It was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who said, “great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending.” As I end my term as president of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, having served from 2019-2022, it affords the opportunity for a new beginning.

In October of 2017, as part of the nominating committee, Chamber board member Mark Figone reached out to me to gauge my interest in serving on the Chamber board of directors. I soon thereafter became part of the team, and the rest is history. Thank you Mark for reaching out, and thanks to retired board member Sil Addiego for the many years that he chaired the nominating committee and sought out potential board candidates.

I am excited about the future of the Chamber and our ability to bring greater value to the business community. In my humble opinion we have the best of

**See From the President, page 7**

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**From the President**

JEFFREY WRIGHT

**DECEMBER MIXER**

**The Natural Grocery Company**

**PREPARED FOOD ANNEX**

10387 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito

**Thursday, Dec. 8th**

5:30-7:30 p.m.

Everyone Welcome

**New El Cerrito Minimum Wage**

**Effective January 1, 2023**

$17.35 per hour

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**Chamber Luncheon with Karen and Gabe**

**City Manager Karen Pinkos and Mayor Gabriel Quinto**

**By Robert Rogers**

El Cerrito City Manager Karen Pinkos is focused on financial sustainability, so residents and businesses can thrive. “We’ve made substantial, significant progress,” Pinkos said during a wide-ranging, 20-minute address to El Cerrito business and civic leaders and Chamber of Commerce board members.

The November 3rd luncheon was hosted at Tigon, the popular new restaurant at 10086 San Pablo Ave. It featured updates from Pinkos and Mayor Gabriel Quinto and was organized by the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce. The event served as an opportunity for Chamber members and others to gain insight into City policies, network with other leaders, and support local business.

The setting was buoyant and casual. Attendees dined on delicious food and enjoyed Tigon’s ambience, which is accentuated by tawny wood furnishings and ceiling beams paired with lush interior greenery.

Mayor Quinto opened the event after being introduced by Chamber President Jeffrey Wright. “El Cerrito is ready to build on our progress and move our City forward,” Quinto said.

Quinto highlighted five areas of focus in 2022:

- Financial stability
- Environmental stability
- Economic stability
- Public health and safety
- Equity and inclusion

“We all continue to recover from pandemic conditions and restore services,” Quinto said.

Quinto also noted that El Cerrito is one of just 38 cities in California currently meeting the state’s goals for local housing development.

Pinkos also painted a bullish picture of the City’s current position and, especially, its future, which she credited to bold actions in recent years to avert financial crisis.

“We took the really painful decision to make a lot of budget cuts and cut our staff,” Pinkos said. “We did that and now that is bearing fruit so now we are in recovery mode.”

**See City Update Luncheon, page 5**
Don’t miss this. The City Council meeting on December 20th is the annual turnover event when a new mayor and mayor pro tempore are selected, and those will be Lisa Motoyama and Tessa Rudnick respectively. Also, new council member Carolyn Wysinger will take her seat on the dais.

But wait, there’s more! The amazing Janet Abelson will retire after serving a record setting six terms as a council member and being El Cerrito’s mayor five times. To read more about Janet, see the feature story in the September issue of the Byline, available online, or by emailing byline@elcerritochamber.org.

This memorable meeting will conclude with PennDel’s Bakehouse cake, of course. Thank you, Janet, for your huge part in making El Cerrito great.

EC forward. Pessimists and cynics must be having a fit now in El Cerrito; there’s little to complain about. The City’s financial picture has completely turned around from two years ago. Credit our extraordinary city manager and staff for that achievement. Read what Karen Pinkos and Gabe Quinto say on page 1.

A Police Department recruiting blitz is paying off big with a press time head count of 29 sworn staff on the job out of an authorized total of 37 with more hires to come. That’s only eight short of full staff. Good news for residents, business people, and anybody who makes a call for service and needs a quick response.

Finance pros are encouraged to apply for employment as the Finance Department is hiring. Contact HR to apply for an essential job at City Hall.

