

Vol. 14 No. 38
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INSIDE

HOMETOWN

Fire Wire
page 2

Police Blotter
page 3

All the doings of Island safety & law personnel



SPORTS
Softball Page 5

Award winners presented with honors in girls softball.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE
And Sudoku Page 7

Sharpen your pencils for that newspaper tradition.



OPINION
Block party 101 Page 6

Neighbor offers tips for ideal neighborhood fun.



OFFICIAL PROGRAM

Webster Fair Inside
The Jam at Neptune Beach is new Father's Day tradition.

CONTENTS

HOMETOWN NEWS... 2
HEALTH MATTERS... 4
SPORTS... 5
OPINION... 6
PUZZLES... 7
CLASSIFIED... 8
REAL ESTATE FOCUS . 10
JAM @ NEPTUNE BEACH... Inside

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Today 05:47 20:33
June 19 05:47 20:34
June 20 05:47 20:34
June 21 05:47 20:34
June 22 05:48 20:34
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June 24 05:48 20:35



Michael Schiess

Last Thursday, Makani Power made efforts to launch its first "energy kite" designed to generate electricity from wind power in the jet stream.

Point Wind Power

Google subsidiary launches experiment at old Navy base

Dennis Evanosky

Local residents noticed Google's Makani Power rolled out its latest project at Alameda Point last Thursday. The company hopes to harness wind power from the jet stream using "energy kites." Makani explains on its website that an energy kite is a new type of wind turbine that can access stronger and steadier winds at higher altitudes. This helps to generate more energy using less material.

The system Makani is pioneering has four components.

- The kite simulates the tip of a wind turbine blade, the company explains on its website.

- The tether connects the kite to the ground station and transfers power and communications between the kite and ground station in both directions. The tether allows the kite to reach up to 1,150 feet in altitude and eliminates 90 percent of the material used by conventional wind turbines.

- The ground station holds onto the tether in a space that is significantly smaller than conventional wind turbines.

- The computer system, which uses GPS and other sensors, guides the kite to the strongest and steadiest winds for maximum energy generation.

Makani is part of Google X, the search engine giant's experimental arm that embodies the company's look toward the future. Makani's energy kites are on a palette that includes Google X's self-driving car, a network for speech recognition, a drone delivery project and eyewear that features a screen and camera.

Google invested \$10 million in Makani in 2006 as part of its Renewable Energy cheaper than Coal (RE-C) initiative. Google put another \$5 million into the company in 2008. Google finally purchased Makani on May 23, 2013, for an undisclosed amount.

At the time of the purchase *Tech Crunch* reporter Frederic Lardinois wrote that the "purchase marked the first time that Google has acquired a company specifically for its Google X skunkworks," a reference to projects developed for the sake of radical innovation; Lockheed Martin coined the term in 1943.

Last year Makani Power expanded its presence at Alameda Point.

("Google Presence in Town Grows," March 13, 2014). Google not only renewed Makani's lease of 17,000 square feet in the former Naval Air Station's air traffic control tower through at least 2035, but also leased an additional 110,000 square feet of industrial space in a nearby hangar.

Nearby Don Montague, who co-founded Makani in 2006 with Saul Griffith and Corwin Hardham, is working on recreational kiteboats in a company called Kai Concepts. (Both companies use Hawaiian words in their names, each evoking a purpose — Makani means wind, while Kai translates as sea.)

Reach Dennis Evanosky at editor@alamedasun.com.



Graduation Issue Next Week

Photo by Dennis Evanosky

Jasmin Kipil'i Baculpo leads her fellow Island High and Alameda Adult School graduates in the Pledge of Allegiance during their June 11 graduation ceremony at Kofman Auditorium. A special feature listing the members of the high school classes of 2015 will appear in the *Alameda Sun* next week.



Photos courtesy Hayward Police Department

On June 4 a Hayward Police Department SWAT team raided a warehouse and uncovered this marijuana growing operation.

Hayward Drug Raid Nets Alamedan

Dennis Evanosky

Police arrested Alameda resident Tony Hoang, 22, and two other men on June 4 after a SWAT team raided a 44,000 square-foot warehouse on the 3100 block of Diablo Ave. in Hayward. Narcotics investigators served a search warrant and discovered some 13,000 marijuana plants in all stages of maturity. Hayward police said the marijuana that they discovered would sell for about \$15 million on the street.

According to Hayward police, Hoang and his accomplices — Manh Tran, 28, and Troy Tam, 21 — set up an operation that consisted of an intricate lighting and ventilation system, extensive hydroponics and illegal electrical connections.

In addition to the grow room, the warehouse had a room for harvesting and packaging the marijuana, a living space, as well as a surveillance and security system.

The Alameda District Attorney's office has charged the three men with felony marijuana cultivation and sales.



Hoang

The Hayward Police Department asks that anyone with information about this operation call 293-7047.

Does Rent Control Work?

Michele Ellison
The Alamedan

With rents rising and vacancies rare here in Alameda and across the Bay Area, it's perhaps no surprise that rent control has become one of the hottest topics on the Island. It's also one of the most emotional, pitting renters and housing advocates who say housing is a basic human right against property owners who feel controls would take their own rights away.

