October 4-8 I was in Anaheim attending the California Association of Realtors business meetings. Prior to making the trek down to Anaheim we had to get a sitter for the only remaining “child” that we have at the house, our Jack Russell Terrier, Rudy, who my wife Tyra fondly refers to as her “little pookie.” Fortunately, we were able to recruit our daughter Gina for that task.

It might sound impressive to say that “I was attending the meetings” however, my real role was that of baggage handler and valet for Mrs. Wright who was attending the meetings as a board member. For me, there was a little saving grace because I was asked to be part of team that was making a presentation to CAR’s Housing Affordability Fund committee. It was for a $50,000 grant application to help with a wealth building and down payment assistance program administered through the Richmond Community Foundation now known as RCF Connects. We succeeded in obtaining the full amount requested. So much for my official duties.

Everything about the trip went fine until Thursday evening when for some unknown reason I was stricken with excruciating back pain while on the way to dinner with colleagues. For the remainder of the trip there was much for my official duties.

Mayor Paul Fadelli presents Kathleen Glenn with a certificate of recognition saluting The Glenn Custom Framing on its 50th anniversary. [Story in the October 2021 Byline.] City Manager Karen Pinkos and Marian Glenn-Ellis were also present offering congratulations.

**Mayoral Recognition**

**Thieves Need to be Charged, Prosecuted**

**By Mary Knox**

During my 36-year career as a prosecutor, I have observed the influence of social and economic trends on our criminal justice system. Contra Costa County has historically been a county where the laws have been enforced which has enhanced public safety and economic prosperity for all Contra Costans. Over the past four years, that has all changed.

Organized crews of thieves now come to Contra Costa County to commit massive retail thefts of merchandise that is then fenced or sold on the internet on sites such as Offer Up. One such crew, known to Loss Prevention Officers as “The Mature Males,” was composed of men in their 40 and 50s, many of whom were on state prison parole, who targeted TJ Maxx Stores. After they hit a TJ Maxx store in Contra Costa and left with armloads of clothing, the Loss Prevention Officers surveilled them to a house in Alameda County. A search warrant was served at this house and more than $300,000 in stolen property was recovered. Much of the looting committed in Contra Costa County was organized on social media and perpetrated by hundreds of looters who came from outside of Contra Costa County.

Businesses, large and small, are forced to protect their merchandise by locking it behind plexiglass and restrict their business hours. Store owners and clerks stand by helplessly as shopping carts filled with liquor, beauty products, and more are taken by the waves of looters.

You are invited to the party

At Elevation 66 on Friday, November 12th • 6 p.m.
Admire festive holiday lights outside.
Enjoy El Cerrito’s best beer and good food inside.

**San Pablo Avenue Holiday Lights**

**Spontaneous LAKE Hardware**
**El Cerrito Royale**

You are invited to the party

At Elevation 66 on Friday, November 12th • 6 p.m.
Admire festive holiday lights outside.
Enjoy El Cerrito’s best beer and good food inside.

**VAX PROOF REQUIRED**

See from the President, page 7

See Prosecute Thieves, page 3
Holiday lights have returned to the theater block. Sponsored by the Chamber, a few generous sponsors make this possible. Of course, there will be a lighting party at Elevation 66. Drop by for beer and food compliments of the Chamber of Commerce on November 12th. I see this as a way to thank the good people at City Hall and elsewhere who assist me with this monthly Byline and other Chamber projects. Details can be found on the front page.

Super service. I drop by Rialto Cinemas Cerrito for takeout pizza and then walk to Elevation 66 for a brew while they bake the pie. What do you know; the theater delivers the pizza to me at the bar! A month ago I was praising Southern hospitality. We’ve got our own version of that here in El Cerrito.

Award time. The annual El Cerrito Art Association show is a favorite and the Chamber makes a donation and chooses a piece for an award. This time it was a work by Steven W. DeMello titled “Scrape and Reveal,” acrylic on canvas. Herewith, the winner of the Chamber of Commerce award.

Annapurna Mart has arrived at Potrero and San Pablo in Del Norte Plaza, opened on October 8th. Owned by Nobel Uprety, the store is open seven days a week and caters to customers seeking Nepalese and Indian groceries.

3 performances. “Clarence Darrow” at the Contra Costa Civic Theatre on November 12, 13, and 14 only. cct.org

Harbor Freight is wasting no time on renovating the site formerly occupied by Big 5 Sporting Goods for their new El Cerrito store at 11060 San Pablo Ave. Big 5 left town on September 30th after which Harbor Freight contractors were immediately positioning equipment. No opening date is known yet. History: Who recalls Standard Brands Paint Co.?

