Youngest students go back to school

Page 5

A city in transition

SEVEN VIE TO LEAD, SHAPE EAST PALO ALTO

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- Spectrum  The Weekly endorses measures, state props  Page 18
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Youngest students return to school under new norms

District begins serving small cohorts of TK to first-grade kids alternating in mornings, afternoons
by Elena Kadvany

Hoover Elementary School teacher Victoria Chavez spent the “first” day of school with a small class of first-grade students talking through new norms for in-person learning: no sharing of supplies, how to walk through the classroom while staying 6 feet apart, why hugging is no longer OK. She showed them the designated area where they’re allowed to play outside during recess and reminded them to wash their hands after touching their faces.

Chavez had mixed feelings about being back at work in person on Monday. She said she felt nervous about her and her students’ safety, but also excited.

“It’s been a long seven months,” she said. “At the same time, we’re still in the middle of a pandemic. I don’t think anyone feels completely safe right now.”

Chavez and her class were among the first Palo Alto Unified elementary students and teachers to return to their campuses in a hybrid model on Monday, following weeks of heated debate among teachers, parents, administrators and school board members divided over the pace and safety of reopening. The teachers union had pressed the district to keep schools closed until January. But the Board of Education unanimously approved a phased reopening of elementary schools, starting this week with the district’s youngest students and adding the higher grades in the coming weeks.

The parents of a little more than half of all transitional kindergartens, kindergarten and first-grade students opted out of having their children to school (about 700) and about half chose to stay with remote learning, according to the district. Classrooms across the 12 elementary schools opened on Monday to serve small cohorts of... (continued on page 40)

PUBLIC HEALTH

County moves into ‘orange’ tier

COVID-19 restrictions loosen to allow some indoor activities
by Gennady Sheyner

Restaurants and congregations in Santa Clara County were allowed to reopen for indoor service on Wednesday under a revised public health order that loosens many of the restrictions that have been in place since March.

The revised risk-reduction order, which county leaders discussed at a news conference Tuesday afternoon, recognizes the county’s recent move into the “orange risk” level — also known as Tier 3 — in the state’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy. The “moderate” risk level allows more businesses to reopen, albeit with some restrictions to ensure social distancing.

In highlighting the revised order, both county Counsel James Williams and Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody emphasized that some of the activities that will now be allowed for the first time since March continue to pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission. To reduce the threat, the county is requiring restaurants to limit occupancy to 25% capacity or a maximum of 100 people, depending on which number is smaller.

The same restriction will be imposed on other indoor gatherings, including movie theaters, congregations and cultural gatherings, according to the county.

“It’s a really important limitation that we put in place to help try to reduce the density,” Cody said. “To help try to reduce the risk for the... (continued on page 16)
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“Staying Sane in these Crazy Times”

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“It’s not about PPE. It’s about... “How safe do you feel?””

– Hyemin Cheung, a Fairmeadow special education teacher, on reassuring staff who’ve returned to campus. See story on page 5.

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EXPANDING ACCESS TO COMMUNITY LEARNING RESOURCES” calls for each of the three institutions to create a digital studio and to work with the Midpeninsula Media Center to develop an “extensive training program” focused on best practices for planning and implementing digital programs and events, according to the city’s grant application. The funds will also allow each of the programs to increase its digital offerings by 25% and allow the city to refine some of the staff in the arts division whose positions have been eliminated through recent budget cuts. They will be responsible for promoting “multidisciplinary programming that links the arts, sciences and literacy, and supports more enhanced and sustained collaborations between these city programs into the future,” the city’s application states. The City Council is expected to approve the grant funding at its Oct. 19 meeting. With the money in place, staff will move ahead with training and start rolling out virtual school programs. The goal is to publish the how-to playbook for virtual exhibits in July, according to a report from City Manager Ed Reiskin. The report notes that about 30% of community members have indicated in recent surveys that they plan to participate “mainly in virtual programming until a vaccine is widely available. This grant will allow city staff to improve and develop additional virtual programming for our community.”

RECORD ON THE GREEN...
Donna Lawrence, an assistant vice president of development at Stanford University, achieved an unexpected feat earlier this month while playing at the university’s golf course: making two holes-in-one on back-to-back days, according to a San Francisco Chronicle article. “It’s very bizarre,” she told the publication. “Your eyes sort of pop out of your head.” The first one occurred Oct. 3, when she shot 101, followed by the second on Oct. 4, when she shot 101. “It was a ton of fun,” Lawrence said. The other good news: the bar was closed and I didn’t have to buy drinks.”

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With new rules, council looks to tighten its grip over boards, commissions

Proposed handbook to lay out policies on removing commissioners, creating work plans

by Gennady Sheyner

For decades, Palo Alto’s City Council and commissions have fulfilled a variety of disparate functions: advising the City Council, gathering public input, serving as a sounding board for the politically ambitious and, at times, pushing back against council policies.

Now, it’s the council that’s preparing to push back. After nearly a year of exploration, the council plans to approve on Monday a new set of rules for boards and commissions that will, among other things, establish term limits, lay out a process for removing commissioners, restrict interactions between commissioners and the media and give the council more power to shape the commissions’ agendas.

The proposed changes follow a period in which the council has found itself at odds with several of its volunteer advisers. In June, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission resigned in frustration after the council repeatedly delayed action on the commission’s proposals to charge nonresidents $10 per vehicle to enter Hills Park.

Lee suggested in a letter to the council that the city “cannot abide their status quo.”

The council’s new handbook will include rules on removing commissioners, creating work plans for boards and commissions and defining the roles of city staff that support boards and commissions. In a February memo to the council, City Manager Ed Shikada noted that the city had considered earlier some of the most dramatic changes that the city had considered earlier this year.

At the council’s request, the latest recommendations from staff and the ad hoc committee veer away from some of the most dramatic changes that the city had considered earlier this year.

The city’s new handbook also requires each commissioner to submit an annual plan to the council, which would then vote to approve it. If a commission wants to add another priority, its chair would have to make a request to the council.

The handbook also includes rules on meetings, which consists of Vice Mayor Tom DuBois and Councilwoman Alison Cormack, has since surveyed past members about their experiences and expressed concern about “lack of clarity or inconsistencies in policies.”

Another proposed policy would limit board and commission members to two successive four-year terms. After that, the individual would not be eligible for appointment to the same board for at least two years after the last term’s expiration.

The handbook also includes rules on meetings that restrict — though not entirely eliminate — the ability of commissioners to speak to the media.

Even though commissioners are not employees of the city, the handbook asks them to “route questions through the chair in collaboration with the city’s chief communications officer.”

This will effectively give City Manager Ed Shikada’s office a role in shaping how commissioners respond to media inquiries.

To justify this policy, the handbook states with no evidence that a commissioner’s actions and comments are “often interpreted to be that of the entire commission, the staff, or the city.”

But while the handbook suggests that statements to the media “should generally be avoided,” it also provides guidelines for commissioners to use when addressing the trust between the council and its most influential advisory panel.

The council would then feel more comfortable adopting the commission’s recommendations without rehashing all the issues that the panel had already debated.

“The council has also struggled in recent years to find answers to such questions: As how does one remove a commissioner? What kind of training should be provided to new members? Should subcommittees be allowed?”

The council’s new handbook will answer these, and other, questions. But as the handbook makes clear, the new rules will also create a system in which commissioners have less autonomy to defy council wishes or to pursue projects that don’t have explicit City Hall approval.

If adopted, the new rules would effectively end the current system in which each board and commission operates by its own rules and has a distinct identity. The Parks and Recreation Commission, for instance, has been relying heavily in recent years on ad hoc committees to proactively push particular projects, whether constructing new dog parks or expanding Foothills Park access.

The Human Relations Commission has also emerged as a persistent advocate for more aggressive action, whether in revising police policies pertaining to excessive force or promoting projects that have taken on diversity and inclusion.

The Planning and Transportation Commission has been more careful about hewing to council directions.

It has also historically mirrored the council by splitting into two factions and engaging in lengthy, internal squabbles between those who tend to support aggressive growth and those who favor more restrictions on development.

The council has been exploring changes to the commission system since last December, when then-Mayor Eric-Filseth appointed an ad hoc committee to vet potential new rules. The committee, which consists of Vice Mayor Tom DuBois and Councilwoman Alison Cormack, has since surveyed past members, experts and residents, gathered input that summed up their findings, Cormack and DuBois noted that some respondents have expressed concern about “the lack of clarity or involvement from the City Council.”

They also pointed to concern about the “lack of clarity or inconsistencies in policies.”

Commissioners “are not entitled to any prior notice or notice hearing,” the handbook states.

Absence from meetings would now constitute grounds for removal. Under a proposed policy, if a commissioner misses more than a third of the commission’s meetings during a calendar year, the absences will be reported to the council. This may result in the commissioner’s removal, the policy states.

“When reviewing commissioner reappointments, attendance at commission meetings will be given significant consideration,” the policy states.

The handbook also includes rules on members’ capacity as a commissioner, appointments to boards and commissions, attending meetings and giving responses to the media.

“Until we are able to trust our commissions and board members, we will not necessarily take their recommendations,” Tanaka said at the February meeting.

Cormack suggested at the time that adopting the new handbook would go a long way to addressing the problems that the council has experienced with its commissions.

She noted, however, that these problems are relatively “small” and that most of the respondents to the ad hoc committee’s survey reflected “how much pride people take in serving and how well most of our boards and commissions function.”

“But that doesn’t mean that just because we have norms, that we don’t need some rules,” Cormack said.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@pawweekly.com.
The November election is the county’s second in which every registered voter has received a ballot by mail, which can be completed at home and returned either by mail, through an official drop box or in person at a vote center. The system was implemented in the March primary under the county’s new Voter’s Choice Act.

That wasn’t the only change to the county’s election process this year. The elections office also debuted touch-screen voting machines in vote centers in March and ballot scanners that tabulated results on site. Those results, saved onto memory cards, were delivered to the Registrar’s office and uploaded.

The difference in how quickly the ballot count could be completed because of the vote center tabulators was literally day and night.

“Before, we counted till 2 in the afternoon the day after (Election Day). During the last primary, we finished at 1 a.m.,” Bushey said. “They’re bringing back tabulated cartridges (from the vote centers). We have our results instantaneously.”

In addition to expressing confidence in the election system, the registrars’ staff say they are prepared to handle the volume of ballots, having added more than 400 workers to supplement the permanent staff of 90 employees. That doesn’t include the 4,000 temporary employees who will staff the vote centers.

Given the anxieties over the election, Bushey, along with Public and Legislative Affairs Manager Evelyn Mendez and Elections Division Coordinator Mike Fong, answered the following questions Tuesday about what voters can expect.

Q: I mailed my ballot back. When will it be counted?

Ballots received by the Registrar of Voters will be counted in batches, after their signatures have been verified and the ballots have been sorted by precinct. The ballots are not being held until Election Day to be counted.

Q: Is the ballot that I put into a drop box being counted in the same manner as a mailed ballot?

Yes.

Q: I put my completed ballot in a drop box. How do I know it can’t be tampered with before it’s counted?

The drop box itself has several security features, starting with the slot into which you deposit the ballot. It only opens about an inch, so no one can retrieve ballots through the slot. Also, there are three locks on the box doors. Each ballot box is also chained to the ground so that the box itself cannot be stolen. Ballots are picked up by Registrar of Voters workers in a team of two people and brought back immediately to the office for processing.

Q: How do I know I’m dropping my ballot at an official drop box?

Registrar of Voters drop box locations are posted on the registrar’s website at sccgov.org/sites/rov/. If you encounter a drop box that is not at one of those locations, then it is not official. Do not place your ballot in there. The box should also be labeled with the Santa Clara County seal and the words “Official Ballot Drop Box.”

Q: How does the Registrar’s office ensure that no one other than the registered voter filled out their vote-by-mail ballot?

The voter’s authenticity is determined by the signature on the back of the envelope. That envelope, when received at the Registrar of Voters, is scanned by a machine to capture the signature digitally. That signature is compared with one or more of your signatures that the elections office has on file, drawn from your voter registration card and from documents you’ve submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The sorting machine kicks out each ballot with a signature that doesn’t match. Next, staff review the ballot signature side by side with the signatures on file. They look for common handwriting traits, such as the slant of the writing and the letters’ ascenders and descenders. If the authenticity is still in doubt, the ballot is sent for review by management staff. Voters whose ballots cannot be confirmed as authentic will receive a mailed notification letter and will have until Dec. 1 to provide a signature that matches the file signature.

In the November 2018 election, 720 letters were sent to Santa Clara County voters because of mismatched signatures; 617 voters responded satisfactorily, ensuring that 79.2% of those questionable ballots were counted, according to the registrar.
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When Karen Holman and Greg Schmid last served on the Palo Alto City Council, they often stood out among their colleagues for their staunch resistance to commercial developments and strict interpretation of zoning rules, which occasionally clashed with staff recommendations.

Now, the former mayor and vice mayor are teaming up with another former mayor, Pat Burt, to formally challenge a decision from the city’s planning director that allows a downtown developer to completely demolish a building and replace it with a larger one by using a program intended for seismic rehabilitation.

The unusual challenge, which the council plans to consider later this month, could determine the fate of both the proposed development at 233 University Ave., and shape the future of the city’s seismic rehabilitation program, which has been in place since 1986 and which provides incentives for property owners to upgrade vulnerable buildings.

It will also test the independence of the current council, which has faced criticism this election season from numerous candidates, including Burt, for being too deferential to staff recommendations.

The dispute here is over a simple question with wide ramifications: Can demolition be considered “rehabilitation?”

