



A message from Mayor Matt Mahan

Like all Americans, I am shocked and horrified by the assassination attempt in Pennsylvania Saturday.

I'm thankful former President Trump was not seriously injured, or worse, and sickened to hear that a

bystander was killed in front of his family and two others were seriously harmed.

There's no room for political violence in our nation. Irrespective of our political parties and beliefs, as Americans we must commit ourselves to settling our disagreements using the tools of democracy—rational debate, the popular vote, the judicial system—and

never through violence.

Our family is praying for those killed and injured yesterday, and for their families; for the law enforcement agents whose action prevented further tragedy; and for a world in which all of us do better in showing our respect and love for one another. The fate of our nation, and our form of government, depends upon it.



Almaden

Times

JULY 19 - AUGUST 1, 2024 ■ VOL. 37, NO. 15

SERVING ALMADEN VALLEY SINCE 1986 ■ ALMADENTIMES.COM

Almaden Valley's Alamitos Vineyards wins big at the 2024 International Women's Wine Competition

By William Bellou
Publisher

Alamitos Vineyards, San Jose's only vineyard winery located in Almaden Valley, has won several awards at the recent 2024 International Women's Wine Competition.

The winery received multiple accolades, including Best in Class, Double Gold, and a 96 score for its 2021 Estate 'Andorinha' Touriga Nacional. In addition, Alamitos Vineyards secured Silver medals for its 2021 'Running Quail' Pinot Noir and 2020 'Night Owl' Syrah / Cabernet blend.

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Owner and vintner Shaun Coleman expressed his excitement, stating, "We are thrilled and honored to receive these awards. It is a testament to our dedication and the hard work of our entire team, including our talented winemaker. This recognition, along with our previous accomplishments such as winning last year's USA Today's 10 Best Readers Choice Award and being voted the #1 Best New Winery Experience in the country, inspires us to push the boundaries of winemaking even further."

The International Woman's Wine Competition, which celebrates the contributions and achievements of women in the wine industry, featured an all-women panel of judges, including winemakers, sommeliers, and industry experts. The competition received entries from wineries around the world, making this achievement even more significant.



Double Gold and Silver Awards

George Troquato, Lead Winemaker at Alamitos Vineyards, added, "Receiving Best in Class, Double Gold, a 96 score and two Silvers is a testament to our commitment to crafting exceptional wines and the best wine tasting experience possible. We are honored to be recognized for our efforts and will continue to strive for excellence in every bottle."

Hand crafted

Alamitos Vineyards takes pride in offering hand-crafted wines, which are skillfully made using the finest estate grown

grapes as well as ones sourced from California's most esteemed AVAs. With its historical and picturesque location overlooking San Jose's Almaden Reservoir and warm hospitality, Alamitos Vineyards provides a truly immersive and captivating winery experience that showcases the beauty and richness of the region.

About Alamitos Vineyards

Founded in 2014 by space and technology entrepreneurs Chris Maune and Shaun Coleman, Alamitos Vineyards seeks to reinvigorate a region, once the epicenter of California mining and agriculture, through authentic, small-batch, quality-driven wines. Alamitos Vineyards is located in the unique microclimate of New Almaden, a historic community tucked into the Rancho Los Capitancillos Hills of San Jose, California on the eastern slopes of the Santa Cruz Mountains. The boutique winery is home to award winning estate grown and produced Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, and Touriga Nacional, a unique Portuguese variety that pays homage to the Portuguese family history of the owners.

To set up a weekend tasting appointment, please visit alamitosvineyards.com.



Motorcyclist killed in crash near Almaden Lake

A motorcyclist was killed in a crash Thursday afternoon, July 11, in the area of Winfield Boulevard and Furlong Drive in Almaden Valley, according to the San Jose Police Department.

The motorcyclist, whose name was withheld pending notification of family members, was pronounced dead at the scene just after 4 p.m. on Thursday.

This accident marked the 24th traffic fatality of the year on city streets. At this time last year, San Jose had recorded 26 roadway deaths.



Comedian Danny Lake fundraiser to benefit the New Almaden Community Clubhouse

Comedian Danny Lake will headline a special comedy show fundraiser to benefit New Almaden Community Clubhouse August 24.

Danny Lake will headline a special standup comedy show fundraiser which benefits The New Almaden Community Clubhouse on Saturday, August 24 at 8 p.m.

