s ready to use his real-world business and crisis experience to lead the Chamber of Commerce.

“We exist to make your business stronger,” Khadivian said, addressing the hundreds of diverse businesses in El Cerrito. “Serving our members so we can all succeed is my highest priority.”

Khadivian, who had served as vice president under outgoing President Jeffrey Wright, takes the reins on January 4th and will be supported by new Vice President Kevin O’Neal, owner of Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar. Khadivian credits Wright for his mentorship and vision in helping set the stage for this leadership transition.

Khadivian originally opened a coffee shop in El Cerrito back in 2012, but soon after converted the venue into a Peruvian eatery, after the competitive pressure from a nearby drive-through Starbucks proved to be financially unbearable. That venue now stands as El Mono Restaurant, a dynamic El Cerrito business with beloved cuisine.

Among the favorites at El Mono are the world renowned Peruvian Ceviche and easy protein-and-rice plates.

Khadivian, an energetic and experienced entrepreneur, plans to focus his Chamber leadership on member services, marketing, policy advocacy with City leaders, and growing El Cerrito as a destination for shoppers, diners, and those seeking other services.

“When we all work together, we can better retain El Cerrito consumers’ dollars while bringing in more consumers from the region and beyond.”

Retired! Maintenance superintendent Bill Driscroll was recognized by city council on December 6th for his 24 years of service to the City of El Cerrito.

New mom, Assistant City Manager Alexandra Orologas, was in the audience at the recent city council meeting with baby Theo, just three months old. Alex has been on parental leave so it was a very pleasant surprise to see her at City Hall.

Red Oak Realty on Fairmount is doing a major remodel on their office. “New and improved…”

United against hate. A new supply of posters have become available and City Council Member Paul Fadelli and myself will be back on the streets urging El Cerrito businesses to display them. Help from other Chamber members would be appreciated as we will cover all business districts.

Thanks come from the El Cerrito Fire Department for making the 2022 U.S. Marines Toys for Tots campaign a big success with over 1600 donations. Business participants included: Doherty’s Truck Rental, NUG, Elevation 66 Brewing Co., Fatapple’s, and Sound Precision Chiropractic, among others. Other Chamber members who helped the effort include the El Cerrito Rotary Club and City of El Cerrito.

Shout out to Code Enforcement for the fast action on getting the Rob’s Auto lot, mentioned here last month, cleaned up. Steven Mello, the “code guy,” is busier than a one-armed paper hanger but gets it all done. To those who like to keep EC looking good, thank Steve.
Serial entrepreneur, Jay Scott, started his local business with a bundle of inspiration.

“My daughter was on the way and I needed to provide for our family,” Scott said, chuckling. “I loved working for a world class agent, but it became clear that I needed to start my own business again.”

Almost two years later—and with a baby boy now added to his family—Jay Scott State Farm is a growing local success story. Scott’s secret is simple: He and his five member team are deeply committed to the local residents and business owners of the East Bay community.

With a goal of saving every customer money during a challenging financial period fueled by the pandemic, while better protecting their assets, incomes and families, it’s no wonder Jay’s local team is eliciting rave reviews from customers. A quick Google search reveals that Jay Scott State Farm is stacking five-star customer reviews at an enviable rate.

Most importantly is Jay and the team’s commitment to a deeper purpose: funding climate action projects to fight the climate crisis; including planting over 60,000 trees in 2022 alone.

“I hope anyone for whom our mission resonates would come in and see if we can improve their family’s overall financial wellbeing.”

Scott invites anyone to come in for a free consultation. Simply call, text, email or show up to his local office near the El Cerrito Plaza and he and his expert team will evaluate your needs and provide a personal price plan.

“Anyone who has assets, income or a family to protect, I want our team to be a resource for,” Scott said.

Scott emigrated to the U.S. from his native New Zealand in 2017. His background is in growth consulting in the high-tech sector. He was inspired to take his talents into starting his own State Farm insurance and financial services business by his mentor, Santa Clarita-based State Farm Agent Kirk Baker.

Scott opened his local office on March 1, 2021.

“Now is an important time for anyone to consider State Farm’s services,” Scott said.

Home owners face a backlash from many insurance companies who are raising rates or making it difficult to keep (or get) a policy due to the rising costs of wildfires in California. State Farm’s financial strength has allowed them to avoid this for the most part; remaining price competitive and available where other companies are not.

