

Alameda Sun

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Joshua Linville

An APD officer investigates a large amount of an unknown green substance on the Jean Sweeney Park slide.

Two Vandalism Incidents at Jean Sweeney Open Space Park Over the Weekend

Sun Staff Reports

There were two cases of vandalism reported at Jean Sweeney Park last weekend.

First, a vandal destroyed the netting and bracing that was protecting the newly planted milkweed plants on Friday, Sept. 3 (read Jean Sweeney Open Space Fun board member Dorothy Freeman's column on the incident on page 4).

There were monarch caterpillars on some of the milkweed and an adult butterfly, but they are now gone. Park voa chrysalis developing into lunteers called Alameda Police Department (APD) officers were called to the area to investigate the incident.

APD officers returned to park two days later, on Sept. 5, to investigate a suspicious

green substance found on the park's slide. The large amount of the suspicious green substance was also spread out on the ground near the slide. A resident that notified the Sun of the incident believed the substance was marijuana. However, APD Lt. Alan Kuboyama strongly asserted the substance was not marijuana. He believed the substance might have been grass clippings.

"I'm not totally sure what it was, but it was a pretty impressive amount," said Kuboyama.

City of Alameda Public Works employees were called to clean the unknown substance.

APD is investigating both incidents. There are no surveil-

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Mayor on Hot Temperatures, Housing Progress and Student Loan Forgiveness

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft

Hot Days Ahead; Stay Cool and Don't Stress the Grid — Alameda, like the rest of the state, is currently experiencing unusually high temperatures. Here are some useful tips from Governor Gavin Newsom's California Volunteers Office to avoid excessive demand on the electric power grid which could lead to planned, or unplanned, power outages:

Avoid using major appliances like ovens, dishwashers, and washing machines between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. Also avoid charging electric vehicles during these hours. (Mayor's tip: Don't use a clothes dryer at all when the weather's warm; invest in a clothesline, or drying rack!)

Alameda Municipal Power (AMP), our clean, green, municipally owned electric utility, reminds customers to set air conditioners to 78 degrees, health permitting, and turn off unnecessary lights. Also keep window coverings closed during the day and open at night to help cool your home. Find more useful information at www.alamedamp.com.

High temperatures can be a health risk, so stay well hydrated and try to avoid being outside when temperatures rise. If your home is unbearably hot, "chill out" at the library! Our Main Library, and West End and Bay Farm branch libraries are air conditioned, and the Main Library (1550 Oak St.) is open seven days a week. Library schedules are available at www.alamedafree.org.

[alamedafree.org](http://www.alamedafree.org).

Be a good neighbor, especially on hot days. If you know older adults, families with young children and babies, people with chronic medical conditions, or anyone who's pregnant, they're particularly vulnerable to heat. Call, text, or visit to offer to pick up groceries, medication, and other necessities.

Housing Progress — On Sept. 15, the Housing Authority of the City of Alameda will celebrate the Grand Opening of the new Rosefield Village (727 Buena Vista Ave.). Originally built in the 1980s as 53 affordable apartments and townhomes, the site has been transformed into 92 new affordable units — a combination of studios, one, two, and three-bedroom apartments — that are energy-efficient and universally designed. Rosefield Village residents will enjoy nearby West End and Webster Street amenities, including public transit, shopping, and the Jean Sweeney Open Space Park and Cross Alameda Trail. For more information, contact the Housing Authority at 510-747-4300.

The Alameda Wellness Center on McKay Avenue is also moving forward, having overcome numerous challenges over the past three-and-a-half years, which delayed, but did not deter, this important project. By providing 100 units of permanent supportive housing for

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City Council Candidate Bill Pai Suspends Campaign

Sun Staff Reports

City Council hopeful Bill Pai announced he would be suspending his campaign after he was charged for an alleged domestic violence assault last month. Pai made the announcement Friday, Sept. 2, on his campaign website, www.billpai4alameda.com.

"To all who have expressed their support, I apologize for disappointing you," wrote Pai, who filed to run for City Council on August 11.

According to the Alameda Police Department daily activity log, the Bay Farm Island resident was arrested at his home and charged with simple battery of a spouse/ex/date on August 24 at 6:09 p.m. Further details of the incident were not disclosed.

"I will state categorically that the charge is completely false, and that I am 100 percent confident it will be dismissed soon," wrote the Alameda Hospital Foundation (AHF) board member. "However, when it comes to the campaign cycle the timing could not have been worse, so I am withdrawing."

In an email to the Alameda Sun, Pai said he will not resume his campaign even if the charge against him is dropped. "It would be inconsiderate to expect my supporters to wait given the short time remaining until November," he said.

Pai ensured that all campaign contributions would be returned to his donors. "I am in the process of determining the best way to return campaign donations," Pai said. "I have canceled the major expenditures which were planned starting this month. The amount spent to date has not been significant."

Pai has been living in Alameda since 2000, according to his campaign website, www.billpai4alameda.com. Since moving to Alameda,



BillPai4Alameda.com

the Chicago native joined the board of the Harbor Bay Community Isle Homeowners Association, along with the AHF. Pai said he does not plan on stepping down from either board.

