This month as I write this I am just back from Waste Expo 2018, the national convention and trade show for the waste services industry. This year’s show included over 600 exhibitors and nearly 12,000 attendees. It was a huge event. It took over a day and a half to get through the exhibit hall to see everything. The technological evolution that has occurred in the waste industry over the past 50 years is quite amazing.

Up until the 1940’s much of California’s garbage was still being collected by four men on horse drawn wagons. The garbage was sorted by the collectors. Bottles, paper, and rags were separated and sold and the rest was simply dumped in open landfills and often times simply set on fire. Locally, several of these landfills were right on the shoreline of San Francisco Bay. The odor and pollution this generated is hard to imagine today.

The 1950’s saw the introduction of modern compacting collection vehicles. Collection crews were reduced to two men increasing collection efficiency tremendously. During the late 1950’s public awareness about the effects that landfills were having on the environment drove haulers and the communities they served to develop “sanitary landfills.” These new landfills were first lined with clay and perforated pipes. This allowed for the leachate or liquid that percolated through the landfills to be captured and processed rather than simply escaping back into the ground or waterways. In addition, most burning ceased, and landfill operators began covering the garbage that was dumped each day with clean dirt which greatly reduced odors.

Then in the late 1980’s here in California legislative efforts began to encourage more recycling of the materials that were being landfilled.

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**Commercial Composting Required by State**

Laureteen Brazil, City of El Cerrito

In late 2014, the State of California passed a commercial organics recycling law (Chesboro AB 1826), which established a timeline for businesses, apartment complexes, and institutions to divert their organic waste from going to the landfill. Commercial establishments with the following characteristics should have or will need to adopt an organic waste recycling service by the following dates:

- April 1, 2016 – Commercial accounts generating eight or more cubic yards of organic waste per week.
- January 1, 2017 – Commercial accounts generating four or more cubic yards of organic waste per week.
- January 1, 2019 – Commercial accounts generating four cubic yards of solid waste per week.

**Organic waste includes:** food waste, green waste, landscape and pruning waste, nonhazardous wood waste, and food-spoiled paper waste that typically is mixed in with food waste.

According to the timeline set by the state, businesses that generate at least four cubic yards of solid waste per week are required to arrange for an organics recycling service by January 1, 2019. Some commercial accounts can save money by reducing their garbage container size and increasing their recycling and composting practices.

The Operations and Environmental Services Division of the City of El Cerrito is here to help your business comply with the new requirement. If you have questions, would like a presentation to be made to your employees, or assistance with training, please contact staff member Laureteen Brazil at (510) 559-7686.

For more information or to sign up for organics collection service, please contact East Bay Sanitary Co., Inc., the city's franchise waste hauler, at (510) 237-4321; www.ebsan.com.

See the CalRecycle website for additional information: www.calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial/organics/

Laureteen Brazil is the city’s Waste Prevention Specialist. Contact directly at (510) 559-7686.
COMING to El Cerrito Plaza is The Perfect Workout. With fitness training studios here in the Bay Area and even scattered around the U.S., they claim to help people achieve maximum fitness benefits from just two 20-minute sessions a week. No opening date is known at this time, but I’d say soon.

If that 20-minute fitness session makes you hungry, Burgerim is another new business planning to open at the Plaza. Gourmet burgers, made to your specifications and topped as you please. This new store will be located next to Dentists of El Cerrito Plaza in the former Avenue space.

Our local 24-hour restaurant scaled back their hours a month ago. Nation’s Giant Hamburgers now closes at 3 a.m. Night owls and early risers who like their breakfasts and pies will have to adjust. The store in the city of San Pablo is still open 24/7.

Feeding El Cerrito. A Mr. Pickle’s Sandwich Shop opened on April 23rd at 10910 San Pablo Ave. (near Schmidt Lane). Their story goes like this: Frank Fagundes (founder) worked in a Daly City deli as a teenager. He eventually wanted to open his own deli, and did. The first Mr. Pickle’s made its 1995 debut in San Mateo. Now they’re all over the place with the corporate headquarters in Loomis, California. Memo to Frank: you hit the big time now that you’re in El Cerrito.

More food. A Popeyes Louisiana Chicken outlet will open soon at 10175 San Pablo Ave. just north of Central. Formerly a KFC store. Different chicken, I presume. (Or it all tastes like chicken.) At any rate, contractors are going full speed ahead on the renovation and help wanted signs are up.

Now for nonfood. Butler’s Uniforms moved in and out of 10330 San Pablo Ave. (El Cerrito) in relatively short order. That’s the block with the Guitar Center building on it. Butler’s seems to have settled in Richmond at 12827 San Pablo Ave. (north of Esmond Ave.), former site of Antonio’s uniform shop.