Lake has performed in more than 100 comedy venues in the US and Canada. Danny appeared in one motion picture.

Also appearing at the comedy show will be Gwen Pol and Priya Puram. The adults only show is \$40.00

The New Almaden Clubhouse is located at 21727 Bertram Rd, San Jose.

For more information, contact Cathy Palmen at (408) 621-7705.

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Please note: I have not and will not be verifying or investigating any information supplied by others.

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OpEd

**America the beautiful
4th of July parade event represents
the miracle of America**

A young lady stands strong in running for office

By Kevin Larsen

Times volunteer staff writer

It's a day of joy! Independence Day was declared a federal holiday 150 years ago; yet it all started in 1777 over 246 years ago.

It's all about America and fireworks came along in the evenings too. People participate for love of country.

Volunteers, participants and cheering onlookers are there, because they cherish and truly love our country; it's inspiring to the American Dream!

Multitude of Parades

Yes, in so many towns on the 4th of July, including the city of San Jose, we get to go early, set up chairs and take in the enjoyment of seeing others walk or ride in the parade route to signify that we are all part of our nation's family.

It is delightful when a person sets up and gets permission to walk or

ride in the parade route and bring new meaning at the local level on this historic day. Her name is Tara Sreekrishnan.

Tara decides to represent America

Among those celebrating at San Jose's Rose, White and Blue Parade was Tara Sreekrishnan, who is running for election to the California State Assembly to represent District 26. She's on the ballot in the general election on November 5, 2024 and her attitude and personality reflect the joy of the 4th of July in my humble opinion.

'The parade symbolizes the miracle of America'

She acts as a strong role model for young ladies to aspire to go into politics and other important government roles. Tara states, "As a proud American and with great schooling, I benefited from the diversity and energy of the Bay Area and garnered an aim to pay it forward and do things to help others. For example, I co-founded a non-profit organization that has



Tara Sreekrishnan enjoying the Rose, White and Blue parade route in San Jose waving, with Colonel Ray Watts. Photo courtesy of Diana Torres.

empowered hundreds of students across Cupertino, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Sunnyvale to actively engage in the environmental sciences and conservation. As a current Trustee on the Santa Clara County Board of Education, I am dedicated to serving our children and families. We oversee 31 school districts, encompassing 270,000 students. This significant responsibility is one I undertake with great honor and commitment."

Tara continued, "I also gained strong professional experience across all levels of our local government – school district, city, coun-

ty, and state – I've never given up on doing the very most I can do in what I do. I have participated in this parade for the past four years, but today, I represent my own elected office for the first time. The parade symbolizes the miracle of America. For me, it's a profound honor to be a product of the American dream and I'm running for Assembly to ensure California makes responsible decisions. We must improve our education system, create future career opportunities for all children, and maintain safe, clean, and affordable

See PARADE, next page



The Almaden Senior Association Members are a diverse group of enthusiastic active adults 50+ who enjoy new learning opportunities, new experiences, and new adventures. Join us today. Meet new people and get involved with classes and programs that will enhance your life and open new doors.

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Stop by the front desk at the Almaden Community Center and ask for an application. Currently Membership is free. Membership includes a copy of our newsletter and offers you discounts on classes through San Jose PRNS.

Events and Trips:

Clue (the play): SJCPA, November 2, 2024, 2pm. \$90

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For Tickets, contact Donna Smith at dsmith95118@sbcglobal.net or 408-266-4938

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Times **Community****Parade, continued**

communities.”

It is seen that all participants of the parade including the audience, assists people of all backgrounds and ages to understand how wonderful our country is and how and why it was formed. We can truly learn from how Tara was motivated.

“As a child of immigrants, July 4th is very special to me. My parents came here with \$50 to their name and scrapped by to create a life for me and my brother,” said Tara. “In our house, America was always a place we could realize our dreams by working hard, and I’m running for Assembly to make sure it stays that way.”

Tara mentioned that her parents never thought she would be a candidate for State Assembly.

“It’s not only possible for me to run, it’s possible for someone like me to win. And that idea, that we are all equal, is what makes July 4th so special.”

