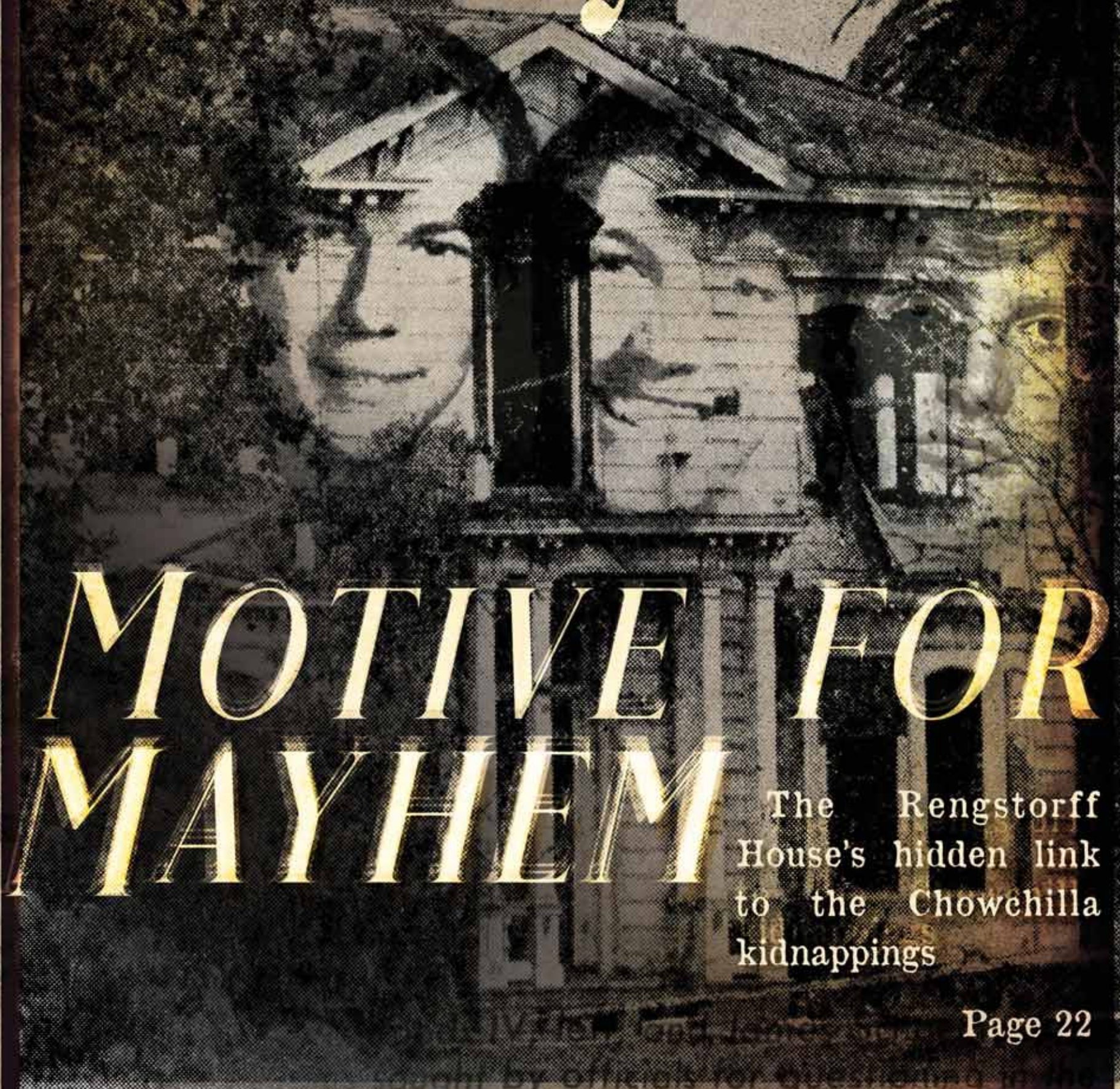


Palo Alto

# Weekly

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# MOTIVE FOR MAYHEM

The Rengstorff House's hidden link to the Chowchilla kidnappings

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- **Eating Out** The refill revolution is here Page 26





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## As city updates grid, Tesla races to be first

Car giant offers to split costs, oversee upgrades of substation on Hanover Street

By Gennady Sheyner

When Palo Alto officials launched last year an ambitious, \$300 million effort to upgrade the city's electric infrastructure, their plan was to start in residential neighborhoods with overhead wires and then

move on to underground districts. Now, however, it looks like the first beneficiaries of the city's upgrade won't be the neighborhoods that meet this profile — areas like University South and East Meadow Circle — but the corporations of

Stanford Research Park, where Tesla is hoping to launch its new engineering headquarters this spring at the former HP property at 1501 Page Mill Road.

To meet this timeline, Tesla has proposed a partnership with the city to rebuild a substation at 3350 Hanover St. near its Page Mill Road campus. Under this proposed deal, which the City Council will consider on Jan. 16, Tesla would

design and install the new equipment based on its expected power needs. The company would split the cost of the \$24 million with the city, with each side contributing \$12 million, according to a report from Tom Marshall, assistant director for engineering at the Utilities Department.

The upgraded substation would be available to serve other customers as well, according to the

Utilities Department. The city will, however, need to spend an additional \$3 million to transfer the feeders that do not serve Tesla to the newly installed transformers, bringing the city's share to \$15 million.

Even though Tesla is driving this project, utility officials argue that it will benefit other customers

(continued on page 18)



Gennady Sheyner

Newly named Mayor Greer Stone gets an ovation from his colleagues, Ed Lauing and Lydia Kou, during Palo Alto's reorganization meetings on Jan. 8. Lauing was then elected the city's vice mayor.

### CITY COUNCIL

## Greer Stone, Ed Lauing to lead Palo Alto as mayor, vice mayor

Tussle for vice-mayorship provides annual election's only drama

By Gennady Sheyner

Palo Alto's election of mayor and vice mayor, which often feels more like a coronation than a contest, turned fiercely competitive this year, as Ed Lauing narrowly edged out Vicki Veenker for the second leadership spot on the City Council.

In one of the longest and most debated leadership tussles of the past decade, Lauing and

Veenker jostled for the role of vice mayor after getting nominated by council members Pat Burt and Julie Lythcott-Haims, respectively. The votes came minutes after Greer Stone was chosen to serve as mayor by a 6-1 vote, with Council member Greg Tanaka dissenting.

For Stone, who served as vice chair in 2023, ascension to the mayor's chair was a foregone

conclusion, given Palo Alto's loosely held tradition of electing vice chair to the mayor's chair in the following year. The real drama came minutes later, when Lauing and Veenker squared off in a contest that was both competitive and collegial.

The last time that the council had a competitive race for vice mayor was in 2021, when Burt edged out former council

member Alison Cormack for the role. But while that race was in some ways a clash of two different political philosophies, the Monday faceoff featured two colleagues who rarely disagree. Both were elected to the council in 2022 and each has a reputation as a political moderate who gets along with their colleagues and rarely ruffles feathers.

Both Lauing and Veenker had plenty of support in the Council Chambers, with about 20 residents weighing in. Bryna Chang, current vice chair of the Planning and Transportation Commission, praised Lauing for his patience and his temperament, which she said make him uniquely suited to working on

(continued on page 13)

### ELECTION 2024

## Eshoo backs Simitian for Congress

Santa Clara County supervisor picks up key endorsement in crowded race

By Gennady Sheyner

With the primary election for the coveted Silicon Valley congressional seat less than two months away, Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian has received a key endorsement in his bid for Congress: U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo, who will be retiring at the end of this year.

Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, who has represented Silicon Valley for 31 years and who announced last November that she is stepping down at the end of her current term, said Wednesday that she is endorsing Simitian.

"This special place calls for a top-notch representative, and I believe that there is one person who has the ability to represent the people of this special place, and that is Joe Simitian," Eshoo said in a video statement.

She called Simitian a "seasoned and effective legislator" and pointed to the more than 150 locally elected officials who have endorsed his candidacy.

"Integrity, experience, determination — that's Joe Simitian, and I am so proud to endorse him for Congress," she said.

Eshoo's endorsement isn't particularly surprising. The two lawmakers are friends who have each represented communities in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties for more than three decades.

(continued on page 9)



Answers to this week's puzzles, which can be found on page 27.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ Maybe the community is finally tired of all the violence.

— **Brownie Rogue**, longtime East Palo Alto resident, on the decline in the city's homicide rate. See story on page 7.

Around Town

**SAXOPHONE STARS ...** When the U.S. Navy Band kicks off the 44th International Saxophone Symposium at George Mason University this weekend, Palo Alto will be well represented. The event, which according to organizers will include more than 150 performances, masterclasses and lectures, will feature the **Triquetra Quartet**, a group that consists of Gunn High seniors **Tyler Featherman** and **Theo Fong**, junior **Ethan Hong** and sophomore **Kabir Mahajan**, according to The Oracle, Gunn's student newspaper. The group will be taking part in the High School Honors Recital on Jan. 13, the second day of the two-day event.

**'23 AND ME ...** It's been an eventful year for former Palo Alto Mayor **Lydia Kou**, who began her tenure with a heavy storm and a sharp spike in gas bills, concluded it with a heated debate over California Avenue and, along the way, squared off with a group of Zoom bombers, lambasted Sacramento's housing mandates and took a selfie with U.S. President **Joe Biden**. She fondly recalled the lattermost episode on Jan. 8, during her last meeting as mayor. Biden came to Palo Alto last June to announce a \$2.6-billion investment for climate resilience and Kou was among the attendees at the Baylands press conference. "At the meeting after the speeches, someone said, 'President, shall we take a selfie?' which the president said yes to. Two men, who are elected representatives, blocked me from being included in the selfie and President Biden observed this and said, 'Let's make sure the mayor is in this picture.' I will never forget this gesture of inclusivity from President Biden and will do my best to incorporate this lesson to myself." Kou, who will conclude her second council term in 2024 and who is running for the state Assembly, received hearty applause from the filled Council Chambers for her actions as mayor. **Greer Stone**, who succeeded her as mayor, gave her particular props for standing in to council meetings last fall to make racist and antisemitic comments. "I think we can all probably agree that this was the

most difficult and troubling time as a council member, at least that I've experienced. You took that fight on like a knight on top of their powerful steed, and I think we all felt so safe with you leading us at that time," Stone said.

**INCHING THE ELKS ALONG ...** The Peninsula could soon be the newest home to California's **growing elk population**, according to a study published Dec. 29 by the California Fish and Wildlife Journal. The tule elk population — a native California species — has slowly bounced back from near-extinction after the species was reintroduced into various parts of California throughout the 20th century, including the Diablo Mountain Range, where some of the elk currently roam. Last month's study used predictive models to find that there are 2,000 square miles of unoccupied habitat around the northern Santa Lucia and Diablo Range and on the coastal and inland sides of the Santa Cruz mountains (aka the Peninsula), where there is enough vegetation and bodies of water to sustain the once-abundant species. Dr. **Rick Lanman**, a co-author of the study and the president of the Los Altos-based Institute of Historical Ecology, argues the addition of elk to the Peninsula could become a state revenue driver due to elk-fueled tourism and hunting. But he thinks the best part of reintroducing the animal could be its part in remedying a growing California sickness: wildfires. "**Elk are nature's lawnmowers**," Lanman said. He said they can gnaw on grass and leaves, stymying the build-up of dense vegetation that fuels fires. He said in conjunction with cultural and prescribed burns, the Peninsula could use the elk population to lower the threat of wildfires. But to get the elk back onto the Peninsula, state officials will likely have to translocate them — move some elk from one part of the state to another — or build an overpass for wildlife crossing over U.S. Highway 101, a deadly divide for elk between the coast and their current home in the mountains. Lanman's hoping his recent study will push state officials to expedite the elk's return to the Bay. ■

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CRIME

# What's behind East Palo Alto's zero homicides in 2023?

Some cite improved policing and community involvement, others say that people have fled city

By Emma Donnelly-Higgins

East Palo Alto reported zero homicides in 2023, a significant mark for a city that experienced the highest per capita murders in the nation in 1992.

But city leaders and community members, many of whom are behind the achievement, draw differing views over how the city achieved the widely celebrated statistic.

East Palo Alto Chief of Police Jeff Liu and Mayor Antonio López attributed the drop to an increase in trust between the public and the police department following the adoption of community policing practices.

In the 1990s, when crime hit its peak, East Palo Alto residents feared and mistrusted their police department, whose rogue cops abused residents, sometimes harassing and beating them. Today, Liu is proud of the department he runs, which follows a community policing model that includes holding monthly open meetings to discuss crime, giving back to the community through charity events and being a front-facing force, with many officers on a first-name basis with city residents.

"I think we have a great deal of community trust," Liu said. "I'm really proud of the relationships that we have with our community members at all levels."

Liu said residents willingly served as witnesses, shared surveillance videos and offered police information about deaths, helping the department solve all five homicides that occurred in 2022. However, Liu said he could not comment on the status of specific cases since none have been adjudicated yet.

"With the return of what we consider community policing, it has brought about a trust factor where folks are not so fearful of the community police, but they work with them to try to eradicate crime," said the Rev. Deborah Lewis-Virges of Saint Mark AME Zion Church in East Palo Alto.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which recognizes community violence as a "critical public health problem" in the United States, suggests that involving community members in prevention efforts and addressing underlying issues that contribute to violence can improve safety.

Liu also credits the drop in homicides to the city's retention of high-quality police officers — an issue the department has historically struggled with — that was partly aided by the addition of a competitive officer pay package in 2022. But despite the salary increase, Liu's officers, like many former East Palo Alto residents, still cannot afford to live in the area.

The 30-year-old city has faced numerous challenges over the decades, including racist real estate tactics, the crack cocaine epidemic, high rates of violent crime and gang activity and police corruption and misconduct, the San Mateo County website states. It was particularly susceptible to drug activity due to its proximity to U.S. Route 101, Mayor López said. He described East Palo Alto in the 1980s as a "one stop shop" for illegal drug purchases.

The city earned its nickname as the "murder capital" of the nation when 42 homicides occurred in 1992. Since then, the number of homicides per year peaked at 16 and 15 in 1997 and 2005, respectively, but has otherwise stayed below 10, according to East Palo Alto Police Department data. The years 1996, 1999, 2017 and 2019 only saw one homicide each.

Today, residents fear displacement due to rising house prices, a symptom of gentrification. East Palo Alto, as some remaining residents are quick to point out, has undergone a vast transformation as its demographics have shifted, and its median household income has spiked over the past two decades from about \$29,000 in 1989 to about \$103,000 in 2022, according to U.S. Census data. The census also reported that

about 60% of homes in East Palo Alto were valued at more than \$1,000,000 in 2022.

Mildred McKean, a resident and activist whose family has been a pillar of the community for generations, said that with the loss of residents, violent crime has only moved beyond the borders of the city.

