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Bills are introduced to stop puppy mill pipelines  
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The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors discuss whether the campaign contribution ceiling should be raised on Jan. 14, 2025. *Photo by B. Sakura Cannestra.*

## Santa Clara County law makers weigh raising campaign donation limits

By Brandon Pho  
*San José Spotlight*

**S**anta Clara County supervisors could relax restrictions on how much they can raise for their reelection campaigns.

The issue sparked a 30-minute debate at the Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday about whether a higher ceiling for candidate fundraising would help or hurt poorer people's chances of winning elected county office.

For 30 years, county supervisor candidates have been barred from accepting more than \$500 in direct donations from a single person – or \$1,000 if they agree to cap their campaign spending at \$250,000. Candidates for district attorney, sheriff and assessor have to cap

their spending at \$500,000 to be able to raise \$1,000 from an individual.

Board of Supervisors President Otto Lee proposed the idea of raising the limit, but without an exact figure in mind. He suggested bringing the county's campaign finance regulations in line with the state. California's Fair Political Practices Commission sets contribution limits at \$5,900 for city and county office candidates in areas that don't have their own more restrictive limits. That's a 490% increase from Santa Clara County's current limit.

Lee called the idea necessary to grapple with the inflating expense of running for office, namely the

See *DONATIONS*, page 7



AVAC fitness trainers: Roham Saba (left) and Jake Fryer.

## Check-in on your fitness goals at AVAC's 'Outdoor Fitness Day'

### Grand opening of new AVAC Outdoor Fitness Center

**A**lmaden Valley Athletic Club (AVAC) celebrates the grand opening of its brand-new AVAC Outdoor Fitness Center with a free community event Saturday, March 1.

South Bay residents can explore the space, check in on their fitness goals, and experience the energizing benefits of fresh-air workouts

Throughout the event, members and guests can meet with AVAC's fitness trainers to discuss their goals, and if they're ready to sweat, sign up for a free 20-minute AbFit class, a mini version of the club's popular AbsoluteFit program, which builds confi-

dence, agility, and core strength.

Those interested in learning about the equipment in the new BeaverFit Shred Sheds or wanting a more in-depth class on proper form can sign up for a 20-minute Machine Learning and Technique Safety class. In between tours, attendees can sign up for a complimentary massage or try to win one of many giveaways.

The expansion continues AVAC's mission to bring the community together through fitness. Over the years, AVAC has consistently invested in facility upgrades and innovated its programs and services to meet member needs. Bordered by a turf track, the 7,200-square-foot outdoor fitness center has

See *FITNESS*, page 7

## State Senator Dave Cortese supports Public Wildfire Catastrophe Model

By Sean Eastwood  
*Times staff writer*

**C**alifornia State Senator Dave Cortese joined state Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara and several lawmakers to unveil a first-in-the-nation public wildfire catastrophe model.

"This first-in-the-nation public wildfire catastrophe model

will be transparent, science-driven, and work for everyone—homeowners, communities, emergency responders, and local governments. By investing in a university-led research center, this bill ensures a model that not only improves wildfire preparedness and planning but also gives homeowners and communities a clearer picture of wildfire risk and whether they're getting a fair deal on insurance," said Cortese.

Senator Cortese is also co-authoring a bill to develop an Insurance Community Hardening Commission.

"We can make it easier for homeowners to get insurance and make structures more wildfire safe by developing an Insurance Community Hardening Commission. It will

See *WILDFIRE MODEL*, page 6



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## New Ballet presents the 8th annual Fast Forward

*New contemporary ballet featuring world premieres by seven choreographers March 21-22 at Hammer Theatre*

New Ballet, the institution that Silicon Valley looks to for excellence in the art of ballet, announces today the 8th annual Fast Forward, two evenings of new contemporary ballet by seven choreographers, March 21 at 7 pm and March 22 at 2 pm at the Hammer Theatre Center.

Fast Forward provides the opportunity for emerging choreographers, both local and from around the country, to experiment. The program offers New Ballet Company Dancers the chance to perform work that has been created specifically for them, and to grow as artists and be part of the creative process. In addition, the choreographers provide the audience with a behind-the-scenes understanding of the new works by discussing the choreographic process and providing context and insight into their inspiration.

