



## Official No Longer

Alameda Sun loses city contract

Dennis Evanosky

"The Official Newspaper of the City of Alameda," the *Alameda Sun's* masthead has proudly proclaimed these last four years. This is the last edition that the *Sun* is able to make that boast.

Over these four years, Jillian Strahler and Joyce McConeghey have worked diligently to develop cordial, well-coordinated relationships with city staff.

This is attested to in this year's staff report about awarding the contract to the *Sun*. The staff report reads:

"Although the *Alameda Journal* was the lowest bidder, for the past four years, the City Council selected the *Alameda Sun* based on general circulation (see attached circulation audits) and because it is locally owned and operated.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Alameda Sun* has reduced its paper circulation and increased online readership. The City Clerk recommends awarding the contract to the *Alameda Sun*."

Despite the recommendation of their own staff, Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Vice-Mayor Malia Vella and Councilmember Tony Daysog voted at the Tuesday, June 15, City Council meeting to award the contract to the *Alameda Journal*. Councilmembers John Knox White and Trish Spencer voted to award the contract to the *Sun*.

On the face of it, the vote makes sense. The *Journal* bid \$5.61 per column inch against the *Alameda Sun's* \$15 per column inch.

Why such a wide difference? Eric J. Kos and I own the *Alameda Sun*. The *Journal*, on the other hand, is part of an Oakland media conglomerate called Bay Area News Group (BANG) which, in turn, is owned by a Denver, Colo., media conglomerate called MNG Enterprises, Inc., which does business as Digital First Media and MediaNews Group.

MNG Enterprises' major shareholder, Alden Capital Group, is a New York City hedge fund run by Heath Freeman.

The *Alameda Sun* could be worth about \$600,000 with assets valued at \$15,000, which mostly include unsold books, a few computers and some second-hand desks and chairs; oh, and a small refrigerator and a microwave oven.

The *Sun* was netting a slight profit until the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, when we lost 63% of our revenue.

On the other hand, Alden Capital Group manages more than \$1 billion in assets. Dun & Bradstreet estimates BANG's 2021 revenue at \$7.61 billion.

It was difficult to nail down MNG's most-recent revenue. I did make a note in 2017, when the *Sun* was bidding against the *Journal* that its Denver-based owner netted profits of \$159 million.

On May 21, the *Journal's* owner became the second-largest owner of newspapers in the United States, when it acquired the *Chicago Tribune*.

**Three members of the City Council have handed the Alameda Sun a lemon. However we've decided to make some lemonade and have some plans to do so.**

### Commentary

Is it any wonder that the *Alameda Journal*-Bay Area News Group-MNG Enterprises-Alden Capital Group can underbid the *Alameda Sun* by more than \$9 a column inch?

And what about Heath Freeman, who runs hedge fund Alden Capital Group? Here are two statements about Freeman from a *Washington Post* story written by Sarah Ellison:

■ The reporters who work for him — and the swelling numbers who used to — call him a vampire, a vulture, an embarrassment; some have protested outside his Hamptons home or his Midtown Manhattan office.

■ Twenty-one (United States) senators have urged him to stop his "reckless acquisition and destruction of newspapers," and mayors (!) bemoan his papers' shrinking coverage of their cities. (The exclamation point is mine.)

Here are three examples of Freeman's influence on the media from Ellison's article:

■ There was no reporter on the education beat at the (San Jose) *Mercury News* when the pandemic started closing schools.

■ In Denver, Colo., in the aftermath of the 2012 Aurora movie theater mass shooting, the editor was asked to slash staff to improve the next month's budget numbers.

■ In Vallejo, there is exactly one news reporter left at the *Times-Herald* to cover a community of 120,000 people.

All this being said, however, I do want to thank past City Councilmembers for allowing the *Sun* to do the city's legal ads the last four years.

I want to thank Trish Spencer and John Knox White for this year's vote of confidence in the *Alameda Sun*.

I would also like to ask for your support. If you are not a subscriber, please become one. It's just \$50 a year. Give us a call 510-263-1471.

We also have history books for sale, two about Alameda and some coffee-table books we've done for our London, England, publisher. We accept all major credit cards.

Three members of the City Council have handed the *Sun* a lemon — we will take a \$43,000 hit on our bottom line. However we've decided to make some lemonade and have some plans to do so. I'll describe them in upcoming issues.

Dennis Evanosky is the publisher of the *Alameda Sun*.



City of Alameda

Artist rendering depicts educational opportunities at a proposed observation area on DePave Park. Image prepared by CMG Landscape Architecture for Alameda's grant funding application.

