

San Jose planners reject development due to 'ridiculous' red tape  
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San Jose to crack down on RV rentals to homeless population  
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APRIL 2025 ■ VOL. 34, NO. 4

# Willow Glen Times

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Willow Glen High School parents learned about changes to the school's safety plan at a community meeting on Feb. 12, 2024. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

## San Jose parents strengthen school safety

By Lorraine Gabbert  
San José Spotlight

One San Jose high school is stepping up its safety measures following threats to students last year. Parents, teachers and officials hope the improvements will be adopted by other schools in the district.

Willow Glen High School's school site council updated its safety plan after a series of incidents, including an arrest of a Willow Glen High School student who walked on campus armed with a loaded ghost gun and knife. Before that, a Hoover Middle School student was caught with a loaded firearm and an Abraham Lincoln High School student was arrested after threatening on social media to shoot classmates with an assault rifle.

The incidents rocked the San Jose Unified School District last spring and were the impetus for the safety plan, which the parents developed and launched.

The plan, now in place, is designed to address student accountability, attendance, review behavioral threat assessments and response protocols. School leaders say they're seeing results.

At a school community meeting last week, Maren Sederquist, school site council chair for Willow Glen High School, said the plan has resulted in

See SAFETY, page 10

## Remains of WWII USAAF airman found after more than 80 years

2nd Lieutenant Robert T. McCollum to be buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose, CA on Saturday, May 3rd to be near his parents, sister and family members

William Bellou  
Publisher

World War II: 2nd LT Robert T. McCollum was a decorated bombardier assigned to the 565th bombardment squadron of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) in the European Theatre.

McCollum, who was born in Cleveland Ohio, received several medals commemorating his more than 15 successful bombing missions over Europe in a B-24J Liberator.

McCollum's squadron targeted major industrial sites, including Berlin's manufacturing centers, oil production facilities in Merseburg, factories in Münster, and shipbuilding yards in Vegesack. It also struck Vergeltungswaffen (V-weapon) sites in the Pas de Calais and took part in the large-scale



attacks on Germany's aircraft production industry during Operation Argument (Big Week) in February 1944.

On a fateful day on June 20, 1944, tragedy struck over the Baltic Sea near the coast of Denmark.

### B-24 mid-air collision

The 22-year-old McCollum was aboard the Liberator, when, for reasons unknown, it crashed with another B-24 in the same formation. Though the pilot and co-pilot of McCollum's plane were able to safely bail out, the rest of the crew vanished into the Baltic Sea. They were presumed dead, and the U.S. War Department issued a "Finding of Death" for McCollum on June 21, 1945.



A piece of Robert McCollum's planes' wreckage recovered from the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

The pilot and co-pilot were picked up by Danish sailors patrolling the area. Due to the German occupation of Denmark, the sailors were forced to turn over both crewmen where they spent the rest of WWII in a POW camp.

Subsequent searches for his remains were unsuccessful. In 1948, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), which sought to recover fallen American personnel in Europe, investigated the crash, but did not locate the remains of McCollum or his crew. He was declared non-recoverable on May 12, 1950.

Fast forward more than half a century later, Royal Danish Navy divers on a training mission in 2019 came across McCollum's WWII aircraft in about 60 feet of water at the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

The diving team first recovered a .50 caliber machine gun with a damaged serial number, one that partially matched the gun used in McCollum's missing plane. Two years later, the site was cleared of unexploded ordnance and quickly became an archaeological site due to the presence of human remains and other evidence.

### Additional dives conducted

On several occasions in 2022, 2023, and 2024, Trident Archäologie, Wessex Archaeology, volunteers from Project Recover, the Royal Danish Navy, and the Langelands Museum teamed up to conduct excavations and recovery operations. Their endeavor was a success as they were able to recover human remains as well as ID tags from two of the crew members. McCollum's dental records along with his DNA tests were conclusive that the identity on one set of remains belonged to Robert T. McCollum. It was a shock to military

See WWII AIRMAN, page 7

SEE OUR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE - PAGE 11





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Times **Community News**

## Beltrán named Woman of Year

By Dave Cortese

We're already into the busy month of March including three weeks of 'March Madness' for basketball/hoops fans, one holy month of fasting, prayer and charity for Muslims celebrating Ramadan, eight months of lighter, longer evenings and darker mornings due to daylight savings time.

