

Alameda Journal

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Newsstand 25 cents

Community What are you doing on grad night? [C1]

Sports The Journal selects its Prep Athletes of the Year [C6]

School district picks chief finalist

By Peter Hegarty

STAFF WRITER
The Board of Education has selected a finalist for superintendent.
Alan K. Nishino currently serves as superintendent of the Castaic Union School District in Los Angeles County. Trustees are expected to make a final decision on whether to appoint him as the new leader of the Alameda Unified School District by June 13.
Their decision will hinge on a June 9 trip to the Castaic district, where trustees will tour facilities and meet staff. Community members will also make the trip, as well as leaders from unions representing teachers and administrators.

Nishino could not be reached for comment because he was away from Castaic attending a budget meeting, according to his secretary.
Trustee Anna Elefant, who helped lead the board's effort to recruit a new superintendent, declined to comment on the specifics of Nishino's candidacy, noting that he has still not been hired.
Elefant described the 21 individuals who applied for the post as "excellent" with wide experience. About half are sitting superintendents, she added.
"We're very excited, and we hope the community is as excited as we are about him," Elefant said about Nishino.
Trustees selected him as a finalist af-

ter interviewing five candidates. The deadline for hiring a superintendent is July 1.
What clearly helped give Nishino an edge was the fact that he has been credited with boosting standardized test scores at Castaic. He has also increased overall student performance during the five years he has been superintendent.
In identifying the traits of a successful candidate, Alameda trustees said they wanted someone who could implement Job One, which is the effort to have at least 90 percent of students performing at or above grade level by June 2004. Results will be measured through district assessments and SAF-9 tests.

What likely also helped Nishino was his work in modernizing Castaic's oldest elementary school, as well as his work in relocating two schools and building new maintenance facilities and a district office.
If Nishino does get the job, that experience should support the efforts now underway to modernize AISD facilities, plus help ease impacts on the district as the former Navy base is developed.
Other highlights of Nishino's stint as a superintendent include:
■ Launched a Head Start program and preschool, on-site day care and after-school tutoring programs at Castaic.

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Railroad sues city

Lawsuit challenges city's intention to buy unused north side railroad land

By Susan Fuller

STAFF WRITER
A lawsuit was Alameda Belt Line Railroad's response to the city's October 1999 ordinance giving notice of its intention to purchase unused strips of railroad property on the island's north side.
The suit, filed in Alameda County Superior Court on May 31, seeks to prevent the city from implementing the purchase option and unspecified damages.

Acting on a 1924 agreement with the railroad, the City Council approved an ordinance giving one year's notice of intention to purchase the property. The council approved the ordinance to see if the old agreement has validity.

The land in question includes strips from the Miller-Sweeney Bridge to Main Street, plus a 22-acre plot between Marina Village and Atlantic Avenue.
The old agreement gives the city the right, at any time, to purchase the property for its original cost plus the amount of any investments and extensions, but excluding the cost of upkeep and repair.

The suit says that if the city intends to acquire the property, it should begin formal condemnation proceedings and pay just compensation. Additionally, the suit contends that the city has interfered with the railroad's use of the property and that the railroad should be compensated.

"Obviously, our position is that the 75-year-old provision is void as a matter of law and equity," said Lena Kent, a spokeswoman for the railroad. "We believe the intent of the agreement is that the area would be served by rail."

Instead, the city intends to sell the property at a big profit, she said.
The railroad wrote to Deputy City Attorney David Brandt on Oct. 19, the same date that the ordinance was approved, asking that the issue be deferred pending discussions.

City Attorney Carol Korade wasn't surprised by the suit.
"My initial review is that the city is not responsible for damages," Korade said. "We will be discussing with Alameda Belt Line the city's position that it has the right to purchase the railroad."

In the meantime, the developer who made an offer to the railroad to purchase the 22-acre parcel is caught in the middle.
Sun Country Developers of Pleasanton made the offer nearly a year ago and began negotiating terms of the sale and working with the city's Planning Department to get rezoning and approvals. The company has committed to pay half of the costs for developing the Northern Waterfront specific plan.

Sun Country has floated a plan to local residents and the Planning Department to build 200 homes on the 22-acre property.

A municipal belt line railroad was authorized by the City Council in February 1918 to assist companies involved in the World War I supply effort. The city built, owned and operated the railroad until 1924, when it was expanded, and a separate company, Alameda Belt Line, was formed, consisting of the city and several railroads. Following mergers, Burlington Northern Santa Fe is the lead agency.