Hotel? The word I hear is that the Hampton Inn & Suites, planned for Cutting and San Pablo, is still a go. There are myriad preliminary steps to go through on any major project and those are being dealt with by the developer. Patience please.

Banter. That is the soon to be wine bar coming to 10368 San Pablo Ave., opposite The Natural Grocery Co. A full kitchen is part of owner Claire Sullivan’s buildout plan which will enable a menu of light meals and snacks to accompany a selection of good wine. Hopefully, Banter will open before the end of the year.

Sad. Firefighters should probably wear their turnout gear inside the building with the roof of Station 71 looking this bad. Residents sure love their public safety people. Now step up and pay for repairs—or better yet—a new building.

City Council to Honor Chris Treadway

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

CHRIS TREADWAY is very well known and loved in El Cerrito, having covered this city as a newspaper columnist, reporter, and editor, for many years. He was also a freelance correspondent for the Byline from June 2018 through July 2021, although his contributions to this newsletter began long before 2018.

While still active on social media, his writing for print publications has been curtailed by health issues.

When learning of this City Manager Karen Pinkos responded: “Chris is such a nice guy and has always been fair and good to the City in his writing over the years. I’m so saddened by this news.”

The City Council will act on an official proclamation honoring Chris, our home town journalist, at their meeting on Tuesday, November 2nd, 7 p.m. The full text of the proclamation will appear here next month.

Attendance at council meetings is by Zoom. Login details are at el-cerrito.org.

Village 29. The last of three buildings at this 29-unit Lafferty development located off of Avila Street is nearing completion. Note the SOLD sign in the front window; many are already taken.
Let’s Prepare Now for Less Plastic Foodware

BY PAUL FADELLI
MAYOR OF EL CERRITO

LIKE MANY other cities in the state seeking to address the challenge of plastic pollution, it is likely El Cerrito will have passed its own new foodware ordinance by the end of this year.

The El Cerrito ordinance seeks to prohibit one-use plastic foodware, educate businesses and consumers on compostable foodware that can go into our green waste bins, and encourage reusable foodware items. For those with disabilities who rely on durable plastic straws, food providers will be required to keep plastic straws in stock for customers who request them.

Local restaurants and food preparers have definitely been through a very difficult time over the last two years with pandemic-related problems and a resulting shaky economy. The road back to “normalcy” with full crews and service will remain a challenge. While the City has been working on a foodware ordinance for some time now, COVID-19 and staff budget cuts have delayed Council action.

Having enough lead time before implementation will be critical. I support and believe our city will be sensitive of this difficult time for our restaurants. We plan to assist food providers by building public awareness and providing training to support a smooth transition. The drafted ordinance will not go into effect until July 2022, with enforcement probably not occurring for another year and a half.

Even with this longer implementation lead time, I believe it’s just good business for our restaurants and prepared food providers to begin seeking environmentally safe alternatives now to plastic foodware.

Other East Bay cities are moving at a faster pace, and the Governor also recently signed AB 1276, which will prohibit single use foodware accessories and condiments unless requested. But most important, customers themselves are growing increasingly turned off by single use plastic that is thrown away and goes to our landfills. Paying customers want to know they are not contributing to our plastic pollution dilemma.

As the city with the best recycling center in the Bay Area, let’s work over the next two years to also help prevent plastic pollution. With restaurants and other businesses as our partners, we can get there.

For more information or assistance from our City, please go to el-cerrito.org/foodware.

PAST PREZ PALAVER

Continued from page 2

Fossil fuels. There will be an effort made to have the El Cerrito City Council adopt a policy that (a) would encourage “socially responsible” investing, and (b) prohibit investing in any entities involved in the production and sale of fossil fuels or tobacco.

Have we been here before? Of course. In the past many city council members have been quick to support or spend money on anything that feels or sounds good, or is “politically correct” whether or not it really affects the day to day business of local government or taxpaying residents.

Prohibiting investment of city funds in securities such as stock in oil or energy companies offer a good return possible on any investment. If oil or energy companies offer a good return, that’s where you put money.

The City must earn the highest return possible on any investment. If retired city manager doesn’t fly. City council members approve all spending and city management cannot spend what is not authorized by council.