We celebrated Women's History Month honoring the contributions of women to American society, culture, and history. During Women's History Month at the Capitol, we had a "Woman of the Year" floor ceremony where each member of the California Legislature introduced and honored on the Senate floor a woman from their district for her contributions to her community.

It will be my honor to introduce Morgan Hill City Councilwoman Yvonne Martinez Beltrán as my district's Woman of the Year! She is immersed in public service and policy that always involves equity; she is a dedicated advocate for her Morgan Hill commu-



Yvonne Martinez Beltrán

nity where she was raised, and she was appointed as the Cal Cities representative which is an organization that advocates for cities in California. She has attended Cal Cities Legislative Day numerous times in Sacramento lobbying to advance local control for cities and is heavily involved in the organization on many levels.

Women's History Month was established by Congress in the 1980s to acknowledge the significant contributions women have made in every field of American life because at that time they were largely unrecognized and unknown. The purpose of the month is to recognize and highlight women's achievements in science, technology, arts, business, and more!



### Senate Report

By Dave Cortese  
State Senator

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# SWAN LAKE

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# San Jose to crack down on RV rentals to homeless

**By Joyce Chu**  
*San José Spotlight*

San Jose has problems with slumlords and now they have problems with vanlords.

City officials are targeting vanlords, individuals who they said prey on the homeless residents by renting them inoperable vehicles. Mayor Matt Mahan along with Councilmembers Bien Doan, Michael Mulcahy and David Cohen want to study ways to restrict renting RVs to homeless people.

The Rules Committee recommended Wednesday the city conduct an analysis of what it would take to enact a policy to prevent these rentals and to report back to the committee in two weeks. The final decision on curbing vanlords will be up to the city council.

“We know there are bad actors out there that put dilapidated, nonworking van trailers or RVs out there, and then manipulate our unsheltered residents to rent these places in an unsafe condition, without any preparation for biohazard or hazardous waste or even a fire hazard,” Doan



San Jose created a new pilot program to get residents living in RVs off the streets. It includes towing and restricted parking zones. *Photo by Joyce Chu.*

said at the meeting. “And I think it’s important that we make sure we protect our unsheltered residents from these bad actors.”

San Jose has two known individuals responsible for renting at least 20 motor homes to unhoused residents. But the pervasiveness of the practice is unknown. In 2023, police officers discovered one person had bought a handful of RVs from a tow yard, set them on Educational Park Drive and was profiting off of the vehicles. Former police chief Anthony Mata wrote in a memo last year the majority of RVs on the streets are owned by the people living in them.

Rudy Ortega, who owns and lives in his RV near Columbus Park, said cutting off this option ultimately criminalizes homeless residents,

Bowl,” Ortega told San José Spotlight. “I think it’s done purposely. It’s another one of his tactics.”

The city is studying how other localities like Los Angeles are dealing with vanlords which has made the leasing of RVs for housing illegal.

San Jose estimates there are 1,000 lived-in vehicles throughout the city, and officials want to find ways to stem the supply of RVs as well as the blight.

The city has started temporarily banning RVs and other lived-in vehicles in designated areas. Under a \$3.3 million pilot program, the city has chosen 30 temporary tow-away zones to clear lived-in vehicles for street sweeping and cleanup throughout the year. It will establish a new temporary tow-away zone every week.

Residents have been worried they’ll lose their shelter if they aren’t able to move their RVs before sweeps happen. Many live in inoperable vehicles.

Councilmember David Cohen said the intent of the proposal is not to target those who live in RVs but to hold those renting vehicles accountable.