### World Premieres by Seven Choreographers

- Julio Hong: Montreal-based



Photo by Tony Abello of Keon Saghari's work for the 2024 Production

choreographer, who trained at the National Ballet of Cuba and choreographs contemporary ballet, modern and Latin dance works; creating a new work to the music of Arturo Sandoval. This world premiere is underwritten by Snowflake Properties, LLC.

- James Kopecky: Former Company Dancer at Charlotte Ballet;

former dancer at Ballet San Jose

- Mariana Sobral: Director of eMotion Arts Dance Co and, former professional dancer

- Laura Burton: New Ballet Chief Operations Officer and contemporary dance choreographer; former lead choreographer for the Dance Company at Virginia Tech
- Deborah Le, New Ballet Stu-

dio Company Dancer

- Niamh Rollins, New Ballet Studio Company Dancer
- Dalia Rawson, New Ballet's Artistic Director

General Admission tickets are \$17-\$50 and Premium tickets are \$136. For more information, visit <https://newballet.com> or call 408-924-8501.

Premium Tickets include access to the Hammer Theatre Center's Curtain Call Lounge starting one hour before the show and at intermission, plus access to a post-performance Cast Party with the dancers, featuring sweet and savory bites and elegant wines.



Dalia Rawson, New Ballet's Artistic Director

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Times **Local News**

**Philharmonic Orchestra's 2024-25 Spring Concert, featuring 2024 Young Artist Competition winners to be held Saturday, March 8**

*The Philharmonic Orchestra Performs Strauss, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Sarasate and Suk*

The San Jose Youth Symphony's Philharmonic Orchestra, under the artistic leadership of Music Director and Conductor Yair Samet, presents its 2024-25 Spring Concert, Featuring Young Artist Competition Winners, to be held on Saturday, March 8, 2025, 2 pm, at the California Theatre, 345 S. 1st Street, San Jose, CA.

The orchestra will open with Johann Strauss's Die Fledermaus Overture from his most famous operetta (meaning The Bat), along with Chopin's beautiful and sparkling Grand Valse Brillante, and close with Smetana's exciting Three Dances from The Bartered Bride.

This concert will also feature two winners from the 2024 Young Artists' Competition, proudly sponsored by the San Jose Symphony Foundation\*. Outstanding young soloists, Zijing (Zack) Zhang, pianist, and Joshua Kim, violinist, will perform Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1, and Sarasate's Zigeunerweisen for Violin and Orchestra, respectively. The orchestra will close the concert with Czech composer Suk's memorable Scherzo Fantastique.



**Zijing (Zack) Zhang** is a high school senior at Saratoga High School and has been a violinist with the San Jose Youth Symphony since 2021 and is currently in his 4th year with the Philharmonic Orchestra. He traveled with the orchestra on their last International Tour to the Baltics in 2022.



**Joshua Kim** is also a senior, attending Valley Christian High School, and has been playing violin with the San Jose Youth Symphony since 2017, first joining the Prelude Ensemble. He has been a member of the Philharmonic

Orchestra since 2021, and also traveled with the orchestra on their last International Tour to the Baltics in 2022.

The San Jose Youth Symphony (SJYS) is one of the oldest and finest youth orchestras on the West Coast of the U.S. Founded

over seven decades ago as part of the former San Jose Symphony, SJYS has a rich tradition of musical performance and education.

The musicians of SJYS, all school-age youth, are chosen from more than 650 applicants through our annual auditions. The SJYS

comprises 13 distinct performing ensembles: two full orchestras, a chamber orchestra, two flute choirs, two string ensembles, as well as winds, brass, harp, saxophone, percussion, and jazz ensembles.

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Times **Local News**

## Wildfire model

*Continued from page 1*  
create statewide minimum fire standards that is data-driven. This will also help builders and developers,” said Cortese.

### Commissioner Lara’s 10 bills

**1. The California Safe Homes Act** (authored by Assembly Member Lisa Calderon) This legislation aims to create safer homes and communities by providing state-tax-free funds to help residents purchase fire-rated roofs and develop non-ignition zones around their properties, along with other crucial mitigation measures. These initiatives seek to safeguard lives and homes while enhancing eligibility for insurance discounts under Commissioner Lara’s existing Safer from Wildfires regulation. The act would establish a grant program at the Department of Insurance, utilizing existing funds without incurring additional costs to taxpayers—similar to current programs in other states that address windstorm threats. Additionally, the grants would be federal-tax-free if Congress passes the bipartisan “Disaster Resiliency and Coverage Act,” which has received support from the Commissioner, many members of California’s congressional delegation, and numerous representatives from states facing the severe impacts of climate change.