The three former council members assert that the clear answer is “no.” The zoning code, they note, states that a building that is deemed seismically vulnerable and “is undergoing seismic rehabilitation” shall be allowed to increase its floor area by 2,500 square feet or 25% of the existing building, whichever is greater, without having the increase count toward their density.

By suggesting otherwise and allowing the bonus to also apply to demolished buildings, city planners are effectively creating a new policy and changing the city code, the appellants assert.

“Demolished buildings by definition are not rehabilitated buildings,” states the appeal, which Burt, Holman and Schmid filed in July.

The project, which the Architectural Review Board reviewed and approved in May 2019, had initially called for retaining two walls in the brick building near Ramona Street that currently houses The Tap Room, Mills Florist and Hookah Nites Lounge: the front wall and the wall that separates the building from the neighboring structure, Stanford Theatre. Constructed around 1905, the building at 233 University Ave. is an example of an “unreinforced masonry” structure that the city deems to be particularly vulnerable to collapse in a major earthquake.

In seeking to rehabilitate rather than demolish the building, the Mills family was looking to get a 2,500-square-foot density bonus that it would use to build a second story and a terrace, according to project plans.

But after consulting with engineers, the property owner decided that it would be safer and cheaper to demolish, rather than preserve, both walls. In June, Planning Director Jonathan Lait approved the new
Since its inception, the Magical Bridge has stood out as an exceptional place — the only Palo Alto playground where children and adults of all abilities can explore, exercise and play.

But as the city began to reopen its playgrounds last week after more than six months of closure, the popular Mitchell Park attraction is exceptional in another way: It is the only playground that the city plans to keep closed for the foreseeable future.

The city’s decision to keep Mitchell Park closed is based in large part on the playground’s popularity. It's a regional attraction that drew about 25,000 monthly visitors before the COVID-19 pandemic. Ironically, its exalted status as a playground for everyone is also the main factor for why the city is keeping it closed.

“Recognizing this particular venue has been a regional attraction, in order to ensure our partners can maintain adequate social distancing, that will not be opened immediately,” City Manager Ed Shikada said at the Oct. 5 meeting of the City Council, where he announced the plan to reopen all the other playgrounds.

“We’re still working on a plan on when and how that will occur.”

To date, the city has not given a timeline for reopening the Magical Bridge. When asked about the playground’s reopening, the city’s spokesperson Meghan Horrigan-Taylor said the playground would require a “much different approach” than the other playgrounds to meet state and Santa Clara County limitations on gatherings and other safety restrictions.

“Timing of reopening remains unknown at this time,” Horrigan-Taylor said in an email.

The city’s approach, she added, is “to learn from the reopening of existing playgrounds first before further development of a reopening plan for the Magical Bridge Playground.”

“State and county restrictions also limit the opening of Magical Bridge Playground and relaxing of current crowd limitations will be needed before we can attempt to reopen,” Horrigan-Taylor wrote. “We urge the community to select another playground at this time and stay safe by not trying to access the Magical Bridge playground while it remains closed.”

For Charleston Meadows resident Yaed Uzial Naveh, whose son has nonverbal autism, the city’s decision is heartbreaking.

“I won’t teach him to jump the fence. Kids on wheelchairs and who are visually impaired won’t be able to jump the fence. The people who need it most are the least able to access it,” Naveh said.

When Naveh expressed her concerns to Mayor Adrian Fine, he responded by saying that the city hopes to reopen the playground, but “probably not for a while.” He noted that the city “cannot deploy staff at all hours while.” He noted that the city “cannot deploy staff at all hours to enforce social distancing and masks.”

Fine also suggested that the Magical Bridge Foundation, a nonprofit that is working to create more inclusive playgrounds, is “strongly opposed to reopening for some of the above reasons.”

But Jill Asher, co-founder of the Magical Bridge Foundation, says that’s not the case at all. Her nonprofit is now working with the city to enforce social distancing and other restrictions.

“Many of his friends have more physical limitations than he does,” Naveh said. “Some of them have visual or physical disabilities that make regular playgrounds completely inaccessible to them.”

She noted that some playground users have been flouting the rules during the pandemic and using the Magical Bridge playground despite the city’s official policy. She has opted not to go that route, she said.

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(continued on page 13)
Redwood City to open a new inclusive playground at Red Morton Park. The playground remains under construction but the Magical Bridge Foundation has been working with city leaders and the current plan calls for opening the space in late November, when construction is completed.

Redwood City’s plan for opening the playground calls for city staff controlling crowds and ensuring that visitors wear masks (if they can), adhere to social distancing rules and stay 30 minutes or less, consistent with state guidelines for reopening playgrounds.

Asher said the foundation wants to see Palo Alto take a similar approach, rather than delay the reopening to an unspecified future.

“We absolutely want the playground to open now,” Asher wrote to the council. “We want to be positive partners in the reopening. With that said, we only want it open if there is city staff (or a combination of staff and volunteers that are managed by the city) to control the number of visitors (like they do at Whole Foods and Trader Joes).”

Both Asher and Naveh acknowledged that safely reopening the Magical Bridge playground would require more resources, a challenge for a council that has recently reduced expenditures by nearly $40 million. But even with the recent cuts, the approved budget includes $404,050 for replacing the rubber and synthetic turf at the Magical Bridge Playground, funding that the council can redirect if it so chooses.

Asher suggested in an email to the council that the city’s current approach to reopening playgrounds — which relies on signage rather than staffing — isn’t working. Over the weekend, she said, more than 50 visitors had jumped the fence at the Magical Bridge playground and disregarded the signage, she said.

“We want to be a positive partner in reopening. We want to help in any way we can to train staff on how to meet and greet visitors — and really, be an extension of our Kindness Ambassador Program,” Asher wrote. “We also believe this will be a wonderful way for city staff to positively engage with the community — especially for our disabled visitors and classes, who have nowhere else to go. (Your other city playgrounds do not meet their needs).”

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.

Playground

(continued from page 12)

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Gaines tapped to serve as deputy city manager

Chantal Cotton Gaines, a fixture in Palo Alto’s recent efforts to launch the Office of Transportation and advance a new vision for the rail corridor, has been promoted to deputy city manager, City Manager Ed Shikada announced Tuesday.

Gaines, a 12-year veteran of local government service, has spent the past three years as assistant to the city manager, first under former City Manager James Keene and most recently under Shikada. Her recent projects include helping the city launch its Office of Transportation and facilitating meetings of the Expanded Community Advisory Panel, a citizen group that is aiding the city’s selection of a preferred alternative for rail design.

Shikada said in a statement that the promotion is effective immediately. In her new job, she will have a greater role in furthering intergovernmental relations, managing the city’s initiatives on race and equity (including public safety reform) and other citywide priorities, according to the announcement.

She will be stepping into a position that has been vacant since April, when Michelle Poche Flaherty resigned to become assistant city manager in Redwood City.

Before coming to Palo Alto, Gaines had spent four years with the city of Oakland, where she led the development of a $25 million annual public safety and violence prevention initiative, according to the city.

Gaines, who lives in East Palo Alto, said in the statement that she is “grateful for the opportunity to serve the Palo Alto community in this new capacity.”

“I am proud to have a strong family history with both Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, from my mother-in-law’s previous business in Palo Alto to my husband being a proud Paly Viking alum, and I am thrilled to continue to give back to the local community I call home,” Gaines said.

—Gennady Sheyner

Police disrupt attempted carjacking

Palo Alto police arrested a man who allegedly attempted to steal a car at Town & Country Village in Palo Alto early Sunday morning after the driver of the car left her keys in the unlocked car while she went to Peet’s Coffee.

Emergency dispatchers received several calls about a woman shouting for help outside the coffee shop at the shopping center at 855 El Camino Real at around 6:30 a.m., according to police.

According to police, before the woman entered the store, she noticed a man in the driver’s seat of her car. The woman ran back to her vehicle in an attempt to remove him — at one point kicking and yelling at him — but the man refused to leave the car.

Another bystander nearby tried to help the woman, but the man allegedly threatened to kill him, according to a police press release.

When police arrived, the 53-year-old man allegedly refused arrest. He then stepped out of the vehicle and moved toward the officer in an “aggressive manner,” according to the news release.

The officer discharged his Taser once, hitting the man, before he was put into custody, police said. He was not injured, the statement said.

The woman did not report any injuries.

The man was booked into the Santa Clara County Main Jail on suspicion of carjacking and resisting arrest.

—Lloyd Lee

Two homes burglarized, one car stolen Monday

Police are investigating an overnight crime spree in a south Palo Alto neighborhood that occurred early Monday morning, Oct. 12, in which two homes were burglarized while residents slept inside and a car from a third home was stolen but recovered nearby.

The unknown perpetrators are at large, police stated in a press release.

One crime occurred in the 700 block of Gailen Avenue, just east of Mitchell Park. Two burglars forced entry into a residential garage at about 2:42 a.m. and stole two bicycles while a couple slept asleep inside the home. The second burglary occurred at a home in the 3700 block of Nathan Way, about a third of a mile away from Gailen Avenue. An unknown person entered the yard through an unlocked side gate and the home through an unlocked window. Inside the home, the suspect stole a purse from the kitchen table and then left. The residents were asleep at the time.

Follow-up investigation revealed that someone tried to use the victim’s credit cards at a San Jose convenience store around 4:45 a.m.

While investigating the second burglary, police located an unoccupied Audi Q-7 in the 3800 block of Nathan Way that had been stolen from the 3600 block of Corina Way, which is also near Gailen. The owner had left the keys in the ignition.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call the police at 650-329-2413.

—Palo Alto Weekly Staff
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Palo Alto Daily Post

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COVID19 • FINANCIAL RECOVERY • AFFORDABLE HOUSING • SOCIAL JUSTICE • CLIMATE CHANGE

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Customers grab a drink at Sun of Wolf on California Avenue in Palo Alto on Feb. 25.

'Orange' tier (continued from page 5)

The county's move to loosen business restrictions reflects its recent success in containing the number of COVID-19 cases. The county's case count, Cody said at the Tuesday news conference, is now 3.7 cases per 100,000 residents, below the state's threshold of 4 cases per 100,000 for the moderate tier. Cody also noted that residents in the county’s most disadvantaged quartile have a positivity rate of 3.8%, which meets the state’s new “health equity metric” criteria that requires a rate below 5.2% for this quartile.

The promising trends have allowed the county to be the first large county in California to move into the orange tier, Cody said.

“I think what this says is that we have been working extraordinarily hard in our county for a long time,” Cody said. “We were a bit stricter for a bit longer than many other jurisdictions, in particular the larger jurisdictions in southern California. And now that is paying off.”

With the revised order, Cody said, the county is “switching from a strategy where we’re controlling the environment by keeping a lot closed, to shifting the responsibility to each of us as individuals to do everything that we can to follow the core principles of wearing a mask, staying in a well-ventilated place and keeping a distance.”

Williams said all businesses in the county will also be required to submit an updated social-distancing protocol within the next 15 days.

The initial goal is to have thousands of people in the Bay Area order and collect their own specimens, then send them to labs that can perform the actual test, Maldonado said in a School of Medicine press release issued Sept. 30.

Unlike most nasal-swab tests performed at testing sites and medical facilities, individuals can swab the lower inside of their nose without having someone push the swab all the way up the nasal passage to the back of the throat.

Prospective study participants take a five-minute online survey and report of the state of their health. Those who qualify place an order for a test kit shipped directly to their home usually within 24 hours and send their sample back for analysis. The tests are picked up by a medical courier after the participant marks on their online account that their sample is ready. The Stanford Clinical Virology Laboratory oversees the testing and results, which are available in 48 hours on average, according to the study website.

The test is free to the selected participants and is open to anyone 5 years or older in the San Francisco Bay Area, whether they have symptoms of COVID-19 or not.

The Vera platform is a step forward in our goal to support widespread testing to individuals not just in our community, but throughout the country.

—Dr. Lloyd Minor, dean, Stanford School of Medicine

The researchers hope to develop a better understanding of the differences between symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and learn how COVID-19 spreads within households and in communities.

The CATCH study is a pilot project, but the research team hopes to eventually have the program running across the country. Stanford wants to distribute the Vera technology platform broadly, which includes software for testing and tracing COVID-19 cases and the swab test kits.

“Vera could help schools and universities boost on-campus testing, allowing for active monitoring of the students’ health and potentially helping the campus administrative and monitoring process,” he said.

To sign up for the CATCH pilot study and find more information, visit catchstudy.stanford.edu. Anyone without internet access can also join by calling 833-971-2468. Institutions interested in the technology can find more details at vera.stanford.edu.

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@pawweekly.com.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Stanford launches COVID-19 study using a simple method: At-home tests

Researchers seek to estimate the virus’ true prevalence

by Sue Dremann

Stanford University School of Medicine researchers have launched a new population study to track the spread of COVID-19 throughout the Bay Area.

The study, called the Community Alliance to Test Coronavirus at Home, or CATCH, would estimate the true population prevalence of the coronavirus by having people take a simple test at home, according to the study website. The project is led by Dr. Yvonne Maldonado, professor of pediatric infectious diseases and of health research and policy, Stanford’s Quake Lab; and Loren Nelson, associate professor of health research and policy.

The study uses a new technology called Vera, which was developed by Stanford University through a partnership with the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub, Microsoft and other organizations. Stanford also plans to offer Vera more broadly to institutions, schools, public health agencies and other groups to track the virus.

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“Vera could help schools and universities boost on-campus testing, allowing for active monitoring of the students’ health and potentially helping the campus administrative and monitoring process when and if to reopen on-site learning,” Nelson stated in the press release.