“We have procedures to follow to provide rental spaces for others,” Cohen said. “Our concerns are (for) people who are putting out old, inoperable vehicles and then renting them to people to live in, as opposed to people who own their own RVs—which is not at all the target of this potential ordinance.”

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## San José Mineta International Airport to have new generation of Airport retail concessions

*SJ City Council approves \$16.9 million in capital investment bringing new retail concession opportunities to Terminals A & B*

Following a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, San José City Council has approved the selection of two partners, Hudson and Paradies Lagardère, to manage a new retail concession program at San José Mineta International Airport (SJC) that will support 50+ local retailers.

The collective minimum capital investment of \$16.9 million will support a high-quality build-out featuring fresh new looks and integrate new technologies that will enhance the passenger experience, increase speed of service and drive sales.

Consisting of 12 retail concepts throughout Terminals A and B, the new partners will bring an updated product mix and a refreshed look and feel to the Airport's retail concessions, with new retail outlets opening as early as this year. The new program features a diverse mix of travel essentials, cafés and specialty retail, prioritizing high-quality products, local merchandise, technology and exceptional customer service. To ensure product freshness, all grab-and-go food will be locally sourced from within Santa Clara County.

Prioritizing a keen sense of place—focusing on innovation, local flavors, small businesses and a curated product selection—the new program will include diverse offerings featuring established brands and local businesses, including an almost 50% increase in participation by Airport Concessions Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. Both retail partners committed to support a high-quality buildout with new technology components that are designed to delight customers and drive incremental revenue.

"With thousands of visitors expected to pass through SJC for the Super Bowl, NCAA Men's Basketball, and World Cup games in 2026, now is the perfect time to enhance our airport's shops, cafes, and overall customer experience," said San José Mayor Matt Mahan. "By putting the spotlight on small businesses and local foods, we ensure that travelers from around the world experience the unique identity of San José from the moment they arrive."

"Thank you to the City Council for investing in the Airport and creating new opportunities for passengers and Airport users to enjoy. SJC's new retail program will create a distinctive San José and Silicon Valley experience by offering visually appealing and welcoming concessions that capture the region's spirit and cultural richness," said San José City Manager Jennifer Maguire.

"Hudson's program will showcase

a diverse selection of local goods, including wines from renowned vineyards such as Eden Rift Vineyards (Hollister) and J. Lohr (San José); artisanal gifts from esteemed local makers including Alice Frost Designs and Lola x Kenneth Collaboration (San José) and culinary delights from local purveyors such as Mike & Niki's Honey Company (Campbell), Sweetdragon Baking Company (San José), Garlic World (Gilroy) and Lala's Jam Bar (Sonoma County), among many others.

Tech enthusiasts will be captivated by a unique Google shop-in-shop featuring cutting-edge electronics and the newest and most trendy products in an experiential display where

travelers can try and play before buying, along with merchandise available only at SJC. SJC will be among the first airports in the nation to feature merchandise directly from Google. Additionally, Hudson will carry a curated selection of best-in-class global electronics brands, including Apple, Bose, Sony and other sought-after technology.

Hudson's program will also include San José-based Nirvana Soul Café

and all grab-and-go food products will be sourced locally from Eatly Silicon Valley. The overall concepts showcase the rich heritage of the San José region, drawing inspiration from iconic local names such as Santana Row and Willow Glen Market.

Paradies Lagardère's program will also reflect the unique character of the San José region by featuring an array of locally sourced goods, showcasing the work of artisans and mak-

ers such as Gooseberry Designs (Los Gatos) and The Capsmith (San José). Local gourmet offerings will include delectables from Nokki Farm (San José), Alice Stick Cookies (Los Altos), Ginger Lab (Santa Clara), Daybreak Coffee (San José) and Greenlee's Bakery (San José), among many others.

A highlight of the program will be a selection of licensed sports apparel for men, women and children.