Renters who have asked the City Council to consider controls and "just cause" eviction rules say

they are needed to protect them from losing their homes through rent spikes and no-cause evictions. But landlords have said they fear rent control would curtail investment in the Island's rental housing, creating blight and making housing even more scarce by discouraging builders and slowing renter turnover.

In a nutshell, research on rent control in other cities shows that the answer lies somewhere in between: It provides protection from sudden rent spikes and, if "just cause" eviction rules are in place, arbitrary evictions. But it also has some impact on housing quality and availability.

If Alameda's political leaders were to implement rent controls — and the City Council is showing few signs that it intends to do that — what if any relief would those controls provide to renters? What impact would rent control have on property investment in Alameda? And what other factors affect housing costs and supply?

To answer those questions, *The Alamedan* reviewed studies on the impacts of rent control and of restrictions on and repeal of rent control rules in San Francisco, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Rent control was originally implemented in this country as a temporary anti-profiteering measure designed to protect workers aiding in war efforts. The concept was later extended to ensure vul-

nerable renters kept their housing after World War II when population growth outpaced residential development.

Rent control has a unique history in California. The 10 California cities that have rent-control laws on the books passed them when Proposition 13 proponents' promises of reduced rents failed to materialize after the tax-capping law passed.

In 1995, state lawmakers passed the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act, which severely restricted the rent controls cities could impose — and, some researchers have argued, also limited the controls' effectiveness.

It prohibits cities from controlling rents for any housing built after 1995 and, perhaps most critically, required cities to allow landlords to raise rents after a tening move out, a policy known as "vacancy decontrol."

A 1988 study of Los Angeles' rent stabilization ordinance conducted by researchers at the RAND Corporation determined that rent-control rules offered big benefits to renters in their early years of implementation and greater costs in terms of lost housing as time progressed; long-term renters benefited from "rent discounts," while short-term renters often gained less after absorbing big rent increases up front.

As originally implemented by some cities — with vacancy decontrol, additional rent hikes for property owners who made capital improvements and other rules softening its effects — RAND's researchers determined that rent controls were "no controls at all." Decontrol in particular "greatly reduced" renters' benefits from the Los Angeles ordinance, the researchers determined.

Still, researchers in San Francisco and other cities determined that the controls provided renters some protection from rent spikes and evictions.

Berkeley was one of a handful of cities that had "strict" rent-control rules on the books prohibiting

★ **RENT:** Page 10

News in Brief

Sun Staff Reports

West End schools locked down

A report that someone with a weapon was in the neighborhood of Encinal High School caused the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) to place the school on lockdown at 11:45 a.m., Thursday, June 11. AUSD also contacted the Alameda Police Department (APD).

AUSD spokesperson Susan Davis said that as a precaution, the district also locked down other West End schools, including the Woodstock Child Development Center, Paden and Ruby Bridges elementary schools and Island High School.

APD later reported that its officers made no arrests.

Emergency center and fire station construction to start

The city announced construction is scheduled to begin Monday, June 22, on its new emergency operations center located at 1809 Grand St., and Fire Station No. 3 adjacent at 1625 Buena Vista Ave. On May 19, the City Council awarded the construction contract to Alten Construction.

Work will take place on the new facilities Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. During construction, motorists will experience minor disruptions in traffic, temporary loss of parking spaces, temporary restricted street access, as well as an increase in noise and dust levels. No-parking signs will be posted 72 hours in advance of the planned work to advise when the work will begin and parking restrictions will become effective.

Construction is scheduled to be completed by June 2016. For more information on the project contact Flavio Barrantes at 747-7900.

Alameda Municipal Power to Host Town Hall Meetings

Alameda's locally owned power company, Alameda Municipal Power (AMP) announced it will be hosting a series of town hall meet-

ings on the future of energy over the next six months. The purpose of the meetings is to engage the community in a dialog about the challenges and opportunities the utility is facing.

The first meeting will discuss customer solar and how to appropriately and equitably integrate it into the electric grid. The utility wants to hear feedback from customers about the level to which it should expand or shrink subsidies for solar and how it should position solar in Alameda's energy mix.

The meeting will begin at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, in the Regina K. Stafford Room at the Alameda Main Library, 1515 Oak St.

For more information, visit www.alamedamp.com/future.

AMP Budget in Place

On June 15, the Public Utilities Board (PUB) approved Alameda Municipal Power's (AMP) \$62.5 million budget for fiscal year 2016-2017. The board also approved a transfer of \$2.8 million to the city's General Fund.

Projects for fiscal year 2016-2017 include continued work on the second electrical crossing to Coast Guard Island, expanded implementation of the advanced metering pilot, as well as upgrades to transmission, distribution and substation equipment.

The budget also includes the conversion of most of the city's streetlights to LEDs as well as expanded energy efficiency rebate programs for residential and commercial customers.

Body Pulled from Bay

Police at East Bay Regional Park District are reporting that the body of an elderly woman was pulled from the water Tuesday at Crown Memorial State Beach. According to police, a visitor at the beach saw the body about 12:30 p.m. in the water near Willow Street and Shore Line Drive and pulled it to shore.

The woman's identity and cause of death were not known at press time.