I know every present council member and they’re all good people with nothing but the best of intentions for the City. I thank them for their service, as they essentially are volunteers.

But would I seek financial advice from anyone on the city council? No way! I’d get better advice on money matters from my hair cutter.

If the Financial Advisory Board makes a recommendation in support of a no fossil fuel investment policy, council members are under no obligation to approve such a rule. I note now departed Financial Director Mark Rasiah opposed the idea. Mr. Rasiah is somebody I would listen to; he has expertise in financial matters.

The City must earn the highest return possible on any investment. If money available to invest.

PROSECUTE THIEVES

Continued from page 1

and power tools, leave their stores, afraid to confront the thieves and risk a violent confrontation.

Thieves are emboldened to commit these brazen crimes because so many have been arrested multiple times throughout our County, yet they are not being charged and prosecuted. It is essential to the safety of the public and the economic health of our County that those who commit crimes are held accountable and that the Constitutional rights of the victims of crime are respected and enforced. This accountability begins with the enforcement of all of our laws including “quality of life crimes” which impact the public daily. Failure to enforce our laws has produced a pervasive sense of lawlessness and resulted in spikes of violent crime.

To reverse the course of these alarming trends and restore public safety and economic prosperity, it is essential that the District Attorney of Contra Costa County enforce our laws.
Once upon a time, long before Amazon was known globally, Jen Komaromi was already a successful sales manager for a large national online enterprise. In early 2000, Jen managed over a hundred sales reps, and she needed more space for inventory. She started looking for an office space to serve as storage and retail store. Jen posted an ad on Craigslist and found a tiny 360 sq. ft. space at 6927 Stockton.

Jenny K. Gift Shop opened on Valentine’s Day in 2004. Jen spent much of her time working at the gift shop, and soon she was tired of 7-Eleven’s take-outs. She realized the neighborhood could benefit from a coffee shop. After unsuccessfully trying to convince her friends to open a café next to the gift shop, Jen’s husband, Kevin O’Neal, left his job and opened up Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar at 6925 Stockton in January 2005.

The first five years were the toughest as they built both businesses and raised their young children. Situated in a residential area just a few blocks away from El Cerrito High School, Jen and Kevin gradually transformed Jenny K. and Well Grounded into a neighborhood hangout and gathering destination. Inspired by art strolls in other cities, Jen organized and teamed up with the art galleries on Stockton Avenue, including The Glenn Gallery and Frame Shop, and launched Stockton Avenue Art Stroll. [My apologies for incorrectly stating the Art Stroll as a weekly event organized by Kathleen Glenn in the October 2021 issue of Byline.] The monthly event brought neighbors together to enjoy art, music, tea, and coffee. Despite its success and popularity, the Art Stroll was unfortunately put on hold in 2011 due to lack of time and resources.

In 2012, Jenny K. Gift Shop moved into a larger space at 6921 Stockton. Well Grounded was also able to expand by taking over the gift shop’s original space. The coffee shop has proven to be an excellent addition to the community, as strangers became friends while getting a sandwich or coffee. Jen was particularly touched when a couple showed up at Well Grounded to take their engagement photos. The coffee shop was where the couple met each other and it would forever be their special place.

The positive impact of Jenny K. and Well Grounded in the community did not go unnoticed. In celebrating their 15 years on Stockton Avenue, Contra Costa County Supervisor, John Gioia, presented Jen and Kevin a Certificate of Recognition on February 9, 2019, for their contributions to improving the community’s quality of life and “socially responsible and civically-minded business ownership.”

Jen has been hosting Friday Night Live at 7 p.m. on Facebook to connect with the community, promote her gift shop and introduce new products. During the pandemic lockdown in 2020, the Friday Night Live and revamping of the Jenny K. online store not only kept the business going but also provided much needed social interaction.

Well Grounded was able to remain open after closing just one day. It removed the indoor seating area and added an online ordering system; it became a place that offered a glimpse of normalcy during the shelter-in-place months.

Continued on page 5
The hard work and loving care Jen and Kevin put into their shops is apparent. With a keen eye for the latest trends, Jen only carries items of high quality and best value in her shop. The gift shop is adorned with beautiful and thoughtful gifts for people of all ages, including cards, candles, confections, jewelry, kitchen gadgets, toys, accessories, and El Cerrito merchandise that you can’t find anywhere else.