Good reviews keep coming about JunkCat, LLC. Now they’re listed as an accredited business by the Better Business Bureau. Get rid of your junk the easy way: www.junkcat.com

El Cerrito’s Economic Development Committee meets monthly and is composed of local citizens and proprietors of businesses within the city. The committee acts in an advisory capacity and a chief purpose is to promote business in El Cerrito. The Chamber president, by policy, has a seat on the committee. Everybody I talk to has an opinion about the state of economic development in our city. Serving on the EDC can be a productive way to focus one’s efforts on improving business in El Cerrito. The city’s website says there are seven vacancies on the EDC. If you’re interested volunteering for the EDC get an application form at City Hall. Or go to www.el-cerrito.org. You can always contact this Chamber of Commerce for assistance. Go for it!

Round-Up. Contra Costa Marketplace magazine reminds us of the upcoming El Cerrito issue in June. The deadline is May 8th for advertisers. The Round-Up section is printed every June and December. Contact the Chamber office for information.

Independence Day. The City of El Cerrito/worldOne Fourth of July Festival is the biggest event in the city attracting thousands of people every year. Your Chamber of Commerce will be there passing out free gifts to attendees. The large number of people at the event in Cerrito Vista Park can also be an excellent way to promote your business as well as help the community. There are deadlines to apply for booth space and they are approaching soon. Get more information by contacting the Chamber of Commerce.

Also, we can use some volunteers to staff our booth. Please help us out.

Questions? Comments? Submissions?
Contact the Byline
byline@elcerritochamber.org
Protect Harassment Victims, Employers from Defamation Suits

In 2016, 554 Californians filed sexual harassment complaints with the state civil rights agency, and many other employees have complained directly to employers without involving a state agency. But in none of these cases was an employer free to warn another employer that a prospective employee was found to be a sexual harasser, lest they be subject to a costly lawsuit for defamation. What’s worse, even the victim may be subject to allegations of defamation or emotional distress for merely making those charges; first, harassment at work, then harassment in the legal system.

Outrageous as it may seem, harassers are attempting to wriggle out of their self-imposed predicaments by filing defamation lawsuits against those seeking justice. Harassers are also suing former employers for defamation when the latter advise prospective employers that the job seeker was terminated because of sexually harassing behavior.

State law and regulations quite clearly require employers not only to take reasonable steps to prevent and promptly correct harassment, but to conduct an impartial and timely investigation upon receiving a complaint.

Nonetheless, employers and harassment victims have been sued for following the law and exercising their rights. An employee was discharged by his employer following allegations of sexual harassment, including unwelcome comments and unwanted touching. He then sued the employer for defamation during the investigation of the allegations, alleging the company had falsely accused him of sexual harassment. The appellate court allowed the lawsuit to go forward because there was no clear basis on which to dismiss the claim.

In another case, a sexual harassment victim was countersued for defamation and infliction of emotional distress by her alleged perpetrator after he was named in a suit arising from her victimization.

An alleged harasser brought libel and slander causes of action against the victim because of the statements she made in her complaint to the company’s human resources department and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Can you imagine a better way to silence a victim of sexual harassment than to threaten her with a lawsuit for simply making a complaint to human resources?

Employers who want to do the right thing are put in a terrible position. They have knowledge of the harassing activity and yet their hands are tied. If they tell a potential employer that the employee was accused of harassing conduct, they may be on the hook for a defamation claim. If they stay silent, the harasser is then free to victimize more individuals at his or her new job without anyone ever having known about the alleged behavior.

To be sure, none of these frivolous lawsuits has so far survived the trial or appellate courts, but the prospect that either a harassment victim or diligent employer would be dragged to court for exercising their rights and following the law is nothing short of absurd.

The California Chamber of Commerce and numerous other employer organizations are supporting legislation to remedy this outrage. Assembly Bill 2770 by Assemblywoman Jacqui Irwin would address this situation by protecting an employer’s ability to notify future employers about sexual harassment investigations without fear of defamation lawsuits. The measure will provide greater transparency during job reference checks regarding sexual harassment complaints and investigations.

The measure also protects employees from defamation lawsuits for reporting sexual harassment allegations to their employers or official agencies. Employers agree with Kevin Kish, state Department of Fair Housing and Employment director, who said, “Sexual harassment and assault can happen in any workplace, in any industry. Employers must be prepared to immediately investigate allegations of sexual misconduct and take prompt action to protect employees subjected to it and prevent future violations.”

But employers should not be dissuaded from taking the extra and important step to warn future employers of the behavior of former employees who engaged in the same sexual misconduct.

The views expressed here are mine and do not necessarily represent those of the Chamber Board. Email: l.martinengo@elcerritochamber.org; cell: (510) 778-5883.

Civic Theatre Sneak Preview, Thursday, May 17

On Thursday, May 17, 7-8 p.m., join Artistic Director Marilyn Langbehn and special guests as they unveil CCCT’s 59th season! This one-night-only event will feature scenes and songs from the blockbuster 2018-19 season, plus a special performance from CCCT’s upcoming production of “Ragtime!”