Pai's campaign website removed his bio, mission statement and donation pages. Currently, the website only has his statement about suspending his campaign. Before the changes to the website, Pai's campaign mission statement emphasized climate change, law enforcement and housing as key issues he wanted to see the city improve.

With Pai out of the running for City Council, there are now five candidates running for two council seats in the Nov. 8 election: Incumbent Tony Daysog, software engineer Paul Beusterien, housing policy fellow Hannah Groce, City of Alameda Health Care District Director Tracy Jensen and former councilmember Jim Oddie.

To read Pai's full Op-ed, read page 4.

Editor's note: Bill Pai's announcement was originally published in another news publication. The Alameda Sun posted this original article with attribution to that publication, but was asked to remove that publication's name from the article. Bill Pai has since posted his campaign suspension statement on his website, so we attributed his statement to his website.

Changing Stories, Ballooning Costs Cloud VA Project

PFAS chemical contamination is the latest delay

Richard Bangert

Every couple of years there is a new story from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on why there are delays in building the veterans facilities at Alameda Point. Meanwhile, the costs have skyrocketed from \$208 million to \$395 million.

Two new stories emerged this summer, just as the VA is requesting another \$128 million in the 2023 federal budget for the Alameda Point project.

Sean Ryan, the spokesperson for Representative Barbara Lee's office in Washington, D.C. offered an explanation for the delay. "All the construction funding [needs to be] in place when the construction contract is bid, increasing the likelihood that a firm will pick up the project. This is a common practice for federal infrastructure projects," said Ryan. But for the past decade, this has not been the case for the Alameda Point project. Funding was periodically appropriated by Congress, and with that funding the VA provided ever-changing direct assurances to the City that work would commence soon.

The VA tells a different story for the current delay, claiming they cannot begin any work until the Navy completes cleaning up a fire-suppression chemical (PFAS) that was used in training Navy firefighters near the VA site. "The U.S. Navy is conducting additional testing to determine the extent of the PFAS," said Armenthis Lester, Chief Communications Manager for the VA Sierra Pacific Network. "We will review the results with the U.S. Navy and regulatory officials, then work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to inform the VA's path forward on the site."

In addition to the completed field testing, the Navy is going to perform laboratory pilot testing of a new treatment method for PFAS, which will take at least a year. The other alternative is to simply dig up the affected areas and haul the soil to a hazardous waste disposal site.

The continuing uncertainty of the fire suppressant cleanup on city property affects the VA's infrastructure work because they



Richard Bangert

PFAS cleanup area is illustrated by the arrow next to the future location of the VA health clinic in relation to the temporary location for the monthly Antiques Faire.

have to install a 36-inch diameter underground storm drainpipe directly through the 14-acre PFAS-contaminated area to the shoreline.

This cleanup, however, has no bearing on whether the VA commences work on installing updated utility infrastructure on three city streets leading to the VA site, as agreed to in exchange for the city giving the VA extra land.

These stories follow a stream of other stories dating back to 2009, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service blocked the entire original project, which included both an out-patient clinic and a two-story in-patient hospital. Back then, the agency feared that the buildings were too close to the nesting site of the endangered California Least Terns, even though they were located more than one-third of a mile, or six football fields, away. This is the same distance to the businesses on Monarch Street. The hospital was, therefore, scrapped, and the clinic was moved further away after the city agreed to give land to the VA.

In 2015, the VA was finally poised to begin work, just as Congress mandated that the VA turn over large construction projects to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in order to minimize cost overruns.

"When the Army Corps of Engineers took over in 2017, they found that there were geotechnical issues the VA had not included when they made their first plans,"

said Ryan. This caused a delay as the Corps made corrections.

In late 2018, with geotechnical issues resolved, VA officials appeared before the Alameda City Council during a special presentation and said that they would be ready to commence work in 2019. But 2019 came and went without any work.

The next year, the VA was telling the city that work would begin in October 2020, according to reporting by Sarah Phelan in Alameda Magazine ("VA Columbarium Makes Progress at the Point," March 4, 2020). "They are looking to award contract to commence construction of offsite work by October 2020, and complete offsite utilities by December 2021," said Community Development director Debbie Potter. Offsite work refers to work on city streets.

The VA first identified a pressing local need for new healthcare facilities and a cemetery in 2004 when they told the Navy they wanted the Alameda Point property. Despite the involvement of the Defense Department, the VA, Congress, four presidential administrations, and the city, new facilities for veterans are still in limbo.

Contributing writer Richard Bangert posts stories and photos about environmental issues and wildlife on his blog *Alameda Point Environmental Report* <https://alamedapointenviro.com>.

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Betty Young

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Alameda Sun Almanac

Date	Rise	Set
Today	6:51	19:18
Sept. 9	6:51	19:17
Sept. 10	6:52	19:15
Sept. 11	6:53	19:14
Sept. 12	6:54	19:12
Sept. 13	6:55	19:11
Sept. 14	6:56	19:09



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