The platform could allow for more streamlined surveillance and tracking of COVID-19 cases, saving health care workers time and preventing them from possible exposure and from having to use valuable personal protective equipment, according to the School of Medicine’s press release.

The low-cost technology allows for affordable testing of large numbers of people in any group or organization. It could also help public health departments speed up testing and monitoring of vulnerable populations.

Stanford plans to make the technology available to academic institutions, public health departments, laboratory providers and other institutions under noncommercial terms.

“Since the early days of this pandemic, Stanford has recognized how crucial testing is, and will continue to be, as we navigate the COVID-19 crisis,” Dr. Lloyd Minor, dean of the Stanford School of Medicine, said in the press release. "The Vera platform is a step forward in our goal to support widespread testing to individuals not just in our community, but throughout the country."

The platform can also address testing inequities by reaching underserved populations that are at greatest risk for the SARS-CoV-2 infection, the virus that causes COVID-19. Vera program leader and CATCH study Director Patrick Arensdorf stated in the release.

“These individuals often work in essential occupations and have difficulty accessing health care facility-based testing. Vera provides them a convenient and rapid home-based testing option,” he said.

To sign up for the CATCH pilot study and find more information, visit catchstudy.stanford.edu. Anyone without internet access can also join by calling 833-971-2468. Institutions interested in the technology can find more details at vera.stanford.edu.

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@pawweekly.com.
Margaret “Maggie” Anderson
May 12, 1927 – September 25, 2020

Maggie was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She attended college and nursing school in Chicago and Minneapolis. In 1955 she joined her soon-to-be husband Andy in Japan where she was stationed in the Air Force. The following year their first son Reed was born and they returned to the USA to live in Sacramento. Twin boys, Dennis and Neil, and daughter Beth were born there as Maggie began her career as a nurse. The family moved to Palo Alto in 1967, during which time Maggie enjoyed working as a Public Health Nurse for Santa Clara county (until retirement at age 59) She was a devoted member of the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto. She loved reading & book collecting and was a volunteer for The Friends of The Library. Maggie also loved to garden, bird watch, watercolor and travel. Maggie and Andy moved to Chico, California in 2015 to be closer to family.

She is survived by son Reed and wife Karel, son Neil and wife Beverly, daughter Beth Chase and husband Tom, eleven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. She was predeceased by husband Andy and son Dennis.

A celebration of Maggie’s life will be held at the home of Beth Chase in the near future.
Our election recommendations

by the Weekly editorial board

Foothill-DeAnza College District Board
Peter Landsberger (inc)
Laura Casas (inc)
Gilbert Wong (inc)

Palo Alto City Council
Pat Burt
Ed Lauing
Greer Stone
Lydia Kou (inc)

Palo Alto Unified School District Board
Jennifer DiBrienza (inc)
Todd Collins (inc)
Jesse Ladomirak

Local and state ballot measures

Measure O - YES
Palo Alto Unified School District Parcel Tax (requires two-thirds vote)

Measure O extends a parcel tax that residents and businesses in the school district have been paying since 2001 to supplement the district's revenue from property taxes. With annual automatic 2% increases each year, and occasional large bumps when it has been renewed every five years, the parcel tax is now $836 per parcel and generates almost $16 million a year, or roughly 7% of the budget. It doesn't expire until next year, giving the district another chance to win voter approval if it should fail to win the needed two-thirds support.

The funds from this tax have, unfortunately, now become baked into the regular operating budget, so its defeat would mean cuts to many of the programs that make this district so unique. At an uncertain time due to the COVID-19 crisis and the possibility of impacts on property tax revenues ahead, voters should approve the continuation of the parcel tax to ensure stability of our finances.

Measure S - NO
Santa Clara Valley Water District Parcel Tax (requires two-thirds vote)

Measure S seeks to renew an existing parcel tax that isn't set to expire for eight years and modify it so it will continue indefinitely without any further voter approval. The current tax generates $45 million a year. The water district and supporters argue that passage of Measure S is needed in order to be able to plan for projects that will extend beyond the 2028 expiration date of the current tax. Some Palo Alto residents in the San Francisquito Creek flood zone are actively supporting it from the budget during strong economic voters repeatedly supporting it for almost every five years, the parcel tax now is limited to a 15-year period, as the current measure is managed and funded is a complete mess and needs a massive overhaul.

The most common argument against the governance and financial problems. The system has never had a guaranteed source of funding and relies on voluntary contributions from San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to supplement fare revenue, which is now a fraction of pre-pandemic levels. It operates under a Joint Powers Agreement between the three counties but managed by the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans), and problems with this arrangement and the lack of accountability have been the source of conflict for decades.

Measure RR, which had to be approved by seven different agencies to get on the ballot, does nothing to fix the underlying governance problems, but it is necessary to ensure Caltrain’s survival through and after the COVID-19 crisis. It will provide, for the first time, a secure source of funding through a 1/8 cent sales tax over the next 30 years. That’s a huge step forward. We reluctantly recommend voters approve this measure, which requires approval by two-thirds of voters overall in the three affected counties.

State propositions

Prop. 14 - No
Stem cell bonds

Sixteen years ago, when voters approved $3 billion in bonds for stem cell research, it was critical to the growth and development of a promising new field of research, largely because the Bush Administration had prohibited all federal funding. But there is now adequate federal government and private funding being invested in stem cell research. With all of the state’s other needs there is no reason California should continue to fund the state’s own program when there is ample national research being done.

Prop. 15 - Yes
Commercial property tax split roll

It’s long past time to end the property tax break to commercial property owners in California, whose taxes don’t increase with the value of their property. Since commercial real estate turns over much less frequently than homes, the current system is grossly unfair and amounts to a giant subsidy to real estate investors. The most common argument against the measure is that property tax increases are often passed along to tenants, which include small businesses. Economic studies have repeatedly shown, however, that commercial rents are driven by the market, not by tax rates. Owners of commercial buildings set rental rates based on what owners of similar space are charging and what tenants are willing to pay.

Prop. 16 - Yes
Affirmative action

When voters approved Prop. 209 in 1996, they banned most affirmative action programs in public institutions, including the state college system. At a time when residents are awakening to the racial bias that still permeates our society, this proposed repeal of Prop. 209, adopted overwhelmingly by the legislature, will restore the ability for state and local agencies to consider race, sex, ethnicity and national origin in hiring decisions. Similarly, state universities will be able to consider these factors as part of their admissions process. Most private employers have active programs to diversify their workforce. It is wrong that public employers and schools are prevented from doing the same.

Prop. 17 - Yes
Parolees’ right to vote

‘This simple proposal, placed on the ballot by the legislature, would give those who have completed their prison sentence but who are still on supervised parole the right to vote. Parole is a period during which offenders are expected to reenter society, find gainful employment and contribute to society. Providing them with the right to vote gives them a stake in their future and comes at no harm to anyone. It’s an easy way to give agency to a person trying to move on from the mistakes they’ve made.

Prop. 18 - Yes
17-year-olds vote in primaries

This legislative proposal allows for a 17-year-old to register and vote in a primary or special election if they will turn 18 before the next general election. It makes good sense to allow a young person who desires to exercise his or her right to vote in a general election after turning 18 to be able to participate in the primary election that selects the top two candidates for that office. Anything that encourages interest in voting and the electoral process among young people is good for democracy.

(continued on page 21)
**Letters**

**Politics of anger**

*Editor, I wish to comment on Michele Lew and John Kessler’s letter in last Friday’s edition of the Weekly in response to Vice Mayor Tom DuBois’ recent comments about how tax cuts off at city council ads that stated that three candidates in particular were “the only candidates who embody Palo Alto values.”

Such a statement is wrong on its face and is offensive (at least to DuBois and me) and deserves to be called out for what it is, as DuBois did. It implies that the other seven candidates lack Palo Alto values and, therefore, are not suitable for serving on city council. Don’t vote for them, but vote for the only three candidates who have Palo Alto values — whatever that phrase may mean to the lesser-informed. That’s inappropriate political advertising.

I want to address one other point made by Lew and Kessler, namely that “who lives in Palo Alto is an economic issue in that area, but it’s also an economic issue in Ather-

ton, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Portola Valley, Woodside, etc. But it’s not an issue created by the vast majority of people who live here. It’s created by tech companies that have proliferated the area, the vast amounts of unbelievable personal wealth that people have, and by local governments along the Mipeninsula that have allowed too much office space to be developed without requiring a commensurate amount of housing for people at all levels of personal income at the same time. Supply and demand has taken over, as it generally does, but that doesn’t mean that residents, like myself, are racists if that is what Lew and Kessler are implying by also saying, “It’s not just an economic issue, Race matters.”

Joe Hirsch

*Georgia Avenue, Palo Alto*

Affordable housing in Palo Alto

*Palo Alto has resisted building low-income housing even for its own city workers, let alone others in the larger community. Define the terms: “affordable housing” for whom? Palo Alto is an elite island where leadership rationalizes that other communities can build housing for an inclusive community. This amounts to a racist, class- and segment- segregated city, where only the very wealthy, or those who have lived here for years, can afford to live. So far, leaders “study” and “talk” about “affordable” housing. Twelve parking spaces for RV dwellers is pathetic. East Palo Alto, Redwood City and Mountain View provide hundreds of spaces for RVs. Stop the talk and take action so that we have a community that houses service-sector workers. Be bold, courageous. Act on your empty words. Here are some actions:

1. Put rent control in place now.
2. Survey the number of vacant houses in the city. Get these own-
ers to rent their houses.*

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**Guest Opinions: Pro & Con**

**‘Yes on Measure RR to save Caltrain**

*by Marc Berman

We all miss certain activities that we took for granted before our lives were upended by the COVID-19 pandemic — cheering on the Giants at a crowded Oracle Park, catching up with friends at a local coffee shop, or eating dinner at the office at lunchtime, or spending a Sunday in San Francisco or San Jose. For tens of thousands of us, these activities all had one thing in common: taking Caltrain to get to and from our destinations.

In connection with this electrification project, Caltrain has to develop a sophisticated signaling system to prevent collisions. Knowing that a certain contractor had been found incompetent in Denver, Caltrain hired the same contractor with disastrous results on the Peninsula and after spending untold millions of dollars. Instead of the ruinous electrification project, Caltrain refused to consider modern Tier 4 diesel trains as an alternative; they cost one-quarter as much, are quieter and cleaner, and get you to San Francisco about three minutes later than an electric train. It is that “severe delay” worth putting Caltrain riders at risk? Another example of Caltrain bumbleheadedness.

Caltrain made an unholy al-

Alliance/marriage with the California High-Speed Rail Authority; Caltrain received $745 million from HSR, and in return gave up control of its 50 mile right of way, agreeing to let HSR run 10 trains north and 10 trains south every hour, a little exercise that will paralyze the Peninsula with the crossing gates coming down every three minutes. No one will be able to get to work or school, get to the emergency room, and the merchants will have lots of customers for when millions of us return to a more normal life sometime next year. A recent survey of Caltrain riders showed that at least 70% plan to start riding again once the pandemic subsides.

Measure RR isn’t just a stopgap meas-

ure to keep the trains running. It’s a well-thought-out, long-term plan to make Caltrain a world-class public transportation system. Electrification is scheduled to begin in 2022, and Measure RR will pay for operations for this cleaner, faster system. Electrified, quieter trains will mean cleaner air and less noise pollution for our communities, reducing criteria air pollut-

ant emissions by up to 97% and eliminating over 176,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions along the corridor each year. Importantly, Caltrain’s Board of Direc-

tors recently adopted an Equity Frame-

work designed to make Caltrain more ac-

cessible to more of our communities who don’t currently ride. They’re pilot ing a 50% fare reduction for lower-income riders that can be made permanent if Measure RR passes. The equity framework also pro-

poses adding more trains to its schedule during off-peak hours, expanding access to station facilities and improving connec-

tions to other public transit routes.

An expanded Caltrain also provides a much-needed economic boost to the area. Projections show that Measure RR will add approximately 16,000 good paying jobs across the three counties.

Ensuring that Caltrain not only survives this pandemic but is in a position to thrive afterward is critical to our post-pandemic quality of life. Can you imagine if the tens of thousands of daily riders were to drive their cars instead? Join me in supporting Measure RR to support Caltrain and pro-

tect this critical transportation system for decades to come.

*Marc Berman is the state assembly member for the 24th District. He can be reached at marc.berman@asm.ca.gov.*

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**Vote ‘no’ on Measure RR**

*by Michael Brady

On the November ballot is a tax measure, Measure RR, that would create an additional sales tax for the benefit of Caltrain. Sensible voters should vote “no” on this measure; Caltrain is a bloated, mis-

managed public works nightmare that doesn’t deserve taxpayer help during these tough times.

For years, Caltrain has been engaged in a program to “electrify” Its main line from San Jose to San Francisco. This has been, and continues to be, a financial disaster. Its original cost estimate was $800 million; now it is up to four times that — or over $3.2 billion! This is a prime example of government waste and profligacy that the voters hate.

