

# Alameda Journal

Volume 14, No. 101

Tuesday, December 19, 2000

Newsstand 25 cents

**Business** Define your portfolio [A10]

**Sports** Hornet boys one goal better than Yellowjackets [B1]

## Wheels still turning on future of Belt Line land

By Susan Fuller  
STAFF WRITER

Will a Belt Line lot be declared as open space immediately or will the voters make the final call in two years? The City Council will consider a re-

### MEETING

The City Council will meet on Dec. 19 at 7:25 p.m. in Council Chambers of City Hall, 2263 Santa Clara Ave.

port on the effects of the Belt Line open space initiative and vote on approving it outright or placing it on the November 2002 ballot. The council meets on Dec. 19.

The most significant results of the proposed re-zoning of the unused rail yard to open space would be loss of income to the city and compliance with the Association of Bay Area Governments' housing mandate.

The report, written by Planning Director Colette Meunier and Development Services Director Doug Mount, shows no revenue from the 22-acre parcel as open space. As a residential development, the city would gain \$766,000 annually, from sales tax revenues, real estate transfer taxes, redevelopment funds and electric use.

The city would also collect \$313,000 real estate transfer taxes when the houses are first sold, according to the report. Losses from land sale proceeds and property taxes to the city are undetermined, according to the report.

ABAG has calculated that Alameda's housing need for the next decade is 2,162 units. If the city is unsuccessful in contesting that allocation, it will have to designate adequate sites to build that number of units in the General Plan and Housing Element.

The land is 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 Belt Line narrows at its western end and has a short frontage on Constitution Way.

The parcel may become critical to meeting the city's housing requirements, the report states.

Moreover, the proposed rezoning could jeopardize the writing of a Northern Waterfront Specific Plan. The developer who has made a purchase offer on the Belt Line property has offered to pay for part of the plan. If the property is marked as open space, he may no longer be willing to foot the bill.

The city's redevelopment plans designate four acres of land for medium density residential use. Because redevelopment plans cannot be amended by initiative, that use would not be changed by its passage, according to the report. Passing the initiative would also require amendments to the General Plan and Housing Element.

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

A 1999 bid by Pleasanton-based Sun Country Developers was reportedly in the \$15 million to \$22 million range.

Pending lawsuits over ownership of the Belt Line complicate the ownership picture.

In October 1999, 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 decide that Sun Country has a legal right to buy the property on the open market and the city has zoned the land for open space, the developer

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## Learning to rescue: Firefighters fish out victim from underground

By Peter Hegarty  
STAFF WRITER

A confession: This wasn't for real and I could have bolted up the ladder to safety.

But then firefighters would have missed an opportunity to put some of their most valuable rescue skills to the test.

Here's the scenario: I'm a worker with Alameda Power and Telecom carrying out repairs in the underground electrical station beneath Pier 2 at Alameda Point.

Suddenly, things start going wrong. First I begin to feel woozy. Then fumes cause me to feel so faint that I can barely move. No other workers are nearby to help me climb up the ladder. I collapse onto a bench and radio my supervisor for help — and wait.

But when firefighters arrive, they encounter an unexpected problem: The space where I was working is so confined they cannot simply lift me onto a gurney and carry me out.

Plus, they fear that they, too, might be overcome by the fumes.

Not only would this simulated rescue take time, it would demand the kind of skills that Alameda firefighters had been learning this past week during training sessions at the former base.

To help them, I volunteered to be a victim.

### A swift rescue

My rescue was swift and easy. After my fellow firefighters double-checked that the air in the chamber was safe to breathe, Robin Haines was lowered through the manhole.

Safely down, she hooked the straps that were attached to her harness — and to the fire truck ladder positioned above the manhole — to my harness, then signaled to the firefighters to lift me out.

Suspended like a puppet, I ascended back to the light and fresh air. As I dangled outside, Tunney and firefighters Scott West and Chris Davis gently maneuvered me away from the danger and down onto the tarmac.

Of course, if it had been a real emergency I would have been examined by paramedics and rushed to a hospital. (Alameda paramedics were initially on the pier, but had to leave on a 911 call).

In fact, as part of the training, firefighters must do everything as if it had been an actual emergency, including filling out the paperwork afterwards.