For me, as a visitor to this wonderful parade speaking with Tara helps me to reflect, when our nation’s honor is shown in a parade of young people like Tara who wish to make the country even better, it brings hope to our world. One thing for sure, these 4th of July parades are good for your health. You get to meet new people and there is such an uplifting feeling when many school cheerleading marching squads and bands stride forward in unison with such vibrant music as well as vast numbers of individuals being honored. For me it brings back memories of my early childhood. It’s a place and time where smiles are welcome!

I realize the youth of today are here, like Tara, to make our country a better place! Parade participants truly represent their parents and family from lots of cultures and all kinds of music and languages blast out over speakers which energizes and pays tribute to Americans in honoring cultures, religions and more!

San Jose officials support retail theft crackdown reform

By Vicente Vera
San José Spotlight

Last year San Jose City Council unanimously approved creating the Organized Retail Theft Detail, an investigative team within the San Jose Police Department to gather intelligence and track crime statistics and patterns to identify hotspots, catch criminals and reduce the rate of retail crimes. The San Jose Police Department received nearly \$8.5 million from the state to launch a three-year program.

Political consultant Rich Robinson told San José Spotlight he isn’t surprised to see big city mayors like Mahan call for Prop. 47 reforms in light of organized retail theft and companies pulling out of some locations.

“Ultimately, crime has gone down in the state of California,” Robinson said. “But the cause and effect of the news coverage on thefts with retail shops closing down, and they’ve got competition coming from Amazon and online retailers – so it’s not just Prop. 47 that’s causing the problems for these retailers.”

A 2022 UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll co-sponsored by



The Gucci Store in WestField Valley Fair was robbed by an organized retail theft ring last year. File photo.

the Los Angeles Times found 59% of people surveyed said they supported reforming Prop. 47.

Not all political leaders are on board.

Santa Clara County Democratic Party Chair Bill James told San José Spotlight they oppose the proposition, which he said have almost nothing to do with reducing homelessness or drug addiction. Instead, it returns to failed mass incarceration strategies to combat retail theft.

“Law enforcement agencies, including the State Attorney General, already have initiatives in place that have been successful in addressing retail theft, and as the Attorney General has said retail theft

by organized rings and or involving violence is already a serious crime that can and should be charged as a felony,” he said.

Regardless of the actual crime statistics, Robinson said he thinks California voters will pass the proposition. Whether the reforms will lead to a decrease in crime and homelessness has yet to be seen, he said, but it will mean more work for the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office.

“I think the voters are going to pass anything that is going to punish people, especially as they see the quality of life go down,” he said.

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OSC has opened a new program for women based upon equine interaction and equine-assisted-learning, designed to develop self-awareness and self-acceptance, confidence and resilience, and safe boundaries.

G.R.I.T. is for adult women led by OSC founder Landa Keirstead. The small group meets in 2 hour sessions, once per week for six-weeks

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Assessing driving fitness: Strategies for determining elderly driver competency

By Michael James

As we age, our abilities and capacities evolve, affecting various aspects of our lives, including our ability to drive safely.

Driving is often associated with independence and mobility, but it also carries significant responsibilities, particularly as our cognitive and physical faculties change with time. Assessing the fitness of elderly drivers is a complex issue that requires careful consideration of multiple factors.

Understanding the Challenges

Before delving into assessment strategies, it's crucial to understand the challenges associated with elderly driving. Aging can bring about a range of physical and cognitive changes that may impact driving ability. These changes can include diminished vision and hearing, decreased reaction times, impaired mobility, and cognitive decline, such as memory lapses and reduced attention span. Additionally, medical conditions like arthritis, Parkinson's disease, and dementia can further complicate the driving experience.

The Importance of Assessment

Given these challenges, assessing elderly driver competency becomes imperative for ensuring road safety. However, it's essential to approach this task with sensitivity and empathy, recognizing that driving cessation can significantly impact an individual's independence and quality of life.

The goal of assessment should not be to arbitrarily restrict driving privileges but to identify potential issues and provide appropriate support and resources. It's still important to make sure your older family members as well as strangers on the road stay safe and away from getting into car accidents. If they have not been assessed for driving competency yet and have been in an accident, contact a local car accident attorney.

Comprehensive Evaluation Strategies

- **Medical Screening:** Regular medical check-ups are essential for elderly drivers to assess overall health and identify any conditions that may affect driving ability. Healthcare professionals should inquire about vision, hearing, mobility, and cognitive function during these appointments.