In connection with this electrifica-

tion project, Caltrain has to develop a...
**Guest Opinions: Pro & Con**

### ‘Yes’ on Santa Clara Valley Water District Measure S

**by Thomas Rindfleisch**

I was an author of a letter from Crescent Park residents supporting the passage of Measure S referred to in Sue Dremann’s recent Palo Alto Weekly article. I continue my strong support. Opponents claim that the remaining seven years of the current Measure B leaves time to complete flood protections. However, we have worked and waited 22 years for San Francisquito Creek flood repairs. After all those years, we still have nothing tangible to show for our work and planning to improve protection especially upgrading Pope-Chaucer bridge for the Crescent Park and Duveneck/St. Francis neighborhoods that were so heavily affected ($40 million worth) in the 1998 flood. This is not the fault of the Santa Clara Valley Water District (now called Valley Water). The project involves coordination among five local government jurisdictions, long negotiations with myriad government agencies, and delaying tactics by the same groups opposing Measure S. Progress has been made, but seven years will evaporate quickly. Even if we are successful, there remain other longer-term challenges for adequate flood protection. I participated for five years as a citizen adviser on a Stanford University study of the future of Searsville Dam. This is relevant because current flood control upgrade plans for San Francisquito Creek will protect against a 70-year flood (as happened in 1998), but we will still be short of the 100-year protection required by FEMA to remove flood insurance requirements on local properties and which would guard against future extreme weather events. The Stanford Searsville study recommended reconfiguring Searsville in a way that would dovetail with the downstream improvements to San Francisquito Creek and raise the flood protection to at least the 100-year level. This additional project is expensive and will require time, funding and cooperation to bring it to fruition. Other long-term threats come from climate change. Sea level rise threatens to inundate many areas of the Bay shoreline, including areas of Palo Alto and other Santa Clara County communities. The effects will change the ecology in these areas, the availability of water, and livability. Planning, design and execution of needed shoreline and infrastructure upgrades will require solid funding support and will last well beyond the seven-year sunset of the current Measure B. Note that Measure S is not “double dipping” in that if approved, it will replace the Measure B and will not impose new taxes – the near-term rate stays the same as the rate today. A key concern of opponents seems to be: Can we trust the management of the Water District to use these funds wisely? After all, not all past projects have reached completion in a timely fashion. I would argue that the way to oversee and manage future performance is not through deferred funding but through effective citizen awareness, involvement and oversight using the ballot box.

**The way to oversee and manage future performance is not through deferred funding but through effective citizen awareness, involvement and oversight using the ballot box.**

### What Valley Water doesn’t tell us about Safe, Clean Water

**by Trish Mulvey and Dave Warner**

When you see a ballot measure with an attractive name like “Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection” and read a campaign mailer promising to “protect every drop without raising taxes,” do you ever think, “I wonder what’s missing?”

We did, and now we want to let you know who we are and what we found.

We are longtime Palo Altans. Trish Mulvey and her family moved to Kings Lane in Palo Alto in the spring of 1951. She discovered pollywogs in San Francisquito Creek in a shallow pool under the big buckeye tree next to the Newell Road Bridge and, in 1994, was a convening member of the San Francisquito Watershed Council. Dave Warner and his family moved to Palo Alto Avenue, across the street from the creek, in 1995 and he has been active in neighborhood creek clean-up and restoration activities.

When looking for what’s missing” in Measure S, we identified four areas of concern along with a reassurance. Here are the concerns. First is the lack of a sunset date — thus allowing the tax to continue indefinitely and taking away our right to vote on new projects and programs.

Second is lack of accountability for poor performance on timely completion of flood protection projects and environmental stewardship key performance indicators for restoring wildlife habitat and providing open space.

Third is continuing a very regressive tax does not expire until 2028. Funding for all the current projects will continue — including the high priority Anderson Dam seismic retrofit.

There are updates in the September 2020 Valley Water draft Year 7 Annual Report regarding other projects of local interest.

Permanent Creek work was originally projected to be completed in 2016. Now, the final element is projected to be completed by April 2021 with construction of the Earth Day Evergreen Creek Detention Facility. San Francisquito Creek flood protection was originally projected to be completed by last June; now the schedule has slipped to the end of 2023. For the upstream-of-101 reach, including the Newell Road and Pope Chaucer bridges, Valley Water continues to work in coordination with the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority on the 95% design document for channel constrictions. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2021.

We oppose Measure S because voters deserve clarity, transparency and accountability.

We oppose Measure S because voters deserve clarity, transparency and accountability. A “no” vote now ensures that Valley Water will have the opportunity to re-examine the proposal and determine which projects are most effective. A “yes” vote gives Valley Water unprecedented power to remove flood insurance requirements on the homes and businesses in our community and to force us to pay for flood protection.

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Prop. 19 - Yes
Transfer of tax base
This measure would add new tax benefits to existing law for people over 55 and older who sell their home and purchase a new one by enabling them to retain the property tax level of the home they sell. It’s being pushed by Realtors and firefighters with $42 million in campaign donations (versus almost no expenditures against). For those who have been active for a long time, this is yet another unfair benefit to what they have already been enjoying by paying property taxes that are a fraction of what a new homeowner is paying. But until we have the courage to move in the opposite direction, this measure will make a decision to move easier, and thereby help to increase helpful turnover of the housing stock.

Prop. 20 - No
Criminal justice reform rollbacks
This initiative measure attempts to undo reforms in the criminal just system that were passed in the last decade and were an important part of reducing the state’s prison population in response to federal court orders. It would put more people back in prison, at great expense, and cut programs that are aimed at assisting offenders to successfully return to society. This measure would be a giant step backward and return us to a day when active arrestees were sentenced to long and unfair prison sentences.

Prop. 21 - Yes
Rent control at local level
Current state law prohibits cit- ies from enacting any measures restricting rent increases for sin- gle family homes, or any housing built since 1955. Even so, about 20 percent of California’s households are living in pre-1995 units that are subject to rent control laws. San Francisco, Los Angeles, Mountain View and many other cities are successfully using rent control measures to protect renters. Prop. 21 doesn’t enact rent control, it simply gives cit- ies the ability to do so if they believe themselves if some form of rent regulation is in the best interest of their community while addressing housing needs.

Prop. 22 - No
Gig workers as independent contractors
Pressured by unions, in 2019 the California legislature hur- riedly passed AB 5 to virtually prohibit the use of independent contractors, including drivers for Uber, Lyft and other ride-share and delivery services, freelance- ers and an array of other workers. Ever since it has been struggling to fix all the problems and inequi- ties from enacting the law, while failed to budge on drivers and many other categories. In June a court or- dered Uber and Lyft to treat their drivers as employees, but the rul- ing is on hold until the outcome of the election. AB 5 was a badly conceived and written law that needs a rewrite. But Prop. 22 is not the answer. It only addresses “app-based drivers” and amounts to a rescue of a few large compa- nies. They should be working as part of a broad coalition to amend AB 5 to address their threat to all businesses impacted by it, not just solve their own needs.

Prop. 23 - No
Dialysis clinic requirements
This is the second attempt by unions to organize kidney dialy- sis workers through passage of a confusing ballot measure that doesn’t belong on a state ballot. It was defeated two years ago and should be again.

Prop. 24 - Yes
Data privacy
Just two years ago the legisla- ture passed a ground-breaking and controversial Consumer Privacy Act establishing rules allowing consumers to opt out from busi- nesses with more than $25 mil- lion in revenue or possessing data on more than 50,000 people sharing data they collect on them. Prop. 24 is intended to strengthen the 2018 law by clarifying some provisions and making enforce- ment easier through the creation of a new state agency, while reduc- ing the number of businesses that are affected. Importantly, it will permit changes through the legis- lature (instead of voters) to further improve the law as long as they are consistent with the goal of increas- ing data privacy.

Prop. 25 - Yes
Cash bail referendum
This measure seeks to uphold 2018 legislation that does away with the cash bail system so that poor defendants aren’t forced to remain in jail pending their trial while wealthy defendants are released on bail. The implementa- tion of the new law has been de- layed due to the referendum. The bail system is highly discrimina- tory and should be replaced with the risk-assessment system con- tained in the 2018 law. A “yes” vote means you approve of the law passed to eliminate cash bail. A “no” vote means that law is strick- en and cash bail will continue.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
The Palo Alto Weekly encourages comments on our coverage or on issues of local interest.

What concerns, if any, do you have about election security in Santa Clara County?

Submit letters to the editor of up to 300 words to letters@paw.com.
Submit guest opinions of 1,000 words to editor@paw.com. Include your name, address and daytime phone number so we can reach you.
We reserve the right to edit contributions for length, objectionable content, libel and factual errors known to us. Anonymous letters will generally not be accepted. Submitting a letter to the editor or guest opinion constitutes a granting of permission to the Palo Alto Weekly and Embarcadero Media to also publish it, including in our online archives and as a post on Town Square.
For more information, contact Editors Assistant Lloyd Lee at llee@paw.com or 650-223-6526 or Editor Jocelyn Dong at editor@paw.com.
1160 DONNER LANE, PALO ALTO

Bright, Stylish, with Top-Ranked Schools

Stylish living awaits in this fresh, modern 4-bedroom, 3.5-bathroom home, which offers over 1,850 square feet of living space along with a location just steps to both Greer Park and Seale Park. New engineered hardwood floors extend throughout most of the home’s three levels, while ample windows provide abundant natural light for a bright, airy ambiance. The main floor includes living space, a granite-appointed kitchen with stainless-steel appliances, and a dining room with a glass door out to a private patio. Flexible-use space ideal as an office or family room rests on the third floor, and all of the home’s bathrooms have been updated with marble countertops. This home offers easy access to US 101 for Bay Area commuting, and children may attend acclaimed schools including Palo Verde Elementary, JLS Middle, and Palo Alto High (buyer to verify eligibility).

For more information, video tour & more photos, please visit:
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Listed by Michael Repka of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Palo Alto.

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960 DENNIS DRIVE, PALO ALTO

Comfortable Living and a Convenient Location
On a peaceful tree-lined street in desirable Midtown, this bright, spacious home offers comfortable living and a convenient location, with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and nearly 1,600 square feet of living space, set on a lot of almost 6,100 square feet. Hardwood floors extend throughout most of the home, and light, bright spaces include the living room centered by a fireplace, the kitchen with ample cabinetry, and the delightful family room. Find comfort in the master suite with access to a private brick courtyard perfect for enjoying your morning cup of coffee. The backyard offers great low-maintenance space, with a large deck to entertain guests. Just a short walk to Greer Park, this location is also convenient to the excitement of California Avenue, and provides easy access to US 101 for Bay Area commuting. Plus, children may attend acclaimed schools including Palo Verde Elementary, JLS Middle, and Palo Alto High (buyer to verify eligibility).

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Three incumbents, four newcomers vie for three seats on East Palo Alto City Council by Lloyd Lee

This fall, seven candidates running for East Palo Alto City Council not only want to tackle some of their community’s more evergreen issues — which have worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic — but also to set a promising path for a city that’s in flux.

The incumbents — Lisa Gauthier, Larry Moody and Carlos Romero — are each seeking to secure a third term on the council to continue their work on affordable housing, job opportunities and commercial development, among other issues. But as the city grapples with one of the highest rates of COVID-19 cases in San Mateo County, some of its persistent issues — resident displacement, job losses, support for youth and seniors, and public safety and health — have become more urgent.

First-time challengers Stewart Hyland, Webster Lincoln, Antonio Lopez and Juan Mendez want to ensure that residents are protected during the health crisis and are included in the city’s future. They are all well-versed in the city’s issues as well as its potential and hope to build upon the work of their predecessors, but with different solutions.

LISA GAUTHIER

Shaping an East Palo Alto for her family

First elected in 2012, East Palo Alto City Councilwoman Lisa Gauthier is seeking a third term this fall. Over the past eight years, she served as mayor in 2015 and 2019 and vice mayor in 2018. Like her veteran colleagues also seeking reelection, she believes the solutions to the city’s intersectional issues take time and another four years on the council are necessary to see some development projects through to completion.

“We’re not a one-issue city,” she said. “There are a lot of things that we’re doing and a lot of the resources and answers we need takes money. If we don’t have the money to do it right away, we can’t get it done.”

For Gauthier, the future of East Palo Alto is one that can accommodate all residents regardless of their income.

The city is an affordable housing community, she said. But she also suggested that current tenant protections in the city such as rent stabilization, which allows for incremental rent increases each year, don’t do enough to maintain that community.

“We can have affordable units, but once a tenant who is in an affordable unit moves out, that unit then goes to market rate, so it’s affordable to whom at that point?” she asked. “Ideally, we need to figure out: How do we keep that rate from being raised to market rate?”

With earning levels of low-income residents at a plateau, and as rents continue to soar, Gauthier said she wants to bring a portion of the city’s housing to remain affordable, though she couldn’t speak to a specific percentage.

Market-rate housing, on the other hand, is an issue that takes care of itself, she said.

One area Gauthier does feel the city needs to address more, however, is housing for “the middle” — the individuals who get their degree and a job that pays around the median income, she said.

Gauthier sees mixed-use projects with retail and housing as the key to increasing the city’s commercial development. She also wants to make more space for the kinds of small businesses that thrived decades earlier when the city was unincorporated and wasn’t home to large corporations.

“If we’re not saying, ‘Look, we’re going to make sure that there’s space for you to develop your business’, I think we’re also doing our city a disservice,” she said.

One of the more immediate threats to the city is the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionally affects East Palo Alto, which has the highest case rate compared to the rest of San Mateo County. Part of the problem in Gauthier’s perspective is effective messaging.

(continued on page 25)

STEWART HYLAND

If there’s a nonprofit, there’s a way

Stewart Hyland doesn’t have experience as a city councilman, but his work for the past two decades is deeply tied to one of the main pillars of the East Palo Alto community: its nonprofit organizations.

“I’ve always worked in nonprofits, either as a community organizer or as a union organizer,” he said.

Because of his extensive work with groups such as One East Palo Alto Neighborhood Improvement Initiative, Faith in Action and, currently, the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, to name a few, Hyland said he already has an intimate knowledge of the council’s priorities and the larger community concerns.

