

MEMORANDUM



TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Karen Pinkos, City Manager
DATE: January 21, 2021
SUBJECT: City Manager's Update

As I write my first City Manager Update of 2021, it occurs to me that it has already been quite a year, hasn't it? We are still facing so many challenges that seem never ending. But El Cerrito will continue to march on, as we always do. This past Monday was the perfect example of El Cerrito's resilience, creativity, and passion in the face of adversity as we gathered for our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. It was different this year as we followed COVID-19 safety protocols (see the City Management section for details), but that didn't at all dampen the spirit of the people who gathered safely but joyfully to celebrate Dr. King's legacy. Reflecting on all that has happened since MLK Day in 2020, it was even more meaningful and poignant to be able to share the day together. Of course, we still have a long way to go to truly fulfill Dr. King's dream, to be healthy (physically, mentally, spiritually), and our drive for social and racial justice continues. But we have hope, we see truth, and we will do the work. That day inspired me, and I will think of that day when I need to remind myself of the goodness that still surrounds us. Thank you to everyone who participated, volunteered, and celebrated.

"When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." -Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., August 16, 1967

Please stay safe and healthy, and take care of yourselves and each other.

Karen Pinkos
City Manager
City of El Cerrito



COVID-19 UPDATES

REGIONAL STAY HOME ORDER IN EFFECT

The Regional Stay Home Order continues to be in effect until further notice. The State will move Contra Costa County to the next tier once the following three criteria have been met for two consecutive weeks:

- Cases Rate: Less than 7 new cases per 100,000 residents
- Positivity Rate: Less than 8% of tests countywide are positive
- Equity Metric: Less than 8% of tests for residents of the lowest quartile of the [Healthy Places Index census tracts](#) are positive

Contra Costa County and various Health Care Providers have begun to distribute vaccines to eligible populations in distribution phases 1A and 1B. For more information about which phase you are in and how to get vaccinated, please visit:

<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine>.

For more general information about COVID-19, please reference the links below. Contra Costa County residents and businesses can also call the COVID-19 Call Center at (844) 729-8410 between 8am and 5pm daily.

RESOURCES

- COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard: <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine-dashboard>
- Contra Costa County Ramps Up Vaccine COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts: <https://cchealth.org/press-releases/2021/0111-COVID-19-Vaccination.php>
- Talking to Loved One About Celebrating in Different Ways During COVID-19: <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/coping-with-stress>
- Press Release (12/4/2020): <https://cchealth.org/press-releases/2020/1204-Joint-Press-Release.pdf>
- Stay Home Order (12/4/2020): <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/health-orders>
- Contra Costa Openings at a Glance (12/4/2020): <https://cchealth.org/covid19/pdf/Contra-Costa-County-Openings-at-a-Glance.pdf>

For up-to-date information from Contra Costa Health Services, please visit:

<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org>

CITY CLERK

VACANCIES ON BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

The City continues to seek interested residents of El Cerrito to serve on City Boards, Commissions and Committees. Opportunities to serve include the Civil Service Commission, Human Relations Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, and Financial Advisory Board. Information on all current and upcoming vacancies is available online at www.el-cerrito.org/commissions, as well as the application to serve. Applications can be submitted via email to cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us. For more information, please contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4305.

UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL MEETING(S)

A special City Council meeting will be held on **Monday, February 1, 2021 at 3pm** for the purpose of holding interviews for Boards and Commissions. The next regular City Council meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at 7pm** via teleconference. The City will hold a study session on the current Fiscal Year budget during the February 2 meeting. Agenda materials and instructions on how to participate and provide public comments for all City Council meetings are posted online at el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials. Archives of meeting videos and materials are also available on this site. For more information, please contact the City Clerk at cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4305.

CITY MANAGEMENT

EL CERRITO'S 2021 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY CELEBRATION A SUCCESS!

On Monday, January 18, the City held the annual City of El Cerrito Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day Parade and Rally. Several modifications were made to make the event safe for everyone in attendance, including requiring face coverings and strict physical distance protocols. Over 100+ vehicles participated in a car caravan that began at the Del Norte BART Station and ended at the El Cerrito Plaza BART station. Participation levels were more than double what was anticipated, and we are grateful to all who made the efforts to celebrate safely. A huge thank you to the Human Relations Commission, Human Resources Manager Kristen Cunningham, Pat Durham, former Mayor Greg Lyman, St. Peter CME Church, City staff from the Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments, and the various volunteers and supporters who helped make this event happen. For more information on how to donate to next year's MLK event, please visit: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/693/Annual-MLK-Celebration>.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WEBINAR: TENANT'S RIGHTS AND EVICTION PROTECTIONS



On January 26, 2021 at 1:00pm, [ECHO Housing](#) will host a live webinar presentation for tenants and landlords of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties about tenant protections. To register for this free event, [click this link](#). For information about ECHO Housing, please visit www.echofairhousing.org. County residents in need of housing counseling can reach out to the [Contra Costa Housing Services Collaborative](#) at no cost.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING WAITLIST INFORMATION

To find properties currently accepting applications, please click on:

[January 2021 Affordable Housing Opportunities](#) – All Bay Area Counties. For more information about affordable housing, please visit www.el-cerrito.org/affordablehousing.

