



CELEBRATE, IT'S SAXOPHONE DAY!

Locally Owned, Community Oriented

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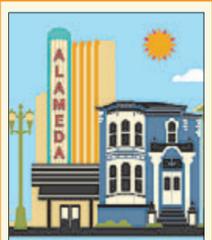
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All the doings of
Island safety and
law personnel



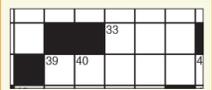
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JoanAnn Radu-Sinaiko

**Alameda Sun
Almanac**

Date	Rise	Set
Today	06:39	17:06
Nov. 7	06:40	17:05
Nov. 8	06:41	17:04
Nov. 9	06:42	17:03
Nov. 10	06:43	17:03
Nov. 11	06:44	17:02
Nov. 12	06:46	17:01

Navy Transfers Point Property

Michele Ellison
The Alamedan

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officially took ownership of 624 acres of Alameda Point on Monday. The VA hopes to transform the land into a new, one-stop medical and benefits center, a national cemetery and a wildlife preserve.

"We are proud that the new One VA facility will call Alameda home," Mayor Marie Gilmore said during a public ceremony at the Alameda Theatre & Cineplex. The afternoon included a color guard, speeches and a video offering the history of the former Naval Air Station and renderings of the planned facilities.

The complex is slated to include 158,000 square feet of medical clinics and office space and an 80-acre columbarium with enough space to hold the cremated remains of up to 300,000 servicemen and women and their family members. The remaining 512 acres will remain undeveloped and will be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a California least tern colony and migratory stopover for other birds, with some public recreational access.

The department hopes to secure money from Congress to build the \$208.6 million project next year, and a staffer said they anticipate it will be open for business in 2018 or 2019. It will replace the department's outpatient clinic in Oakland.

Monday's ceremony marked the Navy's second major transfer of property at Alameda Point. The city secured 509 acres of Alameda Point in 2012.

Speakers at the ceremony detailed the challenges they faced in effecting the land transfer to the VA, from environmental constraints to bureaucratic hurdles and federal funding issues.

The seeds for the VA deal were sown in 2003, when the department — which needed new facilities in the Bay Area — became aware the Navy had land available, Claude Hutchison, a former VA official who helped secure the deal, said Monday. The process encompassed the administrations of two presidents and five VA secretaries, he said.

But Hutchison praised Alameda and former Mayor Beverly Johnson, who he said welcomed the VA with open arms.

"We knew instantly that we were in the perfect community," he said.

The VA has come under fire for lapses in care that left dozens of veterans dead and tens of thousands of others facing long waits for care. The Federal Bureau of Investigation launched a criminal investigation, while the results of a White House investigation of the VA released in June found "significant and chronic system failures."

Glenn Haggstrom, the VA's director of acquisition, logistics and construction, acknowledged the recent scandals over the lapses in care and benefits for veterans and promised that "immediate reforms" are underway. He said better facilities are among the things the VA needs to improve care.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee, whom one speaker called a "tremendous advocate" for veterans and for the project, said she'll continue to fight for funding for the facilities, which are intended to provide "one-stop" access to meet a variety of veterans' medical and administrative needs.

"This is the standard and the model for the rest of the country," Lee said of the planned complex. Veterans said the services the new facilities would provide are badly needed here in the Bay Area and that the supply of existing medical services for veterans have not kept up with the need for those services. Northern Alameda County is home to nearly 29,000 and the greater Bay Area, 267,000.

"We all know that the VA has faced some challenges," said Delphine Metcalf-Foster, a veteran of Desert Storm and Desert Shield who worked at Alameda Point. "I am hopeful that the VA will be able to make a real impact here in Alameda."

Read more Alameda news at <http://webh.it/alamedasun>.

Petersen: All Charges Dropped

Ekene Ikeme

The Alameda County District Attorney (DA) dropped all charges were dropped last Friday against one of the two alleged suspects accused of setting several arson fires in Alameda in September.

Alameda resident Stephen Petersen learned he was finally cleared of all wrongdoing when he went to the Wiley W. Manuel Courthouse to enter his plea. The DA cited new evidence as the reason for dropping the three felony charges against the 27 year old.

Alameda police are now saying the other suspect, Andrew Gutierrez, will be held responsible for the seven arson fires that

Petersen has also been advocating for people to donate to the victims of the arson fires.

took place on Sept. 28. Gutierrez now faces six different counts of arson. The 22-year-old is being held at Santa Rita Jail in Dublin, where he has been since his arrest on Sept. 28. His bail has been increased to \$4.4 million, according to the Alameda County inmate tracker website. The transient from Puerto Rico is due back in court on Dec. 15 for his plea hearing and bail motion.

The series of fires near the

Park Street Business District on Sept. 28 caused about \$3 million in damage to 11 different homes and businesses. Gutierrez was arrested near Park Street that Sunday morning before 5 a.m., according to court documents. Police arrested Petersen that night outside a detached-garage fire at 2103 San Jose Ave.

Petersen maintained his innocence from the time of his arrest. He told several news outlets that this was a case of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

About a dozen of Petersen's friends and family members were in the courtroom of Alameda County Superior Court Judge Gregory Syren when it was announced that prosecutors were

no longer proceeding with the case against him.

Now that Petersen is cleared of all charges, the musician is getting back to his passion. Petersen has returned to hosting an open mic at Rooster's Roadhouse at 1700 Clement Ave. Petersen has also been advocating for people to donate to the victims of the arson fires.

Petersen wrote a Facebook post on Nov. 4 asking people to visit gofundme.com/angelas and donate to the renovation of the restaurant. He is also asking for donations to help him pay for his legal fees. To donate, visit www.freestephenpetersen.com.

Contact Ekene Ikeme at eikeme@alamedasun.com.



'Ware the Haunted Isle

Photos by Jessi Bushey and Eric J. Kos

Grand Street became like a haunted street party last Friday in celebration of Halloween. Many residents of the Island contribute to making the entire city feel spooky for the many visitors who haunt the Island City each year.

Clockwise from top left, trick-or-treaters on Grand; a witch poses with a two-story ghost at the corner of San Antonio Avenue and Grand; Angela Hill and Matt Hunnicutt's front-yard undersea world on Santa Clara Avenue; a spooky Gold Coast home swamped with ghouls and goblins; a fine display of varied expressions on jack-o-lanterns; vendors hawking

light-up noisemakers, jewelry and other contraptions making a killing at the corner of San Jose Avenue and Grand and a unicorn in a white dress with muscular, tattooed arms offered goodies to the kids while dancing in his front door near Grand and San Antonio.

For more Halloween scenes, visit www.alamedasun.com to check out the gallery from contributing photographers.