“(I) have an understanding of how folks are being affected by what policies are in effect and also a little bit about budget work,” Hyland said.

If elected to the council, Hyland said he wants to ensure East Palo Alto residents see the benefits of Measure HH, a 2018 voter-approved parcel tax on large office developments to fund career training programs and affordable housing; support the city with its Ravenswood/Four Corners TOD Specific Plan; and retain the city’s current residents through affordable housing, while also inviting new tenants.

Hyland has called for a “broad-minded” approach when thinking about how the city should serve through affordable housing. Though he’s not the only candidate who has emphasized the creation of units for middle- to low-income earners, Hyland is the only one so far to openly address a specific subgroup of low-income residents: the formerly incarcerated.

“I think single-room occupancy will be great for a lot of our folks that are returning from being incarcerated,” he said.

At the same time, he stressed that it doesn’t mean East Palo Alto can’t accommodate an economically diverse community. The problem, Hyland suggests, is finding the common ground among all types of housing and tenants.

“This economy is so out of whack, it doesn’t make any sense to separate ourselves by class,” he said. “We need to think more holistically.”

One tool Hyland wants the city to look into its inclusionary zoning to create affordable housing alongside market-rate units and, as a result, help preserve the cultural diversity of the city.

On commercial development, Hyland said he wants to move forward with the city’s existing Ravenswood/Four Corners TOD Specific Plan. (A couple years ago, Hyland gathered primarily white-speaking parents for community discussions about what the development should look like.)

“I thought we laid out a good plan,” he said, appreciating details like floor-area ratios, which dictate the size of the buildings that can go on plots of land, and effectiveness of the messaging.

(continued on page 29)
Lisa Gauthier
(continued from page 24)

The city needs to think beyond social media platforms, which many residents may not use, she said, and suggested the city use its police cars, bullhorns and even ice cream trucks to remind people to socially distance and wear a mask.

She acknowledged that many residents can’t pay rent during this time and that the city is looking toward nonprofits such as Live in Peace, an organization that sits on the board, for rental assistance. But at the top of her mind is stopping the spread of the virus, she said. “The most important thing we can do right now: stop the spread of COVID-19; open up the economy; and allow people to get back to work,” she said. “If we don’t open up this economy, it’s not going to just be the renters who are going to be in trouble.”

In addition, Gauthier would focus her third term on the city’s youth by building “leadership development resources,” according to her campaign statement. Gauthier said the city should hear more from younger people of the community by creating a youth commission, something she noticed other cities have established when she attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

“If you don’t engage our youth, we’re losing them and we don’t want to lose them,” she said. “We want them to know their voices are valued.”

The East Palo Alto Police Department can also play a role in empowering the city’s youth, Gauthier, who participated in a Black Lives Matter protest in the city on June 3, said. “I believe that some of the younger, progressively minded community members’ calls for a complete defunding of the Police Department are realistic. Instead, she sees an opportunity for a more collaborative relationship between residents and the Police Department, particularly with the youth community, through programs like the Fitness Improvement Training zones, where locals and officers interacted while doing exercise.”

Gauthier’s pursuit for a third council term is also personal. “I am a product of this community,” she said.

Gauthier was 2 years old when she moved to East Palo Alto in 1967 and later enrolled in the Ravenswood City School District, attending Runnymede Elementary School (which has since closed), Brentwood Academy and Costanoa Elementary School. She graduated high school.

Lincoln also supports reallocating some of the city’s police budget into a “Restorative Justice program.”

Here’s how you can vote in East Palo Alto

Three drop boxes are now available, and in-person vote centers will open Oct. 31
by Tyler Callister and Jocelyn Dong

Voting in the 2020 presidential election officially got under way last week in San Mateo County as the Elections Division mailed ballots to all registered voters.

Voters have several options for returning their completed ballots. They can mail them back in the postage-paid envelope to the San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division. It must be postmarked on or before Nov. 3.

Voters can also bring their ballots to any of 39 drop box locations in the county, including three in East Palo Alto. Those ballot boxes are at University Circle, 1900 University Ave. (the inside box is accessible during regular business hours); Ravenswood City School District Office, 2120 Euclid Ave. (the inside box is accessible during regular business hours); and the Government Center, 2415 University Ave. (the outside box is accessible 24 hours a day).

In addition, voters can go now to any of three in-person vote centers throughout the county, which will be open through Oct. 30, weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. These vote centers are located at the Redwood City Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder, 555 County Center; San Mateo Registration & Elections Division, 40 Tower Road; and the South San Francisco Main Library, 440 West Orange Ave. Closer to Election Day, two in-person vote centers in East Palo Alto will be open from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 3. These will be located at the Lewis and Joan Platt Family YMCA, Half Gym, 550 Bell St., and Saint Francis of Assisi Church, 1425 Bay Road.

One pop-up vote center will open on Nov. 2 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Nov. 3 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the East Palo Alto Academy Multipurpose Room, 1050 Myrtle St.

At the vote centers, people will be able to get assistance with non-English language ballots, disability access and more.

Voters who are disabled or visually impaired can also use the county’s Remote Accessible Vote by Mail System, in which voters can fill out a screen-readable ballot, print it out, and either mail or drop off the ballot at the San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division.

Anyone living in person in San Mateo County will be asked to wear a face covering, maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from others and use hand sanitizer before and after voting.

To track your ballot and find out when it has been counted, subscribe to “Where’s My Ballot?” at whereismyballot.sos.ca.gov.

For more information, visit smcvote.org/elections.

Cover Story

WEBSTER LINCOLN
East Palo Alto’s homegrown data scientist

Webster Lincoln, 33, has grown up in East Palo Alto as a homegrown data scientist who, if elected, will bring critical thinking and problem-solving skills and an understanding of the community’s spirit, culture, history and challenges to his role on the East Palo City Council.

“I’m new to politics, but I have strong and deep roots in this community,” Lincoln stated in his campaign statement. “My goal as a council member is to improve quality of life, health, and housing security for all members of our community.”

Born in Oakland, Webster was raised in East Palo Alto and attended Menlo-Atherton High School. He continued his education at San Jose State University, where he obtained his bachelor’s degree in psychology, with a double minor in biological science and chemistry, and is pursuing a master’s degree in biological science. He has had multiple publications in scientific journals during his career as a data scientist at various companies along the Peninsula, including his current role at Genentech.

“Regardless of the stigma that East Palo Alto had in the ’90s ... there’s success within the community that we heralded in a Facebook Live event he hosted on Oct. 4 on his campaign page. “I hope to inspire other people and make sure that East Palo Alto also remains a place, where regardless of your socioeconomic status or your skin color or where you live, there’s always opportunities for people to make it.”

Lincoln is seeking a seat on the council to ensure that East Palo Alto’s future accommodates its residents — something he believes the council hasn’t always kept in mind when making policy decisions, especially those that could lead to gentrification. He points when the council set aside its long-standing first-source rule of hiring to make way for Amazon in 2017.

“There’s a big divide in the community,” Lincoln said. “I hope to bridge that divide by seeking policies and developments that are representative of East Palo Alto’s residents.”

When it comes to housing, for example, Lincoln said the city needs to focus on developments that increase access to affordable housing.

According to his campaign website, he would focus on increasing affordable housing as one of the primary housing goals of his administration, especially when it comes to multifamily housing zones and provide incentives for homeowners to build second units on their property.

Lincoln also believes that the city needs to encourage mixed-use developments with housing as well as projects that can accommodate small businesses and startups.

The city has already made efforts to ensure new commercial office space will benefit the community through Measure HH — the 2018 voter-approved parcel tax on larger office developments, which will fund housing and job training programs. Lincoln said the measure, however, is not enough.

“We need to focus on development that supports people and help prevent displacement within our community,” he said.

“I want to move good development forward, but I don’t want it to be at the cost of our residents and our diversity.”

On top of affordable housing and equitable development, Lincoln is pushing for greener building standards.

Lincoln also supports reallocating some of the city’s police budget into a “Restorative Justice program.”
828 ILIMA COURT, PALO ALTO

Bright and Peaceful in Barron Park

Nestled at the end of a peaceful cul-de-sac in the sought-after neighborhood of Barron Park, this 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home offers over 1,400 square feet of living space set on a lot of nearly 7,650 square feet. High ceilings, skylights, and new interior paint create a bright, fresh ambiance that flows throughout the home. A brick fireplace centers the living room, the dining room features a charming brick grill, and the kitchen includes new floors, new appliances, and a sunny breakfast nook. Find comfort in the large master suite with a glass door opening to the expansive backyard, which features lush lawn and ample patio space. This great location is just a short walk to beautiful Bol Park, and it is convenient to Stanford University, as well as California Avenue. Plus, acclaimed Palo Alto schools are within walking distance.

For more information, video tour & more photos, please visit:
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3883 LA DONNA AVENUE, PALO ALTO

Beautiful Modern Craftsman with Resort-Like Backyard

Stunning modern Craftsman style provides outstanding curb appeal for this beautiful 5-bedroom, 3-bathroom home, offering 3,268 square feet of living space and a resort-like backyard on a lot of nearly one-quarter acre. High ceilings and excellent use of glass craft a bright, airy ambiance, highlighting luxurious appointments including hardwood floors, crown molding, and fine millwork. Expansive gathering spaces include the living room centered by a fireplace, the chef’s kitchen with striking Blue Eyes granite countertops, and the family room with a wall of glass leading to the grounds of the home. Find comfort in the home’s 5 spacious bedrooms, including the master suite with a soaking tub and step-in shower. And enjoy the outdoors in the spectacular backyard with an outdoor kitchen, fireplace, and an inviting hot tub. This great Barron Park location puts you just a short drive to fabulous Bol Park, and top-ranked schools are within walking distance.

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**Antonio Lopez**

Uplifting the community, starting from the bottom

A
ntonio Lopez knows how to sound persuasive. He talks as if he's spreading wisdom behind a lectern and waves his hands with flourish when he makes a point. It's a useful tool, or at least one he hopes is helpful, for convincing skeptical voters who question if a 26-year-old doctoral candidate in literature at Stanford University, with no formal background in local politics, is prepared to govern a city of approximately 69,000 people.

“Because you have the desire to make an impact, no matter what your age, you can do that,” said Lopez, explaining how he felt inspired to pursue a career in public service by his peers at Oxford University, where he was enrolled through the Marshall Scholarship program after completing his undergraduate degree at Duke University. “I felt very encouraged being in that environment.”

He’s a writer by background, the East Palo Alto native said. His first collection of poetry with the nonprofit publisher Four Way Books is set for release next year. Writing has always been his tool for social justice advocacy, he said — whether it’s through his poetry or through guest opinion columns at his college newspaper.

Coming back to the Gardens neighborhood from some of the most prestigious universities in the world, Lopez said he feels he’s in a position of privilege that he’s obligated to use to guide a city that’s improving but still has many vulnerable residents.

“It is absurd that we are in one of the wealthiest regions — not one of the worlds — and we have people who are homeless,” Lopez said. “It’s just laughable that you can have extremely affluent companies in our midst, especially in the heart of the Silicon Valley, and can have these issues. To me, it is a horrible satire.”

Lopez sets out more progressive actions compared to his fellow candidates when it comes to the issues of affordable housing and the city’s efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

On his campaign website, which outlines a “10 Pt. Program,” Lopez says he wants to cut the foot in the door.

Law school was about applying the law and not so much about creating it,” he said.

Today, at 23 years old and having graduated from UC Berkeley this May, he’s the youngest person to be running for a City Council seat this year in East Palo Alto.

Already, he’s gained some government experience. As an intern for the East Palo Alto Planning Commission, Mendez said he’s acquainted with the impact of growth and development and is learning the process of approving developments and is learning what commissioners and council members of other cities are doing about it.

“I’ve been more involved with the city and trying to understand where the city is right now, what it’s missing and where it’s heading,” Mendez said of his work, which he started in May 2019.

As Mendez made that transition during college, East Palo Alto too was changing. In 2017, Amazon moved in. Then a wave of other developments, he estimated about 27, started coming into the city.

His home was changing in real time. His interest piqued and he decided to meet the council at a special retreat in 2019 to get his foot in the door.

Then the COVID-19 health crisis hit — bringing more uncertainty for East Palo Alto residents — all but cementing Mendez’s desire to get involved with the city and its future.

“I think, now more than ever, we need to be strategic with what we’re doing,” he said. “What can I do to ensure we are taking the rights steps?”

The first-generation college graduate is campaigning on four priorities: affordable housing, a greener East Palo Alto, education and traffic congestion.

From his vantage point on the Planning Commission, Mendez said that one of the city’s current issues is that the process to build affordable housing takes too long: 18 months, he claims. That’s if everything goes well, assuming the applications are on time and everything is approved by the commission — and that’s part of the problem, Mendez said.

In those 18 months, we lose residents on a monthly basis (because) they can’t afford to live there, especially now with COVID-19 impacting their income,” he said.

Mendez proposes to expedite the process, putting affordable housing as a top priority on his list of city development projects. For example, if there are any buildings the city already owns, trim for affordable housing, the council should have the power to shorten the timeline.

He also believes that the council could start pushing office developers toward building mixed-use developments and create a program that incentivizes homeowners to build safe accessory dwelling units on their properties.

“I don’t have a specific percentage (of affordable housing), but the more the merrier,” he said. “We need more affordable housing in East Palo Alto even though the city is already leading the way.”

