

Alameda Journal

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Newsstand 25 cents

Sports Hornet boys win D-1 crown, Pilots run 2nd at MoC [B1]

Community Opera, symphony stars perform for music program [B4]



EIGHTH GRADERS HANNAH FLETCHER AND JESSICA KORICH from Arthur Andersen work on their robot during a break in the competition.

Students send robots on rescue mission

By Peter Hegarty
STAFF WRITER

This volcano wasn't really about to erupt, but it might as well as have been, judging by the concentration on the students' faces.

Students taking part in "Volcanic Panic"—the Lego League Robotics Exhibition at the Arthur Andersen Community Learning Center on Saturday—were given just 150 seconds to send their robots cruising through the course to garner points.

But as the seconds ticked away, every step they programmed into their robots

had to be perfect.

And for many of the 26 teams participating in the competition, the first ever held city-wide.

The idea behind the game was for the robots to gather as much scientific data as possible so that future volcano eruptions will be more accurately predicted.

Each step was worth points: Getting the "gas sensor" into the crater so that it touches lava, for instance, equaled 25 points. Retrieving crates of samples was worth five points.

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OFFICES CLOSED

All federal, state, county and city offices will be closed on Thanksgiving Day. The Journal will also be closed on Thanksgiving Day and reopen Friday, Nov. 24.

City Hall, schools and local libraries will remain closed on Nov. 24.

Groups asking city to bless Beltline open space proposal

By Susan Fuller
STAFF WRITER

More than 10 percent of Alameda's registered voters signed Jean Sweeney's petition to rezone the former Beltline rail yard from medium-density residential and general industry to open space.

Now the City Council has three options: adopt the proposed ordinance without change, place the ordinance on the November 2002 ballot, or direct staff to provide a report of the effect of the proposed ordinance. The City Council will meet on Nov. 21.

The rail yard is an approximately 22-acre parcel located south of Marina Village, bound by Atlantic Avenue and Sherman Street on the north and east. The southern boundary is defined by rear property lines on Eagle Avenue. The Beltline narrows at its western end and has a short frontage on Constitution Way.

Petition circulators and two organizations, Rails to Trails Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, are asking the council to adopt the ordinance outright.

Mayor Ralph Appezato questions the wisdom of the conversion because of its possible cost.

Ownership of the property is currently tied up in court.

Sun Country Developers of Pleasanton made a bid to purchase the property from the railroad in the summer of 1999. In October, the city gave notice of its intention to purchase the property based on the 1924 agreement that created the railroad. The railroad sued to prevent the city's bargain basement purchase, and the city counter-sued, alleging that the railroad intends to break the old contract.

If the courts determine that Sun Country has a legitimate right to purchase the property on the open market and the city's voters have zoned the land for open space, the developer would likely seek damages, Appezato said. The city could be liable not for the sales price of undeveloped land—rumored to be \$15 million to \$22 million—but for the price of

MEETING

The City Council will meet at 7:25 p.m. on Nov. 21 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 2263 Santa Clara Ave.

developed land, into the hundreds of millions, Appezato said.

"We have found numerous ways to fund open space improvements," wrote Trust for Public Land program manager Garlen Capita in a letter of support for the rezoning. The letter mentioned \$747 million remaining in a state park bond approved by the voters last March and funding from private sources.

Rails to Trails Conservancy's California director Kate Bickert offered assistance in locating and applying for funds. The letter of support also mentioned funding sources for maintenance costs.

Ten percent of Alameda's registered voters—3,532—were needed to move the petition forward. Of the 4,034 signatures submitted, 3,657 were determined to be registered voters in the city.

The Alameda County Registrar of Voters completed a random check of the petition's signatures about Nov. 9, with inconclusive results. A full study of the signatures was finished on Nov. 14.

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

In other business, the council is scheduled to:

■ Hold a public hearing to consider establishing a subdivision with 152 lots, 124 detached homes and 28 attached homes and related utilities, streets, open space and visitor parking for Kaufman and Broad's Marina Cove Development on the Northern Waterfront.

Average lot size is 3,500 square feet, with a minimum of 2,100 square feet. The

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Thanksgiving, vegetarian style

By Susan Fuller
STAFF WRITER

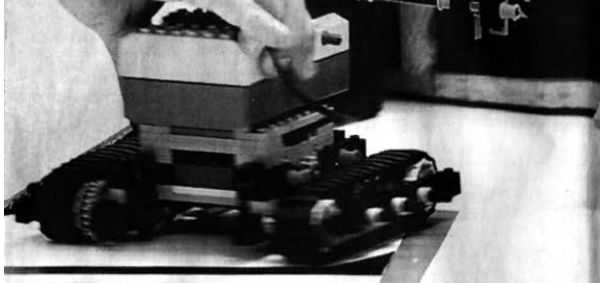
Mention Thanksgiving, and the first thought is usually turkey. So what does a red-blooded American who shuns meat do on the traditional day of gorging and gratitude?