Last year, McKean's cousin,

Michael "Mike Mike" McNack, died in a suspected murder in Union City. He had relocated to the area about seven years ago but was still present in the East Palo Alto community, McKean said. Police have not released any suspect information about his death, but McKean alleged that

(continued on page 13)



Magali Gauthier  
Mayor Antonio López



## PALO ALTO CITY COUNCIL CIVIC CENTER, 250 HAMILTON AVENUE

This is a summary of tentative City Council agenda items. The agenda with complete titles including reports can be viewed at the below webpage: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/agendas/default.asp>

### SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 5:30 PM COUNCIL CHAMBERS & HYBRID**  
<https://zoom.us/join> Meeting ID: 362 027 238 Phone: 1(669)900-6833

#### CONSENT CALENDAR (5:50 - 5:55 PM)

1. Approval of Minutes from December 11, 2023, December 18, 2023, and December 19, 2023 Meetings
2. Adopt an Ordinance to Expand the Public Art Commission (PAC) from Five to Seven Members; CEQA status - not a project
3. Approval of Contract Amendment Number 1 to Contract Number C24189060 with US Bank and its Wholly owned Subsidiary Elavon for General Banking and Merchant Services and Approval of Contract Amendment Number C24189061 with Wells Fargo for Lockbox Services; CEQA Status - Not a Project.
4. Approval of Professional Services Contract with Energy and Environmental Economics, Inc. (E3) for a Not-to-Exceed Amount of \$945,286 for the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP) Funding Study; Amendment to Professional Services Contract with Sterling Communications, Inc. to Amend the Scope, Extend the Timeline, and Increase Total Not-to-Exceed Compensation by \$75,000 (from \$85,000 to \$160,000); and a Budget Amendment in the Electric Fund for Acceptance of \$75,000 DEED grant for S/CAP Funding Study; CEQA Status - Not a Project.
5. Accept the City of Palo Alto's Audited Financial Statements as of June 30, 2023 and the Macias, Gini & O'Connell Management Letter; Approve the FY 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and Amendments to the FY 2023 Budget in Various Funds; and Adopt a Resolution to Extend and Amend the Development Services Reserve Fund Policy, as Recommended by the Finance Committee; CEQA Status - Not a Project
6. Approval of Amendment No. 2 with Pets in Need Contract (C19174493) to extend the term through March 2024 and increase the compensation by \$342,501 for operations of the Palo Alto Animal Shelter, for a Not-to-Exceed Amount of \$4,431,872; CEQA status - not a project.
7. Adopt a Resolution Approving an Amendment to the City's 2009 California-Oregon Transmission Project Long-Term Layoff Agreement to Extend the City's Layoff of its Share of the California Oregon Transmission Project (COTP) until 2034 and to Receive Annual Market Payments as Recommended by the Utilities Advisory Commission (UAC); CEQA Status - Not a Project
8. Approval of Recommendations on Process for 2024 Council Priority Setting Retreat as Recommended by Policy & Services Committee (CEQA Status - Not a Project)
9. Approval of the Office of the City Auditor's Investment Management Audit Report as Recommended by the Policy & Services Committee (CEQA Status - Not a Project)
10. SECOND READING: Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Section 18.42.160 (Safe Parking) to Permanently Establish the Congregation-Based Safe Parking Program and Establishing Regulations Related to Safe Parking, Including a Maximum Number of Vehicles Per Night on Each Site (FIRST READING: December 4, 2023 PASSED 6-1, Tanaka no)
11. SECOND READING: Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Chapters 4.10 (Licenses Obtained by Application to Chief of Police), 4.30 (Soliciting Funds), and Chapter 4.32 (Soliciting Information for Commercial Purposes); and Adding Chapter 4.12 to Title 4 (Business Licenses and Regulations) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code to Comply With Updates to the Law, Including 2018 Senate Bill 946 (Sidewalk Vendors). CEQA status - categorically exempt. (FIRST READING: December 11, 2023 PASSED 5-1-1, Kou no, Veenker absent)
12. SECOND READING: Adoption of an Urgency Ordinance and an Interim Ordinance That Allows the Director of Planning and Development Services to Extend Planning Entitlements for Housing Development Projects up to an Additional 18 Months. Environmental Review: Exempt from CEQA in Accordance with CEQA Guidelines 15061(b) (3). (FIRST READING: December 11, 2023 PASSED 5-1-1, Kou no, Veenker absent)

#### ACTION ITEMS (Item 13: 6:20 - 7:50 PM, Item 14: 7:50 - 8:35 PM)

13. Tree Protection Ordinance Year One Review and Recommendations; Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Chapter 8.04 (Street Trees, Shrubs, and Plants) and Chapter 8.10 (Tree Preservation and Management Regulations) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code to Update the Allowable Reasons for Removal of Protected Trees, Make Clarifying Changes, and to Make Clerical Updates; and Adoption of a Resolution amending the Administrative Penalty Schedule to Increase the Penalties for Violations of Title 8 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code; CEQA Status - Not a Projects
14. Approval of a Substation Improvement Agreement With Tesla Inc. to Install Improvements and Reserve Capacity at Hanover Substation, and Approval of a Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Amendment in the Electric Fund to Establish the Hanover Substation Upgrade Project (EL-24001); CEQA Status - Exempt under CEQA Guideline Sections 15301 and 15302

#### CITY COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS ARE HELD IN-PERSON AND BY TELECONFERENCE

City Council meetings will be held as hybrid meetings with the option to attend by teleconference/video conference or in person. To maximize public safety while still maintaining transparency and public access, members of the public can choose to participate in the meeting from home or attend the meeting in person.

Public Comments will be accepted both in person and via Zoom. Written public comments can be submitted in advance to [city.council@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:city.council@cityofpaloalto.org) and will be provided to the Council and available for inspection on the City's website. Please clearly indicate which agenda item you are referencing in your email subject line.

The meeting will be streamed live on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/c/cityofpaloalto>, and Midpen Media Center <https://midpenmedia.org> and broadcasted on Cable TV Channel 26. PowerPoints, videos, or other media to be presented during public comment are accepted only if emailed to: [city.clerk@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:city.clerk@cityofpaloalto.org) at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Once received, the City Clerk will have them shared at public comment for the specified item. To uphold strong cybersecurity management practices, USB's or other physical electronic storage devices are not accepted.



Sue Dremann

Raised in Palo Alto, Jeff Liu was named East Palo Alto police chief in April 2023.

PUBLIC HEALTH

# COVID cases detected in wastewater hit new high

Tests, vaccine sites have dwindled in recent months

By Nick Pasion

**C** COVID-19 cases detected in Palo Alto hit an unprecedented high last week, according to wastewater monitoring from Santa Clara County.

County public health officials reported that COVID-19 levels began climbing in December, and in Palo Alto on Tuesday, Jan. 2, the amount of the virus detected in wastewater, the best method for tracking the virus, peaked at a (marginally) higher level than it ever has when compared to previous years.

Officials say the spike — driven by holiday travel, waning public health precautions and the new dominant JN.1 variant — coincides with a rise in other respiratory diseases like the flu and RSV, so officials are warning the public to take the proper precautions.

“This is the time, the beginning of January, where we kind of expect to see higher levels, and that’s exactly what we are seeing in our wastewater data, not only for COVID, but also for other respiratory viruses,” said Monika Roy, an assistant health officer

and communicable disease controller for the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department.

While the number of cases detected in sewage has grown, the number of people going to the hospital to treat COVID has fallen. Nationally, about 30,000 were hospitalized the week after Christmas Day in 2023, compared to 97,000 the same week in 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In California, that number for the same period was 3,516 in 2023 and 6,140 in 2022 (the CDC doesn’t track countywide hospitalizations year over year).

But despite recorded cases hitting a new peak in Palo Alto, it may be more difficult to get your hands on resources like tests or vaccines. That’s largely because the federal government ended the COVID-19 federal emergency in May, leading to a drop in free and subsidized resources available to the public, which were once widely available during the height of the pandemic.

California shuttered many of

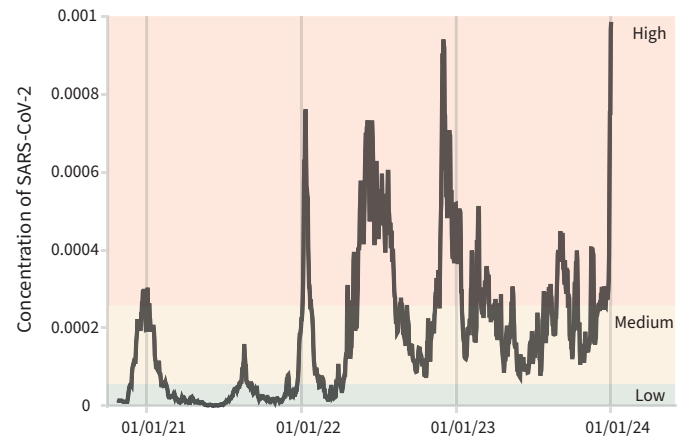
its state-supported test centers last winter as it ended its emergency in May. Stanford, which handed out free PCR test kits to staff, faculty and students, ended its program in March (though at the time of its test sunsetting, the school said it would still provide free antigen testing for university-affiliated people).

So, finding a test is tough. Many of the test sites have closed, with a few scattered across the Peninsula still open. Most pharmacies and drug stores sell COVID-19 tests, but those can put you back anywhere from \$5 to \$25. For free tests, the Better Health Pharmacy in San Jose hands out four take-home tests per person and is open 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.

To find a COVID-19 vaccination, the CDC has a database you can search for locations offering the most recent iteration of the booster. In Palo Alto, the Walgreens at 4170 El Camino Real and at 2605 Middlefield Road, as well as the CVS

## Concentrations of SARS-CoV-2 virus in local wastewater

Samples from Palo Alto Regional Water Quality Control Plant



Source: Santa Clara County Public Health • Graphic by Zoe Morgan.

Pharmacies at 352 University Ave. and the CVS at 855 El Camino Real, all had vaccines in stock as of Friday, Jan. 5. The pharmacies recommend you book an appointment ahead of time.

If you don’t have insurance, in September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Bridge Access Program, which offers uninsured individuals free COVID-19 vaccines. To find a pharmacy that offers vaccines or one participating in the Bridge program, visit the CDC’s vaccine locator vaccines.gov.

For kids who are uninsured, the Vaccines for Children Program can show pharmacies where they

can also get the jab for free.

For those who are at higher risk for serious infection, both Santa Clara County and the CDC recommend that individuals take Paxlovid, a Pfizer drug, within the first five days of COVID-19 symptoms. It has been shown to be highly effective at quashing the virus. Officials approved the drug for those who are at high risk for severe COVID-19, who tend to be those over 65, or who have other conditions like obesity or asthma.

“The earlier they get Paxlovid, the better,” Roy said. “That reduces their chance of being severely ill, hospitalized and dying.” To get the drug, reach out to your health care provider. ■



ELECTION 2024

# Meet the candidates vying for Anna Eshoo's seat

Jan. 31 debate will be live at Palo Alto City Hall

By Palo Alto Weekly staff

**E**leven candidates for U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo's seat are seeking to win voters' approval in the March 5 primary election, the first hurdle to representing the 16th District of the U.S. House of Representatives. And on Wednesday, Jan. 31, the

candidates will square off in a live debate at Palo Alto City Hall from 7 to 9 p.m.

Hosted by Embarcadero Media and Palo Alto Neighborhoods, in partnership with the Midpeninsula Media Center and the city of Palo Alto, the free

public event will be an opportunity for voters to hear directly from candidates Joby Bernstein, Peter Dixon, Rishi Kumar, Julie Lythcott-Haims, Sam Liccardo, Evan Low, Ahmed Mostafa, Peter Ohtaki, Joe Simitian and Greg Tanaka.



Voice reporter Zoe Morgan. Questions from the public for the candidates are welcome: Please submit them ahead of time to editor@paweekly.com.

In California's open primary election, voters can cast their ballot for any candidate regardless of party affiliation. The top two in the primary will face off in November unless one candidate receives more than 50%.

The 16th District stretches from Pacifica to Los Gatos and includes the Midpeninsula.

Want to brush up on who's running? Read profiles of the candidates by Sheyner at [tinyurl.com/District16candidates](https://tinyurl.com/District16candidates). ■

The debate will take place in City Council chambers, 250 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. It will also be broadcast live on YouTube by Midpen Media.

Moderating the event will be Palo Alto reporter Gennady Sheyner and Mountain View

## Eshoo

(continued from page 5)

Before his current stint as a supervisor, Simitian served in the state Assembly and the state Senate, where his districts overlapped with Eshoo's.

The endorsement represents a boost for Simitian, who is one of the frontrunners in a crowded field that also includes former San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo, state Assemblyman Evan Low, Palo Alto City Council members Julie Lythcott-Haims and Greg Tanaka, former Saratoga City Council member Rishi

Kumar, Marine veteran Peter Dixon, former Menlo Park Mayor Peter Ohtaki, researcher Joby Bernstein, attorney Ahmed Mostafa and Karl Ryan.

"Congresswoman Anna Eshoo knows the people of our region," Simitian said in a statement. "She knows my work. And she knows what it takes to get the job done in Congress. That's what makes her endorsement solid gold! I'm enormously grateful."

Other contenders in the crowded race have also been picking up endorsements from federal elected officials over the past month. Dixon, who has made closer scrutiny of Pentagon spending a

key component of his campaign, earned the endorsement of six Congressional Democrats: Jason Crow, Mikie Sherrill, Pat Ryan, Jared Golden, Don Davis and Chris Deluzio.

Low's supporters include U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna and Sen. Laphonza Butler. Lythcott-Haims, meanwhile, has received an endorsement from U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, D-New Jersey.

The primary election will be held on March 5. The top two vote-getters will then move on to the general election on Nov. 5. ■

*Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at [gsheyner@paweekly.com](mailto:gsheyner@paweekly.com).*



Courtesy Joe Simitian

Joe Simitian, left, and Rep. Anna Eshoo walking together.

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MIDTOWN

# Zone-busting townhome project proposed near Midtown Safeway

Developer looks to demolish existing apartment building, asks for waivers from city rules

By Gennady Sheyner

An apartment building near the Midtown Safeway would be demolished and replaced with a 12-unit townhome development under a proposal that the city received last week from a San Mateo-based developer.

The project at 739 Sutter Ave. would replace an existing eight-unit apartment complex with two three-story buildings featuring 12 townhomes, according to the application filed Thursday by the developer, Grace Li of 739 Sutter Ave, LLP. Each unit would have

a two-car garage and a deck, the plans show.

The development would also flout about a dozen local zoning rules and design guidelines, a hurdle that Li hopes to overcome by relying on the State Density Bonus Law, a measure that allows residential developers who include affordable housing in their proposals to request exceptions from design standards. While the number of concessions is typically limited to four, Li is requesting a dozen exceptions from local rules, including



Rendering by G.E. Sun/courtesy city of Palo Alto

Twelve townhomes, in two three-story buildings, have been proposed for 739 Sutter Ave., replacing a one-story, 8-unit apartment complex.

greater height, smaller setbacks, a narrower private street and fewer trees than the city's development regulations typically allow.

The project would deviate from city guidelines by not including trees or other landscaping as screening on its interior side and it

would run afoul of a recently created rule requiring façade breaks.

The townhome buildings would be 33.5 feet tall, exceeding the 30-foot height limit in this residential zone. They would occupy 50% of the site even though a code-compliant project would cover no more than 35% of the property.

But even as Li is invoking the State Density Bonus Law to request 11 waivers from local regulations and one concession (greater building height), she is asking the city for a streamlined review process, which typically applies to projects that meet Palo Alto's recently updated objective design standards — a detailed set of rules that govern everything from garage door placements and window sizes to façade breaks and porch configurations. The council

adopted the new standards in 2022 with the goal of expediting reviews for compliant projects.

The application states that the townhouse project will feature a “contemporary” architecture style, with numerous measures to enhance the privacy of neighbors. The third floor in each building would be stepped back so that decks would not look directly into neighbors' yards, according to the project description.

The project would also include trees that are “planted strategically” at the rear fence to obscure the sight line and a 7-foot-tall fence with a trellis to help maintain privacy, according to the application. ■

*Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at [gsheyner@paweekly.com](mailto:gsheyner@paweekly.com).*

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UTILITIES

## Settlement: Gas customers to get about \$150 each in refunds

Ruling in *Miriam Green v. City of Palo Alto* follows more than six years of litigation

By Gennady Sheyner

The long legal standoff between the city of Palo Alto and a resident who sued the city over its practice of using utility revenues to pay for basic city services reached its official resolution last month, when a Santa Clara County judge approved a settlement that requires the city to issue thousands of refunds.