In thinking about low-income renters during the pandemic, Mendez said the city should extend its eviction moratorium, which expired Sept. 30. (State Assembly Bill 3088, also known as the “Tenant Act,” currently protects residents from evictions if they pay 25% of any missed rental payments between Sept. 1 and Jan. 31, 2021. East Palo Alto has a later repayment period that starts on March 1, 2021.)

“If Facebook donates a million dollars, that’s admirable, but it’s not enough,” Lopez said. “And frankly, when we think about the dignity of this community, waiting for our wealthy tech

(continued on page 30)
Embracing East Palo Alto as a Silicon Valley city

In Larry Moody's words, the East Palo Alto City Council's work over the past eight years wasn't very "sexy," but it was necessary. Having served as mayor and vice mayor since his election to the council in 2012, Moody points to a list of critical, but mundane tasks completed during his tenure — accomplishments he says have helped build the city's foundation: appointing new city staff, such as a city manager, addressing East Palo Alto's water issues — "Oh we're good with water," he exclaims — and completing the city's general and specific plans, which guide development.

"As a city, we've agreed upon what the future is going to look like for us," Moody said.

Now, the father of four and employment specialist at JobTrain is seeking a third term on the council in order to build out an East Palo Alto that is every bit a Silicon Valley city. For Moody, part of that is being a community with amenities that can attract local residents and surrounding neighbors, specifically eyeing the Ravenswood City School District — a 200-acre mix of existing businesses and land primed for redevelopment.

"I want to see anyone that thinks we need to revisit that plan," Moody said, referring to the 2013 Ravenswood/Four Corners TOD Specific Plan. "We know we want mixed-use; we want retail; we want food and entertainment options; and (maybe) a small grocery store.

It's not only an opportunity to keep dollars in the city — especially from young adults who might prefer to spend their disposable income in San Francisco or Oakland — and to create more jobs in the service sector but also a reason for companies to invest in East Palo Alto, he said.

Moody believes that companies, specifically in the tech sector, should treat East Palo Alto the same way Facebook has treated Menlo Park or Google has Mountain View: They should provide community benefits and help build up the city's infrastructure, he said. But Moody qualified his statement by suggesting if a company wants to give these companies a reason to come to East Palo Alto in the first place.

"We haven't created an environment for them to invest into East Palo Alto," he said.

It's similar to his sentiment on why the city's first-source hiring ordinance, which mandates new businesses in East Palo Alto to hire local residents as 30% of its workforce, had no "teeth" when Amazon moved into the city.

Instead of depending on the city's ordinance, Moody hopes to lean on Measure HH, a $2.50-per-square-foot parcel tax on office developments that passed in 2018, which creates revenue for low-income housing and job training programs for local residents to enter into science, technology, engineering, and math fields.

"That's Larry's language," he said. "That's Larry's writing on HH.

Moody's push for East Palo Alto to embrace its Silicon Valley identity is different, however, from becoming "Silicon Valley's dormitory," as he put it during a recent candidate forum when asked about affordable housing.

Affordable housing remains a priority in the councilman's campaign for reelection, as it does for all the council candidates.

The plan would generate facility-use revenue for the district, create jobs for more coaches and mentors, and possibly start a collaboration with the city's Public Works Department, which would take care of maintenance, Moody said.

Moody added that the district has a chance to get involved in the housing industry, especially to create housing for its workforce. One of the key issues being discussed by the district's Board of Trustees is where to build housing for its teachers.

Moody enters the race with an extensive resume of community service, dating as far back as 1993 when he directed East Palo Alto's Midnight Basketball League for at-risk youth, according to his campaign website. He also served as a board member of Ravenswood City School District and the EPA Sanitary District and directed the city's Parks and Recreation Department.

"What happens for us right now is (a) critical opportunity to move forward ... to move forward with these relationships," Moody said.

"If we make the mistake of placing first-time individuals in those (council) seats, their learning curve is going to be so high."
Longtime activist sees city's potential beyond COVID-19

Carlos Romero, 63, has a resume of community service in East Palo Alto that spans almost four decades. From joining the city’s Rent Control Board in 1984 to serving on the East Palo Alto City Council since 2008, Romero is a frequent advocate for social and economic justice for East Palo Alto residents. He believes that his commitment to the community and professional work as an affordable-housing consultant make him a more effective leader for the city.

“That mixture of history and my professional background brings to the council a very important analytical piece that’s necessary to help move the community forward,” said Romero, adding that the wheels of government are slow and progress takes time.

Romero said that while he served on the council over the past decade, the city marked significant milestones: the new pedestrian bridge over U.S. Highway 101; revisions to the Measure HH parcel tax; bolstered tenant protections; a completed flood protection project; and funding for three housing developments with a total of 385 affordable units.

“Over the last 10 years, this has been the most productive and active councils in terms of affordable housing,” Romero said.

If elected for another four years, Romero said a large part of his work on the council will be seeing through projects, programs and policies he’s pursued in his previous terms, including the Measure HH parcel tax passed by voters in 2018, which has yet to be used to establish a concrete job training program or more affordable housing developments.

Romero anticipates that the city could initiate the planning or funding of two affordable housing development projects that could yield roughly 100 units and 175 units with the annual revenue coming in from Measure HH.

The immediate future of affordable housing is at risk, Romero said, with a city facing “a potential massive displacement of tenants” due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The last thing we want is a wholesale cleansing of low-income people of color because of the COVID crisis,” he said.

Romero has proposed a tenant mediation program that would allow tenants and landlords to negotiate a moderate payment plan or a reduction in rent. Unlike similar programs in Palo Alto, San Jose and Mountain View, the city could couple it with its just-cause ordinance, which provides residents certain protections.

Romero believes the program could be effective since the sequences of mass eviction don’t benefit renters or landlords.

Despite the pandemic, Romero said there’s still a healthy interest among developers in commercial projects, particularly surrounding the Ravenswood Business District.

Romero said he’s interested in revisiting the Ravenswood/Four Corners TOD Specific Plan to consider expanding development caps placed on office, retail, industrial and community-use developments.

It’s the kind of work where Romero diverges from incumbent Larry Moody and challenger Stewart Hyland, who have both expressed that the specific plan already lays out exactly the type of developments they hope to see in the city.

Romero also sees an opportunity to finally realize the job training program that was promised to residents through the Measure HH tax parcel.

This year, the city received $1.7 million through the measure, and said. Part of that money will be funneled into career ladder programs to help train residents for higher-paying jobs.

The city recently hired Bright Line Defense, a policy-oriented, nonprofit, to help create program options that comply with Measure HH in the next six to 12 months, Romero said. He believes this will help strengthen the first-source hiring ordinance when it comes to higher-skilled jobs since the city can use the tax to possibly subsidize internships as long as a company agrees to create a program for East Palo Alto residents.

Romero is a 38-year resident of East Palo Alto but started working in the city 42 years ago when he was a freshman at Stanford University.

“I am by vocation … a consummate activist (and) organizer who believes that any city elected official needs to understand and have close connections to the community in order to effectively govern,” he said.

Carlos Romero

Antonio Lopez (continued from page 28)

companies to give us money, to me … that’s insufficient.”

Lopez didn’t offer concrete ways in which the city could pursue rent forgiveness, but he said it would need state and federal aid and that he would look into all other possibilities.

For the youth community, Lopez is determined to help set students on the same four-year college track he experienced. That could come in the form of city-sponsored internship programs, he said, or pushing for more funding to local education nonprofits like the Thieubet Method, according to his campaign website.

“When we think about uplifting our community, it starts from the bottom,” Lopez said. “That’s the email I get daily asking why this city doesn’t invest in the future of our youth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when many seniors are homebound due to the health risks, Lopez suggested mobilizing the youth through a citywide program — which he would dub the City Ambassador Program — and create something akin to hotlines centers, which seniors can contact if they need any assistance in accessing services in the city or on the internet.

He also offers other community-oriented and -powered solutions — characteristic of a city like East Palo Alto, which relies on many nonprofits — in which it comes to the issue of food insecurity and the city’s lack of access to organic produce. (At a local farmers market hosted by the Fresh Approach nonprofit, several Latino residents said staple supermarkets in their city like Cardenas don’t sell organic produce.)

“We need a community garden … several community gardens quite frankly,” he said.

Lopez pointed to vacant lots and empty spaces throughout the city, such as the one at the end of O’Connor Street by the Baylands trail, which he claims is a “perfect site” for a community garden.

Another pillar of his campaign is making East Palo Alto’s streets safer for pedestrians. Illegal parking on the city’s sidewalks often pushes walking residents onto the street, according to his campaign website.

If elected to the council, Lopez said he would advocate for parking permits, one-way streets, speed bumps and the use of empty church parking lots as more residential parking spaces.

Juan Mendez (continued from page 28)

East Palo Alto residents for the past five years. Mendez lays the blame on regional development around the city rather than city growth projects such as the University Avenue building that houses Amazon. It’s why he makes the case for impact fees charged to regional projects and says East Palo Alto needs to be included more in discussions around future regional development.

In the meantime, Mendez said he’s looking at Menlo Park’s Willow Road overpass at U.S. Highway 101. A key component of the type of expansion he wants to make to East Palo Alto’s current infrastructure, which could entail more lanes for cars and cyclists as well as sidewalks.

“We look at our (University Avenue) overpass, and it’s like you’re fighting for your life when you make that cross over that bridge,” he said. “There’s residents dodging cars and … I’ve seen way too many accidents happen there. So how are we with our expansion?”

Mendez was a student of the Ravenswood City School District and now plans to rebuild an alliance with the district as a city councilman in order to “properly fund” the city’s education system, according to his campaign website.

The East Palo Alto Academy alumni said the city is not short on resources or after school programs the youth community can get involved in; however, he thinks major companies such as Facebook, Amazon or Google should create more opportunities such as internship programs that will be reserved for the city’s youth.

“What we’re missing is a new perspective, a new energy and new ideas on City Council,” Mendez said. “I just feel like, as a city, we’ve had this mindset of complacency and just being OK with what the work that they’re doing, when we need more people doing even a little bit more.”

The writer acknowledges that he enters the race with no experience in local politics. But Lopez makes the case that as a young Latino, who came from a low-income family and experienced racial discrimination at his school, he will add an invaluable voice to the council.

“I applaud the work of the incumbents,” Lopez said. “But I also think it’s important to have that perspective of the next generations coming in line to say, ‘Hey, I’m also part of this city. I also want to afford to live here,’ and someone who has that direct experience … is super important moving forward.”

About the cover: With new development mixed with old, East Palo Alto is a city in transition. Photo by Magali Gauthier.
Six candidates are running for two open seats on the Ravenswood City School District Board of Trustees.

The terms of trustees Sharifa Wilson and Marielena Gaona Mendoza are ending in November. Wilson is not running for reelection after 12 years on the board, while Gaona Mendoza is seeking a second term. The newcomers include a Ravenswood parent, two former district employees, a labor negotiator and a labor manager.

This year’s election comes at a time of transition and rebuilding for the K-8 school district, which serves about 1,700 students in East Palo Alto and east Menlo Park. The district has a new superintendent, Gina Sudaria, in place after years of leadership and financial upheaval, and a comprehensive middle school to better prepare Ravenswood students for success in high school. The district is navigating the challenges of making sure students who lack sufficient support and internet access at home during distance learning don’t fall behind. (Ravenswood school campuses are remaining closed until at least late November.)

Whoever is elected to the board will also have to meet the challenges of the pandemic as well as Ravenswood’s declining enrollment, which led to the closure of two elementary schools this year. At least one of the candidates opposes the Voluntary Transfer Program, which allows Ravenswood students to attend neighboring school districts, and another is a staunch opponent of charter schools, which have been criticized for taking students and funding away from the local neighborhood schools.

To get to know the candidates better and find out where they stand on top issues facing the district, watch video interviews the Weekly conducted with Bronwyn Alexander, Jenny Varghese Bloom, Zeb Feldman, Marielena Gaona Mendoza and Joel Rivera. (Candidate Julian Garcia did not respond to multiple interview requests, and candidate Mele Latu has halted her campaign for personal reasons.)

The videos are posted at YouTube.com/paweekly.