### The aim

Alameda fire Capt. Matt Tunney, who directed my rescue, says the department hosts the sessions about four times a year. The aim is to allow firefighters to practice confined space rescues — how to free a heart attack or stroke victim, say, trapped deep inside a manhole.

Or how to rescue an injured worker trapped inside a ship's hull, where doors and passageways are so small a gurney has to be lifted with belts and pulleys.

What makes confined space rescues



ALAMEDA JOURNAL REPORTER PETER HEGARTY volunteered to be a "victim" during a training session on Friday to teach firefighters how to carry out confined space rescues. The scenario called for a worker overcome by fumes needing to be lifted to safety from an underground electrical station. Among the firefighters taking part in the training session at Alameda Point were Robin Haines, Matt Tunney, Scott West and Chris Davis.

complicated is that such places often are in total darkness when firefighters arrive. Breathing also can be difficult, as in my case.

What's more, victims may not be able to move at all, making the rescue even more difficult.

Every firefighter must know how to perform such rescues, and be able to improvise at the scene if needed, Tunney says.

Not only are confined spaces sprinkled throughout Alameda Point, but any

building that collapses after an earthquake could put the rescue skills of firefighters to the test.

The training also helps new-hires with the fire department to build confidence — a vital trait when an emergency strikes and every second counts.



PETER HEGARTY is lowered underground.

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## Beltline

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would likely seek damages.

In other business, the council is scheduled to:

- Install city officials elected in the November general election. Council members Al DeWitt and Barbara Kerr and City Auditor Kevin Kearney were re-elected. Kevin Kennedy is the new city treasurer. The Honorable Judge George E. McDonald will administer the oaths of office.

- Consider appointment of a vice mayor.

- Approve extension of the agreement with Northbay Ecumenical Homes and First Republic Bank for the Community Assisted/Shared Appreciation (CASA) home ownership program until the end of 2001. Through a revolving loan fund, the CASA program makes silent second and third mortgages to low- and moderate-income households for the purchase of a home.

- Accept the city's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, the auditor's reports on parking citation processing, compliance with state mandated appropriation limits and appropriate usage of county transportation funds.

At year end, General Fund equity was \$12.8 million, with \$7.7 million available for municipal operations. Nearly 44 percent of that amount was loaned to other city funds.

- Accept the audit report for two pension plans for the year ending June 30. There are no contributing members to either plan and all residual plan assets have been exhausted. The cost of all benefits, more than \$4 million per year, is borne by the general fund.

- Accept a report on the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program. The purpose of the report is to solicit public comment on a proposal to apply \$58,000 in block grant funds plus an \$11,000 match from drug asset seizure funds to upgrade the police department's records management system.

A full upgrade to the records system, expected to take two years, will cost approximately \$450,000. The

present outdated system is about 15 years old.

- Accept the work of State Roofing Systems, Inc. for repairs to the Officers' Club. Approximately 30,000 square feet of roof membrane and other parts of the roof system were replaced. Final project cost of \$229,000 was funded from the Alameda Point bond. The city awarded the contract for \$252,000.

- Accept the work of Tennyson Electric, Inc. for signal installation at the intersections of Challenger Drive with Atlantic Avenue and Marina Village Parkway. Final project cost, including related lighting, pedestrian push button detectors, striping and cabinets, was \$196,000. The contract was for \$215,600.

- Authorize the city manager to execute an amendment to the funding agreement for the Cross Airport Roadway project. The amendment will increase the Port of Oakland's contribution to the project by \$9.4 million and total project cost to \$114.75 million. The city of Alameda is not required to contribute additional funds beyond the \$9.3 million in the existing agreement.

The Cross Airport Roadway extends from the 88th Avenue exit from Interstate 880, past Oakland International Airport to Harbor Bay Parkway at Maitland Drive in Alameda.

Work is about 90 percent complete on the segment from the freeway to Airport Access Road. Contracts have been awarded and work has begun on the remainder.

- Delegate authority to execute certain agreements with Caltrans for federal- or state-funded transportation projects to the city manager or his designee.