Well Grounded features locally sourced Lappert’s coffee and Semifreddi’s pastries. The small café boasts an extensive menu of coffee and tea drinks, Italian sodas, specialty sandwiches, bagels, salads, California craft beer and wine, and many seasonal favorites including pumpkin pie lattes and the Gobbler sandwich!

Every December Jenny K. hosts a 12-days of Christmas sale from December 1st to 12th. A different item is drastically discounted each day, and in order to take advantage of the amazing deal, you just need to make a donation to a charity. Jen is looking forward to this year’s 12 days of Christmas Sale and even more hopeful to host a “PPP,” Post Pandemic Party, in the near future.

Jen and Kevin would also love to bring back Stockton Avenue Art Stroll as an annual event. If you haven’t stopped by the Jenny K. Gift Shop recently, be sure to check out its holiday preview sale from November 1-10 when everything is 15% off! While you are there, try a seasonal drink at Well Grounded and check out its latest California craft beer and wine selection.

#ElCerritoProud—Jenny K. has a large selection of El Cerrito gear including tee shirts, tote bags, caps, and cups.

6921 Stockton Ave. · El Cerrito 94530
510-528-5350
jennyk.com

6925 Stockton Ave. · El Cerrito 94530
510-528-5350
well-grounded.com
A wash with rain…finally! What a treat to have days of listening to rain and maybe even getting to put on rain boots to splash around town.

Just before the big storm landed on us, we resumed our citywide garage sale, organized by El Cerrito’s Recycling + Environmental Resource Center, with over 37 household participating. It was a wonderful day to reconnect with residents while shopping for “new to us” treasures.

The program has been in place following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, when El Cerrito resident, Marianne Hegeman, an avid proponent of reuse and recycling, realized that because of over-packed garages many El Cerrito households were unable to get their foundations inspected. The City has organized Citywide Garage sales (once or twice yearly) since, so it was exciting to have the program resume after a COVID-19 hiatus.

And, just one day before the big storm, we had our October Chamber mixer at Los Moles’ beautiful outdoor back patio. While businesses are still much impacted by factors related to the pandemic, when we have a chance to connect and share stories, we find that in connection we find inspiration and hope for renewal ahead, just as we anticipate that with the gift of rain, new growth flourish.

Rain, Rain, Come Again Another Day

Story and photo by Georgina Edwards

Times of struggle serve to illuminate what matters most in the journey of life. Informed by our experiences and values, each of us crafts goals and endeavors to align our actions with our hopes and dreams. All of shape and create, but those who chose an entrepreneurial path need a special kind of tenacity, imagination and resilience. When we have a chance to connect with those who serve our community, we realize that much of what makes our town special is our people, and our entrepreneurs are really special ones!

Have you had a delicious meal at Burgerim yet? If so, you’ve probably met owners Peter and Ashley Nguyen who opened this modern and unique burger eatery as franchisees at El Cerrito Plaza with great initial success in 2019. At that time, the chain was one of the fastest growing in the United States, reaching over 400 stores at its height.

But just as momentum along with Peter and Ashley’s recipe for success (great food, hard work, employee empowerment) was beginning to make a mark and gaining a growing following for Burgerim, COVID-19 brought things to a halt. Like many restaurants, Burgerim continued on with take-out, but Peter and Ashley had to lay off half the staff.

Unfortunately, though they applied for government loans and grant programs available to businesses, none of them came through because of criteria that excludes franchise businesses. Peter explains that it is because their entrepreneurial portfolio is diverse (the family works in petroleum products and other projects) that they have been able to keep Burgerim El Cerrito open.

During this time, Peter has held fast to the principles and learnings of a career built on caring about the details and fundamentals of delivering quality product that customers can rely on. For example, at Burgerim El Cerrito customers can order burgers cooked to their taste, which is a feature that no other Burgerim extends. This is because Peter and Ashley value getting to know their customers and creating a great experience for each and every one.

Though these months have been very challenging for the team, they hang on each day to serve us, choosing to focus on some bright spots to light the future. They delight in that when Burgerim was able to open again, customers started discovering their menu and getting to know the staff. Now, they have a faithful set of regular customers, Burgerim friends, who they know by name and enjoy serving each week, often anticipating their specific orders. As a customer shared, the feeling is mutual; “After months of not getting out of the house, coming here gave me a way to connect and enjoy getting to know and appreciate others.”

Gourmet Burgers at El Cerrito Plaza

Byline MEMBER PROFILE

A customer chats with Burgerim owner Peter Nguyen.