Conditions like cataracts, glaucoma, and hearing loss can often be managed with proper treatment, allowing individuals to continue driving safely.

- **Cognitive Assessments:** Assessing cognitive function is crucial for determining driving competency. Screening tools such as the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) or the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) can help detect cognitive impairment. Additionally, specialized driving evaluations conducted by occupational therapists or neuropsychologists can assess specific skills related to driving, such as attention, memory, and executive function.

Vision and Hearing Tests

- **Good vision and hearing** are essential for safe driving. Regular eye exams can detect conditions like age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy. Hearing tests can identify hearing loss, which may affect a driver's ability to hear sirens, horns, or other important auditory cues on the road.

- **On-Road Assessments:** On-road evaluations involve observing an individual's driving skills in real-world conditions. Trained professionals, often occupational therapists or driving rehabilitation specialists, accompany the driver during a simulated driving experience or on actual roads. They assess factors such as lane positioning, speed control, signaling, and response to traffic signals and hazards.

- **Driving Simulator Tests:** Driving simulators offer a safe and controlled environment for evaluating driving performance. These simulations can replicate various driving scenarios, allowing assessors to observe how individuals respond to different situations without the risks associated with on-road evaluations. Simulators can also assess reaction times and decision-making skills.

Assessment

Assessment outcomes may vary, with some individuals demonstrating continued competency while others may require additional support or modifications to their driving habits. Here are some supportive measures that can help elderly drivers maintain their independence while ensuring road safety:

- **Driver Training Programs:** Refresher courses tailored to elderly drivers can help update knowledge of traffic laws, refresh driving skills, and introduce strategies for coping with age-related changes. These programs can instill confidence and

See DRIVING FITNESS, next page

Times **Local News**

Silicon Valley water agency delays decision to fine homeless people

By **William Bellou**
Publisher

The Valley Water board of directors last week agreed to postpone voting on a policy that poses \$500 fines or up to 30 days in jail for unhoused people residing on agency-owned land.

The directors voiced their desire to hear from other government agencies, nonprofits and unhoused advocates at an Oct. 11 housing summit before making a decision regarding imposing a new policy.

“The status quo is not working. Maybe this ordinance isn’t perfect,” Director Barbara Keegan said. “But we’re spending a lot of money to deal with unhoused issues and it’s not benefiting the unhoused or the society at large.”

Over the last three years, Valley Water has spent \$8 million cleaning encampments and \$4.8 million relocating encampments along Coyote Creek. In that period, workers also removed nearly 6 million pounds of trash and debris.

There are currently more than 700 people camping along Valley Water property, a number seems to be rising each year. Valley Water owns the land rights to 295 miles of the 800 miles of waterways in Santa Clara County.

Homeless advocates urged the board not to go through with the policy until safe places for people are implemented.

By the end of fiscal year 2025, the city believes it can offer 1,200 new shelter options for the unhoused.

Driving fitness, *continued*

provide valuable tips for adapting to changing driving conditions.

- **Vehicle Modifications:** Certain modifications to vehicles can enhance safety and comfort for elderly drivers. These may include installing adaptive devices such as hand controls, pedal extensions, or steering wheel grips to accommodate physical limitations.

- **Driving Restrictions:** In cases where individuals demonstrate limitations in certain driving skills, implementing restrictions such as avoiding night driving, limiting travel to familiar routes, or avoiding high-traffic areas can help mitigate risks

while allowing continued mobility.

- **Alternative Transportation Options:** Encouraging the use of alternative transportation options such as public transit, ridesharing services, or community transportation programs can provide viable alternatives for individuals who may no longer be able to drive safely.

- **Family Involvement:** Open communication and involvement of family members in the assessment process can help facilitate difficult conversations about driving cessation. Family members can provide valuable insights into changes they may have observed in their loved one’s driving behavior and offer support during the transition.



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Symphony San Jose announces 2024/25 Season

Classical Masterpieces, contemporary discoveries, light classics, film music, pops, ballet, and education concerts

By William Bellou
Publisher

Symphony San Jose has announced its 2024/2025 season—one filled with an exciting mix of classical masterpieces, contemporary discoveries, light classics, film music, pops, ballet, and education concerts.

The Symphony will present nine productions totaling 27 performances in San Jose’s majestic California Theatre for the new season.