One incumbent, five challengers compete for two open seats in K-8 district

by Elena Kadvany

Cover Story

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te and video games: When done
dwell both, both have the power to
magically transport participants into
another realm. For its next major project,
Dragon Productions Theatre Company is
combining these two media in “Party at
the End of the World.” Its creators call it an
“immersive online experience,” and the first
realm. For its next major project,
the website, developing inventory lists and
he said, of writing custom software, hosting
his technical expertise and his creative eye to
removed), has had an intense job, lending both
I’m on the writing team too.”
Co-Artistic Director Bora
Vorperian, who studied computer science
As Dragon’s associate director and direc-
tor of technology, “I’m responsible for all the
His goal, he said, was to address “our emo-
tional reactions to things as a society that we
often seem to pass off as logic.” He imagined
“creating something mythical and comic book-like— which I believe is the mythology
of our generation — to help us make sense of
what’s going on,” he said in a recent interview,
alongside co-creators Jacob Vorperian, Kimber-
l’ry Ridgeway and Shelli Frew.
“This was the mission: How can we use fic-
tion and a fictional experience to spark people
wanting to commit acts of compassion in the
real world?” he said. “Stories have power to
motivate us and inspire us.”
What evolved from those initial thoughts
is a true ensemble-driven piece, involving
numerous writers, performers and technical
wizards. Vorperian serves as all three.
Vorperian, who studied computer science
in addition to having experience in immers-
itive theater (in which some of the traditional
boundaries between stage and audience are
removed), has had an intense job, lending both
his technical expertise and his creative eye to
develop the “All We Have to Fear” universe.
“It’s been a monthslong research problem,” he
said, of writing custom software, hosting
the website, developing inventory lists and
more. The game, he said, consists of “every
person-and actor-driven quests.” It’s less about
how to find a thing, more about a personal
interaction with someone.”
Ticket holders (ideally with the Chrome
browser, a webcam and a microphone) will
be able to become townpeople in a fictional,
keyboard-controlled 2-D world, where their
avatars can meet and influence main char-
acters (portrayed by live actors), go on “side
quests” and down “rabbit holes,” communi-
cate and collaborate with each other and
generally explore during the show. (Those
who are less inclined to directly participate
can also opt to simply watch and hear the
action unfold.)
Co-writer Frew, like Vorperian, has worked
with Koknar on other immersive projects in
the past, and was attracted to the project par-
ticularly because of how it’s “pretty in the mo-
ment, the way that we’ve worked in what’s
going on in the real world right now,” she said.
Ridgeway, a playwright and actor, comes
from a more straight/traditional theater
background. She brings what she called the
“layman’s perspective” to the innovative
format, not having much experience in the
gamer world.
“I’m not a video-game person outside of
Candy Crush. Once I got on the platform,
that’s when it became a little more magical for
me. It wasn’t easy to picture what we were do-
ing until we were able to explore the space,”
she said. “There are areas in which anyone
who is going to be on the platform can come
together and explore and go on this journey
together. I think that’s the most fascinating
thing for me. You don’t have to be an expert
to completely be immersive in this situation.”
So what exactly is the situation? In the in-
terview, the team was understandably reticent
to offer much in the way of spoilers. What
we do know: The storyline involves a cre-
ation myth, a pantheon of gods representing
anthropomorphized emotions, humans as
pawns in the global politics of immortals,
and the titular party at which everyone’s gathered.
“Some of the characters you meet are just
partygoers trying to survive the pandemic
and feel something, and others have a little
more going on,” Koknar said.
Immersive theater in general is challeng-
ing, both creatively and logistically. Writers,
actors and directors have to allow for enough
flexibility to handle whatever curveballs audi-
ence interaction may throw, while maintain-
ing the discipline to keep the storyline run-
ning smoothly. The experience, Ridgeway
said, offers her a chance to stretch her skills.
“As a writer, I think it’s easier to adapt
than as an actor, because I’m so used to hav-
ing a script. There’s a level of improv to it,”
she said.
“You can write all the scenarios you think
are going to happen and then someone will
do something out of left field,” Frew acknowl-
edged, “Audience members will always throw
a wrench in there.” Surrounding actors new to
immersive theater with those accustomed to
it can help. Sound and lighting cues, similar
to those used in magic and circus shows, can
help subliminally cue the audience — or di-
rectly cue performers — on what to do next.
The around-75-minute show is “set to a
clock, and that’s how we are able to manage
multiple things happening at the same time.
In addition to the script, the improv and the
audience, we have a floor show,” Koknar said.
“Actors have their scenes timed to that chro-
nometer so we can make sure the thing that
is supposed to happen doesn’t happen in the
wrong order.”
With the physical Dragon Theatre space
in downtown Redwood City still closed, the
team is spread out. Vorperian works off a
server in San Anselmo, while Koknar has
converted an in-law unit in the backyard
of his East Palo Alto home into a socially
distant livestreaming station used by stage
manager Rachel Nin. The actors and writers
contribute from their respective headquar-
ters around the Bay Area.
They’re all hoping “Party at the End of the
World” is a prototype; the first piece of the
ongoing “All We Have to Fear” puzzle.
“An episodic immersive piece has been
my white whale for years now,” Vorperian
said. “The reason we want to do that is the
same reason why TV characters seem to be
so much more richly developed than movie
characters. You get to spend so much more
time with them.”
It’s also part of the Dragon’s ongoing reck-
oning with how theater can and should evolve.
“What can theater look like for the future?
We need experiences that connect us; there’s
no reason not to try it now,” Koknar said. "Arts & Entertainment Editor Karla Kane
can be emailed at kkane@paweekly.com.

Top: Dragon Productions Theatre Company’s “Party at the End of the World” is a
ture ensemble-driven piece, involving numerous writers, performers and technical
wizards. Above: The show, which combines theater and gaming, allows patrons to
join the story via an online game.

“All We Have to Fear: Party at the End of the World” runs on Fridays
and Saturdays at 7 p.m., Oct. 17-
Nov. 21 (no show Oct. 24). Tickets
are $15-$30. More information is
available at dragonproductions.net.

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MICHAEL REPKA, ESQ
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In addition to running the top listing team in Silicon Valley, Michael Repka is also the Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel of DeLeon Realty. Michael has two law degrees, including an advanced law degree in taxation (LL.M) from NYU School of Law, the #1 tax program in the nation. Prior to joining DeLeon Realty, Michael was a practicing real estate and tax attorney.

After obtaining his first law degree, Michael joined a law firm, where he counselled clients on the legal, tax, and procedural aspects of buying or selling homes. Following this, Michael worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers, focusing on mergers and acquisitions, and later at Baker & McKenzie, specializing in tax law. Michael then returned to real estate, first as a practicing attorney, and later as a broker.

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Eating Out

Chasing down Mister Softee on the Peninsula

How one Redwood City resident brought sweet nostalgia to the Bay Area

It wasn’t easy finding Mister Softee.

For someone used to food trucks with fixed locations, chasing one down was new to me. Sure, you can use the iconic East Coast soft serve company’s smartphone app to track the trucks in real time, but they’re constantly in motion. Every time I put in a location on Waze, by the time I arrived, the truck I was following had moved somewhere else, just out of reach.

Persistent (and in desperate need of soft serve), I drove in circles through a South San Francisco neighborhood, repeatedly refreshing the app. It didn’t take long for my thoughts to start spiraling. Why is there no Mrs. Softee? Should I quit my job to start a competing soft serve business?"

For those who grew up in pursuit of Mister Softee’s creamy soft serve and sundaes, the name is synonymous with childhood nostalgia and the pursuit of something uniquely wonderful. The mere mention of Mister Softee’s Northern California franchisee in 2016.

"You had to be quick," said Felix Tarnarider, who grew up in Brooklyn, “otherwise the truck would leave before you could get there.”

Felix Tarnarider, who grew up in Brooklyn, “otherwise the truck would leave before you could get there.”

You can thank Tarnarider for introducing Mister Softee to the Bay Area. A Redwood City resident, he worked in tech for two decades before becoming Mister Softee’s Northern California franchisee in 2016.

As a kid, the famed jingle that blares from the Mister Softee trucks was like a siren song. He’d rush to his parents to ask for enough cash for his go-to order (a cone with “crunchies,” or chocolate sprinkles) and take the stairs three at a time to rush into the street.

“Eventually I decided that it would help build community and bring neighborhoods together just like it did in New York City,” Tarnarider said. “While the brand is not known like a Starbucks or McDonald’s, the affinity for the Mister Softee name goes a lot deeper than those other brands. It’s a part of the culture in a few areas of the country.”

Two brothers, William and James Conway, founded Mister Softee in 1956 in Philadelphia and moved its headquarters to New Jersey two years later, where it remains today. The company now operates about 450 trucks in more than a dozen states, many owned by individual operators.

Mister Softee currently deploys a fleet of seven trucks throughout Bay Area neighborhoods, including up and down the Peninsula. Tarnarider said they plan to add two trucks per year for the next several years.

Mister Softee — those trucks, the chocolate-dipped soft serve, the jingle — has remained largely unchanged since the 1950s, except for one thing. The company now relies on social media to disseminate the trucks’ whereabouts and drive sales. The company posts to Instagram and Facebook which cities the trucks will be in each day, but there’s no set location or address. It takes commitment and the app to find the roving trucks. Diehards can also request a weekly stop in their neighborhood.

When you open the app, the truck’s jaunty theme song plays. The jingle sounds innocent enough but has been embroiled in a surprising amount of controversy. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg tried to ban the song in 2005 as part of a citywide crackdown on noise. It was also the subject of a federal trademark infringement case that prohibited a former franchisee who went “rogue,” starting a competing soft serve business, from playing it on his truck.

I didn’t grow up with Mister Softee, but I strongly identify with the sense of nostalgia these trucks invoke. For me, it was the Choco Tacos and It’s It I ordered from the truck that drove through my neighborhood, the Baskin Robbins mint chocolate chip ice cream cake I demanded for every birthday, the soft serve-like frozen yogurt from the now-closed Yogurt Stop, whose parking lot was the setting for many formative teenage gatherings.

Standing on that corner with the Mister Softee truck, trying to make sure my melting treat didn’t drip soft-serve tears down my wrists, reminded me of all those moments — simpler times we could all use more of right now. Follow Mister Softee NorCal on Instagram or go to mistersofteenorcal.com/ for the local truck schedule.

Staff Writer Elena Kadvany can be emailed at ekadvany@paloaltonline.com. Check out her Peninsula Foodist blog at PaloAltoOnline.com/blogs.

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Honest and responsible government depends on comprehensive investigative journalism. I am happy to subscribe to the Weekly. An extra benefit: when I’m traveling, sometimes for a month, I can keep up with the local news using Palo Alto Online. When I return, I haven’t lost a beat. I was subscribing at the senior rate but I just upped it to the basic rate — and that’s only 33 cents a day — a bargain. The comprehensive coverage of what’s happening in Palo Alto is invaluable. I want to be an engaged citizen and the Weekly helps me do that. Thank you to all the staff at the PA Weekly for your great work.

- Rose

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S\ntarting next week, employees of the Palo Alto Unified School District will have access to free, biweekly COVID-19 testing to be provided on campus by Stanford Health Care.

The school board unanimously approved a one-year testing agreement with Stanford on Tuesday, the day after about 700 transi-
tional kindergarten, kindergarten and first-
grade students and their teachers returned to classrooms in person in a hybrid model.

The testing will begin at J.S. Middle School on Oct. 21, according to the dis-
trict. Stanford employees will help staff collect their first sample but afterward, staff can self-collect under the supervision of a trained health care worker provided by the district. They will use pooled sam-
ing testing procedures on a biweekly basis. Employees who test positive will be called directly. The district can also re-
quest aggregated test results, according to the agreement.

Board members — who met in person with a small group of staff, all wearing masks, for the first time since March — described the testing as “essential” and encoding the right to take ad-
vantage of the service. The testing will not be available to students, but they also urged families to get tested regularly at free sites in the community.

Superintendent Don Austin warned that because health care providers are pick-
ing up the bill for the testing, the district’s health care premiums will increase next year without some relief from the govern-
ment. He’s lobbying the state to prevent districts from absorbing this financial burden.

Meb Steiner, president of the classified employees union, said testing is not only important from a public health standpoint but also to protect employees and families “to feel more comfortable about (the) in-person return.”

Steiner and Teri Baldwin, president of the teachers union, continued to voice concerns about safety issues at the schools and employees’ ongoing anxiety about re-
turning to work in person. Baldwin said teachers have been unable to take breaks because there weren’t additional staff pro-
vided to supervise students during recess and lunchtimes. And teachers who are teaching in-person and distance-
learning students need more support, she said.

Baldwin also asked that paper towels be available in all school bathrooms so stu-
dents don’t have to touch air dryers and criticized plastic barriers at student desks as “a bad, distorting distraction.”

“We have asked our teachers to go above and beyond and they have,” Baldwin said. “I just am afraid that the morale is going to go down because our mental health of our professionals is not going to be consid-
tered. It needs to be.”

Fairmeadow Principal Iris Wong told the board that reopening has been stress-
ful, including for principals who are now

### Amid ongoing reopening anxieties, school district to provide COVID-19 testing for staff

Palo Alto Unified also plans to form task force to evaluate communication following criticisms

by Elena Kadvany

As part of the Palo Alto Week-
ky’s election coverage, we will be asking the nonincumbent candidates running for the Palo Alto Board of Education how they would vote — and why — on significant is-

As part of the Palo Alto Week-
ky’s election coverage, we will be asking the nonincumbent candidates running for the Palo Alto Unified School District to provide biweekly COVID-19 testing to district employees.

Katie Causey: Yes. This testing is necessary for our employees’ safety. We must also continue to lobby for legislative relief so our staff does not face high premiums.

Jesse Ladomirak: Yes, I would absolutely vote to approve the agreement.

Matt Nagle: I would have voted yes, but I would have done it in August when the Los Angeles Unified School District contracted with Stanford Uni-

Karna Nisewaner: I would vote yes. I think testing has a significant value for the peace of mind of teachers and staff, as reflected in Section VII of the tentative agreement with PAAE (Palo Alto Educators’ Association) that re-
quires this to be offered. I understand there is a potential for a future increase in health care costs, but I think the value to teachers and staff outweighs this concern.

How would the candidates vote?

### Schools

(continued from page 5)

these students alternating in the mornings and afternoons. Parents were asked to drop their children off from their cars and are not allowed to come onto the campuses.

At Hoover, just four classrooms have reopened — three kindergarten classes and Chavez’s first-grade class. Chavez said most of her morning cohort of eight students seemed excited to be back and have so far adjusted well to a school day that looks vastly different than they’re used to. She said she was “impressed with how they’re taking it all in, realizing that this year is not going to be the same.”

After socially distanced snack and re-
cess, her students lined up 6 feet apart and filed inside one by one to wash their hands before returning to their desks, separated by clear plastic barriers.

Because of the staffing necessary to make the hybrid model work, not all stu-
dents were able to stay with their teachers — a chief concern among some parents who opposed reopening. Chavez herself is getting to know new students. She’s now only teaching four students from when the school year started remotely, and they’re spread out across two cohorts.