**The California Safe Homes Act aims to create safer homes and communities by providing state-tax-free funds to help residents purchase fire-rated roofs and develop non-ignition zones around their properties.**

lection authority to assist the Department in understanding long-term trends in risk management tools, technical data, and the integration of information related to climate-intensified risks that can significantly affect insurance availability.

**5. The California Community Fire Hardening Commission Act** (jointly authored by Senators Susan Rubio, Dave Cortese, and Henry Stern) Proposes the creation of an independent statewide commission within the Department of Insurance. This commission is designed to develop a more effective inspection system that enables individuals to receive insurance discounts for home hardening, thereby improving wildfire safety for entire communities. Chaired by the Insurance Commissioner, the commission will review lessons learned from recent wildfires and offer recommendations to enhance and expedite home and community hardening efforts throughout the state, among other responsibilities.

**6. The Deceptive Disaster Relief Advertising Act** (authored by Assembly Member Heath Flora) After major disasters, consumers are frequently bombarded with misleading advertisements that claim to provide legal or recovery services, often posing as official government or non-profit guidance. To enhance transparency and safeguard consumers from being misled during these difficult times, AB 637 requires that advertisements on social media, traditional broadcast media, and digital streaming platforms clearly display the statement: “This is a solicitation for business. Not affiliated with any government entity or non-profit.”

**7. The California Wildfire Public Model Act** (authored by Senator Dave Cortese) Establishes the nation’s first public catastrophic model for wildfires, offering a crucial tool to assist wildfire planning and enhance transparency.

**8. The Insurance and Wildfire Safety Act** (AB 1, authored by Assembly Member Damon Connolly) AB 1 builds on Commissioner Lara’s groundbreaking Safer from Wildfires regulation. The legislation requires future insurance commissioners to assess the need for updates to the regulation based on new fire science and public input.

**9. The FAIR Plan Stability Act** (AB 226, jointly authored by Assembly Members Lisa Calderon and David Alvarez) AB 226 aims to strengthen consumer safeguards by allowing the FAIR Plan to access catastrophic bonds through the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank. This provision would add an extra layer of financial support for the state’s insurer of last resort, enabling it to continue paying consumer claims promptly in the event of a worst-case disaster.

**10. The Savings Accounts for Mitigation and Catastrophes Act** (AB 232, jointly authored by Assembly Members Lisa Calderon and Mike Gipson) AB 232 creates a tax-exempt savings account for consumers. This account allows them to set aside funds specifically for home hardening and insurance deductibles in the event of a disaster.

**2. The Business Insurance Protection Act** (jointly authored by Senators Sasha Renée Pérez and Susan Rubio) The Wildfire Safety and Recovery Act of 2018 (SB 824, authored by then-Senator Lara) has protected millions of homeowners by prohibiting non-renewals of insurance for one year. The bill aims to extend this essential protection by broadening the insurance moratorium to include commercial policies, covering businesses, homeowners’ associations (HOAs), condominiums, affordable housing units, and non-profits.

**3. The Insurance Payment Protection Act** (AB 597, authored by Assembly Member John Harabedian) Ensuring that wildfire survivors receive the maximum funds from their insurance claims is crucial for their recovery. To help policyholders obtain the full amount they are owed, AB 597 establishes a 15% cap on fees for adjuster-contracted work and prohibits any additional awards outside the contract. Currently, there is no limit on the fees that public adjusters can charge, which may include claims funds received before a consumer-adjuster contract is finalized—ultimately reducing the funds available for consumers to rebuild their homes and lives.

**4. Eliminate “The List” Act** (authored by Senator Ben Allen) This bill requires insurance companies to pay wildfire survivors 100 percent of their contents coverage without needing a detailed inventory list. It also grants consumers additional time—at least 180 days—to provide proof of loss to their insurance company following a declared state of emergency. Furthermore, the proposal aims to establish specific data col-

lection authority to assist the Department in understanding long-term trends in risk management tools, technical data, and the integration of information related to climate-intensified risks that can significantly affect insurance availability.