Gourmet Burgers at El Cerrito Plaza

Open 11-8:30 p.m. daily

174 El Cerrito Plaza • El Cerrito
“wincing and wailing.” While in public I tried my best to maintain a “stiff upper lip” quivering as it may have been. On the next day I managed to make it on the flight back home. When we arrived at baggage claim in Oakland, I headed over to the luggage carousel to wait for our bags as I normally do. My wife looked at me, pointed at the chairs and instructed me to go sit down. I scornfully looked at her and sheepishly went to the chairs and slowly lowered myself down.

As my male colleagues were being chivalrous and retrieving bags for some of the female travelers I watched as my wife took it upon herself to manhandle our bags off the carousel while I sat helplessly slumped in the chair. After finally making it to my feet I shuffled over to my bag, raised the handle and attempted to regain some semblance of dignity by doing my best rendition of a “man-strut” rickety as it was, while towing my luggage curbside to await pick up by our daughter.

With “strong encouragement” from my wife I reached out to my doctor via email and provided him with the relevant details. He suspected sciatica and prescribed some medication as well as some stretching exercises and suggested that I make an in-person appointment.

After a few days I began to feel considerably better. Shortly thereafter I received an invitation from Andy Brown to speak at the October 14th El Cerrito Rotary Club meeting and I accepted. The only reservation in the back of my mind was related to possibly being hit with a sudden pain attack while speaking and crumbling to the floor. On the appointed day and time, I arrived at the Berkeley Country Club and walked across the parking lot with Gabe Quinto who happened to pull into the parking space next to me.

As an aside, a question that I am often asked by people is “why not consider running for…?”; well, I am announcing right now that I will be running for a good seat at an upscale steakhouse where I can also enjoy a well-crafted cocktail. As a matter of fact, I am kicking around slogans, “Jeff Wright knows what’s at steak!” “A well fed and libated Jeff for a better El Cerrito.”

In any event, upon our entry into the clubhouse my confidence was immediately bolstered when I saw Fire Chief Michael Pigoni, Police Chief Paul Keith, and the director of the El Cerrito Royale, Sonja Givens-Thomas. I knew that if I had some sort of physical relapse there were some qualified people on hand who could assist with the situation. I am delighted to report that everything went off without a hitch.

Upon reflection, that brief experience with pain and lack of mobility was just a reminder about the importance of our health and feeling good. Once again, I am grateful and thankful. I have reinforced clarity and perspective!
Chamber Officers & Staff

President
Jeffrey Wright, Wright Realtors
Vice President
Matt Khadivian, El Mono Restaurant
Secretary
Aissia Ashoori, City of El Cerrito
Treasurer, Byline Editor
John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics
Manager
Georgina Edwards
Byline Correspondent
Catalina Hu

We ♡ El Cerrito
#ElCerritoProud

Live/Work on San Pablo Avenue

Have you heard about the new units being created on San Pablo Avenue that will allow you to live and operate your business out of your residence? The zoning created through the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (SPASP) permits residential and commercial uses in a single space.

While the pandemic has shifted the way we do business, live/work units provide multiple opportunities and the flexibility to serve your customers/clients not otherwise permitted in single-use properties. Generally, up to 50 percent of the gross floor area in live/work units are reserved for and primarily used for living space with ground floor access.

Credence, located at 10300 San Pablo Avenue, is the city’s newest condominium project completed in June 2021, offering 32 residences of which two are designated as live/work units. Both units are two-bedroom, one and half baths townhome live/work units with approximately 1,200 square feet available for purchase. Visit liveatcredence.com for more information or stop by for a tour.

San Pablo Avenue Development & Complete Streets
A Zoom Webinar by the City of El Cerrito
Thursday, Nov. 18 · 5 p.m.
For login info: el-cerrito.org/spaspmeeting

Official Chamber Election News

Per Chamber bylaws, the report of the Nominating Committee will be presented to members by a Zoom meeting. Terms expire for these four members of the Board of Directors: Sil Addiego, Matt Khadivian, Nic Tang, and Jeffrey Wright. Directors serve two years.

Along with a slate of candidates presented by the Nominating Committee, members can also be nominated from the floor. Attend the meeting to hear the committee’s report.

Meeting Details
Tuesday, November 16, 2021 at noon
Join Zoom Meeting
For login information or to receive a clickable link, email Manager Georgina Edwards at info@elcerritochamber.org

Chamber Dues
The Board of Directors made a decision not to increase member dues. Therefore, the rates stay the same through 2022.