The ruling that Judge Sunil Kulkarni signed on Dec. 21 paves the way for more than 48,000 gas utility customers to receive refunds from the city, with the average refund totaling \$156.32. The settlement covers most of the customers who were billed for gas service between September 23, 2015, and June 30, 2022, according to the ruling.

The formal resolution to the case *Miriam Green v. City of Palo Alto* has been widely expected since September 2022, when attorneys from the two sides agreed

to the settlement terms. Green sued the city in 2016, saying the city acted illegally when it transferred revenues from the city's utility funds to its general fund, which pays for most services not relating to utilities.

While the practice has been in existence for decades, Santa Clara County Court Judge Brian Walsh concluded in 2020 that the transfer of gas utility funds to the general fund constitutes an “illegal tax” and that the city had violated Proposition 26, a state law that limits utility rates to the “reasonable cost” of service provision.

According to Kulkarni's order, the payments will come from a \$12.6 million “common fund” that the city had established for refunds as part of the settlement. The settlement also authorizes attorneys representing Green to claim

(continued on page 13)

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DEVELOPMENT

# Auto shop to make way for offices under Ventura proposal

Acclaim Companies eyes two-story commercial project at 2905 El Camino Real

By Gennady Sheyner

**A**squat stucco building on El Camino Real that until recently housed an auto body shop would make way for a two-story, wood-paneled office building as part of the latest development proposal in Palo Alto's quickly changing Ventura neighborhood.

Pitched by Acclaim Companies, the project targets a site at 2905 El Camino Real, on the corner of Pepper Avenue. The vacant building most recently served as a supporting location for Akins Body Shop, which has a primary location at 3290 Park Boulevard. The auto shop's lease of the property concluded earlier this year, according to the application.

If approved, the new development would feature an outdoor patio and a roof terrace. It would include 8,571 square feet of office space, which would be occupied by a single tenant, according to project plans.

The new proposal is the latest in a slate of projects targeting Ventura, a centrally located but historically underserved neighborhood that is located southeast of the intersection of El Camino

Real and Oregon Expressway. The site is located in the North Ventura Coordinated Plan Area, a portion of the neighborhood that the City Council had identified as suitable for redevelopment and that includes the sprawling campus that until recently was occupied by Fry's Electronics.

The most significant development in the project area is The Sobrato Organization's recently approved plan to partially demolish and renovate the historic cannery that housed Fry's. Sobrato plans to demolish about 40% of the building at 340 Portage Ave. and construct 74 townhouses. The remainder of the cannery would be renovated and retained for research and development use.

As part of the development agreement, Sobrato provided the city with land for a future park and an affordable housing complex.

Other projects within or near the North Ventura Area Plan district include a proposal by Charity Housing for 3000 El Camino Real, which would feature 129 apartments for low-income residents; a 16-condominium complex that

Dividend Homes wants to build at 420 Acacia Ave.; and a 45-condominium project that developer Roger Fields is planning to construct at 300 Lambert Ave.

The city is also reviewing a proposal for a 44-apartment complex that Half Dome Capital wants to construct for local educators. And just south of this area, developers are advancing with even grander plans. Acclaim is looking to develop a 380-apartment building at 3150 El Camino Real, former site of The Fish Market restaurant, while Oxford Capital Group is pitching a 185-dwelling development at the site of Creekside Inn as part of a project that would also feature a new hotel building.

Both Acclaim and Oxford have indicated that they are willing to rely on "builder's remedy" — a contentious law that allows residential developers to override local zoning rules and objections — to get approval for their respective residential projects.

The plan by Acclaim for the El Camino site is unlike all the others because it consists entirely of office space, a land use that has fallen largely out of fashion in



Rendering by Heather Young Architects/courtesy city of Palo Alto

The office development that Acclaim Companies is proposing for 2905 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, would replace a building that until recently was occupied by an auto body shop.

Palo Alto over the past decade. In 2015, the City Council established a cap of 50,000 square feet on new office development in downtown, along El Camino, and around California Avenue (it then made the cap permanent in 2018).

While the city's development pipeline includes a handful of commercial projects — most notably, a three-story office building that Smith Development has planned for 123 Sherman Ave. — most recent proposals have included a housing component.

The new building at 2905 El Camino Real would be clad in wood siding and feature metal panels, large windows and "light shelf canopies overlooking El Camino Real and Pepper Avenue." The second floor would be set back from the perimeter, and the building's roof terrace

would open toward El Camino Real and allow for views to the distant hills, according to the project description submitted by architect Heather Young, principal at Heather Young Architects.

Young called the proposal a "dramatic improvement to the current conditions and a positive asset to the neighborhood."

"The proposed improvements will revitalize the aging building and site with a new, highly curated design with refined proportions and the use of more sophisticated materials creating a stronger presence on El Camino Real and an improved pedestrian and visual experience for the community and building occupants," Young wrote. ■

Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at [gshyner@paweekly.com](mailto:gshyner@paweekly.com).

HOME & GARDEN

# Community organizations turn to rain gardens to prevent flooding

Efforts to curtail the effects of flooding are more important than ever as California heads into an 'El Nino' year, a period of cooler and wetter weather

By Abigail Neely

**L**ast winter, residents experienced the second largest flood in East Palo Alto history. Now Bay Area nonprofits are installing gardens designed to soak up stormwater and mitigate future flooding.

Climate Resilient Communities (CRC), Fresh Approach and Grassroots Ecology last November broke ground on the first of 25 rain garden systems to be installed for homeowners at no cost. CRC received nearly \$1 million in funding for the project from Coastal Communities, an organization working to reduce water pollution.

"To date, there isn't anything else like this in the county," Reid Bogert, stormwater program director for the San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention program, said. He said he's excited to see it used as a model elsewhere.

Efforts to curtail the effects of flooding are more important than ever as California heads into an El Nino year, a period of cooler and

wetter weather. Many older East Palo Alto residents still remember flooding in 1998 that resulted in \$40 million dollars in damage.

"Rain gardens are an excellent nature-based solution to our changing climate that addresses multiple community priorities at once," Violet Wulf-Saena, founder and executive director of CRC, said in a press release.

## Why a rain garden

Rain gardens are shallow depressions filled with native flood-tolerant plants. They are designed to trap stormwater and send it underground faster. Rather than overflowing out of rain barrels, pooling around the house, or running off into the bay, stormwater accumulates in the gardens, where it's filtered by the soil and returned to the groundwater supply.

In this way, the gardens contribute to a healthy ecosystem. According to CalRecycle, 70% of pollution in surface water comes from stormwater. Traditional stormwater systems don't have a

method for filtering this polluted runoff.

At a household level, rain gardens make a difference by preventing costly consequences of flooding, like leaks and rotting walls. The visually appealing protection they offer can also increase property values. This is especially valuable to East Palo Alto residents who have expressed a fear of displacement in what is seen as the last affordable neighborhood in the Bay Area, said Cade Cannedy, CRC's director of programs.

## A community approach

Through a community-driven process led by CRC, locals identified rain gardens as a way to address their concerns about flooding and gentrification in the neighborhood. CRC held six workshops attended by over 150 community members to spread the word about the initiative.

Quynh Pham never considered a rain garden until she attended a community fair. At the time,



Abigail Neely

Local nonprofits break ground on the first of 25 rain gardens to be installed in East Palo Alto on Nov. 11, 2023.

her yard was a stretch of dirt covered with tarp. Pham knew she didn't want a lawn — it would require too much water — and was searching for an alternative. But as a single mother and homeowner, there were always priorities besides landscaping to worry about. When she learned she could have a garden installed for her, she jumped at it.

On the day of the groundbreaking, Pham's home fills with a dozen gardeners from the partner organizations. A trail of signs announcing "snacks this way!" and "snacks here!" leads them to a bustling kitchen wrapped in the smell of sauteed onions and sweet potatoes.

Ethan, Pham's 8-year-old son, is

sous chef. He offers the gardeners green apples picked from the tree Fresh Approach helped him plant and directs guests to a spread of figs and cheese he has labeled. Pham, a nurse passionate about nutrition, re-assembles a table outside where her guests can eat. Afterward, she composts their scraps. Pham said that becoming a mother helped her realize her responsibility to help preserve the environment for her son.

A fence separates Pham's property from an open field bordering the San Francisco Bay. While Pham said she hasn't experienced intense flooding yet, she's been shown maps that predict up to

(continued on page 13)



LOCAL NEWS

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## Online This Week

These and other news stories were posted on Palo Alto Online throughout the week. For longer versions, go to [www.PaloAltoOnline.com/news](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com/news).

### Nordstrom employee accused of embezzling

Palo Alto police arrested a Nordstrom employee who allegedly embezzled more than \$31,000 from the clothing company. Jan. 11, 2 p.m.

### Project would bring 200 apartments to Palo Alto

Acclaim Companies, a developer whose seven-story apartment complex at the site of The Fish Market represents Palo Alto's most ambitious "builder's remedy" application, is now pitching another major housing project on San Antonio Road. Jan. 10, 4:33 p.m.

### Interim no more, Mahealani Ah Yun is new city clerk

After six months of filling in as Palo Alto's city clerk following the departure of her predecessor, Mahealani Ah Yun is set to assume the job on a permanent basis. Jan. 10, 2:11 p.m.

### Warming centers open; cold weather is here

With chilly, wet weather expected to bring near-freezing temperatures to the Bay Area this week, Santa Clara County is opening warming centers at public libraries. Jan. 10, 7:57 a.m.

### Following fire, El Camino Real to reopen soon

A portion of El Camino Real that was closed due to a massive fire on Christmas Day may reopen this week, as crews work to demolish the unstable building left behind after the blaze. Jan. 10, 7:21 a.m.

### Antonio López voted East Palo Alto's mayor

The East Palo Alto City Council appointed Antonio López and Martha Barragan to the mayor and vice mayor roles for 2024. Jan. 9, 5:04 p.m.

### Children urge Eshoo to call for cease-fire in Gaza

Parents and children stood outside Rep. Anna Eshoo's office in downtown Palo Alto on Thursday, Jan. 4, to deliver letters written by young constituents asking the congresswoman to support a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. Jan. 8, 9:23 a.m.

### Trial set for 4 men in East Palo Alto gun battle

Four men accused of a gun battle that occurred in an East Palo Alto park full of children in 2022 are heading to trial after being arraigned last August, according to the San Mateo District Attorney's Office. Jan. 7, 10:22 p.m.

### Driver arrested for attempted murder

A Dublin woman was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after a two-car collision where she allegedly hit and injured an East Palo Alto man she'd previously been in a relationship with. Jan. 5, 9:01 a.m.

## Public Agenda

### A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

**CITY COUNCIL ...** The council plans to consider revisions to the city's tree protection ordinance and to consider approving an agreement with Tesla to share the costs of upgrading a substation on Hanover Street. The meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 16, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 362 027 238.

**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD ...** The board plans to consider the proposed development at 660 University Ave., which includes 65 apartments and ground-floor office space. The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 18, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 965 6189 1491.

**PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION ...** The commission plans to meet at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 18, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 886 2784 1441. The agenda was not available by press deadline.



## Homicides

(continued from page 7)

his killers were also former East Palo Alto residents.

McKean pointed to a lack of economic resources, including mental health services that people who have experienced trauma from violent crime could benefit from, as a reason that the cycle of violence may continue.

“We just take our trauma with us; we pack it up like we pack up and move out of East Palo Alto,” she said. “We take that everywhere we go, we never get to unpack that baggage because we never deal with it. We don’t know how to deal with it. And we don’t

have the resources to deal with it.”

Lifelong East Palo Alto resident Brownie Rogue constantly interacts with his community through his work with Tha Hood Squad, a nonprofit art collective dedicated to creating social change, particularly regarding public health and safety. Rogue said that it is too early to be celebrating the drop in homicides, noting that many families are still dealing with the ramifications of past deaths and that crime occurring outside the city also impacts residents.

Rogue, who said he has personally experienced harassment by East Palo Alto police officers, said that, for some, officers are often not present in their community and that some residents still fear them.

For this reason, he does not believe that the police should be taking credit for the drop in homicides.

“I wouldn’t say the police has anything to do with it,” he said. “I just feel like maybe the community is finally tired of all the violence that has been going on over the years and is just trying to stay away. A lot of people moved out of the city for that reason.”

Still, officials said that educators, religious leaders and city staff have made a concerted effort to stifle crime with more prison re-entry programs, homeless shelters and after-school services that have all helped improve public safety.

Some community members are involved in crime prevention efforts in official capacities.

Lewis-Virges is a member of the Community Safety Team, a group of concerned East Palo Alto residents who look at ways to improve safety in collaboration with government officials. The team is roughly two years old and devotes itself to mitigating all threats, including violent crime, Lewis-Virges said.

Faith groups were particularly vital in solving the 2022 homicides and have continued to play a role in public safety, Mayor López said. In previous years, when homicides occurred, faith leaders created opportunities for community members to heal and bond, paving the way toward a safer city, he said.

“I don’t personally take any credit for those statistics, but we have

been engaged with a host of things that I think has contributed to unity in the community,” she said.

Lewis-Virges, who is unofficially known as the “community pastor,” said that providing youth with positive activities and programs, as well as the availability of city-sponsored job training and development programs, have contributed to a shift in the city that reinforces the safety of the community.

“Once we directed our energy to our youth and we provided them with more hopeful and optimistic choices, I sincerely believe that they took advantage of that,” Lewis-Virges said. ■

*Emma Donnelly-Higgins is a freelance writer and former editorial intern.*

## Refund

(continued from page 10)

\$4.3 million in revenues from the common fund and to get an additional \$1.3 million through the “lodestar” method, which is based on how much time the prevailing party’s attorneys spend on the case. Green was represented by the firm Kearney Littlefield, LLC.

Kulkarni concluded in the ruling that the fees are reasonable given the “great risk” that Green’s legal counsel had spent on an entirely contingent basis, the substantial outlay of time, the “complex and consistently evolving case law,” the “exceptional” results and the long delay in being compensated, according to the order.

The settlement allows the utility to issue the refunds in three

installments, with the first installment due just after the final settlement order becomes official, the second one due 12 months later and the third payment due 12 months after the second. According to the order, three customers had submitted requests to be excluded from the judgment class and will not receive the payments. Neither will Judge Kulkarni, whose family lives in Palo Alto but who is

excluded from the class.

Miriam Green, who launched the litigation, will receive an “incentive award” of \$7,500 and reimbursements of \$7,598 and \$6,960 to cover litigation costs and the notification process for the judgment class.

Kulkarni alluded in the Dec. 21 ruling to a previous preliminary order, which found the “proposed settlement provided a fair and

reasonable compromise to the Plaintiff’s claims.”

“If finds no reason to depart from the findings now, especially considering that there are no objections,” Kulkarni wrote. “Thus, the Court finds that the settlement is fair and reasonable for the purposes of final approval.” ■

*Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@pawekly.com.*

## Mayor

(continued from page 5)

city problems.

“They are difficult and he has this incredible patience to come back to something again and again, and the stamina to do it. ... He is doing all of this with no ego involved. He is just in the service of the best solution,” Chang said.

Burt, who nominated Lauing, also cited his many years of service as a commissioner and said he is a rare council member who already has “enough experience with our processes and the myriad of issues that we face to be able to step into a leadership role.”

Lauing was elected vice mayor by a 4-3 vote, with Burt, Lauing, Stone and council members Lydia Kou all joining his selection. Council member Julie Lythcott-Haims, Tanaka and Veenker all voted for Veenker, who received kudos from her council colleagues

and from members of the public for her work both on the local, regional and national levels.

Veenker spearheaded the establishment of Palo Alto’s sibling city relationship with Bloomington, Indiana, and she serves on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. And as Lythcott-Haims noted in her nomination speech, Veenker receive more votes in 2022 than any of the other candidates.

“It was Council member Veenker who came out in first place and I do think that means something,” Lythcott-Haims said.