“San Jose’s connection to symphonic music runs deep,” said Executive Artistic Director Robert Massey. “It can be traced back to the 1870s when musicians came together and formed the city’s first orchestra. Today, the talented orchestral musicians of Symphony San Jose are key to the city’s unique cultural identity, ensuing live, world-renowned music continues to flourish in the South Bay.”

Masterworks of the Classical Canon. Anchoring the season are symphonic classics beginning with **Jon Nakamatsu and the Jazz Age** featuring music from the 1920s including Gershwin’s **An American in Paris** and Ravel’s **Bolero** with conductor Elinor Rufeizen and local Van Cliburn winner Jon Nakamatsu performing Gershwin’s **Rhapsody in Blue** and Copland’s **Piano Concerto**.

Argentinian conductor Carlos Vieu returns to lead **The Firebird**, a program consisting of Sibelius’ **Finlandia**, Brahms’ **Variations on a Theme** by Haydn, Possetti’s **Bullanguera**, and Stravinsky’s **Firebird Suite**. Newly-named Resident



Conductor of the Nashville Symphony Nathan Aspinall will conduct Beethoven’s **Eroica**, featuring Beethoven’s **Symphony No. 3**, R. Strauss’ **Death and Transfiguration**, and Pärt’s **Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten**. Japanese conductor Tatsuya Shimono returns for **The Planets—An HD Odyssey** featuring the popular Holst work, Mozart’s **Symphony No. 41**, and Montgomery’s **Starburst**. The season closes with **España**—a musical trip through Spain led by Jose Luis Gomez and featuring Frank’s **Escaramuza**, Rodrigo’s **Concierto de Aranjuez** performed by guitarist Rafael Aguirre, Ravel’s **Rapsodie Espagnole**, and Rimsky-Korsakov’s **Capriccio Espagnole**.

Symphonic Spectaculars. New this year are three concerts consisting of a mix of familiar favorites, light classics,

pops, and film music. **Halloween Spooktacular** features haunting harmonies with music including J.S. Bach’s **Tocatta & Fugue**, Saint-Saëns’ **Danse Macabre**, Mussorgsky’s **Night on Bald Mountain**, Bernard Herrmann’s **Psycho Suite**, and John Williams’ **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban**. Holiday Spectacular celebrates “**The Most Wonderful Time of the Year**” with the Symphony, Symphony San Jose Chorale, Cantabile Youth Singers, and New Ballet performing holiday classics, carols, audience sing-alongs, and the ever-popular **12 Days of Silicon Valley**.

Hollywood Spectacular celebrates films and film composers who took home the coveted Oscar for Best Score, including Korngold’s **The Adventures of Robin Hood**, Mancini’s **Breakfast at Tiffany’s**, Jarre’s **Lawrence of Arabia**, and Williams’ **Schindler’s List**. Halloween Spooktacular and Hollywood Spectacular will be conducted by Peter Jaffe. Elena Sharkova returns to conduct Holiday Spectacular.

The San Jose Nutcracker. Symphony San Jose announces a special collaboration with New Ballet for their 2024 holiday production of **The San Jose Nutcracker**, choreographed by New Ballet Founder and Director, Dalia Rawson. This union between two important San Jose civic arts organizations increases the number of performances of this favorite holiday ballet to span over two full weekends (December 14-23, 2024). Thomas Shoebottom will conduct Symphony San Jose, bringing Tchaikovsky’s immortal score to life.

Students at the Symphony. Symphony San Jose launches a new education program in May 2025 where elementary students are welcomed into the California Theatre to experience a performance of Holst’s **The Planets**, accompanied by awe-inspiring NASA images and footage projected onto a giant screen on stage.

Subscription tickets and single tickets are currently available online at www.symphonysanjos.org or by contacting the Symphony ticket office at (408) 286-2600. Patrons 25 years of age and under may purchase a \$25 NextGen Sound-Check Pass, gaining access to all Saturday evening performances throughout the season. Single tickets (\$35-\$115) go on sale August 15. Photo: CC2.0 by BWChicago (flickr)