Meanwhile, local business owners who’ve struggled to manage during the pandemic can now benefit from State Farm’s #1 ranking as Small Business Insurer according to JD Power and Investopedia; fueled by amazing savings on business policies including workers compensation insurance.

Scott invites anyone to come visit him and his team at 400 Evelyn Ave., Suite 101, Albany.

“If you come to us, we can help save you money and save the planet together,” Scott said.

He is also expanding his current team, so if you know of a person passionate about helping people with their financial wellbeing while fighting climate change, send them over.
Clockwise from top:
The new city council with Mayor Pro Tem Tessa Rudnick, Council Member Paul Fadell, Mayor Lisa Motoyama, new Council Member Carolyn Wysinger, and veteran Council Member Gabe Quinto.
Mayor Lisa Motoyama takes her oath administered by Superior Court Judge Joni Hiramoto.
Mayor Pro Tem Tessa Rudnick with “Gaucho green” Council Member Carolyn Wysinger.
Retiring Council Member Janet Abelson is presented a custom framed resolution from her colleagues by outgoing Mayor Gabe Quinto.
Preceding the meeting was a performance by the Sakura Kai Taiko Drumming Group.
The City of El Cerrito has adopted an expanded foodware ordinance requiring foodware to be compostable or reusable, and additionally requiring foodware accessories to only be provided upon request.

The expanded foodware ordinance has two components.

1. All food providers in the city must use compostable or reusable foodware (e.g., straws, eating utensils, and food containers) with limited exceptions. Compostable is defined as being accepted in the City’s green-waste collection programs and being free of all intentionally added fluorinated chemicals.

Note: Compostable plastics are not allowed. To make it easy for businesses to understand what kinds of products are compliant, the City produced a Compliant Disposable Foodware guide, available at el-cerrito.org/foodware.

2. Aligning with state law (Assembly Bill 1276), all food facilities must also only distribute single-use foodware accessories (e.g., utensils, straws, stirrers, etc.) and condiment cups or packets upon request by the consumer. This includes through food delivery platforms such as DoorDash, GrubHub, Uber Eats, etc.). Note: bundling or wrapping of foodware accessories is not allowed. Self-serve stations are okay.

The City will assist businesses by providing training and building public awareness to support a smooth transition. Additionally, City staff will be sending a resource packet that includes a factsheet, the Compliant Disposable Foodware guide, and sample signage to impacted businesses this month. Enforcement of the compostable foodware requirements will begin January 1, 2024.

The ordinance helps reduce the community’s environmental impact, reduce recycling contamination and costs, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the City’s Climate Action Plan and Strategic Plan goals. To download PDF files of the resources that have been created or to find out more information, please visit el-cerrito.org/foodware.

El Cerrito Historical Society Information

The El Cerrito Historical Society presents “When El Cerrito Went ‘Insane’: The Ouija-Mania Incident of 1920.”

This is the Society’s annual meeting. The Ouija talk follows a brief business meeting with election of officers.

The program focuses on one of the strangest events in the history of El Cerrito, one that brought our small city national attention. In March 1920, seven people were arrested on charges of insanity after conducting Ouija board sessions and engaging in bizarre rituals to ward off evil spirits. Many others were also involved.

Historian Chris Sterba will discuss how El Cerrito’s “Ouija-mania” incident reflected changes in American life after World War I and the influenza epidemic of 1918.

The program is free. Light refreshments will be served. Attendance is limited, so please send your RSVP to davidsweinstein@yahoo.com.

This program will also be available to view on Zoom. Email David Weinstein at the above address to receive a link.

Sunday, Jan. 29th • 4 to 5:30 p.m.
In the Garden Room
El Cerrito Community Center
7007 Moeser Lane, El Cerrito

Learn more about the Society at:
elcerritohistoricalsociety.org

Complimentary Lunch January 16 at El Cerrito Royale

Following the annual El Cerrito MLK Day parade and program, enjoy a free lunch dining on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s favorite entrées.

Call 510-234-5200 for information or to RSVP.

Southern Mixed Green Salad
Spare Ribs Atlanta
Baked Sweet Potato
Blackeyed Peas
Corn Bread
Pecan Pie
Iced Tea
FROM THE PRESIDENT

My goal, as president, is to bring business vitality back to the Chamber, by focusing much of the Chamber’s energy on the single, most important element of its conduct: commerce. It is not going to be an easy task, but it is worthy of the cause. Nearly 27 million small businesses, or about 50% of the nation’s GDP, consists of small businesses. This means that on average about half of all the revenue generated within cities, counties, and states is done so as a direct result of the hard work and productivity of mom-and-pop businesses.