Both Lythcott-Haims and former Mayor Liz Kniss also observed that the council has three female members and suggested that electing Veenker would make the council more representative of the city’s population.

Others lauded her for being receptive and generous with her time. Julian Hong, a Palo Alto High student who has worked

with Veenker on the topics of race and belonging, praised her for her engagement on the topic and said he believes she will be able to nurture the next generation of leaders.

“She embodies the first-one-in and last-one-out approach that I believe our leaders need,” Hong said.

But Lauing’s supporters pointed to his experience at the local level as the reason to elevate him to the top spot. Burt noted that Lauing had spent 13 years on the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning and Transportation Commission, which included five years as chair. Kou said the city will have plenty of time in future years to elect people who are active on the global stage.

Stone called the vote for vice mayor his “least favorite vote of the year” and said all three of the council members who were elected in 2022 are “incredibly gifted and capable in their own way.”

“We really can’t make a wrong decision tonight,” Stone said.

Lauing recalled that when he ran for council in 2022, he promised the public that he would “hit the ground running.”

“I think I’ve done that and that would be my promise again tonight,” Lauing said, “that as a vice mayor, I’d hit the ground running tonight and move on with our work.”

Stone’s elevation to the mayor’s chair was far less dramatic. Tanaka nominated Veenker, who quickly declined the nomination and then joined the rest of the council in supporting Stone, a teacher and a renter who was elected in 2020. Lythcott-Haims, who nominated Stone, lauded him his commitment to fairness and for treating every member with respect.

“I appreciate your values around equity, whether we’re talking about supporting un-housed people, protecting renters, building affordable housing or

allocating funds to worthy non-profits,” Lythcott-Haims said.

In accepting the nomination, Stone said one of his first moves will be to bring more attention to the topic of youth mental health. He cited Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finding in 2021 that about 42% of students felt “persistently sad or hopeless” and 22% reported seriously considering suicide.

Stone said he will be forming a committee that consists of local nonprofits, mental health professionals and city and school officials to identify and address service gaps.

He also thanked his colleagues for selecting him to lead the city in 2024.

“Palo Alto and this community made me who I am today,” Stone said. “It’s truly the greatest honor of my life to be chosen as mayor.” ■

*Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@pawekly.com.*

## Garden

(continued from page 11)

half of her front yard could be submerged.

As an East Palo Alto resident for the last 15 years, Pham said she feels lucky to be a part of a warm community that serves each other. She praised community organizations for helping people learn about environmental solutions and access resources.

“Having that community outreach introduces you to things that you wouldn’t really necessarily think about or can afford. (It) informs a community that normally wouldn’t be informed,” Pham said.

Many of the people working on Pham’s garden had a connection to the neighborhood. Debbie Nunez, a curious neighbor and friend of Pham, was at the groundbreaking to learn how to conserve water in her own yard. Volunteer Sydney Taylor was in the yard digging, just blocks away from her childhood home.

### Modeling the future

Models by HighTide Intelligence have shown that East Palo Alto would need over 1,000 rain gardens to prevent wide-scale flooding, Cannedy said. While this is CRC’s ultimate goal, it doesn’t currently have funding for such an expansion.

David Freyberg, a water re-

sources specialist and professor at Stanford University, described East Palo Alto as a “tough location” for water management. The area is exposed to rising sea levels, flooding from nearby creeks, and internal stormwater flooding. Although rain gardens have not been studied intensively as a management tool, Freyberg said they are worth exploring.

Still, Freyberg cautioned that rain gardens present challenges. This is especially true in California, where rain falls for short, intense time periods. Homeowners will need to be okay with brown vegetation in the summer. Upkeep will be needed to prevent trash found in runoff from building up in the gardens.

Responding to that demand, a five-person garden ambassador workforce is being trained to install and maintain the gardens and rain barrel systems.

Ultimately, Cannedy hopes the project will demonstrate that rain gardens are cost effective and garner more government support. Often, Cannedy said, the rebates available for rain barrels and gardens aren’t enough.

“These types of solutions are, fundamentally, an opportunity to pay reparations for the years of environmental burden that have been concentrated in these communities and build a world and a society that are much more just and better for everyone,” Cannedy said. ■



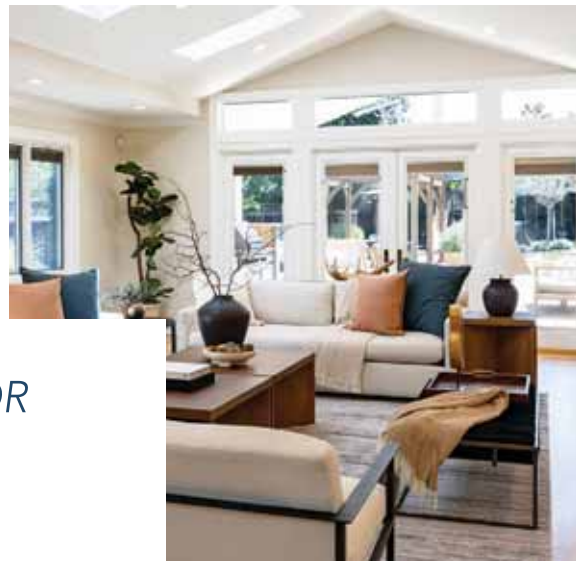
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# PALO ALTO WEEKLY HOLIDAY FUND

## GIVE BACK LOCALLY

Give to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund and your donation is doubled. You give to nonprofit groups that work right here in our community. It's a great way to ensure that your charitable donations are working at home.

### Last Year's Grant Recipients

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|---|----------|
| Able Works  | \$10,000 |
| Acterra   | \$15,000 |
| Ada's Cafe  | \$25,000 |
| Adolescent Counseling Services                    | \$7,500  |
| Art in Action                                     | \$10,000 |
| Art of Yoga Project                               | \$5,000  |
| Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School              | \$5,000  |
| Bay Area Friendship Circle                        | \$5,000  |
| Beyond Barriers Athletic Foundation               | \$5,000  |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bay Area          | \$5,000  |
| Blossom Birth and Family                          | \$5,000  |
| Canopy  | \$5,000  |
| CASA of San Mateo County                          | \$5,000  |
| Christmas Bureau of Palo Alto                     | \$7,500  |
| Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto        | \$10,000 |
| Counseling and Support Services for Youth (CASSY) | \$15,000 |
| Downtown Streets Team                             | \$15,000 |
| DreamCatchers                                     | \$15,000 |
| East Palo Alto Academy Foundation                 | \$10,000 |
| East Palo Alto Kids Foundation                    | \$15,000 |
| East Palo Alto Razorhawks Rugby Football Club     | \$5,000  |
| Eastside College Preparatory School               | \$7,500  |
| Ecumenical Hunger Program                         | \$10,000 |
| Environmental Volunteers                          | \$7,500  |
| EPACENTER   | \$25,000 |
| EPATT (East Palo Alto Tennis and Tutoring)        | \$20,000 |
| Family Connections                                | \$7,500  |
| Fit Kids Foundation                               | \$5,000  |
| Foundation for a College Education                | \$15,000 |
| FRESH APPROACH                                    | \$5,000  |
| Fresh Lifelines for Youth                         | \$5,000  |
| Friends for Youth                                 | \$5,000  |
| Friends of the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo      | \$10,000 |
| Heart and Home Collaborative                      | \$10,000 |
| Hidden Villa                                      | \$10,000 |
| Hope Horizon East Palo Alto                       | \$7,500  |
| Jasper Ridge Farm                                 | \$5,000  |
| Kara  | \$15,000 |
| Lauren's House 4 Positive Change                  | \$5,000  |
| Learning Home Volunteers                          | \$10,000 |
| Mannakin Theater & Dance                          | \$5,000  |
| Music in the Schools Foundation                   | \$7,500  |
| My New Red Shoes                                  | \$5,000  |
| Nuestra Casa de East Palo Alto                    | \$10,000 |
| Palo Alto Art Center Foundation                   | \$10,000 |
| Palo Alto Community Child Care (PACCC)            | \$20,000 |
| Palo Alto Players                                 | \$10,000 |
| Peninsula Bridge                                  | \$10,000 |
| Peninsula College Fund                            | \$10,000 |
| Peninsula Healthcare Connection                   | \$10,000 |
| Peninsula Volunteers                              | \$15,000 |
| Pursuit of Excellence Scholarship Foundation      | \$20,000 |
| Ravenswood Classroom Partners                     | \$20,000 |
| Ravenswood Education Foundation                   | \$10,000 |
| Rebuilding Together Peninsula                     | \$7,500  |
| REEL2e  | \$5,000  |
| Rich May Foundation                               | \$5,000  |
| Riekkes Center                                    | \$5,000  |
| Rise Together Education                           | \$15,000 |
| Rosalie Rendu Center                              | \$5,000  |
| Sager Family Farm                                 | \$5,000  |
| Science is Elementary                             | \$5,000  |
| Silicon Valley Urban Debate League                | \$7,500  |
| StreetCode Academy                                | \$10,000 |
| The Circuit EPA                                   | \$5,000  |
| TheatreWorks Silicon Valley                       | \$5,000  |
| UNAFF (United Nations Association Film Festival)  | \$10,000 |
| Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired  | \$10,000 |
| WeHOPE  | \$15,000 |
| WomenSV   | \$7,500  |
| Youth Community Service                           | \$25,000 |

### Child Care Grants

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| AbilityPath                                 | \$10,000 |
| All Five                                    | \$10,000 |
| Children's Center of the Stanford Community | \$5,000  |
| Children's Preschool Center                 | \$5,000  |
| Covenant Children's Center                  | \$10,000 |
| Grace Lutheran Preschool                    | \$10,000 |
| Palo Alto Community Child Care (PACCC)      | \$10,000 |
| Palo Alto Friends Nursery School            | \$10,000 |
| Parents Nursery School                      | \$10,000 |
| The Learning Center                         | \$10,000 |

For the past 30 years, the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund has raised money from the community to support programs serving families and children in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto. Last year, the campaign raised and granted a record \$793,000. Since the Weekly and Silicon Valley Community Foundation cover all administrative costs, every dollar raised goes directly to support community programs through grants to local nonprofit organizations.

And with the generous support of matching grants from the Packard, Hewlett, Peery and Arrillaga foundations, as well as several anonymous family foundations, your tax-deductible gift will be doubled in size. A donation of \$100 turns into \$200 with the foundation matching gifts.

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| Bank of the West.....1,500                  |
| Chan Zuckerberg Initiative.....5,000        |
| Kaiser Permanente.....5,000                 |
| Stanford Federal Credit Union.....5,000     |
| Stanford Medicine.....10,000                |
| Wealth Architects.....5,000                 |
| DeLeon Realty.....5,000                     |
| Wilson Sonsini Foundation.....5,000         |
| Delores Eberhart DDS.....*                  |
| Peery Foundation.....10,000                 |
| Arrillaga Foundation.....10,000             |

\* Donor did not want to publish the amount of the gift.





## Isabel Walker

1928 - December 17, 2023

Isabel Walker — Age 95, passed away peacefully in Palo Alto on December 17, 2023.

Isabel got her start in caring for others as a young girl. In 1938, when she was ten, her mother asked her to take her place on the Red Cross's annual door-to-door canvass in her home town of Wilmington, Massachusetts. Thanks to a generous donation from a neighbor, she set a local record for collections, sparking a lifelong interest in nursing and later social work.

Isabel Ames MacLeod earned B.S. and R.N. degrees from Simmons College and attended Smith College's School for Social Work. She supported disaster response efforts up and down the East Coast, ranging from mine explosions to floods and hurricanes, and later worked for the Kennedy family in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., where she met her future husband John Walker. In the mid-1950s, Isabel became the Red Cross's Nursing Representative for the state of Ohio, establishing a nursing committee in every chapter in the state. She earned a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Indiana.

Isabel and John married in 1958. John was serving in the US Navy, and they soon moved to Taiwan. Isabel served with the American Red Cross Field Service in Taiwan and at Red Cross training centers in Japan and the Philippines.

In 1961 they moved to San Francisco, and then to Palo Alto three years later. In 1970, Isabel joined Stanford University Medical Center as a member of the counseling team and a support-group facilitator. For much of the next thirty years she served countless patients in many roles, including as Assistant Director of the Department of Social Services and as the Department of Oncology's first Clinical Social Worker. She co-authored several works on supporting cancer patients and their families, and continued to see patients well into her 80s. She brought a practical empathy to all of her roles — helpful and kind to patients and families dealing with life-altering challenges.

Isabel was a dedicated correspondent with friends across the country and through the years, and was an active volunteer with the Palo Alto schools and local church groups. She loved beaches on both coasts, collecting artifacts and memories from her travels. She was a valued friend, colleague, and contributor to her community, as well as a beloved mother and grandmother.

She was predeceased by her sister Jean, her brother Duncan, and her husband John, and is survived by her son Kent and daughter-in-law Diana Walsh, daughter Avery and son-in-law Marc Olesen, and grandchildren Quinn, Callie, and Garrett Walker, and Jordan, Brooke, Kendall, and Tatum Olesen.

The family asks that any contributions in Isabel's memory be made to the American Red Cross, where she got her start in public health nursing and which remained close to her heart throughout her life.

Services will be held at St. Mark's Church, 600 Colorado Ave. Palo Alto, on January 13 at 10:30 am.

In a 2016 interview with the Red Cross, Isabel recalled "When my mother sent that 10-year-old girl out on that door-to-door drive, I was introduced to the fact that if you work hard and do something important, it really means something in life." It did.

PAID OBITUARY



Courtesy Office of Gov. Gavin Newsom

California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Elon Musk at Tesla's new global engineering and AI headquarters in Palo Alto on Feb. 22, 2023.

## Tesla

(continued from page 5)

in the area as well. Marshall's report says the existing transformers are "undersized relative to the needs of customers in the Stanford Research Park, require a higher-than-normal level of maintenance, and are nearing or past their useful lives of 50 years."

Vaibhav Taneja, chief financial officer of Tesla, has already signed the proposed agreement. If the council approves the proposed public-private partnership and authorizes City Manager Ed Shikada to sign the deal, Tesla's contractors would replace the two existing 4 kilovolt (kV) transformers at the substation with two 12 kV transformers. The project also includes installing three substation breakers, a power distribution center and two 12 kV feeders.

The Tesla project represents a stark departure from Palo Alto's notoriously methodical approach to infrastructure projects. While the citywide grid upgrade is expected to take seven years and cost between \$300 million and \$350 million to complete, a significant component of the Stanford Research Park project could be completed in just a few months.

Marshall noted that it typically takes three to four years to upgrade a substation. Tesla, however, is looking to finish all construction and energize its new building by April 2024.

"The City cannot meet this timeline under normal City processes due to insufficient staffing to coordinate the design and construction of all facilities and the time required to complete the City public procurement process," the report states.

The report notes that Tesla is not only chipping in for the cost of the replacement but also paying extra to have the project expedited. Even though the City Council has yet to discuss — much less approve — the deal, Tesla has already gone

out to bid on the project, and it has already selected a contractor to undertake the upgrade.

The substation improvement agreement is also highly unusual in that Tesla is explicitly authorized to "take the lead in design and construction" of the upgrade, which upon completion, would be transferred to the city's ownership. The company will be required to submit written progress reports and to meet with city officials once a month.

Both parties in the proposed partnership are expecting to reap long-term benefits from the deal. Tesla will pay a monthly fee to the city in exchange for having up to 11,200 kVA of capacity reserved for its needs. The city, for its part, would get help with both funding and implementing a utility project from Tesla, a company that famously moved its headquarters from Palo Alto to Austin, Texas, in late 2021 but that has only expanded its local footprint since then.

"These upgrades will serve Tesla, accommodate customers in the Stanford Research Park, replace outdated infrastructure, and modernize and reorganize the substation for greater efficiency," the Utilities Department report states.

