

Locally Owned, Community Oriented

Vol. 14 No. 20
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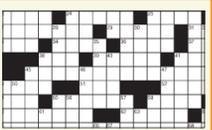
All the doings
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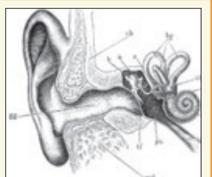
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Alameda Sun Almanac

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Point Enters New Era

Richard Bangert

Alameda Point is on the cusp of a new era in civilian reuse. Plans for construction of residential neighborhoods and commercial space are taking shape, alongside growing productive reuse of aircraft hangars. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is poised to begin the first phase of its \$240 million clinic and columbarium project. In addition, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) is studying plans for accommodating their increasing ferry ridership.

At its Tuesday, Feb. 18 meeting the City Council will get an update on the pending 68-acre "Site A" residential and retail plan. The council is also scheduled to consider authorizing an urban design firm to draft detailed plans for a 100-acre residential neighborhood along Main Street near the ferry terminal.

In November 2014, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) awarded a \$250,000 grant to the city to prepare the Main Street Neighborhood Specific Plan. This sub-district at Alameda Point is part of the new zoning system adopted by the council in early 2014 along with environmental and infrastructure documents. The yearlong public review process for the Main Street neighborhood design will not result in any commitment to build. It will only provide the necessary planning and design document for seeking bids when the City Council decides to move forward with the neighborhood's construction.

A key part of the design will be moving the Alameda Point Collaborative (APC) onto a smaller footprint near the Ploughshares Nursery. The move will achieve a long-sought consolidation of housing, services and programs. A condition of APC vacating its current property for development, which they occupy through Congressional authority, will be for a future developer to fund the construction of new transitional housing and a community center to replace the old.

Reflecting the existence of Ploughshares Nursery, the urban planning team will include a specialist who will be tasked with expanding on the use of agriculture as a community benefit, according to the staff report. The planning process will also devote considerable attention to whether and how the former senior officer housing, known as the Big Whites, will be incorporated into the new community.

MTC also funded the design of the Waterfront and Town Center (WTC) Plan around the Seaplane La-



File photo

If the City Council approves, the city will pay \$290,000 from the Tidelands Fund account to Power Engineering Construction Company to dismantle the historic Todd Shipyard crane next to the ferry terminal.

Alameda Point Partners' "Site A" proposal is an outgrowth of the WTC planning process.

VA 2016 budget request

At the end of the previous City Council meeting, City Manager John Russo announced that President Barack Obama's 2016 budget proposal includes \$70 million for the VA project. If approved by Congress, the money would go toward site work, utilities, geotechnical work and wetlands mitigation.

As part of the VA's agreement with the city, the VA will lay all new infrastructure from the north entrance, down West Red Line Avenue past the gym and out to its runway site. The infrastructure will be sized so that the city can tap into it when needed. The VA will also build an underground dry utility trench from West Red Line Avenue over to Alameda Municipal Power's electrical substation near the east entrance. The city will have use of the trench when needed.

A section of the VA's footprint will impact wetland, and the VA will have to mitigate the loss. It's unknown at this stage whether the VA will add to the existing wetland on the southeastern part of its property near the Seaplane Lagoon, or whether it will send its funds to a wetland mitigation bank.

Ferry service

WETA recently completed the installation of a new passenger gangway at the Main Street Terminal. The upgrade was precipitated when Bay Ship and Yacht moved its floating dry dock closer to the terminal. The passenger-loading ramp is now further west, making the ferry exit maneuver safer.

Ferry ridership at the Main

Suspects Face New Charges

Men associated with Sept. 28, 2014, arson fires land back in court

Dennis Evanosky

The Alameda County District Attorney's (DA) office announced on Thursday, Feb. 5, that it has filed new charges against Andrew Gutierrez, 22, and Stephen Petersen, 27. Last September, the Alameda Police Department (APD) arrested the pair for setting seven arson fires that caused \$3 million in damage to homes and businesses here.

On Oct. 31, 2014, the DA dismissed the arson charges against Petersen.

Until Dec. 7, 2014, Gutierrez was sitting in Santa Rita Jail in Dublin in lieu of \$4.4 million bail, facing five arson charges. Gutierrez learned of his new problems the following day, when the DA charged him with felony burglary. Three days later the DA added felony rape with the enhancement that the victim was incapable of resisting while Gutierrez was performing the act.

Records show that the alleged burglary and rape took place on Sept. 19, more than a week before Gutierrez allegedly set the fires. The victim told police that a man raped her while she was in her car on Park Avenue in Jackson Park. She said that she was drunk when the alleged rape took place. The burglary charge stems from Gutierrez entering the car to commit the rape.

Police connected Gutierrez to the rape when they found his fingerprints in the victim's car.

The DA charged Petersen with possession of child pornography after an investigation found more than 50 questionable images on his computer during the arson investigation. APD had obtained a search warrant for Petersen's computer after he refused to speak to its investigators during that investigation.

When its officers discovered these images, APD opened a second investigation with a new search warrant to determine if Petersen's computer contained child pornography. This led to the DA filing charges.

Petersen turned himself in to Hayward police on Friday, Jan. 30. APD learned through Petersen's attorney that Petersen declined to speak to its investigators. He was released on bail. Petersen was arraigned on the charges on Tuesday, Feb. 4, and was scheduled to enter a plea yesterday, Feb. 11.

Gutierrez remains in custody in lieu of \$4.52 million bail (\$4.4 million on the arson charges; \$100,000 on the rape charge and \$20,000 on the burglary charge). He is scheduled to return to court for a pretrial hearing on all charges before Judge Yolanda Northridge at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Feb. 17, in Department 115 at the Wiley Manuel Courthouse, 661 Washington St.