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**Almaden Senior Association**  
at the Almaden Community Center  
6445 Camden Avenue, San Jose, CA 95120



Times **Local News**

## Donations

*Continued from page 1*

ever-increasing postage cost of mailing campaign materials. He said less affluent candidates would have a better chance against those with more connections and resources.

“I’m frankly shocked to see there’s no one in the public here to speak on it,” Lee said at the meeting, referring to the lack of requests to make public comments in the half-empty meeting chambers. “It’s a practical step toward modernizing our election policies while ensuring fairness, consistency and alignment with well established practices across California.”

Other county leaders are hesitant. Supervisor Susan Ellenberg said Lee’s proposal is “well-intentioned,” but she isn’t convinced it’s a solution to the real problem.

“I’m concerned about this making it even harder for new candidates, young candidates — those who may not have well-resourced friends or colleagues to be able to compete. We’re just making the divide that much larger,” Ellenberg said at the meeting. “Every incremental increase is going to make it harder for some candidates. I would argue the very candidates that we want to represent us, that bring in more diversity and life experience, are going to find it even harder to raise those funds.”

She pointed out political action committees and special interests can still spend unlimited amounts of money in support of

candidates as long as they’re not direct donations, regardless of Santa Clara County’s laws, thanks to a landmark 2010 Supreme Court ruling that found campaign money constitutes free speech.

“At this time, I’m not comfortable supporting the flow of more money into supervisor races. I think the focus should be getting money out of politics rather than bringing more money in,” Ellenberg said.

Supervisor Sylvia Arenas said while money is important, it’s not always the deciding factor in a race.

“I’ve had an experience of always having a very budget-limited campaign — I’ve never had a campaign office,” Arenas said. “The first year I ran for council I didn’t have yard signs. My office has always been my home, my garage. I think it really speaks to when your message resonates with people. We are in politics and unfortunately our allies are not always our friends and our friends are not always our allies. And those are tough lessons.”

Yet she and other supervisors agreed on the need to study the issue — and have the county Finance and Government Operations Committee take a microscope to the gap between county and state regulations.

“There is, I think, an opportunity for us to take a look at making sure we don’t close the doors for folks who are well intended and should be part of elected office,” Arenas said. “Because those who don’t have those resources are the ones who should be running.”

## San Jose Youth Symphony to hold auditions for the 2025-26 Season

The San Jose Youth Symphony (SJYS) will be holding its annual general auditions for the 2025-2026 Season.

The auditions will be held on Thursday afternoons (March 27th & April 3rd) and Friday afternoons (March 28th & April 4th) between the hours of 4-9 p.m. Saturday auditions will be held all day (March 29th & April 5th).

All student musicians are welcome, ages 8 and up, who play orchestral instruments (woodwinds, brass, percussion & strings) or who are interested in performing jazz.

Marching Band musicians are welcome to apply for an audition now and then join after marching band season ends.

To submit an audition application, visit: [www.sjys.org](http://www.sjys.org) to join one of SJYS’s 12 orchestras and instrumental ensembles. Your audition will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. The symphony will do its best to accommodate your date preferences you list in the application.

The deadline for submitting applications is March 23, 20245

Questions? Reach out to [sjys@sjys.org](mailto:sjys@sjys.org)

### About the San Jose Youth Symphony

The San Jose Youth Symphony is one of the oldest and finest youth orchestras on the

West Coast of the US. Founded over 70 years ago as part of the former San Jose Symphony\*, SJYS has a rich tradition of musical performance and education.

SJYS member musicians, of ages 8 to 20, are selected from more than 650 applicants through our annual spring General Auditions. SJYS comprises 12 distinct performing ensembles: two full orchestras; a chamber orchestra; two flute choirs; concert winds, saxophone, percussion, jazz and harp ensembles; and two string ensembles. Each group rehearses weekly from September to May or early June and performs a scheduled series of concerts each season. In addition, member musicians participate in a weeklong summer camp and receive special coaching and participate in masterclasses from professional and renowned musicians in the Bay Area.

The premier group of SJYS is its Philharmonic Orchestra, led by SJYS Music Director and Conductor, Yair Samet. The orchestra performs its season subscription concerts at the historic and beautiful, California Theatre, in downtown San Jose. The orchestra also travels biannually on its International Concert Tours, and have performed in renowned concert halls in Japan, Italy, Austria, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Argentina and Uruguay. The orchestra’s last two-week concert tour in 2022, saw them traveling to the Baltics: Vilnius, Lithuania; Riga, Latvia; Parnu & Tallinn, Estonia; and Helsinki, Finland.