The company announced its takeover of the former HP site nearly a year ago when its CEO Elon Musk and Gov. Gavin Newsom held a press conference last year announcing Tesla's plans to expand in Palo Alto.

"This is a poetic transition from the company that founded Silicon

Valley to Tesla," Musk said at the Feb. 22 event. "And we're very excited to make this our global engineering headquarters in California."

As Tesla races to get its new engineering headquarters running, Palo Alto is inching ahead with its broad upgrade to the electric grid, a project that city officials say is necessary to accommodate its goal of switching people away from natural gas to clean electricity. During an October presentation, Utilities Director Dean Batchelor said he expects the grid upgrade to stretch from 2024 to 2032.

The Utilities Department plans to start with the reconstruction of the overhead system, which makes up 70% of the city's grid. This component is expected to be completed by the end of 2027. The city would move on to the underground system, Batchelor said.

The project will include converting 4 kV lines to 12 kV to accommodate a growing demand for electric appliances and electric vehicles, Batchelor said at an Oct. 19 seminar sponsored by the League of Women Voters. The average peak demand in the current system is between 3 and 3.5 kVA (kilovolt amps), he said. The upgrade would support between 6 and 8 kVA.

"Once we get to (that) point, we can start thinking about having 100% electrification, which also includes EVs," Batchelor said. ■

*Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at [gsheyner@pawebly.com](mailto:gsheyner@pawebly.com).*

# CityView

A roundup of Palo Alto government action this week

## City Council (Jan. 8)

**Mayor:** The council elected Greer Stone to serve as its mayor in 2024. **Yes:** Burt, Kou, Lauing, Lythcott-Haims, Stone, Veenker **No:** Tanaka  
**Vice mayor:** The council voted 4-3 for Ed Lauing to serve as its vice mayor in 2024. **For Lauing:** Burt, Kou, Lauing, Stone **For Veenker:** Lythcott-Haims, Tanaka, Veenker



# Pulse

A weekly compendium of vital statistics

## POLICE CALLS

### Palo Alto

Date Jan. 4-10

### Arrests

Total people arrested . . . . . 15

### Violence Related

**El Camino Real**, 1/8 at 6:56 p.m.

Battery — simple (misdemeanor)

**Sand Hill Road**, 1/4 at 3:21 a.m. Child

Abuse — simple (misdemeanor)

**Paul Avenue**, 1/3 at 2:16 p.m. Rape (felony)

### Theft Related

Credit card forgery . . . . . 3

Embezzlement . . . . . 1

Grand theft . . . . . 8

Petty theft . . . . . 5

Retail theft . . . . . 2

Shoplifting . . . . . 5

### Alcohol or Drug Related

Possession of drugs . . . . . 2

### Vehicle Related

Abandoned auto . . . . . 1

Auto theft . . . . . 3

Driving without license . . . . . 1  
 Display unlawful registration . . . . . 4  
 Hit and run . . . . . 2  
 Possession of a stolen vehicle . . . . . 3  
 Theft from auto . . . . . 19  
 Theft of vehicle parts . . . . . 10  
 Vehicle accident/injury . . . . . 5  
 Vehicle accident/no injury . . . . . 3  
 Vehicle tampering . . . . . 1

### Miscellaneous

APS referral . . . . . 1

Death unattended . . . . . 1

Found property . . . . . 1

Lost property . . . . . 7

Mental health evaluation . . . . . 1

Missing person . . . . . 2

Outside warrant arrest . . . . . 2

Suspicious circumstances . . . . . 2

Trespassing . . . . . 1

Vandalism . . . . . 10

Warrant arrest . . . . . 1

## OBITUARIES

Local residents who have died recently include:

**Trudy Lucy Bowman**, 95, a Palo Alto resident who came to the city via New Zealand, Israel and San Francisco, who loved caring for babies, feeding people and showing hospitality and who actively volunteered for countless causes and nonprofits she believed in, including the Jewish Community Center, on Nov. 18, 2023.

**Joseph Robert Meyers**, 78, a resident of Palo Alto and career technical writer who as a Renaissance man possessed talents spanning from mathematics to photography to bicycling to math tutoring at Eastside College Preparatory, and whose family was always at the forefront of his joyous life, on Oct. 12, 2023.

**Jean Elsa (Ganz) Sloss**, 97, a former resident of Palo Alto and Portola Valley, who with her husband, Louis, was among the original 15 shareholders in Embarcadero Publishing Co., whose life was devoted to community and charity through co-founding Thomas Creek Ranch, an intentional community in Sonoma County, and the county's first hospice, and who was a loving mother and an accomplished tennis and pickleball player into her 90s, on Dec. 1, 2023.

**Joan Trehwitt**, 93, a Woodside resident who worked in the airline industry and was married to her beloved husband, Wayne D. Trehwitt III, for 50 years, who loved skiing and sailing with her grandsons at Lake Tahoe and spending Christmases in Maui, on Dec. 23, 2023.

**Madelaine "Mad" Juri Vairora**, 72, a former Menlo Park resident and Woodside High School graduate who kicked off her drama career at Canada College and later worked for the city of Fremont's Community Development Department, on Sept. 22, 2023.

To read the full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at PaloAltoOnline.com/Obituaries. ■

## Joseph Robert Meyers

October 22, 1944 – October 12, 2023

Joseph Robert Meyers, aged 78, of Palo Alto, CA, died on Thursday October 12, 2023, with his family at his side.

Joe was born in Milwaukee, WI, in 1944, the son of Viola and Albert Meyers. He attended the Salvatorian seminary, St. Nazianz, through high school. Years of living in a community setting helped mold Joe with a unique set of life skills, compassion and caring. Realizing as he began college that his path lay elsewhere, Joe left the seminary for studies at University of Minnesota with graduation from University of Wisconsin.

His first job brought Joe to California for a long career as a technical writer. He worked at many Silicon Valley companies, startups as well as giants Wells Fargo, Olivetti, Apple and Cisco. He wrote the original Apple II owner's manual – a technical classic now in the Computer History Museum. Once in California, Joe did graduate work in mathematics at San Jose State.

Joe was a joyous human, a Renaissance man. Joe loved words, he loved mathematics. He lived for the pursuit of knowledge. And still, he was deeply caring, with a constant smile and subtle wit. Joe was always present for friends and those in need of a listener or counselor.

Joe was an avid bicyclist, dedicated swimmer, and recreational hiker. Outdoors highlights were participation in the High Sierra Death Ride and providing backup for his son Ben's cycling team at MS fundraisers. He included music of all types into a rich social life. A talent for photography led to a foray into the arts. Joe exhibited many of his photographs locally and shared his nature photography widely. After retirement, Joe jumped into a new role as a math tutor with the Eastside College Preparatory community. His enthusiasm for math, humor, thoughtfulness, and support for the students were hallmarks at Eastside.

Family was foremost throughout Joe's life. Joe, his wife Melissa and son Ben spent many happy times through the years living and travelling in Europe, North Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Joe and Ben were close companions and co-conspirators, never happier than when they were inventing and problem solving. Joe was famous for his cooking skills, mixed with much humor as accompaniments to the food. (He was proud winner of a Palo Alto chili cookoff award, proof of his culinary skills.)

Joe leaves his wife, Melissa Biggs and son Benjamin Meyers. He is predeceased by his parents and two sisters. He is survived by siblings Steve (Mary), Madelene (Joel Smith), Cecilia Carrao and Kathleen Burghardt. He also leaves six nephews, five nieces and their families, and many dear friends and community members.

A celebration of life will take place January 20 at Lucie Stern Center.

Donation request: Eastside College Preparatory

PAID OBITUARY

Visit

## Lasting Memories

An online directory of obituaries and remembrances.

Search obituaries, submit a memorial, share a photo.

Go to: [www.PaloAltoOnline.com/obituaries](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com/obituaries)

# Employment

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 Menlo Park, CA 94025**

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**The Palo Alto Weekly offers employment advertising. If you wish to learn more about the employment advertising options, please visit [PaloAltoOnline.com/employment\\_ads/](http://PaloAltoOnline.com/employment_ads/).**

## Jean Sloss

February 26, 1926 – December 1, 2023

With family at her bedside, Jean Elsa (Ganz) Sloss died peacefully on December 1, 2023 at her home in Forestville, CA at age 97. She was born in 1926 in San Francisco to Fred and Elsa (Meier) Ganz, both descendants of Jewish pioneer families.



Raised in San Francisco, Jean attended Burke's School, spent summers at her grandparents' retreat, Menucha, alongside the Columbia River Gorge and later graduated from Bennington College in Vermont. She met her lifelong partner, Louis Sloss Jr., at a dance party in SF. They married a year later and raised 5 children, starting out in Portland, OR then moving back to Palo Alto and eventually Portola Valley, CA.

A loving mother, Jean was also a talented homemaker, flower arranger, a black-belt shopper, and a gourmet chef and hostess. Her compassionate nature and dedication to helping others touched the lives of many. With Louis and friends, she was active in the human potential movement and a lay-counseling center. Separately, Jean led Parent Effectiveness Trainings, assisting many families with the challenges of raising children.

She and Louis enjoyed extensive travel during their 70 years together, strongly favoring Paris and the French countryside. Jean could feel at home in both a Michelin-star restaurant and a tent pitched in the Sierra wilderness or Alaska. She loved gardening and going on wildflower hikes at Lake Tahoe and elsewhere.

Jean grew up playing the piano and adored attending the Symphony and Opera. She was an accomplished tennis and pickleball player into her 90s and enjoyed watching the major competitions, especially if Roger Federer was involved.

In the early 1970s, with 5 other families, Jean and Louis started Thomas Creek Ranch, an intentional community in Sonoma County, where they shared common facilities and values, and lived out the rest of their lives. Along with others, they founded the first hospice in Sonoma County in the 1980s and thereafter, Jean volunteered at Memorial Hospital serving the terminally ill and their families.

Jean and Louis were among the original 15 shareholders in Embarcadero Publishing Co., the parent company of the Palo Alto Weekly, when it was founded in 1979, and Jean continued to own a small number of shares.

Jean is survived by her daughters, Karen Sloss and Elizabeth Sloss (Dahveed Rubin), and her sons, Louis Sloss III (Julie), Jeff Sloss (Susan), and Tony Sloss (Debra). She also leaves behind eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Jean was preceded in death by her beloved husband, her parents and her brother, Fredrick Ganz, Jr.

A celebration of Jean's life will be held in the Spring in Forestville. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Memorial Hospice of Santa Rosa or a charity of your choosing.

PAID OBITUARY



# Trudy Bowman

April 2, 1928 – November 18, 2023

Long-time Palo Alto resident Trudy Bowman died peacefully in her home on November 18, 2023, at the “living past 90 is so unnecessary” age of 95 years. Born Gertrude Lucy Keller in 1928 in Timisoara, Romania (formerly the Austria-Hungarian Empire) to Jansci and Vera Keller, Trudy was the younger of two daughters. Her early childhood was easy and typical of upper middle-class European Jewish life: she attended school at a Jewish elementary school and weekly services at synagogue, and although her family were Hungarian-speaking Jews, her first language was German, taught by a governess. By the time Trudy was twelve and her sister Marion was fifteen, they spoke Hungarian and German and had conversational fluency in French and Romanian as well.



Because of the rising levels of anti-semitism in Nazi Germany before the outbreak of World War II, Trudy's father had applied for visas from several countries, including the United States. In 1940, just in the nick of time, New Zealand accepted their application, and the Keller family emigrated to Wellington. Trudy's mother Vera knew English, so she spent the six weeks of their trip teaching family members to speak English, the language of their new country.

New Zealand granted the Keller family's visa primarily because Jansci worked in the textile industry in Romania, and he brought four old knitting machines so he could establish his own business in Wellington. John, as he was now called, modernized the machines and worked with a designer to create “sweater sets,” very popular with women in the 1940s, which he then manufactured in his new factory. Because New Zealand was known for its wool, his business worked out very well for him. The family settled safely and comfortably into their new lives in New Zealand.

One of Trudy's new friends was Soni, a Jewish girl who had immigrated to New Zealand from Germany a year earlier. They met at Wellington Girls College, and Trudy said the two of them were mischief from the start. Trudy and Soni became life-long friends despite the vast physical distance that marked the rest of their lives, and their friendship created close relationships that have now spanned generations.

All of her life, Trudy loved babies and children, and she babysat first for neighborhood families back in Romania and then for families in Wellington. After Trudy graduated from high school, she trained for two years to be a “Karitane” baby nurse at a Plunket Society teaching hospital, so named for the town where the pioneering program of infant and post-natal care was established. At the time, the Plunket Society offered a certificated nursing program and is now New Zealand's largest provider of support services for children and families. For her on-the-job training, Trudy lived on the hospital premises and worked any and all of three shifts caring for newborn babies and providing breastfeeding support to their mothers. After her training, she was hired by families to stay with them for several weeks to care for both babies and mothers.

In 1948, Trudy took her Karitane nursing skills to Israel, where she lived in a kibbutz-like community at first, caring for babies during the day and refining her Hebrew at a language “ulpan” at night, and then later living with her distantly related but very close cousins in Jerusalem and Haifa.

Back in 1944, Trudy's sister Marion had married a Marine from San Jose and in 1946 had traveled to her new husband and his family in the United States on a “bride ship” with brides from Australia and New Zealand. After the war, Trudy's parents also emigrated to the United

States and settled in the Sunset district of San Francisco, California. They opened a “health food” store called Eat-Rite on Powell Street, which was one of the first of now ubiquitous natural food stores, and in 1950, Trudy left Israel to join her parents in San Francisco. She worked at the family store, and soon met her future husband, Curt Bowman, at a synagogue group for young adults. Curt grew up in Berlin, and as had Trudy's father, Curt's father applied for visas from several countries to escape Nazi persecution. Although Curt's father died before they could emigrate, Curt and his mother were granted visas to Bolivia in 1940. After the war, Curt moved to New York and then eventually San Francisco to take a job at Singer Sewing Machines. He joined a local synagogue, which just happened to be the same one that Trudy and her parents attended. Curt learned to repair sewing machines at his new job, which offered a natural topic of conversation with his soon-to-be father-in-law!

Trudy and Curt married in 1955 and moved to Palo Alto in 1957, buying a house for \$12,000 that they would live in for almost seventy years. The first of three sons, Dennis, was born in 1956, followed by twins Peter and Brian in 1959. Trudy wholeheartedly loved being a mother and having a family, and the Bowman house on a cul-de-sac became a hub of first little kid activities and then teenage shenanigans. Trudy became best friends with her next door neighbor, Marge, who later shared with Trudy that the realtor had first checked with Marge and all the residents in the cul-de-sac to make sure they felt comfortable with a Jewish family moving in next door. Since Marge and Trudy's kids are still good friends today, apparently it was okay! Trudy loved to cook, and even more, she loved to feed people, and her house became famous for being a place where anyone could find something yummy to eat at any time.

Trudy remained close to her sister Marion, who also had three children, and the two families grew up together. They vacationed at Lake Tahoe and the now much extended families continue to celebrate birthdays and holidays together. Trudy also was the primary caregiver for her aging parents, who had eventually sold Eat Rite and moved to Palo Alto. Greenma and Greenpa, as their six grandchildren called them, loved when the family, of which Trudy was now the acknowledged matriarch, got together for Passover, Hanukkah, and everyone's birthdays. And Trudy cooked (of course she did!) all of the meals for the Greenies, as they eventually became called, for the rest of their lives.

All the way into her late 80s, Trudy traveled extensively, visiting family and friends in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel, Romania, England, and many places in the United States. In return, Trudy generously shared her sprawling ranch home in Palo Alto with family and friends who traveled from all around the world to see her. And Trudy had a boundless interest in people's lives. She always wanted to know what was happening not only with her close family and friends, but also with *their* friends and families. Trudy completely and effortlessly embraced everyone she met; she loved learning about their interests, their jobs, their friends, and their adventures. And her comfortable home and her generous hospitality were at times a refuge for too many people to count.