With so much money printing that took place during the pandemic worldwide, causing a devaluation of fiat currencies, and the Federal Reserve’s rather fruitless monetary policies to tame inflation (a controversial topic which we will discuss further in the next edition of the Byline), the buying power of consumers has noticeably dropped. What this translates to in simple terms is that people will frequent businesses less in general, but especially those businesses that have failed to prove their concepts as either unique, desirable, or necessary. Consumers will be more frugal in the upcoming months, perhaps even years.

With all this in mind, the Chamber of Commerce, as a business entity itself, will also need to reorganize to keep up with what many call the changing world order. As I sit back and think about my upcoming responsibilities as Chamber president, I ask myself questions such as: Is our chamber unique? Desirable? Or even necessary? To me, the answer is a resounding yes! An organization that works for the best interest of its member businesses and attempts to constantly network the local wants, needs, and providers together, must carry on full force.

My dear readers, if you are a business owner but have not joined our Chamber yet, please consider doing so, because we are here at your service and wish to celebrate you and help your business grow. You can also make a donation to support the Chamber without becoming a member. If you are a member already, you have my deepest gratitude. Revenue generation for the Chamber is on the top of our list of priorities for 2023. Without sufficient revenue, our ability to assist our local businesses will be extremely limited.

Thank you for giving me your most valuable commodity, your time.

California’s New Wage Transparency Law Is Now In Effect

By John C. Stashik

Effective New Year’s Day, every employer in California with at least 15 employees is required to list salary ranges for all job openings. That information must also be provided to existing workers upon request.

Businesses with 100 or more employees have additional, more detailed, reporting requirements.

Byline Pick Up Locations

This newsletter is mailed monthly to Chamber of Commerce members and others. A PDF edition is posted and available on the Chamber website: elcerritochamber.org/byline.

Other distribution points are:
- El Cerrito City Hall
- The Glenn Custom Framing
- Mr. Pickle’s Sandwich Shop
- Doherty’s Truck Rental
- El Cerrito Public Library
- The Farmers Market at El Cerrito Plaza
- 514 Lounge
- Elevation 66 Brewing Company

Farmers Market

At El Cerrito Plaza
Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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California’s New Wage Transparency Law Is Now In Effect

The idea behind this, which was enacted by Senate Bill 1162, is to allow employees to get a better idea of what other workers are earning and thus have the information necessary to see how their own wages compare.

Businesses that don’t already have pay bands for current employees should put them in place, and ensure that there aren’t pay disparities based on race, sex, or other protected classes between employees doing substantially similar work.

If companies aren’t adding ranges, people can sue or file a complaint with the state Labor Commissioner’s office, which can issue a penalty of $100 to $10,000 per violation. Companies that don’t have pay ranges in job postings won’t get penalized for their first violation of this new law; however, additional violations will result in fines.

All employers must maintain a record of each employee’s job title and wage history during their employment period and for three years thereafter.

It is complicated. Hopefully, the Chamber can arrange a seminar explaining more details to members.
Welcome New Member

Marie Bowser Acupuncture
514 Kains Ave., Albany
510-684-9836
transformational-wellness.com

Chamber Dues Effective January 1, 2023

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Meet Matt
NEW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

At the
January
Chamber Lunch
Wed., January 25th
11:30 a.m.

Los Moles Beer Garden
6120 Potrero Ave., El Cerrito
$25 ($27 non-members)
Enchiladas, Taco Plates, Burritos with sides

Reserve at eventbrite.com or email: info@elcerritochamber.org

Comments Welcome
Contact the Byline with news or feedback: byline@elcerritochamber.org
Join the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce: elcerritochamber.org

Chamber Officers, Directors & Staff

President Matt Khadivian, El Mono Restaurant
Vice President Kevin O’Neal, Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar
Secretary Aissia Ashoori, City of El Cerrito
Treasurer, Byline Editor John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics
Directors Mark Figone, East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc.
Scott Harris, ClientClicks Internet Marketing
Robert Rogers, Supervisor John Gioia’s office
Jeffrey Wright, Wright Realtors
— Plus one vacant seat —
Manager Georgina Edwards
Byline Correspondents Catalina Hu
Robert Rogers

We ❤ El Cerrito
#ElCerritoProud