In the past, the city has delegated this authority to the public works director on a project by project basis. This method, according to a Caltrans review, adds a step to the process which can cause unnecessary delay on a project. The authorization would also save staff time in the Public Works Department and the City Attorney's Office.

The City Council would still have to authorize the project application, matching funds, approve final plans and specifications, authorize call for bids, award the contract and accept final work.

- Authorize the purchase of three dump trucks and three pickup trucks. Staff proposes to buy the vehicles through a state competitive bid process. The budget appropriation for the vehicles is \$202,000.

- Increase rates at the Chuck Corica Golf Complex. The fee changes were discussed at the Oct. 8 Golf Commission meeting and approved at a Nov. 7 special meeting of the commission. The commission used the Consumer Price Index as an indicator for the fee increases. The increases, effective Jan. 1, will generate at least \$600,000 additional revenue to be used for improvements at the complex.

Fees for the Mif Albright course, the driving range and resident monthly tickets will not change.

Rates for Alameda residents Monday through Thursday will go up by a dollar to \$19. Weekend and holiday rates will go up by \$2 to \$22. Twilight fees will be \$15 weekdays, \$16 weekends. A late twilight fee (after 4 p.m. standard time, 6 p.m. daylight savings time) is proposed at \$11 for residents weekdays, \$12 weekends. Resident juniors can still play weekdays or after twilight for \$1.

Golf cart charges will go up by \$2.

- Approve amendments to the agreement that governs an investment pool the city uses for short-term deposits.

- Consider, on a second reading, the proposed community commercial zone for Park Street and Webster Street.

- Commend Lewis Hurwitz for his 15 years of service as the City Treasurer.

- Thank Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft, Frank Matarrese and the members of Library 2000 for their efforts on behalf of the Alameda Free Library.



KATHY BAUER/STAR

## A time of note

Irma Hofmann and Mona Florio join other singers in traditional Christmas carols at Mastick Senior Center Dec. 14. This sing-along was one of a number of holiday events at the center, which offers other musical activities, travel opportunities, meals, games, dancing, current events classes and computer instruction, pool, and, of course, bingo.

## Candidates

FROM PAGE A2

laborative and his involvement in various regional transportation issues.

As the only white male in contention, Appezzato fielded a question about diversity on the board.

"I look at the best qualified candidate (when selecting city board and commission members)," he said. "If they are equal, I choose diversity. That's a decision you have to make."

In cutting the list of candidates, the board angered the city of San Leandro by passing over two council members who applied for the seat.

"San Leandro is the largest population in the district and I'm stunned that our two representatives couldn't make it to the interview process," Councilman Gordon Galvan said. "It's kind of a slap in our face." San Leandro Councilwoman Glenda Nardine was also among the applicants.

Carson asked each candidate about their contacts in San Leandro, and the Oakland residents about their knowledge of Alameda. All

promised to represent the whole district but only Appezzato and Lai-Bitker have significant connections in other communities.

The candidates didn't have pat answers for complicated questions about land use, redistricting and whether Santa Clara County should have to buy into the BART system in order to extend the tracks beyond Fremont.

The supervisors are often faced with balancing the need for more housing, particularly affordable housing, with cries for open space and the maintenance of agricultural land.

With the census data coming out soon, defining supervisorial districts for the next decade will be on the board's agenda next year.

Both Supervisors Carson and Gail Steele said they were more interested in how the candidates processed information than their specific knowledge of the issues.

"I really wanted to see how they processed questions and formed opinions and communicated those," Carson said about the first cut. "It wasn't based on whether they were aligned with me philosophically, but whether they looked at the pros and

cons and thought things through."

"This is a very subjective, gut feeling kind of thing," Steele said. "It's very political, so I think it's amazing we all agreed on four candidate right away." The fifth candidate was selected in a second vote.

Staff writer David Holbrook contributed to this story.

## BRIEFS

### Development impact fee on commission agenda

At its Dec. 21 meeting, the Economic Development Commission will consider a proposal to establish a citywide development impact fee. The fee was slated for City Council consideration on Dec. 5, but was withdrawn from the agenda for additional public comment.

The Economic Development Commission will meet at 7:15 p.m. in Council Chambers of City Hall 2263 Santa Clara Ave.

## News tip?

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