New signals. That dangerous Eureka-Columbia-San Pablo intersection now has pedestrian hybrid beacons. You’ve likely noticed these tri-light signals in Albany or Berkeley. Drivers should know that flashing red is a stop and proceed indication. Solid red means stop. Yellow is prepare to stop.

Retirement. Maintenance Services Superintendent Bill Driscoll is pulling the pin after 24 years with the City. The City Council will approve a proclamation honoring Bill on December 6th.

They’re back. The theater block is lit up like a Christmas tree once again, thanks to very generous donors.

Sadly, Steve’s Auto Care has closed. Steve Kahn, wrenching for 40 years, decided to retire. The disposition of the business is unknown. Steve thanks his customers for helping him pursue his passion. He is already missed.

Super Slice Pizza opened on Veterans Day at 10180 San Pablo Ave. The photo shows the soft opening ribbon cutting with Fahima, Sal, and Ahmad Esmatyar doing the honors. Open every day except Tuesday, 11 to 8. Huge slices.

514 Lounge, at 11236 San Pablo (at Potrero), will be open on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, and New Year’s Day, 4-9 p.m. A cozy place to stop for a libation over the holidays. Mary is the friendly proprietor.

The counter re-opened at Fatapple’s. Returning to normal, step by step.

See Past Prez Palaver, page 3
Banter news. Progress on building El Cerrito’s new Banter Wine Bar near Stockton and San Pablo is slow as a car punched through an exterior wall months ago. The wall has been repaired and strengthened and the next time that happens, the vehicle will come out on the losing end. However, the interior structure of the building needs fixing too. Plenty of work to be done. Stay tuned.

Coming in 2023. Sometime early in the new year seafood will become a dining option at the Plaza in the form of California Fish Grill. Also to open at El Cerrito Plaza is Ike’s Love & Sandwiches which is a rapidly growing chain started here in the Bay Area and has a huge and very loyal following.

One can hope that the new Hampton Inn & Suites hotel at the corner of Cutting and San Pablo will finally break ground; a real game changer for that intersection. Meanwhile, Mayfair Station at the same corner is leasing market rate residential apartments with ground floor commercial space available at the high traffic site. The affordable apartment project adjacent to Mayfair could break ground next year.

Pie town. ’Tis the season with Nation’s and Fatapple’s baking nonstop for the holidays. Pumpkin Pie is always the favorite. Then there is Veronica Chin’s small business called A Pie in the Sky which sells homemade pies bi-weekly at a location opposite the El Cerrito Plaza BART station. See apieintheskyclub.com to get on her mailing list to hear about her next pie sale.

Hello Masa! That’s where you can get hand crafted tamales. This taqueria, a grab and go version of the popular Point Richmond restaurant, is at the old Jack in the Box site at Panama and San Pablo (across from the Natural Grocery Annex). masatalamesandtacos.com.

At press time, opening day for the new store is likely after the first of the year. Although if some miracle happens, it could be this month.

Donation barrels are located at the El Cerrito Community Center, City Hall, Police Department, Doherty’s Truck Rental, Elevation 66 Brewery, Fatapple’s Restaurant, and NUG, among other places. Jenny K. is a great place to pick up some toys to donate.

Happy retirement to Bill Halligan. This super plumber at Olivero Plumbing knows every house in El Cerrito. After 46 years, Bill retires on December 31st.

Winners. Several Best of El Cerrito winners have purchased attractive 8x10-inch plaques to display at their businesses. If your business desires one, contact info@elcerritochamber.org for more information. Go ahead and brag.

Bad for business. This garbage dump on San Pablo Avenue next to the former Rob’s Auto site looks like hell and gives El Cerrito a very trashy image. Business people in the adjacent Peppermint Tree Plaza are not too happy either. The City needs to come down hard on this do-nothing property owner and get the lot cleaned up ASAP. There are no excuses.

FIFA World Cup. Three huge screens installed at Fatapple’s offer soccer fans an excellent view of the games. Add food and draft beer on tap, and we can start calling the place a sports bar! Eventually, with extended hours, NBA and NFL games will be streamed. And, don’t forget that great American spectacle known as the Super Bowl.