This special sneak peek at the season will be followed by a reception featuring wine and light refreshments courtesy of some of El Cerrito’s finest restaurants.

This event is free; seating is limited and reservations are strongly encouraged. RSVP at www.ccct.org.

Sponsored in part by a donation from Marvin Gardens Real Estate.

“In the Heights” 2017. Photo by Ben Krantz.
ZIPANG! Have you seen the store or driven by and wondered what that means? An interesting story going way back, explains how El Cerrito’s locally owned Japanese variety store got its name. In the 13th century, intrepid explorer, Marco Polo lived in China for years and heard tales of another eastern land rich with gold called “Chipangu” by the Chinese. The word Chipangu, roughly translates to “country of gold,” probably referring to Japan’s once abundant ore resources. Later, Mr. Polo recounted his stories to a fellow Italian, who wrote everything down and published the travelogue introducing medieval Europeans to exotic new places and cultures. The now classic book inspired many speculators and adventurers, including Columbus, who began to plan his expedition. Over the years, the name Chipangu was modified for Westerners to Zipangu or Zipang, which eventually became “Japan” by English speakers!

To experience the creative genius of Japanese ingenuity without leaving the city limits, I suggest you visit the store in the Moeser Square center, at the corner of Moeser Lane and San Pablo Ave. Owners Keiji Ohshita and Reiko Ono, have assembled an amazing assortment of items and are constantly importing practical and beautiful items from Japan for us to try. On a recent visit, I came home with wonderful glass tumblers, whimsical sticky notes, useful colored pens, a box of bandages, delicate cookies, and more. It’s well stocked with a wide variety of home goods, foods, gift ideas and more, I’m willing to bet everyone that enters finds something surprising and delightful to use at home or give.

Keiji’s background in behavioral sciences with its blend of economics, marketing and philosophy, along with his early career experiences, help him understand what items his customers like, want and need. In the early 1980s, after graduating from a well regarded university in Tokyo, Keiji went to work for an advertising company as an account executive. His main account was the Kikkoman Corp., and he developed many campaigns to showcase the soy sauce and other products to new audiences.

In 1992, Keiji relocated to San Francisco to begin a new life chapter and worked for a food distributor, driving all around the Bay Area. After some years, he and one of his regular clients teamed together to set up a retail store in Japantown, importing food and other goods. This store, called Ichiban Kan, did a good business with built-in customers in the city, but, many customers were coming from the East Bay to buy Japanese products they were familiar with. He also noticed that customers from the East Bay were buying different items than those folks in San Francisco. In 2004, they decided to establish an East Bay location which Keiji would own as a franchisee. Since Keiji and his wife, lived in Kensington, they chose the El Cerrito location, which was available due to renovations of the next door liquor store.

From 2004 to 2009, the El Cerrito store was also called Ichiban Kan. After a few challenging years, Keiji realized it was time to have a new identity and name to separate fully from the San Francisco location. Zipang, the ancient name, was chosen for the newly independent store. Keiji and Reiko look at catalogs to keep up with the latest trends and goods in Japan and contact a partner that helps with the local ordering. They are currently ordering from about 20 different manufacturing companies!

I was slightly surprised to learn that very popular items are the stationery and pens. It seems that digital communication is not completely erasing “old school” ways. Mechanical pencils that rotate the lead automatically and thus, do not break are popular as are Origami paper kits, notepads and kitchen utensils. To help identify items, all the product tags have English descriptions.

Keiji shared his goal for Zipang, which is to showcase the Japanese style and culture of designing everything for efficiency and beauty! I think he and Reiko are doing a fantastic job of that and I’m so glad they’re here in El Cerrito; we don’t have to fly to Japan for unique home and gift purchases! Do yourself a favor and stop by Zipang in Moeser Square, 10562 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito.
FROM THE PRESIDENT
Continued from page 1

As a result, a massive infrastructure of transfer stations and other material recovery facilities with the latest material processing technologies was developed throughout California to capture and recycle much of the waste stream with 50% being the goal. These processing technologies made up a large percentage of exhibitors at this year’s waste expo. The technologies include things like electromagnet systems that remove iron and other ferrous metals from the waste and optical sorters that use lasers to identify specific materials such as specific types of papers or plastics which then triggers a blast of air that kicks these particular items out of the rush of material and into their own specific bins for further processing. While there is still a lot of manual picking and separation of “recyclables” that occurs by people from conveyor belts, the technologies that have been developed are still quite impressive.

Today there is a new obstacle facing the waste industry and the communities we service. The materials that get separated in these recovery facilities get baled and then sold to processors to be recycled into new products. Over 70% of these bales are shipped overseas for processing, most frequently to China. But despite the investment and with today’s best management practices and technologies for recovering as clean a product as possible, a certain percentage of residual garbage still makes it into these bales, perhaps as much as 10%.