Plaza de San José rendering



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Times **Local News**

# Mark Purdy: Raiders' Jim Plunkett is a good play for NFL Hall of Fame

*South Bay native, Stanford star and first Latino Super Bowl champion quarterback helped drive a wider fan base*

By Mark Purdy

Politicians love to pass resolutions. It keeps them busy and out of trouble. Most of the resolutions are worthy but full of flowery language and have no earth-shaking impact.

That will almost surely be the case again this past week in Sacramento.

State Sen. Dave Cortese, of San Jose, plans to introduce a resolution supporting former NFL quarterback Jim Plunkett's candidacy for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Plunkett, the South Bay native and former Stanford quarterback, is among 31 finalists in the hall's "Seniors" category. In early December, a Blue Ribbon Committee will trim the list to nine. In February, three of the nine "Seniors" will be elected to the hall along with more recent players.

I am not involved in that process. But I have been a Hall of Fame voter for other sports. And I can testify that no resolution from any state senator ever influenced my thinking. Or the thinking of any other voter I know. What could



be Cortese's motivation?

"Our family's house was just a short distance from James Lick High School in San Jose, where Jim played high school football," Cortese explained in a phone call. "I'm proud to have grown up in the same neighborhoods where he was raised."

So, it's personal. And a fine gesture. But to be blunt, Plunkett's selection faces long odds. Other candidates have thicker curriculum vitals. They threw more yards and touchdowns, earning more honors. Plunkett never made a Pro Bowl team. He had a .500 record as a starting quarterback.

Plunkett's best resume entry? He is one of just 13 quarterbacks to win two or more Super Bowls — and of the 10 who are eligible for Hall of Fame consideration, all have been inducted. Except for Plunkett, the MVP of Super Bowl XV with the Raiders.

## Off the field

Is that enough? Probably not. But Cortese has built an intriguing additional case, based on Plunkett's massively influential role helping the NFL become North America's most

widely followed professional sport. I'm on board with that case, even if it technically violates a voting dictum.

Hall of Fame selection members are instructed to consider "only on-the-field accomplishments" for candidates. Plunkett's Heisman Trophy at Stanford can't be a factor. Nor can his inspiring life story of growing up as the son of two blind parents, working part-time jobs while excelling at James Lick to earn his college scholarship.

But guess what? That same "only-on-the-field" standard was in effect in 2006 when hall voters decided whether to induct John Madden as a coach. In Oakland for 10 seasons, he won 112 games and a Super Bowl. But other coaches who are not in the hall achieved more — including former 49ers coach George Seifert, who won 124 games and two Super Bowls.

Voters were supposed to ignore Madden's brilliant television work and how he helped create a video game that built NFL interest among millions of young fans. But did they? Of course not. The voters essentially inducted John Madden for being the one and only John Madden, honoring all his contributions.

Likewise, Jim Plunkett should be inducted for being the one and only Jim Plunkett. He entered the NFL when Latino sports fans were generally more interested in soccer or baseball. A typical NFL crowd in the 1960s through the early 1970s was pretty much monochromatic, the milky opposite of diverse.

Take a photo of an NFL crowd today — particularly in California, Texas, Arizona and Florida — and you will notice Latino and Hispanic faces of all sorts. A recent Nielsen survey revealed that Latinos follow the NFL more intensely than any other sport — and are more passionate about the NFL than American

sports fans in general.

## A wider fan net

This didn't happen overnight. In 1971, Plunkett became the first Mexican-American player selected as an NFL overall No. 1 draft pick. This ramped up the interest of Latino fans, especially when Plunkett joined the Raiders in 1979 and won those Super Bowl titles, one in Oakland and one after the franchise moved to Los Angeles. The Latino NFL fan base up and down the state exploded into a sea of Raiders jerseys at the mall, the beach and neighborhood barbecues. Not to mention the stadiums.

During Plunkett's era, he formed a Hispanic NFL troika with his Raiders coach, Tom Flores, and Cincinnati lineman Anthony Munoz. Flores and Munoz are already in the Hall of Fame. But Plunkett was the most visible and identifiable personality of the three.