CALIFORNIA SMALL BUSINESS COVID-19 RELIEF GRANT

The second round of [California Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program](#) opens February 2, 2021 through February 8, 2021. Round 1 applicants who do not receive funds do not need to apply again as they will automatically be entered in Round 2. Please take a moment to [sign up here for announcements](#) or visit www.careliefgrant.com for information about the application and qualification process.

FIRE

OPEN BURN PERMIT – DO YOUR PART TO MITIGATE FIRE DANGER!

The Fire Department urges all residents with an open-flame, non-cooking fire feature in their backyards to apply for an Open Burn Permit at no cost. A non-cooking fire feature includes outdoor fireplaces, fire pits, and fire rings. The Open Burn Permit does not apply to natural gas/propane outdoor fire features. To get your free inspection, please contact the Fire Prevention Office directly at (510) 215-4457 or fpo@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us to make an appointment. After you have passed inspection, you will receive a signed copy of the permit that will be good for one year. The Fire Department will keep your permit on file in case of any calls about smoke or odor from your residence. Do your part to help in our efforts to keep El Cerrito safe from fires. Visit el-cerrito.org/openburnpermit for more information.

PUBLIC WORKS

MAINTAINING THE CITY'S "TREE CITY USA" STATUS

At the end of December, City staff submitted the required documents and an application to maintain the City of El Cerrito's status as a Tree City USA. 2020 was the first year after El Cerrito received this recognition, after adopting a more expansive Public Tree and Shrub Ordinance in 2019. The new ordinance was developed, in part, to ensure the City's tree protection policies met the minimum standards of the Tree City USA program. The City has also continued to meet and exceed the other minimum standards of the Tree City USA program by hosting Arbor Day events, supporting the City's Urban Forest Committee, meeting minimum per capita spending thresholds for trees, and actively maintaining trees throughout the community. To learn more about the City's Urban Forest Program or Tree City USA status, please contact Environmental Programs Manager Stephen Prée at spree@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 559-7685.



NEW STATEWIDE RODENTICIDE PROHIBITION FOLLOWS SIMILAR CITY POLICY

"The California Ecosystems Protection Act of 2020" ([AB 1788](#)), took effect January 1, 2021, and prohibits certain types of rat and mouse bait from use in most applications. These products are known as second generation anti-coagulant rodenticides (SGARs) and have been found in non-target wildlife including birds of prey, foxes, bobcats, mountain lions, and protected Pacific fishers. While all anticoagulant rodenticides have a harmful effect on nontarget animals, SGARs are especially potent, persistent, and dangerous. In 2012, the El Cerrito City Council voted to pass Resolution 2012-72 that urged local businesses to stop selling SGARs, discouraged the use of SGARs by City staff and contractors, and sent a letter to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) requesting their refusal to renew the registration of twenty (20) SGARs products because of the risk to public and environmental health. In 2014, the DPR banned consumer sales and use of SGARs, restricting their use to certified pesticide applicators only.



Unfortunately, extensive research in the period since then has found elevated levels of SGARs in over 70% of nontarget animals tested. The new restriction extends the 2014 statewide SGARs ban to include *all* licensed pest control applicators, prohibits use of four specific SGARs, and prohibits the use of those SGARs in any state park, state wildlife refuge or state conservancy. It does not apply to compliant governmental agencies regulating public health activities or to

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qualifying vector control districts, and it does allow use of these products in food warehouses, breweries, and wineries.

The City of El Cerrito has not used SGARs since 2012, and instead uses reduced risk pest management techniques such as covered, non-lethal bait boxes, and traps. In 2014, with the help of the Eagle Scouts, the City installed owl boxes (pictured above) in several park sites to manage rodents. For more information regarding the City's integrated pest management program, please contact Environmental Programs Manager Stephen Prée at spree@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us

REFRESHER ON CART SET-OUT INSTRUCTIONS

The Operations + Environmental Services Division and the City's Franchise Hauler for garbage and green waste can experience operational challenges when solid waste carts are placed out late, too close together, or if they are overflowing. The Division is working to remind community members of the proper set out instructions in order to reduce issues for City and East Bay Sanitary staff picking up



garbage, green waste, and recycling. In addition, these efforts help make the pick-up faster and more seamless, reducing any nuisances from the set-out and collection process.

- Make sure carts are at the curb by 6am on your collection day, or the night before
- Make sure the lids are closed and the wheels are against the curb
- Remove any bungee cords
- Make sure to leave 2 feet between carts
- Make sure carts are placed 4 feet from parked cars
- Make sure the container is not overflowing and the lid closes completely. Materials left on top of or outside the carts will not be picked-up
- Remove cart from the street after it has been serviced, on the day of pick up

For more information, please contact the El Cerrito Recycling + Environmental Resource Center at greenassistant@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or (510) 215-4350.