Throughout most of her life, Trudy actively volunteered. She “adopted” Jewish Russian immigrants through Hadassah at Temple Beth Am, and she volunteered in the kitchen at the Jewish Community Center and helped distribute meals from the Food Pantry to needy families. She supported many charitable causes: civil rights; women's rights; Jewish education; native American education; local, state, and national parks; political groups that supported Israel; natural and wildlife conservation efforts; animal humane societies; and public television and radio, to name just a few.

Trudy was a life-long patron of the arts. She regularly

attended the San Francisco Symphony, taking the senior shuttle from the Jewish Community Center with her several dear friends in Palo Alto. She attended many plays performed at the Los Altos Stage Company, inviting friends and family to join her. Trudy loved movies, both contemporary and classic, and she regularly attended Stanford Theater's film series and festivals. She was an avid reader, enjoying mystery, history, memoir, fiction, and all forms of news media. In her early 90s, Trudy learned mahjong and began playing twice a month with a close group of friends. She regularly frequented farmers markets, passed up no sample at Costco, and sought out specialty food stores. In addition to containing many tasty treats, Trudy's kitchen was a cornucopia of single-purpose gadgets: pickle grabbers, cheese slicers, spaetzle makers, and soft-boiled egg piercers.

Trudy claimed the name Omi when her grandchildren and grandniece were born, and what an Omi she was! Every child who has ever visited Trudy knows about the unique attention and affection she gave to kids: she asked not *if* they were hungry but what they were hungry *for*; she directed them to the toys in the back room or to the cul-de-sac with buckets of chalk or to the backyard to pick fruit and vegetables. Trudy played endless games of Rummikub first with her own children and then with every generation after. She let children play “hairdresser” with her hair; and she enthusiastically applauded acrobatics and dances and singing and art projects and every single thing any child wanted to share with her. Trudy loved nothing more than to hold a baby on her lap, and if she could feed that baby, too, well, all the better! She felt very blessed to have had young children present in her life all the way to the end of her own.

The three tragedies of Trudy's life were when her sister Marion died at age 59 in 1985, when her husband Curt died in 1999, and when her son Peter died in 2021. She bore the untimely losses of Marion and Curt with the support and love of her family and close friends, but Peter's death, after he succumbed to brain cancer at the young age of 62, remained painful for her.

Trudy is predeceased by her husband Curt; her sister Marion and her brother-in-law David; and most sadly, her son Peter; She is survived by her two sons Dennis and Brian and her daughters-in-law Kristi, Suzanne, and Robin; her nephew Adrian and his wife Robyn; her niece Judith and her husband Dany; her niece Claudia and her partner Cathy; her granddaughter Sarah and her husband Will; her granddaughter Amy and her husband James; her grandchildren Hailey, Olivia, and Jake; her step-grandchildren Cris and Daniel; her great-grandchildren Brooklynn, Aubrey, Hunter, and Mason; her step great-grandchildren Colton, Jonathan, and Cooper; her grandniece Marina and her husband Zach; her great-grandnephew Keller and great-grandniece Zelda; and many cousins and cousins of cousins all around the world.

In her last weeks of living, Omi told family and friends who visited and called her that she had a wonderful life and was ready to die. She said she had fully lived every one her ninety-five years, had no regrets, just a few sorrows, and had loved and been loved by too many people to count. Although she didn't think there was life after death (but if there was, she was pleased that she would see Peter, Curt, Marion, and her parents again!), she did believe that she would forever remain a part of everyone she loved.

Trudy's granddaughter Amy has said it best: “My Omi, your Omi; she was the Omi to us all.” May her memory be a blessing to everyone who knew and loved her.

A celebration of Trudy Bowman's life is scheduled on April 13, 2024, 1:00pm - 4:00pm, at Mitchell Park Community Center, 3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Contact Dennis Bowman at dennismbowman@gmail.com or 831-601-9850 for more information.





# Spectrum

Editorials, letters and opinions

## Guest Opinion

# A dose of sunshine, caffeine and optimism

By Debbie Mytels

About two months ago, I stopped for coffee at a Starbucks in Saratoga. It was a sunny afternoon, and I took the big warm cup outside with my magazine to enjoy some time outdoors. I noticed that a foursome who'd arrived on their bikes were now heading to the table behind me. Older folks, I thought, glancing at them. I didn't pay any more attention as they settled into their chairs.



But then, I overheard one of the men say, "So tell us about this heat pump thing." I perked up my ears! The other man started in, explaining their water heater was old, that they'd researched the idea of electric water heaters, and decided that a heat pump model would be the most efficient. "And we got a big rebate from Silicon Valley Clean Energy, so that reduced the cost considerably..."

By now, I was more interested in them than in my magazine. However, I didn't want to intrude, so I just kept eaves-dropping.

"Don't forget about the BayREN rebate, dear," the wife interjected.

"Yes," he said, "and because of the Federal Inflation Reduction Act — the thing that Biden got passed — we'll be getting 30% of the cost back as a tax credit from the IRS this year. Basically, it's costing us the same as if we'd bought a new gas water heater. So we avoided a broken water heater mess — and we're reducing our emissions, too."

"But what happens if they shut off the electricity?" the other woman asked.

"Yes," the speaker said. "But it's usually not for long. We got a slightly larger tank, so it holds enough hot water for a couple days. We set the temperature a little hotter and bought a model with a mixing valve, which adds cold water as it flows out, so you don't burn your hands. It's a manageable problem."

"So now," the wife chimed in again, "with the induction cooktop, we're almost an all electric house!"

The other woman asked how she liked it. The first replied, "It's so easy to clean — just wipe it with a cloth! And it's so much faster than an old-fashioned

electric coil stove. With induction, it's easy to control the temp, and as soon as you turn it off, you can touch the glass top without getting burned."

Then the second man said, "That's all nice, but how can you cook if they shut off the electricity?"

"Well," said the first man, "It hasn't been a problem so far — but I've heard that the newest induction stoves also include a battery. They recharge automatically, and hold enough juice so you can cook even if the power goes down."

"Smart idea," said the other man.

"But you're still using gas to heat the house, aren't you?" the second woman inquired.

Enjoying the warm sun on my back, I wondered how they'd answer. The wife responded, "Yes, because it IS expensive to change a furnace. But I've been reading more about the hazards of gas. There's a UCLA study that says kids who grow up in a home with gas are 40% more likely to develop asthma. Our grandkids visit here a lot, and I don't want them to breathe the bad indoor air, especially in the winter."

"Our heater's as old as our house," her husband added, "but we do have a duct system, so it should be easy to switch from gas to an electric furnace. So, we're planning now to switch it next year, to get another tax credit."

He paused and then asked, "How old is your house?"

"It's over 70 years old," the second man said, "with just a floor furnace. We don't have any ducts."

"Yeah, yours will be more expensive," the first man nodded, adding that he'd heard about a cheaper system called "mini-splits" that are smaller units, without ducts and placed onto the exterior wall of rooms you want to heat.

"That would work," said the second woman, adding: "I worry about gas. Remember that big gas explosion in San Bruno about 10 years ago? It blew up a whole block — some 30 houses — and eight people died! And what if we have an earthquake? Gas catches fire and that's usually the biggest damage when there's a quake."

By now, my coffee was drunk, the sunshine had slipped behind a post, and it was time for me to head out. I picked up my magazine and left, glancing at the

foursome with a polite smile.

"Amazing," I thought to myself getting back into my car, "Here I am in another town, listening to people I don't know ... and they're talking about the same stuff that we're chewing over in Palo Alto."

Of course, Saratoga shares many demographics with Palo Alto: affluent, older, well-educated techies. But these strangers are learning from each other. The resources we need for taking action — the appliances, the rebates, the tax credits — are now readily available throughout our region. And people are starting to make the changes.

I pushed the button to start my EV, and thought: "The awareness is growing that our Earth is in trouble — and we're starting to do something about it. Now, if only we can do it in time?" ■

*Debbie Mytels, a resident of Midtown, is delighted with her new heat pump water heater installed by CPAU in October. She's a retired associate director at Acterra and currently volunteers on the steering committee of the 350SV Palo Alto Climate Team. You can reach her at [debbie.mytels@gmail.com](mailto:debbie.mytels@gmail.com).*

## Read more opinions online

Palo Alto Online's bloggers are writing about everything from innovation and politics to community service and family. Here are the latest posts from some of our bloggers. Discuss these and other topics with them at [PaloAltoOnline.com/blogs](http://PaloAltoOnline.com/blogs).

### The Food Party!

by Laura Stec

*There is fungus among us*

Jan 10, 2024



### An Alternative View

by Diana Diamond

*Are Palo Alto's priorities really doable — or just pipe dreams?*

Jan 7, 2024



### A New Shade of Green

by Sherry Listgarten

*What do you think about a meat tax?*

Jan 7, 2024



## Letters

### Improved proposal for University Avenue

Editor:

The Dec. 15 issue of the Palo Alto Weekly included an article about a plan for University Avenue which proposed bike lanes next to traffic, and parked cars next to the curb.

I believe a much better plan would position the bike lane next to the curb, separated from traffic by a line of parked cars. That is, looking from the curb towards the middle of the street: first a bike lane, then a parking lane, then a traffic lane.

The bikes would be separated from traffic by a line of parked cars, which would be directly next to the traffic lane - so that parking a car would not require driving through the bike lane.

This would improve safety without changing the amount of space used by bikes, parked cars

and moving cars.

This traffic plan has been implemented in parts of Arastradero Road, near Terman Middle School, which serves as a successful model that could be copied on University Avenue.

Such traffic designs have been

implemented in other cities, including New York City.

I urge us in Palo Alto to adopt this simple, yet much safer, improvement to the proposed plan for University Avenue.

Jim Fox  
Carlson Circle, Palo Alto





# How a house became the motive for the 1976 Chowchilla kidnapping

## Criminals wanted to buy and restore Rengstorff House in Mountain View

BY LINDA TAAFFE

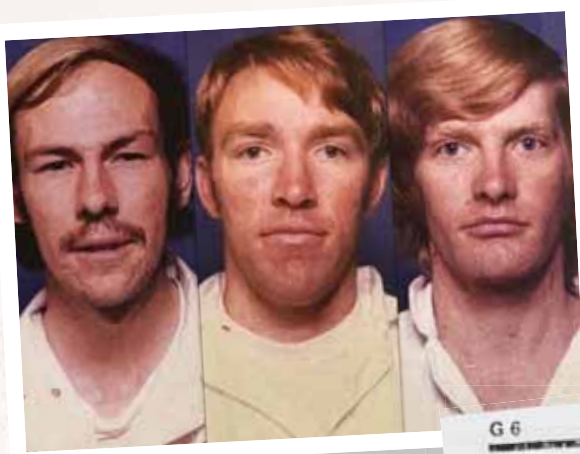
Most people who have ventured into Shoreline Park probably have seen the historic, two-story, white wooden Rengstorff House — the oldest home in Mountain View and a striking example of Victorian Italianate architecture with front-facing bay windows, a central gable crowned by a widow's walk and a front portico flanked with square columns that stand out in stark contrast to the surrounding baylands.

More than a decade before the farmhouse was transformed into the city's landmark history museum representing the area's early agricultural days, it became part of the motive behind what has been considered the largest mass kidnapping case in American history.

Woodside High School graduates Frederick Woods and brothers James and Richard Schoenfeld — the now infamous Chowchilla school bus kidnapers — reportedly launched their plan to bury 26 school children and their bus driver alive in an underground hole on July 15, 1976, in part because they wanted ransom money to preserve the abandoned, rundown mansion from destruction and make it their private residence, newspapers reported at the time.

A year prior to the kidnapping, two of the men had struck a deal with the city of Mountain View to restore the 15-room house built around 1867 for settler Henry Rengstorff, who came to California hoping to strike it rich in the gold rush but ended up making his money as a rancher and local businessman who operated a ferry between San Francisco and his Mountain View property.

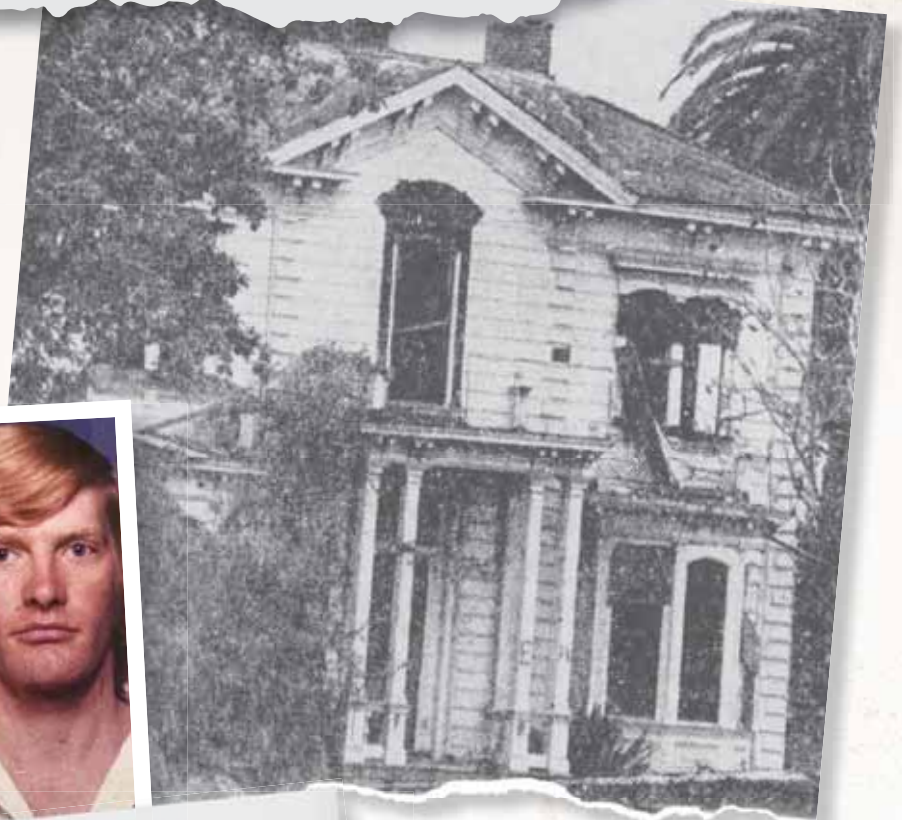
The Peninsula Times Tribune reported on



Aug. 26, 1975, that the Mountain View City Council approved a proposal from Woods of Portola Valley and James Schoenfeld of Atherton to buy a half-acre lot from the city at the intersection of Middlefield Road and Independence and Rock streets and move the historic house to the site. The house, located on Stierlin Road at the time, had been abandoned a few years earlier and the new property owner, Newhall Land and Farming Co., offered the home free of charge to anyone who would remove it.

Under the agreement with the city, Woods and Schoenfeld would have to pay \$23,000 for the new site, \$13,000 to have the home moved and about \$66,000 to restore it so it would be habitable.

The two raised the cash needed to purchase the city-owned lot and move the home but struggled to come up with a \$60,000 surety bond to guarantee the renovation and



Clockwise from above: This newspaper photo shows how the Rengstorff House looked in 1976, around the time Frederick Woods and James Schoenfeld were trying to restore the structure. Image from the Peninsula Times Tribune. Collecting ransom to pay for the restoration of the Rengstorff House was part of the motive in the Chowchilla mass kidnapping, according to this article that appeared in the Montreal Star. Image from the Montreal Star. Fred Woods, James Schoenfeld and Richard Schoenfeld mug shots. Courtesy Alameda County Sheriff's Office.

finalize the deal, according to an article published in the Peninsula Times Tribune on July 23, 1976.