Alameda Belt Line purchased the property east of Grand Street for \$30,000 and invested \$500,000 to extend its reach to Webster Street. There have been additional investments for further extensions, but city staff believes that the current market value is much higher than

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This little light of mine



JOJO BEAL, far left, a 10-year-old student at Edison Elementary School and an athlete in the Special Olympics, helped carry the Special Olympics torch when it passed through Alameda on June 6. Alameda police officers picked up the torch at the Fruitvale BART station from BART police, then ran with it along Lincoln Avenue, Broadway and Otis Drive to Applebee's restaurant at South Shore Center. Before carrying the torch across the Park Street Bridge into Oakland, where they handed it over to representatives of the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, Alameda police stopped by Edison school, left. Chief Barry Matthews, on a police motorcycle, below, led the children in a torch run.



Reserach lab's ordinance change put on hold

By Susan Fuller

STAFF WRITER
Plans for a medical research facility at Harbor Bay Business Park are on indefinite hold.
Based on the reaction and comments at a Harbor Bay Isle Home Owners Association board meeting, Covance Research Products withdrew the ordinance that would allow them to operate in Alameda from the June 6 City Council agenda.
With about 40 people at the June 5 meeting, the association board listened to representatives of Covance and residents of Harbor Bay.
"Based on what was presented to us, we couldn't make a rational decision," said Walt Jacobs, a member of the board. The board thought that more information and study was needed.
Covance Research Products, one arm of Covance, Inc., holds research contracts

with many drug and biotechnology companies. Only medical devices such as heart pacemakers, cardiac valves and new surgical instruments — not drugs — would be tested in Alameda. Swine are most commonly used for research, but the company also uses goats, sheep, calves and occasionally guinea pigs or dogs.
"Covance was telling us about the business they are in, not the business they could be in," Jacobs said. With their own buildings, they might do things they wouldn't do if watched more closely, he said.
"If anyone was looking for support for the Covance position, they didn't get it," Jacobs said.
Covance Research Products, a contract tester of medical devices and new surgical instruments, hopes to move its Berkeley laboratory to a free-standing facility in the southeast corner of the Harbor Bay Business Park, near the Oakland Airport.

To open the research lab in Alameda, Covance needed a change in the municipal code restrictions on the keeping of swine. The current code requires that pigs must be kept at least 300 feet from other buildings and that more than five head of swine must be allowed one acre per head. The council voted on May 16 to ask staff to come back with a suggested modification.
"We're still digesting what happened," said Dr. David Valerio, president and general manager of Covance Research Products. "We're rethinking and re-strategizing with our attorneys and advisers."
This is the first time Valerio, a veterinarian, has tried to open a lab in a "relatively urban area" and the first time he has encountered protests.
"Maybe we should have expected (opposition)," he said. "If you're in biomedical research, you're going to be aware of your opposition."

"We are going to regroup and go forward," said Tim Hoppert, chief operating officer of the Doric Group, the developer of Harbor Bay Business Park. He interprets the homeowners' association board's message as a call to slow down and address questions. Hoppert expects that Covance and his organization will hold town meetings and respond to issues and concerns.
Several dozen animal rights protesters gathered in the hallway outside the City Council Chambers before the June 6 meeting. A sign on the door announced that the swine ordinance item had been removed from the agenda and Mayor Ralph Appazotto announced it several times before the protesters realized what had happened.
When it sank in, several cheered. Most left City Hall, but a handful stayed, some

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KNIGHTRIDER

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Helped establish Castaic as an Internet service provider for the community and developed an interactive video conference center for teacher education.

Helped forge strong relationships with elected officials to advance educational goals.

Nishino earned a doctorate degree from the University of Southern California with a dissertation on educational technology. He has master's and bachelor's degrees in physical education from California State

before he became superintendent in 1995, Nishino was assistant superintendent for educational services in the Eastside Union School District.

Nishino also served as an administrative assistant for educational technology and a junior high school principal in the Hueneme School District.

He began his career as a junior high teacher and high school coach.

If Nishino does win the board's final approval, he will replace Dennis Chaconas, who left ALSJ in February to take over the troubled Oakland public school system.

Ardella Dailey has been the interim superintendent since Chaconas' departure.

Lawsuit

FROM PAGE A1

the total investment.

Many communities have such rail yards, created by a consortium of local government and railroad companies to develop a shared facility for storage and maneuvering at the end of the line.

Alameda Belt Line has removed most of the rails west of Grand Street as the need for rail access has diminished. The company has sold

some surplus property and is reportedly in the process of disposing of additional land, including the 22-acre parcel.

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