VACANCIES AVAILABLE ON CCTA'S COUNTYWIDE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE



The Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CBPAC) of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) has two vacancies for at-large residents of Contra Costa, one familiar with issues facing youths and one familiar with issues facing people with disabilities and people older than 65 years of age. The positions are open to residents of Contra Costa County, and committee membership requires attendance of scheduled meetings on the fourth Monday of every other month at 11:00am (meetings typically last two hours).

If you are a resident of Contra Costa County and are interested in becoming one of these at-large members, you can learn more and apply at <https://ccta.net/news/>. Submission details and more information about the responsibilities of this committee are provided on the application.

Deadline to submit is no later than 5pm on January 31, 2021.

PG&E REMINDER ABOUT DIGGING AND PLANTING SAFELY

Planting a tree? Working in your garden? You may be digging close to underground utility lines connecting to your home. To ensure that you remain safe when doing any digging projects, always contact 811 first. 811 is a free service managed by Underground



Service Alert and available to everyone. Visit <http://www.california811.org> or call 811 at least two working days before you dig and plant. The date of notification does not count as part of the two working-day notice. For example: If excavation will begin on Friday, you or your excavator must call no later than Tuesday. After you call, Underground Service Alert will contact PG&E and other companies that have underground lines in your area. Representatives will then mark the location of their underground lines so you can avoid them and dig safely. To learn more from PG&E at [Call 811 before you dig \(pge.com\)](http://www.pge.com)

RECREATION

RECREATION PROGRAMS CONTINUE THROUGH REGIONAL STAY AT HOME ORDER

Following the Contra Costa County Regional Stay at Home Order, the Recreation Department has been able to continue programs and keep open facilities that were operating prior to December 6. Under this order, certain sectors may remain open with modified operations pursuant to applicable sector guidance, including youth cohorts, childcare programs, and outdoor recreational facilities such as swimming pools, playgrounds, and tennis courts. Recreation staff remain dedicated to providing services during these challenging times, and these programs and facilities remain open (see below for more detail on what we are currently offering). While the Recreation Department Office remains closed to the public, customer support remains available via email to recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us and phone calls to (510) 559-7000. Program registration and facility reservations are available online at www.el-cerrito.org/onlinereg.

SWIM CENTER ENROLL-BY-DAY

Swimmers can reserve lanes in a calendar, making it easier to see what lanes are available. Future registration dates will be posted on the Swim Center website at www.el-cerrito.org/swimcenter. You can also sign up for calendar notifications by going to the [online notification page](#), signing in using your email address, then scrolling down to the Calendar and finding El Cerrito Swim Center. Clicking on the email or text icon will send notifications to you two days before the registration date.

Teeter Tots - Limited Spaces Available!

Teeter Tots is a nurturing environment for ages 2-4.5 to experience a play-based learning environment and prepare for a preschool setting. Operating Monday through Thursday from 9am-12pm, this program focuses on social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and using words. There are still a few spaces remaining, and those interested in attending Teeter Tots can email recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us after reviewing the Parent Policy and Information Handbook. To view these documents or learn more about the program, visit <http://el-cerrito.org/436/Preschool-Programs>.

REGISTRATION FOR SESSION 4 YOUTH PROGRAMS AND PRESIDENT'S WEEK CAMP COMING SOON

The Recreation Department continues to offer care and recreational pods of up to 14 children using the City clubhouses at Harding, Fairmont, Castro, and Arlington as well as the Community Center. Soon, enrollment for our fourth session of the schoolyear will take place. Families who are enrolled in the current session will begin priority registration on Monday, January 25. Registration for new families will start two days later, on Wednesday, January 27. Families who register for Session 4 are additionally eligible to sign up for Presidents Week camp within their pod if there is interest to do so. Those interested in this option as asked to submit opt-in forms for the camp within the first week of registration, and will be notified February 2 if minimum enrollment was reached for their child's 'pod' camp. Also being offered in Session 4 are enrichment programs including gymnastics, science, and children's outdoor fitness, as well as a

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variety of new virtual classes. For more information on our Session 4 Youth Programs, visit www.el-cerrito.org/childcare.

FALL 2021 CHILDCARE INTEREST FORM

Families interested in Before and Afterschool Childcare for the 21-22 school year can submit an Interest Form to receive future communications when registration is confirmed. Care is available at Fairmont, Harding, and Madera Elementary schools for children enrolled at the same school where care is provided. The Interest Form is available at <http://el-cerrito.org/435/School-Year-Youth-Programs>.

SENIOR TECH PROGRAMS CONTINUE

The Recreation Department, Midtown Activity Center staff offers monthly opportunities to learn about and practice using Zoom. Workshops are 45 minutes long and provide an overview of how to use the Zoom platform as well as hands on practice. The next Zoom practice session will be held on Monday, February 8, 2021 at 10am and the next How to Host a Zoom workshop will be held on Monday, February 22, 2021 at 10am. To sign up or get more information on Senior Tech Workshops, call (510) 559-7677 or email midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.