The orchestra will be touring again during the summer of 2025 to Poland and the Czech Republic!



Photo: [www.AVAC.us](http://www.AVAC.us)

## Fitness

*Continued from page 1*

raised rubber flooring, weight and cardio equipment, two BeaverFitShred Sheds, and a roof for shade and comfort.

The event is free but requires RSVP. Classes and massages are on a first-come, first-serve basis.

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9:00 - 10:30 AM Massage Demos  
 11:00 - 12:30 PM Machine Learning (every 30 mins)  
 11:00 - 1:00 PM Massage Demos  
 All Day Prizes and Tours  
 Date and Time: March 1 @ 9 am -1 pm  
 Cost: Free, but RSVP is required  
 Venue: Almaden Valley Athletic Club, 5400 Camden Ave, San Jose, CA 95124  
 Website: [www.avac.us](http://www.avac.us)  
 Register at [www.avac.us/OutdoorFitnessGrandOpening](http://www.avac.us/OutdoorFitnessGrandOpening)

Friday, March 7, 2025

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Times **Local News**

## Bills introduced to stop puppy mill pipelines

SB 312, AB 506 and AB 519 aim to protect consumers and dogs

In response to a groundbreaking multi-part investigation into the puppy market in California by the Los Angeles Times this fall, Senator Tom Umberg and Assemblymembers Steve Bennett and Marc Berman jointly intro-



duced legislation this morning in Sacramento to curb consumer fraud and abuse in California.

Standing side-by-side with colleagues, animal advocates, and puppies from Sacramento County Animal Services, the legislators all declared their commitment to ending the puppy mill pipeline in California, once and for all with the introduction of three measures, all jointly sponsored by the ASPCA (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and San Diego Humane Society.

Thomas J. Umberg (D-Santa Ana), author of Senate Bill 312, noted "As chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a rescue dog owner myself, I am appalled by what the Los Angeles Times has uncovered in its investigation into, and exposure of, extensive fraud and suffering in the puppy trade. Like many, I have been under the impression that advocacy and awareness of this issue had largely reduced or eliminated the puppy mill business in California. I'm proud to be authoring SB 312 as a part of this important package to protect consumers from moving forward."

SB 312 mandates that dog importers submit health certificates electronically to the California Department of Food & Agriculture within 10 days of shipment and requires those certificates to be made publicly available. This health certificate information is crucial for individual consumers to confirm information about their dog and is also helpful to

humane law enforcement agencies as they work to investigate fraud and malfeasance.

At a time when California shelters are overflowing with adoptable puppies, kittens, dogs and cats, SB 312, AB 506 and AB 519 will provide transparency in the sales process and protect both consumers and animals alike. All three measures will be heard in policy committees in March or April.

## Milo Ford of Almaden elected to membership into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi

Milo Ford (inset) of Almaden Valley was recently elected to membership into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society, at Brigham Young University.



Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L. Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 300 campuses in the United States, its territories and the Philippines. Its mission is to "cultivate a community that celebrates and advances the love of learning."

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Times **Local News**

# Math eludes us

By **Matt Mahan**

Since I took office, I've been asking for something that should be common in government but often seems to elude us, and that's math.

I've been asking our housing department to put together a realistic mathematical model for ending unsheltered homelessness in San Jose.

Like many of you, I've been critical of past plans to "End Homelessness" that don't show their math. As a candidate for mayor, I took the existing city-county plan to end homelessness and showed that the prioritized strategies would require over \$5 billion in capital costs alone just to offer an alternative to the streets to everyone out there. Obviously, that approach wasn't going to meet the scale of the crisis anytime soon.

Fortunately, our new Housing Director, Erik Soliván, has answered the call by creating a strong first draft of a model that gives us a realistic path to ending unsheltered homelessness.

It's not going to be easy. It's not going to happen overnight. But it's possible.

The fact is we won't come close to getting everyone indoors by spending \$1M per door on affordable housing while we leave people to suffer on the

streets — further worsening any mental health conditions or addictions and reducing the quality of life for everyone.