On freeing fowl and floating cats

By Lucinda Ryan
EDITOR

How to free fowl and floating cats...



STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE ISLAND took part in the first city-wide Robotics Lego League Exhibition inside the Arthur Andersen Community Learning Center on Saturday. The event was dubbed "Volcanic Panic," and students had to program their robots to perform tasks that equaled points during the event.

Interest

FROM PAGE A4

Industrial production slowed last month in several industries, from consumer products to cars, the Commerce Department said Wednesday.

New-vehicle output fell to a rate of 12.2 million a year from 13.1 million in September, accounting for much of the October drop. Excluding motor vehicles and parts, October industrial output gained 0.3 percent on top of a 0.4 percent September rise.

Coming on the heels of other economic evidence pointing to a softening, some economists are betting

Fed policy-makers are just about convinced that demand won't exceed supply in the economy.

The tone of the Fed's statement Wednesday suggests just that, First Union chief economist David Orr wrote in a research note.

Quoting the Fed's acknowledgment of a softening in business and household demand, Orr suggested the Fed is moving toward a neutral stance on inflation risk.

That would be welcome news to officials at Lake Forest, Ill.-based Tenneco Automotive, who are in New York this week explaining to analysts how they are preparing for a projected decline of 700,000 units in auto sales in the coming year.

Already, car makers are heavily

subsidizing consumer loans to boost sales, money that could otherwise go to profits or new product development, said Tim Jackson, senior vice president of global technology.

And at Tenneco, like at virtually every other U.S. company, labor costs have been rising, he said.

Still, the company has boosted productivity through quality improvements, so that revenue per employee has increased 23 percent this year despite the increased wages, he said.

And spotty price increases in Europe and in some product categories here are sticking.

Hence, the Fed's dilemma.

"It's just fun to work as a team and build up your computer skills," added 13-year-old Ashlee Williams, an 8th grader at the middle school. They named their robot Tanky-

sored Northern California's First Lego League Exhibition, when eight Alameda teams took on schools from other districts. But this time the approximately

Korich said as she worked to program the team's robot on a computer before the next stage of the tournament. "And it hasn't gotten any easier."

Beltline

FROM PAGE A1

subdivision will have a gross residential density of 7.4 units per acre and a net density of just over 12 units per acre when the area of streets and shoreline park is deducted from the project area.

The project includes construction of five new public roads, one of which is intended to function as a possible extension of Clement Avenue.

Land is dedicated for a 2-acre shoreline park and trail. The project will include 30 units of below-market-rate housing.

■ Hold a public hearing to consider a five-lot subdivision at 43 County Road.

■ Consider an appeal of the Transportation Advisory Committee's denial of all-way stop controls at Pacific Avenue and St. Charles Street. The intersection meets none of three state guidelines — accident history,

traffic volume and speed — to install four-way stop signs.

■ Consider a rating system for small capital improvement projects and the expenditure of the \$100,000 small project fund. Small projects have a total cost of less than \$50,000.

Community development and maintenance projects are given the highest priority in the proposed criteria. The team that developed the criteria wants to track the location of small projects to ensure that needs are addressed throughout the city.

Public Works staff anticipates bringing the prioritized project list to the City Council on March 20.

■ Accept a combined implementation plan for the Downtown Vision Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan, and Housing Forum. Staff and representatives of each of the public vision groups will make presentations.

The actions recommended to the council by staff are to invite further comments from boards and commissions and to direct staff to return for final approval of the implemen-

tation plan with the mid-year budget adjustment expected in February.

The budget adjustment proposal will recommend creating new positions in the Public Works, Planning and Housing Development departments.

■ Accept the quarterly financial, sales tax and investment reports.

Sales tax revenues increased by almost 3 percent over the same quarter last year. Leasing, miscellaneous retail and restaurants showed gains for the quarter ending Sept. 30. Electronic equipment, light industry and auto parts and repairs declined.

■ Accept the work of P&P Construction for repair of concrete sidewalks, curbs, gutters and driveways and the work of Gordon N. Ball for Bay Farm Island dike repair project.

■ Accept the improvements and reduce the subdivision bond for The Gardens.

■ Hear the mayor's nomination for a partial term on the Economic Development Commission.

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Early Bird Specials

Beat the Rush & Save a Bunch at Beverly's!

To reach the Journal:

Mayor's Toy Drive

Bring a New and Unwrapped toy into Saturn of Oakland and receive 15% off the service of any