Los Moles Beer Garden is another place with multiple TVs to watch the soccer matches. Open at 8 a.m.

2022 wrap-up. Over the last 12 months the Byline has profiled the following Chamber members: Pastime Ace Hardware, The Junket (sadly, now gone), Abbey Pet Hospital, The Proposed Hampton Inn & Suites

When you advertise free beer, everyone shows up. The November 4th theater block lighting event at Elevation 66 Brewing Company.

See Past Prez Palaver, page 6
By Robert Rogers

On the day of the grand re-opening, Steve Gardner had the coveted end of the bar seat in the 514 Lounge, perched on a comfy stool with an icy drink in hand.

“It’s cozy, it’s classy, it’s just a great place to sit down and have a great cocktail,” Gardner said over the din of lively conversations. “I’m glad to see this back (open).”

Beloved local proprietor Mary Dugbartey officially reopened her bar and lounge at 11236 San Pablo Ave. at 4 p.m. on Thursday, October 27th. Within minutes, the intimate and immaculately-decorated watering hole brimmed with revelers, including El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce leaders.

The 514 Lounge is a full service bar with spirits, cocktails, beer, wine and small bites, and the bartender is a master of innumerable libations.

Chamber President Jeff Wright hailed the reopening.

“After a lengthy closure, we’re delighted to celebrate that the 514 Lounge is back, with Mary welcoming thirsty residents to her lively, fully stocked local hangout,” Wright said.

The interior looked fresh and welcoming, with a shiny smooth bar, squares of velvety red carpeting, plush bench-style couches lining the perimeter, big screen television, and an array of art pieces arranged throughout. The bar was fully-stocked on arrival, with a cascading wall of spotless bottles whose levels receded steadily as the evening progressed.

“Mary is a great person, and her bar occupies an important niche we don’t have elsewhere, so come on down!” said Chamber Treasurer John C. Stashik.

Visit 514lounge.com and find them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
Pinkos further noted an array of positive developments that can benefit local businesses and all El Cerritans.

- City budget is stable and has been recognized by State Auditor for progress.
- General Plan reserve fund is more flush than it has been in a decade.
- City’s Climate Action Plan update is in progress.
- Solid waste and foodware regulations for environmental sustainability.
- Del Norte Complete Streets Project to begin in 2023 to enhance north San Pablo Avenue corridor.
- A second local cannabis business set to open near City Hall.
- Robust housing development.
- Working with BART on the Plaza Project, establishing the downtown and driving economic development.
- Working with a private developer to open a new library in a housing development, a novel approach.
- Supporting continuing outdoor dining opportunities through local ordinance.
- Revamping emergency preparedness programs with support of the new Fire Chief.

“All of these developments will contribute to the City’s tax base,” Pinkos said.

The lunch ended with a vibrant Q&A session and then plenty of time for networking and photos, with several attendees remarking about how much they enjoyed having informal access to their Mayor and City Manager.

Chamber President Wright thanked all for attending and urged continuing membership and support for the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, which made the event possible.

Join the Chamber of Commerce today at elcerritochamber.org or by emailing info@elcerritochamber.org.

Chamber and City Join Forces Against Hate Crimes

BY COUNCIL MEMBER PAUL FADELLI

LAST MONTH, the El Cerrito City Council declared a “United Against Hate Week” — just as it has every year since 2017. A hate crime in that year on Arlington Blvd. against an African-American family spurred the city to take action, and encouraging the public to put up signs condemning hate.

Sadly, it is even more important now that our city make a similar stand, because local hate crimes have not diminished — but increased. Recently, incidents in our community have been reported disparaging a Jewish family’s home and a transgender employee. Other hate crimes sadly continue in our state and across the nation.

We must fight back. Our police are on high alert to find and prosecute those who commit hate crimes here. But to help prevent them in the future, our Mayor and City Council have asked residents, businesses and the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce to once again help by proclaiming that El Cerrito will not put up with such illegal actions.