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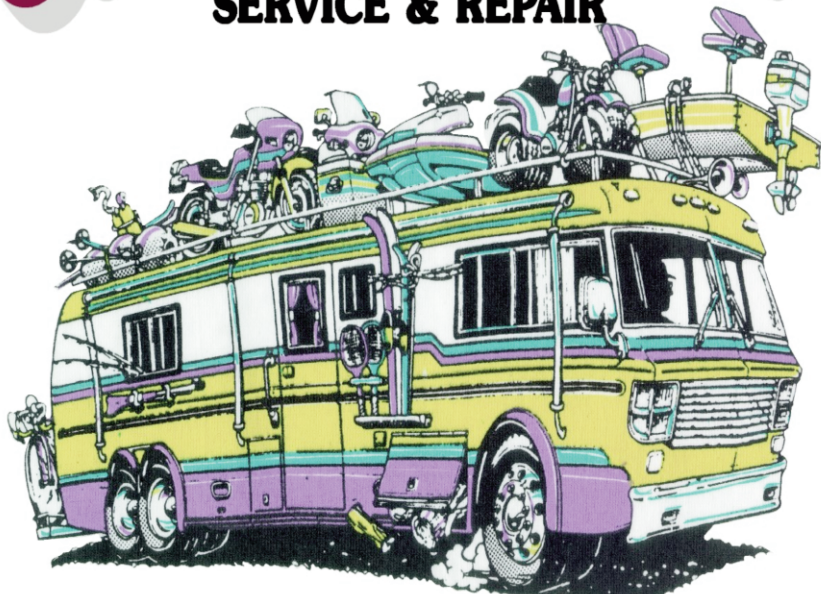
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TECH JARGON OF THE WEEK:

Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)

By Shubhi Asthana



Have you ever stumbled into a conversation where everyone is speaking around this “techie” word – and even after you’ve broken in, it is difficult to understand the unfamiliar jargon and acronyms? Well, there’s no need to sweat it. Let me teach you the meaning of some commonly used tech words:

Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)

Retrieval Augmented Generation, or RAG, is popular these days because it introduces some serious capabilities to LLMs like OpenAI’s GPT-4 - and that’s the ability to use and leverage their own data.

Why do we need RAG? There’s so much noise in the AI space and about RAG. Vendors are trying to overcomplicate it. They’re trying to inject their tools, their ecosystems, their vision. The essence of RAG involves adding your own data (via a retrieval tool) to the prompt that you pass into a large language model. As a result, you get an output. That gives you several

benefits:

- You can include facts in the prompt to help the LLM avoid hallucinations
- You can (manually) refer to sources of truth when responding to a user query, helping to double check any potential issues.
- You can leverage data that the LLM might not have been trained on.

With Retrieval Augmented Generation, the system allows the LLM to function in the context of data external to its original dataset used for pre-training. The system works as follows:

• **Ingest flow:** Data is split into sentences or other chunks of data. Each chunk or sentence is then encoded into a vector embedding and stored in a vector store.

• **Query flow:** When a query is issued, the query is first encoded into its own vector embedding, and those are compared to the data in the vector store. The most relevant sentences or facts from the vector store are retrieved. Those facts (or sentences) are then provided to a summarizer LLM so that it can respond to the query with this context (set of facts) in mind and provide an accurate response to the query, based on the data.

About the Author

Do you enjoy reading this column? Send in your comments or feedback to the author at shub.saxen@gmail.com. Shubhi Asthana works as a Research Senior Software Engineer at the IBM Almaden Research Center, San Jose.

Supervisor may leave for job in New Mexico

Bernalillo County board votes to hire Cindy Chavez as next county manager

By William Bellou
 Publisher

Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez could be leaving the Bay Area for a new job leading Bernalillo County in New Mexico after serving decades in public service.

The Bernalillo County Board of Commissioners voted last week 3-2 to hire Chavez as the next county manager. Bernalillo County, which includes the city of Albuquerque, is the most populated county in New Mexico with more than 672,000 residents.

Chavez, who terms out at the end of the year, still would have to accept the offer and



Cindy Chavez could be leaving the Bay Area for New Mexico. File photo San Jose Spotlight.

pass a background check.

In 1998, she was elected to the San Jose City Council, and she was reelected in 2002. Several years after her failed 2006 mayoral bid in San Jose, she became the head of the South Bay Labor Council, and later the executive

director of labor think tank Working Partnerships USA. She won a special election for the District 2 seat on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, where she has represented parts of downtown and East San Jose. In 2022, she made another run for the San Jose mayor’s office, but ultimately lost to current Mayor Matt Mahan.



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