

# Alameda Journal

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Newsstand 25 cents

**Community** Student learn the art of trash [C1]

**Sports** Runners spend the night ... running [C6]

## Students head back to school



THE ENGINAL HIGH SCHOOL GYM is undergoing a major remodel, including the installation of a new floor. Students will be unable to attend P.E. classes inside the gym until the work is finished. The deadline is Oct. 15.

## Changes, old friends greet students

By Peter Hegarty  
STAFF WRITER

Many sported backpacks stuffed with textbooks and new school supplies.

Some greeted old friends with a hug or a high-five, while still others glanced nervously at class schedules before quietly asking directions to a classroom.

With bells echoing down hallways and clanging across playgrounds, summer officially came to an end for about 8,000 students on the island the morning of Aug. 30.

At Lincoln Middle School on Fernalde Boulevard, the year began with a traditional safety lesson: A fire drill sent stu-

dents marching out of classrooms and lining up on the playground.

Jennifer Matthews missed it this year. The former Lincoln student is now an Alameda High School freshman.

Matthews had a confession to make as she stood in the hallway between classes: Leaving middle school behind and starting life as a high school student made her just a little nervous.

"I asked my dad this morning if I really had to go," Matthews said with a smile as students brushed past her on the way to class.

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## A suit for a suit

City countersues Alameda Belt Line Railroad over right to purchase Northside land

By Susan Fuller  
STAFF WRITER

The city has filed a cross-complaint against Alameda Belt Line Railroad, alleging that the railroad intends to break a 1924 contract giving the city the right to purchase property along Alameda's northern shore.

The suit, filed July 27, asks that the railroad be ordered to convey the property in accordance with the old agreement.

Last May, Alameda Belt Line sued the city in response to the City Council's October 1999 notice of intention to purchase the unused railroad land. The railroad's suit seeks to prevent the city from implementing the purchase option and asks for unspecified damages.

The city also filed its response to the railroad's suit.

The 1924 agreement between the city and Alameda Belt Line 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 City Council's October ordinance gave one year's notice of intention to purchase as required by the agreement.

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.

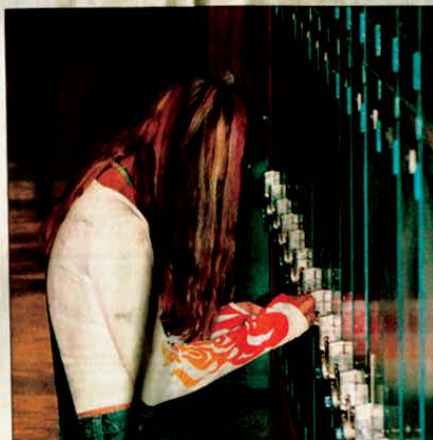
Both complaints will be merged into the same suit. A timeline for the case will be known later this month when it goes to hearing, according to Deputy City Attorney David Brandt. It's not a priority case, so the city will have to wait its turn, he said.

"We think we have a valid option to purchase the property," Brandt said. "The court will determine how valid it is."

In the meantime, the developer who made an offer to the railroad to purchase the 22-acre parcel must wait for resolution of the ownership issue, and Alameda resident Jean Sweeney continues to circulate a petition asking to rezone the same property as open space.

The 180-day petition circulation period ends Oct. 2. To be validated, the petition must contain the signatures of 3,815 Alameda voters. The City Council would

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MONDAY IS  
LABOR DAY

# Suit

FROM PAGE A1

Alameda voters. The City Council would then have the choice of either accepting the rezoning or putting the issue on the ballot.

Sweeney circulated a similar petition last autumn which failed to go forward because it was short 500 signatures and didn't contain the sections of the General Plan that would be amended.

Sun Country Developers of Pleasanton made a purchase offer nearly a year ago and began working with the city's Planning Department to get rezoning and approvals. The company has committed to paying 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.

The City Council authorized a municipal belt line railroad in February 1918 to assist companies involved in the World War I supply effort. The city built, owned and operated the railroad until 1924. After the railroad expanded, a separate partnership between the city and several railroads, Alameda Belt Line, was formed. Burlington Northern Santa Fe is now the lead agency.

Alameda Belt Line purchased the property east of Grand Street for \$30,000 and invested \$300,000 to extend its reach to Webster Street. Additional investments were made for further extensions. City staff believes that the current market value is much higher than the total investment.

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

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.

# School

FROM PAGE A1

Her fellow freshman Melynda Fry wasn't nervous at all.

But the 14-year-old former Wood Middle School student did have a common problem: What's the combination of your new lock on your newly-assigned locker? Searching for the slip of paper with the number on it made Fry a few minutes late for her Media Studies class.

Not just students encountered new faces or had to search for the principal's office.

ALSD's new Superintendent Alan Nishino spent much of the first day of school visiting campuses and meeting teachers and administrators.

"I'm pretty pleased and impressed with how smooth things are going," Nishino said after he stopped by Wood and just before heading to Island High School.

Nishino was hired to replace Dennis Chacoras — who now heads the troubled Oakland public schools system — and comes here from the Costa Union School District in Los Angeles County, where he served as superintendent for five years.

It was also a first day for Margie Sherratt, the new principal of Alameda High. But the day was also a homecoming for her, just as for the sophomores, juniors and seniors who hurried past her office as the bell rang for class.

Before becoming principal, Sherratt was head counselor at the high school for 10 years. She also graduated from Alameda High in 1956.

"It's been a great morning. Amazingly controlled," Sherratt said in between offering directions to any student passing her who looked confused by a class schedule.

During the third period at Alameda High, teachers conducted the "warm body count" — or counted the number of students in their classrooms and checked enrollment.

First day of school was especially frustrating for coaches and teachers in Encinal High School's athletic department. The gym is still undergoing major remodeling — including having a new floor installed — and so students cannot use it for P.E. or team games.

And because the first day of school was overcast and threatened rain, students spent their P.E. class in the cafeteria.

Until the remodeling is finished, department head Jim Saunders said



ALAMEDA HIGH SCHOOL has a new principal. Margie Sherratt, a 1965 graduate, was head counselor on the campus for 10 years before.

students will use the football field and outdoor basketball courts for P.E. But the remodeling prevents students from using the lockers or showers.

"It's a pain," Saunders said bluntly.

What especially worries him is that Encinal's basketball team will be left scrambling for a place to play if the work is not finished on time.

Current deadline is Oct. 15. "But as usual, when you do demolition, you can come across things you don't expect," said Lou Bignetti, a supervisor with Arutz Builders, the Novato company carrying out the work.

Attendance was slightly down this fall compared to last year for students on the traditional calendar, according to Alameda Unified School District officials.

But they noted that it will take at least 10 days to get an accurate number of the students enrolled. Plus officials expect a small number of students to show up for class after Labor Day, when they return from family vacations.



STUDENTS AT WOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL pass a sign showing where to pick up class schedules on their first day back at school.

Questions Often Asked-one of a series

## BANKRUPTCY

CAN I KEEP MY CAR? Yes, if you can afford the monthly payments, which may be lowered if you owe more than what the car is now worth.  
 CAN I PAY SOME CREDITORS AND NOT OTHERS? Yes, you choose who you will pay and who you will not. AWAKE AT NIGHT DECIDING BETWEEN FOOD AND BILLS? You are entitled by Federal law to a fresh start. Our fee is \$650 plus a filing fee of \$200 for a simple Chap. 7 bankruptcy. We provide fast relief from collection hassles in just one visit.  
 Compare our prices, ask your friends and then call us, you'll be glad you did.

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