Please join the campaign against hate by putting an “El Cerrito Stands United Against Hate” poster visibly in your window. Let everyone see! Posters can be picked up in the entry of City Hall.

They can be delivered by contacting Paul Fadelli at: pfadelli@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or John C. Stashik at: j.stashik@elcerritochamber.org.

Paul Fadelli is Council liaison to the Human Relations Commission.

Council member Paul Fadelli and a Chamber representative visited businesses posting United Against Hate posters. Your help is needed.

Columbia Sportswear Special Holiday Offer Announced

BY JOHN C. STASHIK

TROY McLEAN is with the Columbia Sportswear Employee Store in Richmond. The Columbia Sportswear Company Employee Store is a private store for Columbia employees and community program partners. The store is not open to the public as the items are marked up to 50% off retail pricing.

Troy has a special invitation to Byline readers. This month, the store will be opening their doors to allow everyone in the area access to shop the store during the Winter Community Appreciation event from December 5-24. Several of their most loyal community program partners currently come from El Cerrito, and Columbia would like to get the word out to the El Cerrito community.

The Employee Store is located at 1414 Harbor Way South in Richmond. Phone 510-558-2995.

Special note to City of El Cerrito employees. As the City is a full member of the Chamber, every City employee is entitled to all member benefits such as this special offer from Columbia.
CoCo Vector Control: Protecting Public Health for 95 Years

BY NOLA WOODS
PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

Who do Contra Costa County residents call when they have a problem with mosquitoes, rats, mice, skunks, ground-nesting yellowjackets, or ticks? They call the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District because the District has been providing services to reduce the risk of these vectors of disease or harm for 95 years.

Also, the best part, is, Contra Costa County residents already pay for the District’s services through property taxes and benefit assessments, so there is no additional charge when the District provides one of the services listed below.

- Mosquitoes: Inspection and Control including the use of Mosquitofish
- Rats and Mice: Inspection and Advice
- Skunks: Inspection and Assistance
- Ground-nesting Yellowjackets: Inspection and Treatment for Ground-nesting species only
- Ticks: Identification

To request a District service, visit ContraCostaMosquito.com, click on I Want To, and select “Request Service” or call 925-685-9301.

Follow the Vector Control District on Nextdoor, Facebook or Twitter @CCMosquito for timely vector-related information.

No Vectors, Victor, But You Can Become a Trustee

BY NOLA WOODS
PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

The Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District is a public health agency dedicated to protecting the community from mosquitoes and other vectors of disease. The District has been protecting public health for 95 years and is governed by a Board of Trustees. There are 19 Trustees who represent each city in Contra Costa County and three who represent Contra Costa County at large. Right now, there is no Trustee to represent El Cerrito.

Information on District Trustees:
- Trustees are appointed by their local City Councils.
- Trustees receive compensation, not to exceed $100 per month, in lieu of expenses while attending official District board meetings.
- Board meetings are currently held monthly and virtually; however, we anticipate meetings will return to in person on the second Monday every other month in early 2023.

If you are interested in giving El Cerrito a voice on the Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District’s Board of Trustees, contact your an El Cerrito City Council member and let the member know you are interested in being appointed as a Trustee.

PAST PREZ PALAVER

Continued from page 3
Joint Chiropractic, El Cerrito Royale, Nation’s Giant Hamburgers, Juku, Council Member Extraordinaire Janet Abelson, Gymboree, Urgent Care Pet Hospital, and the 514 Lounge. Thanks go to the talented Byline writers for their work on those and other stories. Namely, Catalina Hu, Robert Rogers, and Paul Fadelli.

Jeff Wright gets a nod for his reader friendly entertaining commentary every month as Chamber president.

Some other team members that make this publication work are usually under the radar. But I’ll call them out now. Karen Pinkos has saved me several times, correcting mis-information before publication and providing helpful advice.

Last, but definitely not least, is the Community Development Department dynamic duo of Melanie Mintz and Aissia Ashoori. CommDev and the Byline share intel, often on a daily basis.