## DePave Park Funding Denied

Political favoritism may have affected the decision

Richard Bangert

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority has denied the city's request for a planning grant for DePave Park at Alameda Point (City to Seek Wetland Park Funding, Sept. 24, 2020).

This ecological wetland park is proposed for the western side of the Seaplane Lagoon. The rejection letter and the agency's ranking of applicants raise questions of fairness in awarding grants.

In the recent round of grant awards, Alameda's request for \$1.165 million for DePave Park planning was denied, while the East Bay Regional Park District was awarded \$500,000 for designing the Hayward Marsh Restoration Project.

Whether or not a 2016 campaign contribution from EBRPD to the Restoration Authority's ballot Measure AA gave them a bump in

the rankings is unclear. But the optics are not good.

In the rejection letter, the Restoration Authority highlighted the strengths and weaknesses in the city's application.

"This planning project would leverage innovative partnerships to create an ecological park in an Economically Disadvantaged Community within a highly urbanized area," wrote grant reviewer Linda Tong. The partnerships would be with the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) and San Francisco's Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ).

SFEI would provide scientific consultation throughout the design process and into construction, focusing on ecological and physical processes and long-term habitat evolution and resilience of the site. The LEJ partnership would

provide a community stewardship program involving volunteers, citizen science projects and potentially partnering with the Alameda Point Collaborative to expand job training.

In terms of weaknesses, the reviewer said it was a "Small area to be restored." Small size didn't seem to matter when the Restoration Authority awarded \$450,000 to the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) in 2018 for its one-acre dune restoration and shoreline stabilization project next to the Encinal Boat Ramp. DePave Park is 12 acres.

One explanation for the apparent double standard may be tied to an EBRPD campaign contribution to help place the Restoration Authority's regional parcel tax

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## Suspects Sought in Two Gun Crimes

Ekene Ikeme

Alameda Police Department (APD) detectives are investigating two gun-related incidents that took place in Alameda on the same day.

APD detectives are currently investigating a shooting that took place Tuesday, June 15, near Washington Park, just before 11:30 p.m.

APD began receiving multiple 911 calls of possible gunfire in the area around Upper Washington Park on the 700 block of Central Avenue. Officers were dispatched to the area soon after. At the scene, responding officers located more than a dozen spent shell casings with the help of witnesses, according to an APD report.

The preliminary investigation has determined that a vehicle and a person traveling on foot were spotted at the time of the incident. No victims have been identified but surrounding homes and vehicles have sustained damage. The APD report did not say if the damage was bullet holes.

APD said in a statement that they do not believe this was a random act of gun violence and think the involved parties did know each other. Detectives are still reviewing evidence and speaking with witnesses.

APD said it will provide updates as the investigation permits.

### Armed Robbery

Earlier in the day, an adult male was robbed at gunpoint while trying to enter the Safeway on the 2200 block of South Shore Center.

APD received calls around 10:25 a.m. for a report of an armed robbery.



Alameda Police Department

Three armed robbery suspects drove off in this silver SUV after robbing an adult male at the Safeway at South Shore Center on Tuesday, June 15.

Once at the scene, officers were advised that a silver SUV, similar to a Chevy Equinox, with three occupants, pulled up to an adult male as he was attempting to enter the Safeway. One of the suspects exited the vehicle and approached the victim while pointing a firearm and demanded his property. The two men began to struggle over the belongings. A second suspect exited the vehicle, pulled out another gun, and demanded the victim's property. The victim complied, and the three suspects fled. APD believes the suspects traveled northbound on Park Street and likely turned east on Otis Drive.

APD detectives have deter-

mined the silver SUV entered the South Shore Center parking lot around 9:50 am and parked within view of the shopping center's banks, according to an APD report.

After a brief time in the parking lot, the suspects observed the victim exiting one of the banks. The suspects approached the victim at 10:05 am.

APD is asking community members who live in the area near South Shore Center and Otis Drive to review their home security systems for the pictured vehicle between 9:40 and 10:05 a.m.

Anyone with information or who may have witnessed either of these crimes is asked to call APD Violent Crimes Unit at 337-8336.

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Betty Young

**Alameda Sun Almanac**

Date	Rise	Set
Today	5:48	20:35
June 25	5:49	20:35
June 26	5:49	20:35
June 27	5:49	20:35
June 28	5:50	20:35
June 29	5:50	20:35
June 30	5:50	20:35

## Coast Guard Change of Command



Rear Adm. Peter W. Gautier (left) salutes Vice Adm. Linda L. Fagan (right) during the Coast Guard Pacific Area change of command ceremony on Coast Guard Island. Adm. Karl L. Schultz presided over the ceremony, where Gautier relieved Fagan as the acting Pacific Area commander.

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