



Locally Owned, Community Oriented

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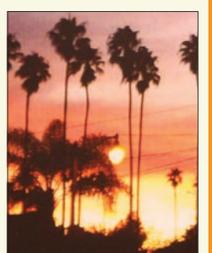
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**HOMETOWN**

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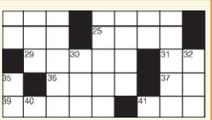
All the doings  
of Island safety  
& law personnel



**ISLAND ARTS**

**Sunset Calendar** Page 12

Local photographer releases  
Alameda-themed calendar.



**CROSSWORD PUZZLE**

**In the ESSENCE** Page E2

Sharpen your pencils for that  
newspaper tradition.



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High School students host  
potluck to help Philippines.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

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First Congregational Church to  
host festive musical event.

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**Alameda Sun Almanac**

**Date Rise Set**

Today	07:15	16:50
Dec. 13	07:16	16:51
Dec. 14	07:16	16:51
Dec. 15	07:17	16:51
Dec. 16	07:18	16:51
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Dec. 18	07:19	16:52

## Two New Tax Districts on Horizon in Town

Public hearing set for Tuesday, Jan. 7

**Michele Ellison**  
*The Alamedan*

Residents and business owners at Alameda Landing may pay thousands of dollars more in taxes than their other Island neighbors. The City Council voted 4-0 Tuesday, Dec. 3, to move forward on a pair of proposed special districts that would encompass the development. (Councilwoman Lena Tam was absent.)

If approved these new districts would allow the city to levy additional taxes to pay for roads and sidewalks, parks and sewers, along with police and fire protection and maintenance. A public hearing and potential approval of the proposed districts is set for Jan. 7.

"The developer came to us asking (for this), they're willing to tax themselves and we're getting the benefit. I don't see a problem," City Councilman Stewart Chen said, offering one of the few comments council members made on the districts prior to the vote.

If the districts are approved, Alameda Landing homebuyers could pay up to \$5,700 a year in supplemental property taxes. Commercial property owners would be taxed up to \$1.54 per square foot to cover city services. The taxes would rise by a maximum of 3 percent each year.

Lower-income residents who move into the development's affordable units won't have to pay the taxes. Residents in units reserved for moderate-income buyers would pay a reduced tax rate.

The city could levy additional taxes if it doesn't have enough money to make its annual bond payments. The city and the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) would jointly operate one of the districts. They anticipate seeking up to \$20 million in bonds to pay for infrastructure. Taxes to pay off infrastructure bonds could be levied for up to 50 years. Taxes to fund services would be permanent.

Separately, property owners at Alameda Landing are expected to pay \$300 a year for transportation improvements like shuttles. Businesses like Target would pay a per-square-foot charge.

Residents and commercial property owners outside of those areas don't pay extra taxes for those facilities or services. If the city wished to levy similar taxes on existing neighborhoods, they would need to win an election with two-thirds of the vote, the same amount needed to levy parcel taxes.

Since no one lives at Alameda Landing yet, landowners and council members will vote on whether to impose the taxes. The still effectively owns much of the former military property at the Landing. City Councilmembers and TRI Pointe Homes, which is building houses at Alameda Landing, will vote on taxes for infrastructure and services. Target and the project's developer, Catellus, will also get to vote on the taxes for services, Community Development

Director Debbie Potter said. Catellus asked the city in July to form the districts last July. Potter said the agreement Catellus signed with the city says they and others who buy land in the development will support it. If everyone agrees to waive their right to an election — which is likely — the decision to form the districts could be finalized on Jan. 7.

After the districts are voted on and approved, the council can vote to levy the taxes and the city can seek bonds.

The Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act of 1982 gives California's municipalities and special districts the power to set up the facilities districts in order to levy taxes to pay for infrastructure and services. Hundreds of these districts exist throughout California.

Special districts were set up to pay off bonds for infrastructure in

Marina Village and Harbor Bay. Bayport residents pay a supplemental levy to fund police, fire and other services; this year homeowners in four-bedroom Bayport homes will pay an extra \$1,173.92 for services that residents outside the special districts don't pay extra for. Bonds for the Marina Village development were paid off this year.

The real estate website Trulia listed the average home sale price for Alameda at \$605,000 between August and November. Alameda's property tax rate is 1.1432 percent of a home's assessed value, plus extra assessments for schools, Alameda Hospital and an array of other services.