Happy Holidays from the Byline

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Continued from page 1

both worlds, inasmuch as we have newer board members who bring an increased level of energy, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas along with members who have great institutional knowledge, and well-developed relationships throughout the community.

At our December 2022 Board of Directors meeting, the board will be officially electing officers to serve in 2023. Finally, you will get to see a “fresh face” and new name at top of the president’s column! I will continue to serve on the board, and I offer my thanks to all the board members that I have served with both past and present. Thank you to former Chamber Manager Lisa Martinego for her service during my first term as president, and a big thank you to current Chamber Manager Georgina Edwards for her efforts as we endeavor to evolve into the very best Chamber of Commerce that we can possibly be.

Throughout the years of writing this column I would oftentimes refer to family members with a particular emphasis on my father, Eddie M. Wright, Jr. and his father Eddie M. Wright, Sr. Even though I can say a lot I am going to restrain myself, and only include a few tidbits, because in the back of my mind the words of Larry Seidell still rest when he said, “I enjoy reading your column, but you have to be retired to read it.” That still cracks me up!

Here are a few of my favorite sayings from those two gentlemen that have broad applicability to business and life in general.

My father on seeking his advice: “I’m going to tell you what you ought to do, but you’re going to what you want to do anyway.” My takeaway is that when you receive solid, experienced based advice, take it!

My father on panic and worry: “5,000 years from now what difference will it make?” That was his way of saying that too much emphasis is being put on a situation that really is not that important in the grand scheme of things. That line has helped me to keep things in perspective.

My grandfather on human relations: “If you can’t get along with me then there’s something wrong with you!” I live by that one. We can always be cordial, civil and respectful. We don’t have to always agree, but we certainly don’t have to be obnoxious and disagreeable.

When I started in the real estate business in 1979, my father told me that 90% of the transaction that fell through were the result of a lack of communication or miscommunication. The importance of effective communication should not be underestimated. With that understanding I am going to close my “farewell column” out with a little story that drives the point home about effective communication. Communicating the right message, to the right person, at the right time.

A businessman arrived for an executive retreat on a remote tropical island. There was a computer in his room available for limited use purposes. He decided to send an email to his wife and accidentally typed in the wrong email address. Unbeknownst to him he sent the email to a widow who had just returned from her husband’s funeral. The widow decided to check her emails, expecting condolence messages from relatives and friends. After reading the first message she fainted. Her son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor and saw the computer screen which read:

To my loving wife, I know you are surprised to hear from me, they have computers here and we are allowed to send emails to love one’s. I’ve just checked in. How are you and the kids? The place is beautiful, but I am lonely here. I have made the necessary arrangements for your arrival tomorrow. Expecting you darling. I can’t wait to see you!

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

Holiday Market Schedule

CLOSED
Saturday, December 24
Tuesday, December 27
Tuesday, December 29
Saturday, December 31

RE-OPEN
Tuesday, January 3

Farmers Market

AT EL CERRITO PLAZA
Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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New Chamber Officers for 2023

By Robert Rogers

On the heels of a banner year, this Chamber is set to name new officers, benefit from the continued service of former officers, and recruit fresh talent for an open seat.

Following the report of the Nominating Committee (Kevin O’Neal, Matt Khadivian, and Robert Rogers), and a board recruitment subcommittee’s recommendations, the new officers will be as follows subject to board approval this month.

Matt Khadivian will move from vice president to president. Khadivian, owner of El Mono Fresh Peruvian Restaurant, is set to build upon the board’s recent success under the leadership of outgoing President Jeffrey Wright. Wright will remain as a director.

The new vice president will be Kevin O’Neal, owner of Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar.

Treasurer John Stashik, proprietor of Premier Graphics, and Secretary Aissia Ashoori, City of El Cerrito Housing Manager, will remain in their posts.

The Chamber has an open seat with the resignation of director Sonja Givens-Thomas, who also serves as Director of El Cerrito Royale.

As there were no contested offices, it was not necessary to mail ballots. The incoming officers and directors will assume their duties at a January 2023 meeting. The date and location of that event will be announced in the January Byline.