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DOWN	2	4	3	1	
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Alameda Sun is a publication of Stellar Media Group, Inc. 3215J Encinal Ave. Alameda, CA 94501
Locally Owned, Community Oriented
 News: (510) 263-1470
 Ads: (510) 263-1471
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Alameda Sun Almanac

Date	Rise	Set
Today	6:45	17:59
Feb. 28	6:43	18:00
Feb. 29	6:42	18:01
March 1	6:41	18:02
March 2	6:39	18:03
March 3	6:38	18:04
March 4	6:36	18:05

Watchdog Has No Bite

Council defangs Sunshine Ordinance

Irene Dieter

In on Alameda

“Eliminating the current enforcement provisions would undermine trust in our city government.”

— Former Vice Mayor Lena Tam allowing the Council to be its own watchdog.”

On Feb. 18, the City Council stripped the Open Government Commission of its authority to enforce the Sunshine Ordinance, Alameda’s open-government provision. The Commission no longer has the power to nullify an action passed in violation of the Sunshine Ordinance and order corrective action through a rehearing.

The Commission can now only “recommend” not “order” corrective action if a violation occurs. While all the Councilmembers agreed with this change, Vice-Mayor John Knox White and Councilmember Malia Vella wanted to wait until the Commission had a chance to come up with new language that would give some teeth to its potential “recommendations.”

The Open Government Commission was created to oversee and enforce the Sunshine Ordinance. But the one and only time the Commission sided with a complainant, the Council refused to honor the Commission’s decision that ordered the Council to re-agendize the matter.

By removing the Commission’s ability to hold the city accountable, the Commission is rendered toothless and complainants are left with only two options — asking the City Council to rule on an alleged wrongdoing or suing the city. The entire Open Government Commission has already rejected the amendment three times.

City Attorney Yibin Shen had opined that a non-legislative body, such as the Commission, could not be granted enforcement authority — a justification initiated by some Councilmembers. He did not address why “enforcing” a law enacted by the Council regarding the conduct of its meetings is “legislative power.”

Many residents, including several attorneys who said the city had mis-stated the law, argued for preserving the cure-and-correct remedy.

The Alameda League of Women Voters said the Commission “is more likely to be viewed by the public as a neutral arbiter of Council adherence to proper procedures than the Council itself.” Former Councilmember Lena Tam added, “Eliminating the current enforcement provisions would undermine trust in our city government by

Mayor Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft and Councilmember Jim Oddie countered, expressing concern that people might use the Open Government Commission to overturn laws they do not like. Conversely, the Commission has made it clear on numerous occasions that they have no interest in the merits of any legislation, only that it has been properly noticed.

No distinction was made between overturning or nullifying a decision versus “staying” it. Nor was the call for requiring the City Council to suspend enacting legislation when a Sunshine Ordinance complaint is pending entertained.

The only person who sided with the Council majority was former Mayor Trish Spencer, who said if voters didn’t trust the Council they could always carry their grievances to the ballot box. Ashcraft concurred, saying they could also run for public office.

Irene Dieter posts stories about Alameda at www.ionalameda.com.



An excavator with a hydraulic breaker goes to work on concrete remnants outside the Del Monte warehouse on Buena Vista Avenue.

Del Monte Project Moving Forward

Photo & story by Dennis Evanosky

Real estate development and acquisition company Wood Partners announced last December that it would soon break ground for Alta Buena Vista, a 372-unit luxury mixed-use project at 1501 Buena Vista Ave., the site of the long-closed Del Monte Warehouse (“Del Monte Project Rebooted,” Dec. 17, 2019).

The developers have made good on their word and work is underway.

Wood Partners is using plans that the City Council approved in 2014 for Tim Lewis Communities. Lewis’ company sold the property with all its entitlements to Wood Partners last year. These plans include live-work, lofts, townhomes and flats. There will be no single-family detached homes in the mix.

When Wood Partners announced its acquisition of the site, the company envisioned the development there as “a 10-acre community (that) will blend the old and the new, mixing the existing six-acre historic brick Del Monte Warehouse with new apartments and retail spaces designed by BAR Architects.”

According to the plans approved in 2014, recreational boat and small-craft rentals and sales, artist studios and galleries, a farmer’s markets and community gardens help make up the broader picture for the site. The developer says that Alta Buena Vista will feature a fitness center, resident lounge, multiple roof decks and 11,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. Improvements at the site also include:

- Extending Clement Avenue along the northern frontage of the Del Monte Warehouse from Entrance Road to Atlantic Avenue

- Refurbishing the sidewalk along Buena Vista Avenue with a planter strip and street trees

- Placing sidewalks on both sides of all new streets with pedestrian crossings at all intersections

- Installing a traffic signal with pedestrian countdowns at Sherman Street and Clement Avenue.

At the heart of the project lies the 240,000-square-foot brick warehouse that California Packing Corporation — or “Calpak” — built in 1927. Calpak named the building for its premium brand, Del Monte. Architect Philip Brand designed most of the company’s warehouses in the same style, often referred to as “modernist brick.”

Wood Partners plans to complete the project in early 2022.