In early 2017, China declared that they would no longer accept bales of paper and plastic that contained residual garbage in excess of 1%. This announcement is being called “National Sword” by the waste industry. What it means for processors is that they have lost a huge market for the sale of these materials. The revenue from the sales of these materials currently offsets residential and commercial collection rates by as much as 20%. Prior to 2017, prices for bales of paper ran as high as $100 per ton. Today many of the processors are actually having to pay brokers to take the bales. In more and more instances the bales are not moving at all which is creating a huge health and safety problem as the bales accumulate in communities hosting these processing facilities.

Needless to say, this is a huge problem that the general public is mostly unaware of but that needs to be addressed quickly. In the short term, there are legislative efforts occurring that would provide relief from current law and allow processors to begin land-filling the bales to minimize the health and safety issues that are developing. Longer term solutions should include development of mills here on the west coast that could recycle the material rather than having to ship it overseas. But the environmental obstacles to building these mills may be insurmountable. The other option is to invest huge amounts of additional capital to develop and deploy technologies that further reduce the amount of residual garbage in the bales to meet current market demands. I suspect the ultimate fix for the current situation will include some combination of all three.

The industry has done a fantastic job of responding to legislative measures to reduce the amount of material going into landfills. But what we need now is a much stronger legislative focus on market development for the recyclable materials. Bottom line, garbage rates will likely begin to increase at a faster rate as communities struggle to meet this new reality.

New Candidate Workshop
BY JOHN C. STASHIK

Fed up with the status quo? Do you want to “throw the bums out”? Would you like to see a business friendly choice on the ballot? Obviously, you can do a better job than those entrenched politicians! Put your money where your mouth is. Now is the time to consider running for public office. There is no guarantee of winning an election but the upcoming workshop can teach you the ABCs.

Join Contra Costa County Elections for a free workshop to learn about the basics of running for public office. Topics will include candidate filing, campaign finance disclosure requirements, working with the media, and hearing from past local candidates.

Here are the details. Saturday, May 12th; 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Pacheco Community Center, 5800 Pacheco Blvd., Pacheco, California. There is no charge.

We sincerely thank M.A. Hays Co. for donating 2 tickets to an Oakland A’s game as an April luncheon raffle prize.

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5th Annual El Cerrito Hillside Festival
Friday May 4 – Sunday May 6
Locations throughout the Hillside Natural Area
FREE
The May 2018 edition of the El Cerrito Marketing Program postcard was mailed to 13,388 addresses.

This includes all homes and businesses in El Cerrito plus part of Richmond.

The Chamber is producing these cards four times a year. The next card will have a deadline of August 15 to be delivered by Labor Day.

Spaces on the card fill quickly. Reserve your spot soon.

Next Deadline: August 15, 2018
For sales and information contact: Ads@ElCerritoChamber.org
Hana Gardens

Then
One year ago dignitaries were throwing dirt with gold shovels signaling the start of construction.

Now
Today, construction continues with substantial progress evident on what will be one of San Pablo Avenue’s taller buildings.

This offering of our Best Selling Marketing Products at Exceptional Prices addresses the key pieces in marketing your business. As your Marketing Partner we can expand well beyond this core offering to help you create a marketing plan that exceeds your goals.
Calendar of Events

May
1 Taco Tuesday with the El Cerrito Police Dept.
   Los Moles Restaurant, 5-8 p.m.
1 City Council meets, 7 p.m., City Hall.
2 Chamber board of directors meets. 9 a.m. City Hall.
2 Mixer at Everything Under the Rainbow,
   6491 Portola Ave. 5:30-7:30 p.m.
4-6 Hillside Festival. All day. Hillside Natural Area.
   6 Closing day: “Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike,”
   Contra Costa Civic Theatre. www.ccct.org
12 Barks & Bells, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., El Cerrito Plaza.
15 Luncheon meeting with Chief Paul Keith. See above.
15 City Council meets, 7 p.m., City Hall.
June
15 “Ragtime” premiers, 8 p.m.
   Contra Costa Civic Theatre. www.ccct.org
July
4 Annual Fourth of July Festival. Cerrito Vista Park. All day.
Sept.
13 Cerrito Classics: “Raiders of the Lost Ark.” 7 p.m.
   Rialto Cinemas Cerrito.

MEET THE CHIEF OF POLICE
Paul Keith
Tuesday, May 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
Food by Sasa Kitchen, El Cerrito

Meeting room generously provided by
El Cerrito Royale

Farmers Market
AT EL CERRITO PLAZA
Open Tuesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
SPONSORED BY
El Cerrito
Fresh Seafood by Hudson Fish
will return to the Saturday
market on May 12th.

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

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