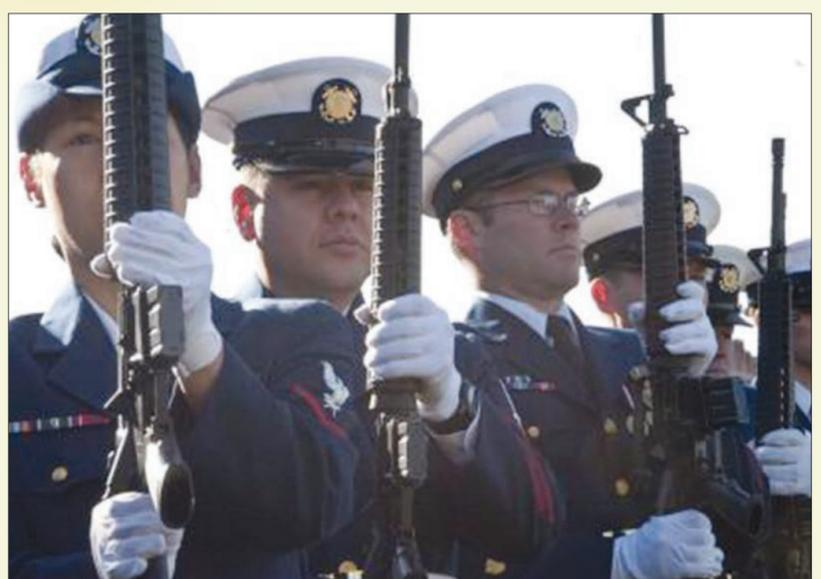
TRI Pointe plans to build 275 new homes at Alameda Landing, an amount slated to include 91 single-family homes, 79 two-story condominiums, 26 single-level flats, 56 townhomes and a 23-unit apartment building. The entire Alameda Landing development will span 45 acres.

The council has discussed imposing similar taxes on residents and businesses at Alameda Point, in an effort to make the development cost-neutral for the city. The council has mandated that the redevelopment of former military property in Alameda pay for itself.

Separately, the city will also seek new state legislation that would reinstate its ability to collect property taxes to fund services and infrastructure — a power they lost when state lawmakers shut down California's redevelopment program.

Proponents say these taxes provide a critical funding source for infrastructure and services in a post-Proposition 13 world in which local agencies' ability to raise the funds needed to pay for those services is limited — at a cheaper rate than developers could get on their own. But critics have called the taxes an end run around the voter-approved limitation on property taxes and have also questioned the fairness of levying taxes on future residents without giving them a vote.

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



## Coast Guard Hosts Pearl Harbor Day

Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Thomas McKenzie

An honor guard welcomes U.S. Navy retired Fireman 2nd Class John Vaessen to Coast Guard Island (above). The Coast Guard honored Vaessen during a Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony last Saturday. Vaessen is wearing the Navy Cross that Adm. Chester Nimitz awarded him. Vaessen was serving aboard the USS Utah on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when the Utah took two torpedoes and rolled over, trapping Vaessen below decks.

He realized that his ship was capsizing, but remained at his post at the forward distribution board after word had been passed to abandon ship and kept the lights burning as long as possible. Although trapped, he was later rescued through a hole cut in the bottom of the capsized ship.

According to Vaessen, what saved him was a thorough knowledge of the ship, a three-cell flashlight with a faulty switch and an end wrench used for opening hatches. Vaessen appears at right with the wrench, flashlight and his Navy Cross.



## New Year May Bring Fee Increases

**Ekene Ikeme**

City council will consider revising recreation and park and fire and emergency fees at the next council meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 17.

The Alameda Recreation and Parks Department (ARPD) commission reviews the recreation and park user fees annually with a recommendation brought forward by the city council, according to the adoption memorandum by city manager John Russo.

ARPD reviewed its fee structure and proposed adjustments after comparing similar fees from other local cities.

If the new rates are approved as planned, athletic field prep for non-profits will be raised from \$25 per

game to \$40, large group (150-plus) event fees will be raised from \$50 an hour to \$150 and use of parks for the Tiny Tots would be raised from \$5.75 an hour to \$5.85 an hour.

The new resolution would also add three new fees for use of parks. The ARPD will charge \$25 for a park rental late reservation fee, 15 percent of gross revenue for food booths and \$452 to \$994 for transitional kindergarten program use.

The Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ambulance and Paramedic Provider Agreement between the city and Alameda County stipulates

that the county establishes user fees the city can charge patients for emergency medical services, according to a memorandum from Russo.

On Oct. 13 the Board of Supervisors approved an increase in fees allowing the city to also increase its fees, which is permitted in the agreement.

The base rate for the service will increase to \$1,895 from \$1,740.35, the per mile fee for ambulance transportation will increase to \$45 from \$40.05 and oxygen use will increase to \$149 from \$131.20.

## AMP General Manager Departs for Southland

**Dennis Evanosky**

Girish Balachandran, Alameda Municipal Power's (AMP) general manager, has accepted the position as head of Riverside Public Utilities (RPU). He learned of his appointment last Friday. His last day at the helm at AMP is Jan. 3. He will start his new job on Jan. 27.

Balachandran, who sits on the California Municipal Utilities Association board of governors, began his career at the Pasadena Water and Power Department. He came to Alameda from Palo Alto in 2007. He worked for that city's utilities as assistant director of utilities, as well as a resource planner and manager.

Balachandran arrived here in the midst of then-Alameda Power and Telecom's scheme to become an Internet provider. The city sold the failed idea to Comcast in November 2008.

Under Balachandran's direction AMP has successfully fended off a pair of telecom-related lawsuits from disgruntled bondholders. The city has lost one other telecom-related lawsuit and is appealing the decision. The util-

ity has achieved high residential customer satisfaction and boasts a five-year record of no lost-time accidents. Last year Balachandran spearheaded the idea of selling excess renewable energy credits to the state of California: a four-year deal that could put some \$24 million in AMP's coffers. He leaves AMP as the utility is installing a "smart" electric grid.

"I am proud of what the AMP team has accomplished together in the last seven years," he said.

In Riverside Balachandran will run a utility with almost four times as many electricity customers, some 64,500 water customers and a staff seven times the size of AMP.

Balachandran replaces RPU general manager David H. Wright, who announced his retirement in July. The city of Alameda has not announced who will replace Balachandran.



City of Alameda  
**Girish Balachandran**

## News in Brief

**Sun Staff Reports**

**Enjoy Holiday Music Tonight at Kofman Auditorium**

The Alameda High School music program invites residents to take a break from holiday preparations and enjoy an evening of musical entertainment featuring student bands and choirs.

Students will be the hosts of their annual winter concert this evening, Thursday, Dec. 12, at Kofman Auditorium, 2200 Central Ave. Doors open at 7 p.m., and the concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

Guests will enjoy holiday selections from the school's choir, jazz band and concert band. The school's guitar group will serenade the audience. AHS's symphonic band will treat music lovers to a sweeping emotional chorale and a band classic.

The suggested donation is \$10 per person.

The student booster group will be on hand selling bottles of water and treats.

**Register for Father, Daughter Soiree**

The Alameda Recreation and Park Department (ARPD) and Girls Inc. of the Island City are teaming up to present "Western Hoedown Dance Party" for the 13th annual father-daughter party.

The party will take place from 6 to 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 7, 2014, at the Albert H. Dewitt's O' Club, 641 West Red Line Ave.

The event is for girls currently in kindergarten through fifth grade and their fathers (or other favorite male role models).

The cost is \$25 per couple and \$15 for each additional daughter. Complimentary admission tickets are available; call ARPD at 747-7529 for an application.

Pre-registration is required. Registration ends Jan. 24, 2014, or until the event sells out. Register in person at ARPD, 2226 Santa Clara Ave., Monday to Thursday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; closed on Fridays; or register online at [www.arpdplay.com](http://www.arpdplay.com).

For more information, visit <http://alamedaca.gov/recreation/> 13th-annual-father-daughter-dance or call ARPD at 747-7529.

**Take the Local Shopping Pledge**

The city of Alameda's Community Development Department is asking residents to take the Alameda Island Shopper Pledge and make Alameda their first choice for shopping. The campaign was launched last Saturday at the tree lighting ceremony.

Totes, decals and other rewards will be available to those who take the pledge.

Local businesses have been asked to show support for the campaign by displaying signs and downloading graphics from the city's website.

To find out more, visit the city's "Shop Local" web page at <http://alamedaca.gov/economic-development/shop-local> and learn how shopping here benefits the local community.