Gutierrez, left, and Petersen

File photos

Hu Takes School Board Seat

Dennis Evanosky

The Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) board of trustees has selected Philip Hu to fill Mayor Trish Spencer's seat. Spencer's election as mayor last November required her to vacate the seat. The board chose to select a new member rather than pursue a more-expensive election.

Hu was among 23 applicants for the seat. The candidates included former school board members Barbara Rasmussen and Mike McMahon. The number was whittled to 19 when four of the applicants either withdrew or failed to show for the first stage of the screening process.

The board chose 10 applicants to return for a second meeting. By the end of the evening, the board pared its list to Hu and Jane Grimaldi. When the board deadlocked, Grimaldi withdrew her name.

Although a relative newcomer to Alameda, Hu brings five years of school board experience to the table. He served on the San Gabriel Unified School District board from 2009 until last year. The district, located in the San Gabriel Valley 10 miles east of Los Angeles, has seven elementary schools, one middle school and two high schools.

One of Hu's school board experiences may have a familiar ring to Alameda residents who just endured a round of outside union money financing their City Council races. The same happened during Hu's stint as a school board member in the Southland. Hu was first elected in November 2009. He took his seat on Dec. 8, 2009. In February 2010, Hu and his fellow board

members unanimously sided with unions in a vote to allow them in on \$64 million of contracts, using a concept called "project labor agreements (PLA)."

The Pasadena Star-News reported that many in the audience at the February 2010 meeting, when the vote was taken, considered the decision "hasty." In fact, sitting school board president Denise Menchaca stated that she never heard of PLAs until the night of the meeting. Star-News staff writer Brian Charles penned that many considered the decision "a railroad job."

The Star-News reported that records filed with Los Angeles County showed that "Hu took \$5,000 of his \$8,957 in campaign funds from labor unions. Records also showed that Hu's fellow board member Mathew Stadler had banked \$7,250 in campaign funds, \$6,250 from labor unions, the rest from Hu.

"Union members (attending the meeting), don't live in San Gabriel. But they funded the elections of the board members," San Gabriel resident Lori Husein told Charles.

Hu has spent 19 years as an instructor and professor in the California State University and community college systems. He currently works as the assistant general manager for Public Employees Union Local 1.

Hu was scheduled to be sworn in on Tuesday. He will serve out the remaining two years of Spencer's term, "unless a petition is filed with the county calling for a special election," the school district stated in a press release.



Photos by Chuck Kapelke

Left to right, Alameda's best spellers: Hazel Purins, first place, fifth grade, Otis Elementary; Dylan McGrew, fifth place, sixth grade, Academy of Alameda; Ella Banchieri, fourth place, fourth grade, Edison Elementary; Liam Hofmann, third place, fifth grade, Earhart Elementary; Brenden Dalipe, second place, fifth grade, Bay Farm Elementary and alternate Lavanya Kumar, sixth grade, Wood Middle.

Island's Official Spelling Bee Sending Five Competitors to County Level

Sun newspaper foots bill for six spellers' entry fees

Sun Staff Reports

Atrophy, then delicatessen, were the winning words Hazel Purins spelled correctly to earn her the title of champion of the First Annual Spelling Bee Saturday, Feb. 7. Around 60 kids representing 12 Alameda schools — including elementary and middle, charters and parochial schools — participated in the rather intense spelling challenge.

Finalists Purins, Brenden Dalipe, Liam Hofmann, Ella Banchieri, Dylan McGrew, and one alternate, Lavanya Kumar, rose to the top after a very challenging 30-word written test, and besting 25 other semi-finalists in the oral matchup.

The top five will participate in the Alameda County Elementary Bee, to be held in Castro Valley on Saturday, March 14.

"The kids who signed up for this event all deserve a lot of credit," said the bee's lead organizer, Chuck Kapelke. "It takes a lot of courage to compete in a public event like this, and they all handled it with aplomb." A local parent and PTA volunteer, Kapelke wanted to hold a spelling bee after finding out no official bee of its kind had been held in a long time here.

"Spelling bees are a fun way for kids to boost their vocabulary and think about language in a different way," said Kapelke. "We're proud to organize a city-wide bee here in

Alameda, and hope to make this an annual tradition. I have no doubt that one day a speller from Alameda could be the state or national champion."

Kapelke rallied local support to create the bee, starting with the Alameda Sun, where Co-Publisher Eric J. Kos immediately agreed to provide funding and to serve as a judge for the event.

"Helping host a spelling bee is something I've always wanted the Alameda Sun to do," said Kos. "I was honored to help, including letting the kids know when they got the spelling wrong. A tough job, but someone had to do it." Poet Laureate Julia Park Tracey also served as a judge. Alameda Advertising and Recognition provided the trophies while Books, Inc., the Pacific Pinball Museum, Subpar Mini-Golf and Toy Safari all donated prizes. Peet's Coffee donated coffee and Girl Scout Troop 33022 provided logistics support.

"We are very grateful to the Alameda Sun and our other local sponsors for their willingness to support this event," said Kapelke.

Alameda County requires a bee receive a sponsor in the form of a school official, and Otis Elementary School Principal Dr. Shirley Clem fulfilled that role. University of San Francisco economics professor (and Alameda resident) Micheal Jonas was the official reader. While both

"It takes a lot of courage to compete in a public event like this, and they all handled it with aplomb."

— Bee Organizer Chuck Kapelke

Kapelke and Jonas have daughters in local schools, the girls chose to assist the bee through their girl scout troop, rather than compete.

To find out about next year's event, keep an eye on www.alamedaspellingbee.org. For an entire gallery of photos from the event, visit www.alamedasun.com.



Hazel Purins, Spelling Bee Champion