The cultural motor of pro football fandom shifted gears when Plunkett planted the flag as the NFL's first Latino Super Bowl champion quarterback. There are Raiders fans today who became Raiders fans because their dads and grandfathers became Raiders fans because of Plunkett. He deserves immense credit for making the NFL an ethnically ecumenical fan soup.

In Sacramento, Cortese often hears his peers philosophize about "a California for all." He knows that pro football also wants to cast as wide a fan net as possible.

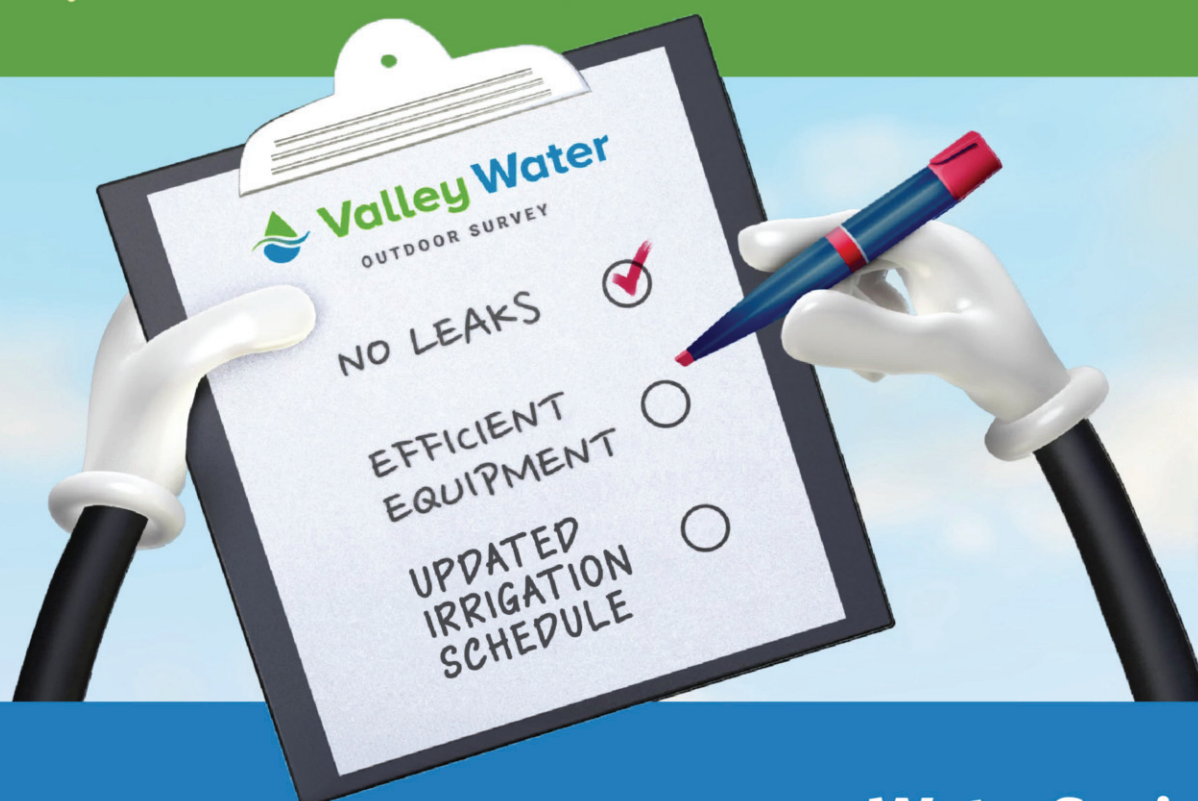
"If you want an NFL for all, you can't ignore the winners and champions who created that for you," Cortese said. "That should be the closing argument."

Right. But he still intends to introduce the resolution with the flowery language.

Please forgive him.

*Editor's note: Mark Purdy is a former sports columnist for The Mercury News.*

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## Times **In Memory**



An engineer with Project Recover spotted bits of a parachute which led to finding the parachute's cords, and then the harness still attached to the remains.