Reportedly, the duo ended up in debt trying to rescue the old mansion, which in part, led them to begin plotting out a scheme that involved kidnapping young school children riding a bus more than 100 miles south in the small farming community of Chowchilla by gunpoint and transporting them to the Bay Area where they would be buried alive in an underground moving van stocked with food and water at the California Rock & Gravel quarry that Woods' father owned in Livermore. (CNN released the documentary "Chowchilla" earlier this month that details the kidnapping and its aftermath. The documentary can be rented on Google Play and Vudu and will be streaming on Max starting Jan. 11.)

Jack Baugh, chief of the criminal division of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office who worked on the case and later co-wrote a book about the kidnapping, "Why Have They Taken Our Children?", said James Schoenfeld wrote in a diary that they planned to collect \$5 million in

ransom money to rehabilitate the Rengstorff House as well as pay off debts and fund inventions, according to a story published by the Montreal Star on Jan. 18, 1978. To avoid getting caught, the men planned to bury all the ransom money for seven years, except for \$40,000, which Woods wanted to use immediately to preserve the house.

"(Woods) wanted money to realize his dream of living in a grand, fully restored and modernized Victorian mansion," Baugh wrote in his book.

Their plan ultimately failed because all 26 children and their bus driver were able to dig their way out of the hole and escape before the trio had sent the ransom note, later discovered at the Woods family's 79-acre Portola Valley estate directing that the money be dropped from a small plane flying over the Santa Cruz mountains an hour before dawn.

Within days, all three men were in police custody. Richard Schoenfeld, 22, surrendered voluntarily in Oakland, Woods, 24, was captured in Vancouver, British Columbia, and James Schoenfeld, 24, was arrested in Menlo Park. The trio was sentenced to life in prison,



Courtesy city of Mountain View

The Rengstorff House, Mountain View's oldest home, now hosts special events and exhibits.



**Interested in visiting the Rengstorff House?**

Free docent-led tours are offered Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1-4 p.m. The garden and grounds are open during Shoreline Park's regular hours. Friends of "R" House, a nonprofit organization supporting the city-owned landmark that curates and manages the museum exhibit, also offers online exhibits and tours.

but all three have been since granted parole with Woods being the last to be released in August 2022.

As for the Rengstorff House, the city of Mountain View purchased it for \$1 in 1979 and moved it to Shoreline Park a year later to make way for a business park. The home sat vacant for more than a decade while political and private disagreement over who should take responsibility for the home raged on.

'(Woods) wanted money to realize his dream of living in a grand, fully restored and modernized Victorian mansion.'

Jack Baugh, chief of the criminal division of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Offers to turn the home into a restaurant, office building, art gallery and ballroom came and went.

In 1986, the city relocated the home once again; this time to its current location at 3070 N. Shoreline Blvd., and the community launched a massive effort to rescue the historic building.

The home, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, opened to the public as a history museum in 1991 and has since served as a popular destination for weddings, tourists and even ghost hunters. ■

*Email Home/Real Estate Editor Linda Taaffe at [taaffe@paweekly.com](mailto:taaffe@paweekly.com).*

**About the cover:**  
Photo illustration by Douglas Young. Images from the Palo Alto Times, Peninsula Times Tribune and courtesy Alameda County Sheriff's Office.



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**Public Notices**

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME  
File No. FBN701863  
The following person(s)/registrant(s) has/have abandoned the use of the fictitious business name(s). The information given below is as it appeared on the fictitious business statement that was filed at the County Clerk-Recorder's Office. FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME(S):  
DAVE'S BODY SHOP  
2145 Old Middlefield Way  
Mountain View, CA 94043  
FILED IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY ON: 06/11/2020  
UNDER FILE NO. FBN665988  
REGISTRANT'S NAME(S):  
LIEM PHAM  
2091 Plymouth St  
Mountain View, CA 94043  
THIS BUSINESS WAS CONDUCTED BY An Individual.  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of SANTA CLARA County on January 02 2024.  
(PAW Jan 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2024)

JUNG CONSULTING  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN701337  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) Jung Consulting, located at 4127 Willmar Drive Palo Alto, CA 94306, Santa Clara County.  
This business is owned by: an Individual.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
SARAH ANGELINA JUNG  
4127 Willmar Drive  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/13/2023  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara on December 13 2023.  
(PAW Jan 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN701401  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) Committee for Green Foothills, located at 3921 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303, Santa Clara County.  
This business is owned by: a Corporation.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
GREEN FOOTHILLS FOUNDATION  
3921 E. Bayshore Rd.  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
California  
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/1962  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara on December 15 2023.  
(PAW Jan 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2024)

HOLIDAY DOLLARS  
MERRY LEAGUE BASEBALL  
CHERUBINI ARTS  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN701577  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) Holiday Dollars, 2.) Merry League Baseball, 3.) Cherubini Arts, located at 2473 High Street, Palo Alto CA 94301, Santa Clara. This business is owned by: an Individual.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
KEVIN ROSS SANTIAGO  
2473 High Street  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/2010  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara on December 21 2023.  
(PAW Jan 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

GABBYGEM  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN700822  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) GABBYGEM, located at 420 James Rd #24, Palo Alto, CA, 94306, Santa Clara County. This business is owned by: an Individual.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
TIANCI ZHANG  
420 James Rd #24  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/09/2023

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara on November 28 2023.  
(PAW Jan 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

THE FIRST TEE OF SILICON VALLEY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN701882  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) The First Tee of Silicon Valley, located at 2797 Park Avenue, Suite 205, Santa Clara, CA 95050, Santa Clara.  
This business is owned by: a Corporation.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
THE FUTURE TALENT OF SILICON VALLEY  
2797 Park Avenue, Suite 205  
Santa Clara, CA 95050  
CA  
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/17/2013  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara on January 02 2024.  
(PAW Jan 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2024)

ZENITHAL ENGINEERING  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: FBN701479  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
1.) Zenithal Engineering, located at 984 California Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306, Santa Clara.  
This business is owned by: an Individual.  
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):  
JAROD ALAN MCCORMICK  
984 California Ave.  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
Registrant 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 on December 19 2023.  
(PAW Jan 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA  
Case No.: 24CV428572  
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:  
Petitioner: Elizabeth Ashley Slaydon filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:  
ELIZABETH ASHLEY ANEJA to ASHLEY SLAYDON ANEJA  
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.  
NOTICE OF HEARING: 03/26/2024, 0845, Probate of the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara, 191 N. First Street, San Jose, CA 95113.  
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:  
PALO ALTO WEEKLY  
Date: 01/03/2024  
Jacqueline M. Arroyo  
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT  
(PAW Jan 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2024)

**The Palo Alto Weekly is adjudicated to publish in Santa Clara County.**

- Fictitious Business Name
- Abandonment of Fictitious Business Name
- Name Change
- Partnership Withdrawal or Dissolution
- Petition to Administer Estate - Probate Hearing
- Notice of Bulk Sale
- Legal Summons
- Trustee Sale

**The deadline is Monday at 11:59 pm. Visit [PaloAltoOnline.com/legal\\_notices/](http://PaloAltoOnline.com/legal_notices/) For assistance email [LegalNotices@paweekly.com](mailto:LegalNotices@paweekly.com).**



# Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, culture, books and more, edited by Heather Zimmerman

## LISTEN LOCALLY

### Miko Marks, Frank Thibeaux to perform as part of Guild Theatre's new Local Sound Series

By Karla Kane

**M**enlo Park's Guild Theatre has been livening up the Peninsula performing arts scene since opening as a concert venue in 2022. With its new Local Sound Series, the nonprofit will be shining its spotlight on Bay Area musicians in particular. The hope is that the community will be inspired to come out and support local musicians, even if they're not yet familiar with them.

Eventually, "the goal is to try all types of genres of local artists; to try something from each and every scene," said the Guild's talent buyer Molly Butera.

The theater has hosted sporadic local nights before but is making it more official with its new series, and on Jan. 18 will feature the acclaimed Americana artist Miko Marks (based in Oakland) and the Belle Haven-raised bassist and blues

vocalist Frank Thibeaux. Both acts are associated with East Palo Alto's Redtone Records, which founder Justin Phipps described as a nonprofit collective of Bay Area artists making "soulful music with a classic sound."

"We are committed to ensuring that great music and culture thrive throughout this region, and the Guild is a fantastic partner in that mission," Phipps told this news organization in an email.

Marks first worked with Phipps and musician/producer Steve Wyreman when she was starting her musical career, back in 2003.

"A few years ago, the timing just lined up with a dream I had one night that the three of us were making music together again," she recalled in an email Q&A with this news organization. The team has written and produced her most recent three records for Redtone: "Our Country," "Race Records,"

and "Feel Like Going Home."

"The Redtone collective has been an amazing musical community to be a part of," Marks said.

Marks' music has evolved over the years. While she's best known as a country artist, she now feels more aligned with the Americana scene, "as that feels the most inclusive of the styles that make up my sound," including blues, gospel, rock and soul, she explained.

"I faced significant challenges in the early 2000s when I was trying to make it as a Black woman doing straight-ahead country in Nashville. Since that time, the country music scene has been eager to showcase its growing diversity, shining a light on more Black and female artists in particular, so much so that it has actually been difficult for me to successfully redefine myself as an Americana artist," she said. "I appreciate any support, and I am so thrilled to be looking ahead to my third Grand Ole Opry performance, and so grateful to have an exhibit in the Country Music Hall of Fame. But at the same time, when people keep hearing 'country music artist Miko Marks' and then come to my shows and get some Duane Allman-style guitar and some Little Walter-style harmonica and some Mavis Staples-style singing, I don't want them saying, 'Well, this isn't country' and thinking that I'm the one defining myself that way."

After all, "back in the early days, it was all the same music anyway, really. Black, white, Indigenous, Latinx, musicians and artists all hearing each other, all influencing each other, all just playing local music," she said. "Genres only came about for marketing. 'Who are we gonna sell this to? If Jimmie Rodgers sings this 12-bar blues we'll call it country and sell it to white folks. If Robert Johnson sings it we'll call it a race record and sell it to Black folks.' Even though it might be literally the same song."

After all, "back in the early days, it was all the same music anyway, really. Black, white, Indigenous, Latinx, musicians and artists all hearing each other, all influencing each other, all just playing local music," she said. "Genres only came about for marketing. 'Who are we gonna sell this to? If Jimmie Rodgers sings this 12-bar blues we'll call it country and sell it to white folks. If Robert Johnson sings it we'll call it a race record and sell it to Black folks.' Even though it might be literally the same song."



Karen Santos

Miko Marks is best known as a country artist, but her sound has evolved to align more with the Americana scene.



Courtesy Frank Thibeaux

Musician Frank Thibeaux says audiences at The Guild can expect "good old funky blues."

Marks' work with Redtone "has been focused on reaching back to all of my musical roots, not just country. I've tapped into another side of my voice, bringing in the sounds from my old church days, singing with more power, more spirit," she said.

At their Guild performance, Redtone house band The Resurrectors (including Phipps and Wyreman on keys and harmonica, and lead guitar, respectively) will be backing both Thibeaux and Marks.

"It's Resurrector night. We're going to be resurrecting the ancestors of the blues and country world," Thibeaux said.

A longtime member of the local music scene who currently lives in San Jose, Thibeaux reflected on how the area has changed over the course of his life and career.

"When I was growing up in Belle Haven and East Palo Alto, it was predominantly Black, and there was a singing group or a band almost on every corner," he said. "That's gone. There are hardly any Black people left in that community." As a child, he said,

being immersed in that music-rich environment inspired him.

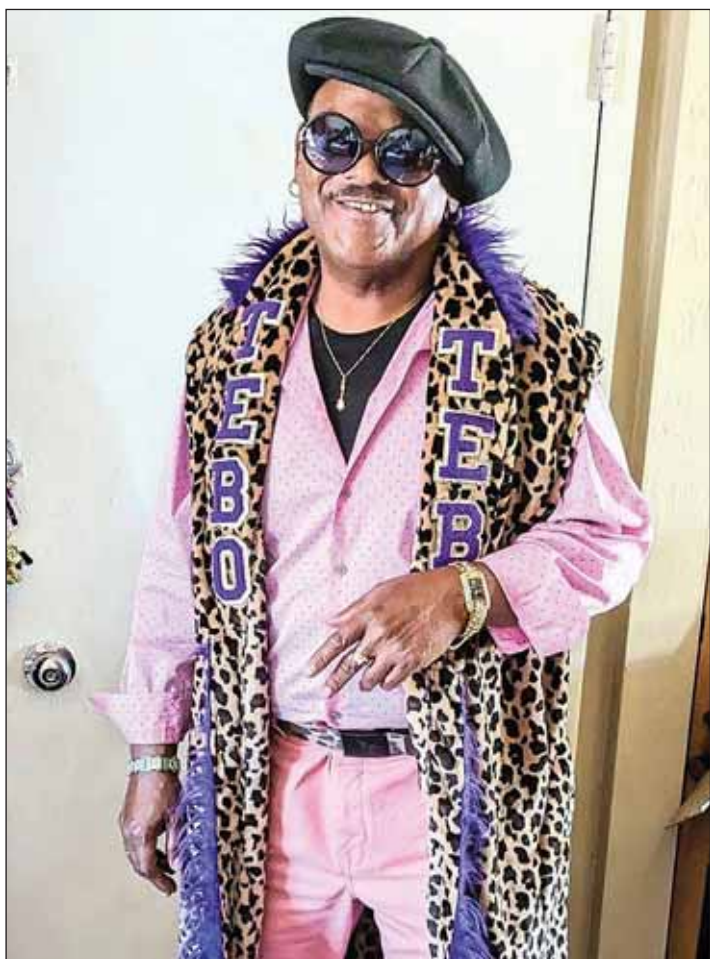
"It was the competitiveness of it that made me really want to be better. There were so many great singers and musicians and players," he recalled. "Something was always going on. It kept me engaged."

He formed his first singing group, The Junior Temptations, around the third grade, performing at school lunch times. "We sucked but we thought we were great," he laughed, his voice distinctively deep and raspy. "By the fifth grade, my voice started to change. They basically kicked me out of the group because I sounded like I sound now!"

When a friend lent him a six-string guitar with two broken strings, that became his first bass guitar and the rest is history.

"The bass is an instrument where it requires you to listen to everybody and it requires you to hold everything down; you're the foundation," he said. "If your bass player sucks your band sucks. That really inspired me to take the lead. I've been a leader ever since





Courtesy Frank Thibeaux

Frank Thibeaux, also known as Tebo, grew up in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood and is now based in San Jose.

I started." He also discovered a knack for songwriting, and musical interests that defy genre, incorporating blues, funk, R&B, rap, rock and beyond. His long musical career boasts many highlights, including his band Precision's four months touring Japan in the 1980s — "Kids from Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, being in Osaka Japan; it was like a fairy tale," he said — and his working with all sorts of big names, from Herbie Hancock to MC Hammer.

More recently, at an East Palo Alto block party, Thibeaux was performing on the sidewalk with his blues band when he caught the ear of Phipps.

"Maybe five years ago I got a call, 'I got this song for you.' I've been hanging out with Redtone ever since," he said.

He's released two Redtone singles and is currently working on a "strictly blues" album with the label (under the name Frank Thibeaux, to distinguish it from his multi-genre work under the name Tebo). "To be affiliated with a record company that believes in me still at this age, I think that's awesome," he said.

The Jan. 18 show will be Thibeaux's first performance at the Guild, a venue he's been hoping to be booked by since it opened, and especially meaningful because of the recent loss of a close friend,

who, as he was battling cancer, repeatedly told Thibeaux "You've got to play the Guild!"

"I know he's smiling in heaven," he said of his late friend. "It should be an awesome show. I hope my people come out."

According to Marks, audiences can expect a high-energy and spirit-filled evening.