Cross Alameda Trail Dedication Set

Sun Staff Reports

The City of Alameda has an event planned for this Saturday, Feb. 29, from 10 a.m. to noon, to celebrate the completion of the Cross Alameda Trail (CAT) along Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway (RAMP) and Atlantic Avenue, between Main Street and Constitution Way. This 0.9-mile segment of the Cross Alameda Trail will create 1.5 continuous miles of separated walking and bicycling trails.

The public is invited to gather at the new plaza at Webster Street and RAMP adjacent to College of Alameda for family-friendly activities, starting with the inaugural community walk-roll-march and group photo at 10:15 a.m. with city officials. The Sting!, Alameda High School’s Marching Band, will perform as part of the festivities. Locals can take part in bike safety classes, games for prizes and other fun activities.

CAT features safe, protected access for people walking and rolling, two landscaped plazas, seating, bike racks and lockers, a new mid-block crossing of Atlantic between Webster and Constitution, signal improvements and more.

The trail is envisioned as a cross-town, low-stress, four-mile bicycling and walking corridor that will connect the Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal at Alameda Point to the Miller-Sweeney (Fruitvale) Bridge.

CAT is being built in segments. The Jean Sweeney Park segment (0.6 miles) between Constitution Way and Sherman Street opened in December 2018. The next section to be completed later this year is the westernmost segment, connecting Main Street to the new Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal.

CAT is a 29-year-old idea. The \$7.1 million project is funded by the Federal Transit Administration, Alameda County Transportation Commission and Measures B and BB transportation sales tax funds, City of Alameda Community Development Block Grant funds, Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s Transportation Fund for Clean Air and Transportation Development Act Article III funds, among others.

In the event of rain, this event will take place on March 14.



Dr. Frank DeStefano gestures to one of the 15 stained-glass windows ensconced in St. Joseph’s Basilica. The works are particularly notable as they reflect design reforms imposed just prior to the church’s construction.

St. Joe’s Celebrates a Century on Chestnut

Photo & story by Eric J. Kos

After the original St. Joseph Basilica of the 1870s burned, the current facility replaced it in 1920. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the present-day basilica at 1109 Chestnut St. As part of its centennial celebration, the basilica hosted a tour led by art historian Dr. Frank DeStefano of Connecticut. DeStefano conducted an informal walking tour

of its historic stained-glass windows last Sunday.

St. Joseph Basilica was built during a period of religious revival and artistic renaissance in church art and architecture following the World War I. As part of this revival, artists began to incorporate into their work the liturgical reforms initiated by Pope Pius X at the beginning of the 20th century.

As a prime example of these reforms, St. Joseph Basilica’s stained-glass windows depart from the popular depiction of saints or even secular subjects, and primarily represent episodes from the life of Jesus as recounted in scripture.

As such, the windows are considered an artistic treasure and a memorial to a short-lived American artistic renaissance.

The proposed park will include bicycle-pedestrian trails throughout; viewing and seating areas; habitat restoration; amenities including restrooms, parking and drinking fountains; and a separate visitor’s center on VA property that EBRPD will operate. This plan is not a part of the proposed VA medical center and a columbarium.

EBRPD has allocated \$6.4 million toward planning and construction as well as operations and maintenance of the park once open. The initial \$6.4 million for construction will come from funds acquired from Measure WW, which voters approved in 2008. EBRPD will use funds from Measure FF and CC to finance the operational and maintenance costs.

Prosecuting attorneys from the Alameda City Attorney’s Office, in coordination with the District Attorney’s Office, recently began staffing Alameda County criminal courts and handling misdemeanor prosecutions for certain crimes that occur within the City of Alameda.

Since the program started earlier this month, city prosecutors have since filed more than two dozen cases originating within the Island City, ranging from theft and vandalism, to disturbing the peace.

On Sept. 3, 2019, the Council unanimously directed the City Attorney’s Office to create a local prosecution unit to handle certain misdemeanor crimes that occur in the City of Alameda.

News Briefs

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City Signs Point Lease

At its Feb. 18 meeting, the Alameda City Council approved a plan that would convert the northwest section of Alameda Point into a regional shoreline park.

The Council approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The MOU calls for the city to lease a 158-acre section of Alameda Point to EBRPD for 66 years at no cost. The deal is contingent on EBRPD developing, operating and maintaining what will be called the Northwest Territories Regional Shoreline.

The proposed park will include bicycle-pedestrian trails throughout; viewing and seating areas; habitat restoration; amenities including restrooms, parking and drinking fountains; and a separate visitor’s center on VA property that EBRPD will operate. This plan is not a part of the proposed VA medical center and a columbarium.

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Black Women Authors to Speak for History Month

Books Inc. will be hosting an event to celebrate female African American authors tomorrow.

The event, “Black History Month: Focus on Black Women Authors,” will be held on Friday, Feb. 28, at Books Inc. located at 1344 Park St. from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Amos White, *The Sound of the Web*, will moderate the event.

The event will feature authors Alison Hart, *Mostly White*, and Dera Williams, *In My Backyard*, and playwright Cindy Acker, *Words that Made the Difference: Brown v. Board of Education*.

City Attorney to Help County

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