



On the Front Lines

Alameda Fire Department

An Alameda firefighter handles a hose to help extinguish the Monument Fire. The fire is burning near the town of Big Bar in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, some 280 miles north of Alameda. A July 30 lightning strike ignited the blaze, which continues to threaten communities in Trinity County. As of Monday, Aug. 23, the fire had consumed some 150,000 acres and was 20% contained.

City Hosts Final 'Slow Streets' Meeting Monday

Dennis Evanosky

In April 2020, the City of Alameda began implementing what it called "soft closures" on some of its streets.

The program was born out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The city intended these closures to encourage social distancing. Over time, the city limited traffic using this "soft-closure" approach on five of its streets (see box accompanying this story).

Limiting automobile traffic on these streets has helped the city create places for residents to safely walk, run, bike, scooter and roll.

The city plans to review the slow street program this October and is finalizing plans to strengthen some of its features and test out new features that include temporary traffic circles and speed cushions.

The city is currently evaluating the program to determine if, and how, "Slow Streets" will continue beyond Oct. 31 the current Council-approved expiration date.

SPUR, a Bay Area, nonprofit public policy organization has posed the question whether at least some of the "Slow Streets" should remain a permanent fixture on our landscape.

"Many fear that these urban assets that they've come to love will also return to their pre-pandemic status," SPUR points out on its website.

The organization poses the question: Do slow streets have a permanent future and, more importantly, how do we make them more equitable when doing so? Some major cities have already done this.



City of Alameda

During the pandemic, the city blocked 4.7 miles of "Slow Streets" to through automobile traffic to provide more space for physical activity at a distance. Officials invite you to help decide what's next for the Slow Streets program at next Monday's open house.

Current slow streets

1. On Orion Street between West Midway Avenue and Pearl Harbor Road
2. On Pacific Avenue between Ninth and Oak streets
3. On San Jose Avenue/Morton Street from San Antonio to Oak streets
4. On Santa Clara Avenue between Pacific and Sixth streets
5. On Versailles Avenue between Calhoun Street and Fernside Boulevard

In 1972, the city of Munich, Germany, turned its major street, Koenigstrasse, into what it called a "Fussgaengerzone," a pedestrian zone. Almost 50 years later that major thoroughfare remains open only to pedestrians.

The city is hoping to hear from its residents in the last of four virtual open houses on the topic. This

meeting is scheduled from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., next Monday, Aug. 30.

City staff will present recommendations for the future of the program to the Transportation Commission at its Wednesday, Sept. 22 meeting. Staff is then scheduled to report to the council in October.

Contact Dennis Evanosky at editor@alamedasun.com.

Blood Drive This Sunday

Sun Staff Reports

Right now, there is an urgent need for blood donors of all blood types. The need for type O blood is especially urgent, as it is the most transfused blood type. O-negative is what emergency room personnel reach for when there is not time to determine a patient's blood type.

To help support hospitals and

patients, the Alameda Elks lodge is sponsoring the Alameda Community Blood Drive from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., this Sunday, Aug. 29 at the Elks Lodge, 2255 Santa Clara Ave.

Your donation can help ensure doctors and hospitals have what they need to help patients in need, so please schedule an appointment if you're currently healthy.

Park District Workers Vote on Strike

Ekene Ikeme

East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) workers will decide whether to go on strike after no agreement has been made in ongoing negotiations with the EBRPD's Board of Directors.

The 600 EBRPD workers will vote this weekend whether to authorize a strike at EBRPD's 73 parks, including Crown Memorial State Beach, Crab Cove Visitor Center and Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Park in Alameda. A vote to authorize a strike will not lead to an immediate strike, according to People for East Bay Park Workers' (PEBPW) spokesperson Heather Weiner. The group would decide when to strike at a later date.

"If a strike were to happen it probably happens during Labor Day Weekend," said Weiner.

A simple majority wins the vote. Weiner doesn't see the vote being close because the "workers are pretty united."

Representatives from the union, AFSCME 2428, and the Board of Directors have been negotiating for a new contract for months. Weiner said the existing contract has already expired and park personnel have been working under the previous agreement while negotiations continue.

Park workers are demanding the elected seven-member EBRPD board raise their pay to meet the median wage levels of similar workers within the region. The union hired Ralph Andersen & Associates (RAA), a human resource consulting firm, to compare their pay scale



East Bay Park Workers

Park educator Aki McKinize, pictured here at Crab Cove is among the people East Bay Park Workers say is among the underpaid staff at the East Bay Regional Park District.

to similar employees at other Bay Area public agencies.

According to the RAA report, which was released in 2019, EBRPD employees were paid 10 percent less than similar public agency employees. In one example, a civil engineer for EBRPD earns a monthly salary of \$7,870 to \$8,824. This was 15th out of 15 agencies surveyed. East Bay Municipal Utility District paid comparable civil engineers the highest salary at \$9,779 to \$11,886 a month. The RAA study looked at 37 different job positions and EBRPD did not pay any position in the top half of agencies surveyed.

The People for East Bay Park Workers believe the low wages contribute to the more than 40 EBRPD positions remaining vacant. This while EBRPD reported a surplus of

\$26 million in 2020 including \$10 million in unspent salaries, according to a PEBPW report.

Weiner said park personnel want to avoid a strike, which would be the first in nearly 50 years, but believe "collective action is the best way to help each other."

"They say we are paid in sunsets for working at East Bay parks," said Aki McKinize, park educator for EBRPD. "But sunsets don't pay for groceries and school supplies. Like many other working people in our expensive region, East Bay Regional Park workers are struggling to cover childcare, rent, and other basic necessities."

Strike authorization results will be announced Monday, Aug. 30 at 6 p.m. A call to the EBRPD board was not returned by press time.

Helping Monarchs Thrive at Jean Sweeney Park

Sun Staff Reports

On Saturday, Aug. 21 The Rotary Club of Alameda members joined with the Kiwanis Club of Alameda to do their part to help to turn around the decline of the Western Monarch butterfly.

They planted landscaping that the Monarch Butterfly caterpillars need to feed on before becoming the beauti-

ful black and orange beauties we recognize.

With the support of the City of Alameda and other organizations, they brought some 50 plants made up of several varieties that Monarch butterflies are attracted to.

They planted these in a designated area of the Jean Sweeney Open Space.



Courtesy photo

Rotarian Rhush Wanigatunga helps his daughter Amaya dig the hole for a Salvia plant as part of the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project.

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Alameda Sun Almanac

Date	Rise	Set
Today	6:34	19:48
Aug. 27	6:35	19:47
Aug. 28	6:36	19:45
Aug. 29	6:36	19:44
Aug. 30	6:37	19:42
Aug. 31	6:38	19:41

Stroll along the Estuary



On Saturday, Aug. 28, Dennis Evanosky will lead a history walking tour along the Oakland Estuary. Meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of Fernside Boulevard and Versailles Avenue. We'll walk across the Fruitvale Bridge, along Oakland's Alameda Avenue to High Street and back to the start. Along the way, Dennis will describe how the estuary was created under the direction of Alameda's own Hermann Krusi. Pictured here: Carving out the estuary with the help of a pair of locomotives.

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