"We leave it all out on the stage. It'll be joyous, raucous, fun, but you also might see me fighting back the occasional tear on certain songs. Every time we've ever performed we've always had at least one person (and usually more) come up to me at the merch table with a tear in their eyes telling me how much they needed that experience, how uplifting and healing it was," she said. "That's the power of music. That's why we do this. This is where we uplift and heal ourselves and hope to pass that on to the audience in the process." ■

**Email Assistant Lifestyle Editor Karla Kane at [kkane@paweekly.com](mailto:kkane@paweekly.com).**

Miko Marks and Frank Thibeaux, Jan. 18, 8 p.m., The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Tickets are \$28-\$66. All ages. [guildtheatre.com](http://guildtheatre.com).

**Correction**

In the Jan. 5 issue, "From Barbenheimer to small-budget indies" misidentified the role of J. Robert Oppenheimer as having "organized" the Manhattan Project. General Leslie Groves was the director of the Manhattan Project. Oppenheimer was director of the Los Alamos Laboratory, which was one part of the larger Manhattan Project. The Palo Weekly regrets the error.

# Worth a Look



Courtesy Tricia Cronin

Members of The Living Earth Show collaborate with contemporary dance company Post:ballet in a performance of "Lyra," based on a classic Greek myth, at Stanford Live Jan. 18-20.

## 'Lyra'

"Lyra," a collaboration between experimental chamber music group The Living Earth Show and contemporary dance company Post:ballet, is a multidisciplinary (dance, film, and live music) performance rooted in the classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. According to Stanford Live, "Lyra" explores our shared human experiences of love, loss, and learning to let go." The performance incorporates music by composer Samuel Adams, choreography by Vanessa Thiessen and cinematography by Benjamin Tarquin and was created "both in quarantine and in person."

Jan. 18-20, 8 p.m., The Bing Concert Hall Studio, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford. \$50. [live.stanford.edu](http://live.stanford.edu).

## 'What They Say About Love'

Feldman's Books in downtown Menlo Park is perhaps best known as a treasure trove of used and vintage reading material, but it also offers events, including a monthly poetry open mic night and special performances featuring local artists. On Jan. 12, catch actor Steve Budd performing his award-winning, humorous solo show "What They Say About Love," for which he interviewed a variety of couples about how they fell — and stay — in love. According to Feldman's website, Budd performed the show at the shop in October and is back by popular demand. And if you like that one, stay tuned for next month, when he'll present "What They Said About Sex."

Jan. 12, 5:30 p.m., Feldman's Books, 1075 Curtis St., Menlo Park. Free. [feldmansbooks.net](http://feldmansbooks.net).

## Gallery House reception

Gallery House, the longtime Palo Alto co-op gallery that marked its 65th anniversary last year, has lost its lease and is planning to move. The gallery recently opened "So Ready," its final exhibition in its current spot, and is marking the occasion with a reception Jan. 12 that features new works as well as some previously unseen pieces by 30 artists — all "priced to move," as the reception flyer says. Visitors will also have the chance to play curator and help one of the gallery's member artists, photographer Michael Endicott, decide how to show some of his latest works.

Jan. 12, 5-7 p.m. at Gallery House, 320 S. California Ave., Palo Alto. [galleryhouse.art](http://galleryhouse.art).

## Band of Brothers Levin and La Barbera

If your new year's resolution was to catch more live shows, Earthwise Productions couldn't offer a better way to make a start on that, setting the musical bar high for 2024. The Band of Brothers double bill presented by Earthwise on Jan. 12 highlights two pairs of talented brothers who bring diverse credits and a wealth of musical experience to the stage. Bassist Tony Levin has shared the stage with everyone from Peter Gabriel to Lou Reed to Judy Collins, and he honed his jazz chops in performances with names like Buddy Rich and Chuck Mangione, while his brother, keyboardist Pete Levin, has recorded or performed with the likes of Miles Davis, Gil Evans and Dave Brubeck. (Read about Tony's experiences on the road at his longstanding blog: [tonylevin.com](http://tonylevin.com)). Meanwhile, the La Barbera brothers come with equally versatile and prestigious résumés: in addition to touring and recording under his own name, jazz tenor, alto and soprano saxophonist, clarinetist, and flautist Pat La Barbera has performed with Buddy Rich Big Band, Woody Herman and Carlos Santana. His drummer and composer brother, Joe La Barbera, has also performed with Herman, Mangione and Tony Bennett, while his work as a sideman has included stints with John Scofield, Rosemary Clooney, Michael Bubl  and Rod Stewart.

Jan. 12, 8 p.m. at Palo Alto Art Center auditorium, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. Tickets are \$4.25-\$18. [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com).



# Eating Out

## The refill revolution

Meet two Peninsula refilleries making shopping more sustainable

By Karla Kane

**W**hen you're shopping, how much thought do you give to not only the products you buy, but also the packaging they come in and the waste they create, or to the overall environmental footprint of your consumption? Have you ever considered changing your habits but found the prospect daunting? Laura Porter and Emily Ting have thought about it a lot, and their Peninsula establishments are here to help, offering local customers the opportunity to make shopping for everyday essentials (and goodies) more sustainable in an accessible way.

Byrd's Filling Station in San Mateo and Right On! Refillery in Los Altos are both examples of "refilleries" — retailers that aim to reduce reliance on single-use plastic by offering items in bulk so customers can refill their containers and use them again and again.

### Byrd's Filling Station

Byrd's Filling Station founder Porter's journey away from waste began about five years ago, when she was horrified by a San Francisco Chronicle article she read about plastic pollution.

As she learned more, she became concerned not only about the harmful effects of plastic waste in the environment, but also the pollution involved in manufacturing it. At the same time, the busy mom was learning about and inspired by the Plastic Free July movement and decided to change her family's consumption habits. It was trickier than she expected.

Over the next year, she set goals to avoid plastic at the grocery store,

then worked on finding plastic-free sources of staples like shampoo and deodorant. She found what she was looking for online, but feared the packing and shipping process ran contrary to her sustainability goals. Plus, ordering from so many different vendors was time-consuming and tedious. She began stocking up on deliveries from a shop in the East Bay and found other locals were interested in getting the goods as well.

"There needs to be a place to go to make it convenient," she remembers thinking, desiring a central spot in her own neck of the woods. In May 2022 she officially opened Byrd's Filling Station with the goal of providing a one-stop shop in San Mateo to meet basic grocery and household needs, including all sorts of food (both bulk and packaged), cleaning products, makeup and much more.

The community's response to the shop has been "very positive," she said. "From there, it is a change of habits (remembering to take bags or jars along to refill). It's thinking a little differently. It's doing a lot of education that I think most grocery stores don't have to do."

Top sellers include "a surprising amount" of fresh-ground peanut butter, made in-house, and whole-bean coffee, roasted in San Francisco.

Locals know that boba drinks are wildly popular. However, the disposable plastic cups, wrappers, and straws that often come with them are the opposite of eco-friendly. At Byrd's Filling Station, reusable glass boba tumblers and straws (with lid, silicon plug and cleaning brush) are available,

so boba fans can get their treats without the guilt. After all, bringing one's own reusable cups to coffee shops has become a fairly common sight, so why not boba?

"People do hesitate because of the willingness of some stores to accept them," she said. "What we have found is that many will if you just ask," including downtown San Mateo's Sweet Moment, Heere Tea and Urban Ritual. As long as the tumblers are clean, there's no hygienic reason for an establishment to refuse, she said.

### Right On! Refillery

Green habits have long been a part of life for Right On! Refillery's Ting.

"I kind of grew up this way," she said. "My mother was like the original hippie." Eating local, organic food, belonging to a co-op and composting in their huge garden were the norms for her Massachusetts family. Ting always aimed for sustainability in adulthood, but as a parent of three young children living in Silicon Valley during the age of COVID, she found it had become increasingly difficult. As the family grew, the household was going through things like sunscreen and shampoo at accelerating rates, and during the heart of the pandemic, deliveries, complete with extraneous packaging, began to pile up. Ting recalled looking around her home and seeing how full her trash and recycling bins were getting.

"I just started getting kind of disgusted with all of it," she said. Like Porter, she did research and was dismayed to learn that just a tiny percentage of what gets put into household recycling bins



Devin Roberts

Right On! Refillery owner Emily Ting said she often recommends that customers looking to reduce waste start with items such as these Bay Area-made reusable "Not Paper Towels."

actually ends up being recycled. "It's kind of a weird myth," she said. "People will ask, 'This is recyclable?' Well, yes, you can put it in your bin but what happens to it from there is a big question mark. Most of that waste is going to the landfills."

Right On! Refillery began as a pop-up on First Street in downtown Los Altos in April, then opened in its current location in June.

"Buying local is a huge part of the sustainability movement. We had a lot of interested people right away," she said.

Right On! specializes in mostly locally made goods, with bestsellers including refills of laundry and dish soaps, lotions and hair care products. And while she sells reusable receptacles, "steadily, more people are bringing in their own containers, which is the point, the ideal," Ting said. "People are getting the hang of that. We try to talk people through that not only are they saving the plastic container, but they're also purchasing a product that in most cases was made locally, that's had the supply chain checked, the labor practices checked."

For customers new to the low-waste lifestyle, Ting often recommends Not Paper Towels — a line of reusable, machine-washable cotton cleaning cloths, made in Santa Rosa and available in cute patterns — as a first step.

"It's nice to have good entry points for people who are interested in the concept but don't know where to start," she said. "It's easy for people to understand what to do with it, and see, 'Oh, look I'm cutting down on all the paper towels I'm buying.'"

Right On! also offers customers a place to bring in waste that isn't accepted in their household bins, with boxes for hard-to-recycle items such as toothpaste tubes, kids' squeezable snack pouches, razors and lithium batteries.

Now equipped with a trailer, Ting hopes to "bring the refill concept mobile" and is considering doing Right On! pop-ups in nearby cities.

### Think globally, shop locally

Porter and Ting said they and other Bay Area low-waste merchants often work together to maximize efficiency, as many vendors have ordering minimums, and to cut down on deliveries. They see their stores as part of a bigger movement, with the goal to bring low-waste shopping to the mainstream. As they noted, to really change consumer habits involves infrastructure and a wider reach so that shoppers can access these goods and services wherever they're based. They are also hopeful people can make a basic mindshift.

"I think what would make the biggest difference is, we're not in the habit of just looking at something at home and saying, 'I can refill this,'" Porter said. For generations, consumers have been conditioned to ignore packaging, thinking of things as disposable. "If we can change that mindset to, 'I need to go refill the dish soap' instead of, 'I need a new dish soap,' that's a powerful change of words and change of thought." ■

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Devin Roberts

Laura Porter opened Byrd's Filling Station in San Mateo to sell groceries and household items with less plastic waste.



Devin Roberts

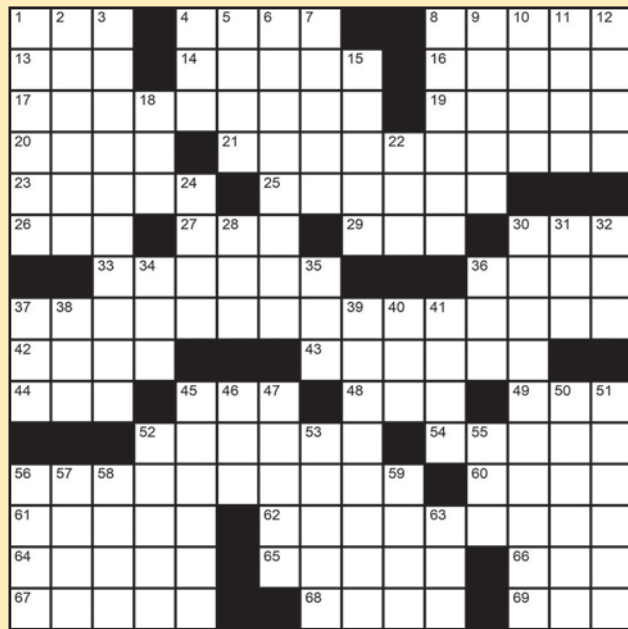
Customers can fill glass bottles with olive oil at Byrd's Filling Station in San Mateo.



**Across**

1. Roast battle hosts, for short
4. Bumble profile maintainers?
8. Flight seat option
13. "\_\_\_ y Plata" (Montana motto)
14. Actress Mitra of "The Practice"
16. National prefix
17. Lead character of "24"
19. Feeling regret
20. Early Peruvian
21. Nursery rhyme pie fillers ("four and twenty", they say)
23. Connect with
25. Barely achieve
26. Rowboat implement
27. George Burns title role
29. Impersonated
30. Spot for a soak
33. Big name in circuses
36. Loads
37. Ratio that's often 24 for film cameras
42. Like some salad dressings
43. Stracciatella, e.g.
44. 7'7" former NBAer Manute
45. "\_\_\_ the Walrus" (1967 Beatles tune)
48. Uno plus uno
49. Talk trash about
52. Removes names from pictures, on some social media platforms
54. To the letter
56. Units where 24 = 100%
60. Poodle plager
61. Remain patient
62. The NBA sets it at 24
64. Penny-pincher
65. Vietnamese capital
66. Burns downvote?
67. Planetary display
68. \_\_\_ baby (one who's famous via family connections)
69. Pre-album drops

**"Welcome to '24" — the year with things in common. by Matt Jones**



Answers on page 6.

**Down**

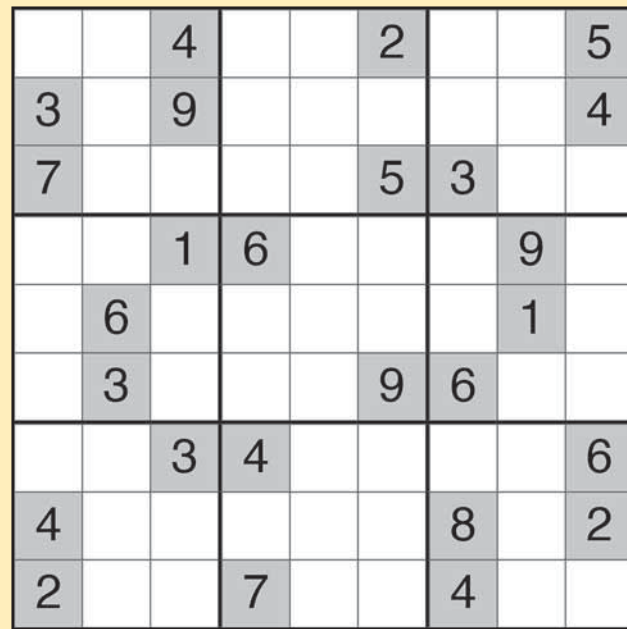
1. Mint-garnished cocktail
2. They surround brains
3. Goal-oriented item?
4. Royal sphere
5. Obsessive whale hunter of fiction
6. Biffed it
7. Creep around
8. "He's right. Ain't no rule that says a dog can't play basketball" movie
9. Arctic First Nations resident
10. Make Kool-Aid
11. Give for a bit
12. Rowing machine units
15. Took a curved path
18. "WandaVision" actress Dennings

22. Pond fish
24. Fairy tale meanie
28. Come-\_\_\_ (enticements)
30. Was the odd one out
31. "\_\_\_ de Replay" (Rihanna's first single)
32. Joining word
34. Actress Adams
35. Sister of Chris and Stewie
36. Division for "Hamlet" or "Hamilton"
37. Keyless car key
38. Duran Duran hit of 1982
39. Former Viacom chairman Sumner
40. \_\_\_-pitch softball
41. Reduce
45. Comic book artists
46. \_\_\_ standstill

47. Swampland
50. Polar covering
51. They may never have been higher
52. Part that the ointment Bag Balm was designed for
53. Depeche Mode lead singer David
55. Short-lived gridiron org. revived in 2020
56. Legs, in film noir monologues
57. "In memoriam" piece
58. Simpson who got into crosswords around 2008
59. Word before "Hammer time!"
63. A.F.L. merger partner

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**This week's SUDOKU**



Answers on page 6.

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