In some cases, there were also too few students to form a fully remote class at one school, so the district combined students from two schools to create a full distance learning class with a single teacher from one site.

“Our teachers and principals worked together to determine who was going into each assignment,” Superintendent Don Austin wrote in his weekly update on Oct. 9. “It doesn’t mean people aren’t anxious. It means the team worked together in the
new electostatic spray devices, which charge antimicrobial liquid as it passes through a nozzle. The positively charged antimicrobial droplets are attracted and cling to negatively charged surfaces, allowing for constant cleaning according to the Environmental Protection Agency.)

Fairmound Principal Iris Wong said school staff have spent months phasing a reopened plan, which will allow the schools to adjust and gain confidence as more students arrive. She, too, said she had “mixed emotions” about returning.

“I would be lying if I said staff weren’t afraid or stressed out,” she said. “At the end of the day, everyone put their best foot forward.”

Fairmound special education teacher Hyemin Cheung has been back at the school for students for two weeks. She said it took weeks of Zoom meetings and conversations to prepare and for her and her classroom aides to feel safe.

Cheung now works with four students full time in-person and one who comes only in the afternoons. She said they seem happy and engaged with their school work. While she’s adjusted classroom activities to reduce contact as much as possible, some of the students can’t wear masks due to their disabilities or need help washing their hands. Despite the safety concerns of close contact, Cheung said she keeps a distance of a few feet for these students. Zoom learning also left her feeling unsatisfied as a special education teacher.

“After all, we choose this profession because we love to work with the kids. We love to interact with them,” she said. “Those comments or questions to each other, that’s what we all have been waiting for.”

Second- and third-graders are set to return for in-person learning on Oct. 26 and fourth- and fifth-graders in November. The current plan, middle and high school students will not go back to school until January.

For the first time since March, the school board resumed its work in person to coincide with the reopening of schools. The board approved a plan to restart the district’s Distance Learning and Care to offer district employees bi-weekly COVID-19 testing.

Staff Writer Elena Kadvany can be emailed at ekadvany@pawekly.com

Demolition (continued from page 10)

plan and confirmed that the project can still receive the density bonus associated with rehabilitation.

In his June 29 determination, Lait also indicated that other projects can similarly get floor-area bonuses if they do not provide sufficient incentive to encourage seismic strengthening of a building type known to be hazardous to building occupants; Lait wrote in the finding. “Allowing replacement of the building — new building construction — would remedy the seismic hazard.”

Lait also noted that the project will retain the existing masonry, which will be restored and reapplied to the new masonry. “The new masonry will carry the look and character of the building.”

The three former city council members firmly reject this logic and continue to argue that the city needs to be able to counter to code, with potentially serious implications for future projects. The planning staff, they contend, does not have the authority that needs to be a change in policy but has chosen to use “a ministerial tool” — the director’s interpretation — “to determine that the new masonry is safe.” They also argue that this interpretation also carries with it an inherent conflict regarding historic buildings that are in need of seismic retrofit,” the appeal states. “Will the new ‘Interpretation’ extend to historic

rehabilitations and the President Hotel or the Post Office be vulnerable to the wrecker’s ball if an applicant is successful in convincing the Building Official of some undefined ‘financial infeasibility’ or ‘impracticality’ if a similar Interpretation determines the fate of such buildings?”

The new proposal for 233 University Ave., the appeal states, is a “seismic hazard.”

The Mills family, meanwhile, urged the council to allow the project to proceed.

“The fact is that a new building constructed to current code is seismically much safer than one that was built before 1972 and is now about to be restored,” Mills wrote in a Sept. 14 letter to the council. “Such a project is distinctly more earthquake resistant, reducing the chance of full building collapse in an earthquake.”

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@pawekly.com.

Upfront

Schools (continued from page 40)

to a county election office report. (About 487,000 vote-by-mail ballots were cast during this election.)

Q: How do you ensure a person doesn’t vote twice?

The ballot first received and verified by the elections office will be the only one counted. For example, if a person returns his or her mail vote-by-mail ballot in early October and then goes on Town Square at PaloAlto Online.com or email them to jdong@paweekly.com.

Q: If I vote in person, will I get the wrong ballot?

If a ballot is intended for someone else and it wasn’t simply delivered to the wrong address by the U.S. Postal Service, you can help the county update its voter roll by writing “return to sender” or “no longer at this address” on the envelope and putting it back in the mail, according to Joe Holland.

Q: If I suspect that election fraud is happening, what do I do?

You can report it to the Registrar of Voters; however, because the registrar has no enforcement powers, her office will then refer cases to the District Attorney’s Office or the Secretary of State’s Fraud Unit.

Get more questions? Post them on Town Square at PaloAlto Online.com or email them to editor@paweekly.com, and we’ll try to get them answered.

CalMatters reporter Ben Christopher contributed to this article. 
Editor Jocelyn Dong can be emailed at jdong@pawekly.com.

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Lost & found
(continued from page 5)

gender, according to its website. It recruited former African American slaves, many from refugee camps during and after the Civil War.)

She recalled that a few months before, Karen DaColletto, another volunteer, discovered an album filled with singer Joan Baez's baby pictures. A Friends of the Palo Alto Library member delivered a note to Baez during a concert, and the singer and her baby pictures were later reunited, Blumenthal said.

Now Blumenthal wanted to reunite Lythcott’s family with the long-lost pictures. She searched through phone books seeking the name Lythcott in Palo Alto and came upon two: writer Julie Lythcott-Haims and her mother, Jean Lythcott. When the phone rang, Lythcott almost didn’t answer it.

“So often I get calls from every organization imaginable,” she said of the landline.

The call came up with a name, however, “P. Blumenthal.” Intrigued, she answered.

“Before I say anything else,” Blumenthal said. “I need to ask you: Do you know a George I. Lythcott II?” Lythcott recalled.

“I know him well. He’s my husband!” Lythcott said.

‘Taking a picture was a big deal when we were growing up.’

—Jean Lythcott, resident, Palo Alto

Blumenthal invited Lythcott to her home to discuss the discovery.

“It’s incredible. It was astonishing,” Lythcott recalled upon seeing the photos of her late husband for the first time.

George Lythcott II, a prominent New York City pediatrician and medical educator, died in 1995. They met in Ghana, Africa, when he was doing medical research in pulmonary diseases and was a regional director for five years in a U.S. assistance program helping 19 African countries fight smallpox and measles. Jean Lythcott, who holds a degree in botany, was teaching science in Ghana and arrived there just two months after he did.

The two fell in love. They married in 1966. He was 20 years older; she was born the year he graduated from Bates, she said.

George Lythcott was asked to be one of four sprinters who paced Jesse Owens when he trained for the 1936 Olympics. He worked in West Africa as an American member of a team for the World Health Organization to eradicate smallpox in the 1960s. President Jimmy Carter appointed him head of the Health Services Administration and as assistant surgeon general in the 1970s. He was a New York City assistant commissioner in charge of the health department’s Bureau of Schoolchildren’s and Adolescent Health, and he held prominent positions at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and the University of Wisconsin.

The women talked for two hours, discovering overlaps between George Lythcott’s career and that of Blumenthal’s father, Dr. Sidney Blumenthal.

“They were both pediatricians in New York City at the same time,” Jean said during a phone interview on Monday. “He’s baffled by how the photographs came to Palo Alto, since she doesn’t know of any relatives who live in the area. She had moved to Palo Alto in 1999 to be near her daughter and family after her husband died. Now 81 and retired from a long teaching career that took her across the globe, she wants to meet the person who do- nated the photo album.

Already, she said, “I started to do some sleuthing.”

She contacted her husband’s three surviving children from a previous marriage, but none knew of the photographs, nor did they know of anyone who would have possessed them. The photograph with five people at the Bates graduation had to have been sent by her husband to someone he knew fairly well, she said.

“It’s highly probably that they had only known George when he was really young and would not have recognized him,” she said.

Lythcott said she has many questions.

“How did (the album) get to California? Who received them? What hand did that person have in terms of receiving it? Why would they have emptied (the album) except for the Lythcott photos? It feels like whoever received the photos kept them until now. Perhaps the people with any connection to the photos just died,” she said.

One story offers a plausible explanation, she said. When her husband was about 2 years old, his mother died in the 1918 influenza epidemic. Agatha, an unmarried aunt who lived in Guyana, was summoned to New York to take care of the young boy. His father, who was also a physician, had gone to Oklahoma to work. When George II was about 8 years old, his father married a Cherokee-American woman. They summoned Agatha and the boy to live with them, Lythcott said.

She didn’t last long in the undeveloped state in the 1920s. One day Agatha walked down the dusty dirt road to a nearby church, dressed entirely in white from her hat to her shoes.

“Everything was covered in red-brown dirt. She said she couldn’t stay there,” Lythcott said. Plus, it was clear she could not share responsibility for raising George II with her new wife, Corrine. Agatha returned to New York. A niece also lived there, Lythcott said. It is possible that George II sent the photographs to Aunt Agatha and somehow they passed down through her.

Memories fade as families and friends die, but Lythcott wonders about who might have kept the photo album until now and if they knew his history. Photographs were rare when she and her husband were young, Lythcott said.

“Taking a picture was a big deal when we were growing up. During the Methodist holiday Whitunsitude, we always had a photo taken, so there was one picture a year of me,” she recalled.

These rare photographs couldn’t capture the many stories of a person’s life the way pictures do today, with thousands of digital images shared on social media and stored on thumb drives and laptops. But Lythcott thinks there’s something about people living longer and be- coming healthier that propels an interest in the stories of the past and “the notion that someone would want to know your story,” she said.

The old photographs and the mystery surrounding them reminded her of one of her favorite lines from the musical “Hamilton,” she said.


Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@pawweekly.com.
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Public Notices

**995 Fictitious Name Statement**

**APPLY**

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

File No. FBN868871

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

DeLeon Realty Team Platinum

DeLeon Team Platinum

DeLeon Platinum Team

DeLeon Realty, Inc.

This business is owned by: A Corporation.

The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is:

DeLeon Realty, Inc.

1717 Embarcadero Road

Palo Alto, CA 94303

Registerant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara County on September 11, 2020.

(PAW Oct. 2, 9, 16, 2020)

DeLeon Realty Team Platinum

DeLeon Platinum Team

DeLeon Realty Team

DeLeon Team Platinum

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

File No. FBN868871

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

Zhuangzi Li and Associates

This business is owned by: A Limited Partnership.

The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is:

Zhuangzi Li and Associates

4023 Villa Vista

Palo Alto, CA 94306

Registerant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on October 2, 2020.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara County on September 30, 2020.

(PAW Oct. 16, 23, Nov. 6, 2020)

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This week’s SUDOKU

Answers on page 17.

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CalRE #01844580

SACRAMENTO | Price Upon Request
3br/2ba home close to Regency Park. Spacious kitchen & living room w/ fireplace. Master bedroom w/ walk-in closet. Low maintenance rear patio & yard.
Judah Kent
916.241.3933
Judah@kentfamilyhomes.com
CalRE #01998324
REDWOOD CITY | $2,398,000
4br/3ba multi-level home. The entryway immediately beckons you to the open-concept kitchen, dining and living rooms with soaring ceilings and expansive windows. The spacious master suite features sloped ceilings, a unique fireplace and a built-in bed. The hidden wine room is finished with redwood and kept naturally cool by the hillside. You can enjoy the outdoors from the multiple decks on three levels.
Douglas Andrew Gonzalez
650.465.9330
dgonzalez@cbnorcal.com
CalRE #00895304

MOUNTAIN VIEW | Price Upon Request
Stunning Summerhill home only 3 years young! Open floorplan, stylish kitchen, 3 bd 2.5 ba, Oak floors, plush carpet & high end finishes throughout.
Manju Bhatia
408.644.9100
manju.bhatia@cbnorcal.com
CalRE #01399514

SANTA CLARA | $1,239,000
Pending! This lovely single-family home is situated in central Santa Clara. Main home consists of 3 bd, 2 ba + detached bonus room on backside of the property. Fireplace in the living room and laminate floors. Large sliding door in the dining area leads you to beautiful Japanese garden. Kitchen features granite counters and white cabinetry. Spacious guestroom has a large window overlooking the garden.
Masako Takemura
650.847.7272
Masako@cbnorcal.com
CalRE #01760865

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PORTOLA VALLEY | $22,000,000
This magnificent vineyard estate is the ideal place to escape from the fast daily pace of Silicon Valley. The peaceful grounds of approx. 4.1 acres enjoy top-of-the-world San Francisco Bay views. Outside, the grounds are equally compelling with exceptional front and rear terraces, a pool, spa, pool house and tennis court, intertwined with beautiful landscaping and sweeping Bay views.
Ginny Kavanaugh 650.400.8076
John Kavanaugh 415.377.2924
CalRE #00884747 #02059127

LOS ALTOS | $4,649,000
This home features a formal living room & dining room with dramatic architecture for entertaining. The chef’s kitchen & the family room boast slab granite counters, stainless steel including a six burner range, wine cooler & Sub-Zero refrigerator. The family has a fireplace & entertainment center & wet bar. The master features a fireplace, walk-in closet, a bathroom with floor heating & a steam shower.
Dana Willson 650.917.4256
dwilson@cbnorcal.com
CalRE #01292552

LOS ALTOS | $3,388,000
This stunning, new custom 3BR/2.5BA home, lives larger than its square footage with open floor plan, chef’s kitchen w/island and light filled rooms.
Linda Takagi 650.303.2972
ltakagi@cbnorcal.com
CalRE #01286038