That's why we've changed our approach. We're prioritizing solutions that are faster and cheaper. We're creating an array of options from family reunification through our Homeward Bound program to quick-build communities. We need an all-of-the-above approach because there isn't just one reason people fall into homelessness, so we can't just have one solution to get them out of it. Especially when that one solution would cost us \$5B to get all 5,000 people indoors.

Luckily, the math shows that our new approach is 5% of that cost. Erik's modeling captures the inflow and outflow of homelessness and tells us that our best option to end this crisis is investing more in prevention and expanding our shelter system.

So we're on the right path. To get to functional zero (the point when our shelter and prevention system is able to keep the vast majority of people indoors and ensure when homelessness does occur it is rare, brief and one-time), would cost us about \$250M in capital costs.

Obviously, and especially in the midst of a tough budget year (more on that

below!), the city can't cover these costs alone. We'll need other levels of government and philanthropists to chip in. But unlike the traditional approach, this modeling shows us that it's actually possible to get to a point where no one is suffering on our streets, everyone is able to access our public spaces and people once again want to invest in our safe, clean city.

This may be the first time a city has actually done the math behind the model. And I have no doubt that once other cities see an end to the crisis that has become a constant across California, they will follow suit. And that's vital, because we need every city, county and region to do their part. (And yes, I'll just repeat here again—we all must demand that our state and each county significantly increase the number of in-patient treatment beds, which will be a necessary first stop for many of our chronically homeless neighbors.)

As we build out an expanded shelter and treatment system, and approach functional zero, we can ban camping in our city and truly hold people accountable for coming indoors. In the meantime, we'll be better enforcing our laws through a strict code of conduct. Because the truth is — whether you're homeless or housed, you should be accountable for being a good neighbor.

In this year's budget message, I'll be asking my colleagues on the City Council and the administration to use our limited funds to make life better and safer for everyone by banning open flames in encampments, figuring out how to better enforce our 72-hour park-

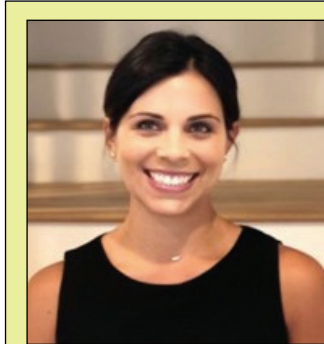
ing rule, and fully implementing the policies we've outlined over the past few years to make a visible difference in our communities.

Because enough is enough — we can't expect taxpayers to fund failure when we know we can do better. It's time for better.



**From the Mayor**  
Matt Mahan  
Mayor, San Jose

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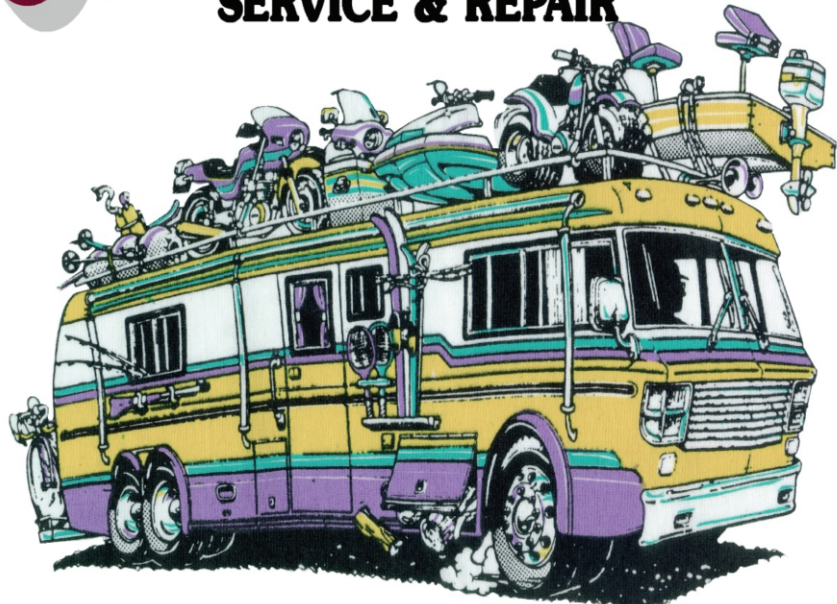
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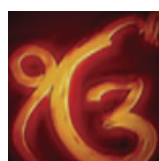


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