### WWII Airman

*Continued from page 1*

and civilians alike that McCollum's remains were successfully recovered, nearly intact, after more than 80 years.

#### Project Recover

Project Recover is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding the remains of our fallen service members. Moline said his team used underwater vehicles to map the crash site, using high-resolution sonar. The organization is headed by Mark Moline, University of Delaware Professor and Co-Founder of the Project Recover Partnership.

For the folks at Project Recover, it's all about bringing closure for families of service members MIA/KIA.

"My engineer is actually the one who found the first signs of remains,"

Maline said. "We found bits of parachute and the parachute led us to the parachute cords, and then the harness and then the remains," Moline explains. "So yeah, the bone remains were still there."

#### DPAA

McCollum's remains were flown to the (DPAA) Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's Forensics Lab in Hawaii, cross-referencing the bones with military records, pulling DNA from the bones, and eventually cross-matching family members currently living in California and Colorado.

#### Family DNA sample match

There was a request for family DNA samples and when there is a positive match there, they know who they have. So, it's quite a process

that can take around a decade, however McCollum's remains were pushed through the system swiftly, with confirmed recovered status on December 10, 2024. Without the DPAA, none of this would happen.

#### DNA results

"When I was first contacted by an Army representative asking if I would agree to provide DNA for the possibility of someday matching my uncle Robert, I immediately agreed, along with my brother and sister in providing DNA samples, but I did not believe a match would be found in my lifetime," said next of kin, Sandy Bellou of San Jose, CA. "When the DNA results came back with a match of 5.87 million to 1, our whole family and everyone involved were astonished. I feel blessed, amazed, and honored to receive the news of Robert's recovery. There are no words that can express the gratitude that I feel for the hundreds of people that worked so hard to accomplish this goal."

Moline said he's proud of the work to repatriate 2nd LT McCollum, and views it as a major victory, but said there's more work to be done for so many others.

"We need to resolve over 80,000 cases that are of service members that are still missing," he said. "So, we have a daunting task ahead of us. But we do it for the families."

To learn more about Project Recover and how you may donate to the organization, visit <https://www.projectrecover.org/donate-every-americans-mission>

*Editor's note: Sandy Bellou is a co-publisher of this newspaper. Look for follow-up stories in our future issues.*

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Times **Community News**

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## Sandra Day O' Connor Institute announces winners of 6th annual Civics Challenge

The Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy is pleased to announce the ten winners of the 6th Annual Civics Challenge.

This online civics competition, open to students in grades 6 through 12, invites them to choose a civics education topic and express their knowledge through an essay, short video, or original song.

Among the eight students that received an honorable mention is Naina D., 11th grade student in San Jose.

"We are amazed by the knowledge, creativity and talent these students have demonstrated," Institute President and CEO Sarah Suggs said. "Justice O'Connor was committed to civics education and the tremendous interest in our Civics Challenge is inspiring as we look to future generations to lead our nation. We congratulate all of the winners and honorable mention recipients for their commitment to civics."

The winners of the honorable mention for the high school categories are listed alphabetically below.

Honorable Mention:

- Amelia N., 9th Grade, Stamford, CT
- Frances A., 12th Grade, Napa, CA
- Laila S., 11th Grade, Washington, D.C.
- Matilda F., 9th Grade, Montpelier, VT
- Naina D., 11th Grade, San Jose, CA
- Ronan P., 12th Grade, Metuchen, NJ
- Rudra P., 12th Grade, Tampa, FL
- Travis D., 11th Grade, Mazomanie, WI

Winning entries and additional information on the Civics Challenge and other Institute programs are available by visiting: <https://oconnorinstitute.org/ocwinners>

Details for the next Annual Civics Challenge will be announced in September 2025.



### IN MEMORY

## Clark Goddard

**7/14/44 – 2/7/25**

*Willow Glen Resident*

Clark Goddard, a proud U.S. Navy veteran, devoted family man, and respected leader in the motorcycle community, passed away on February 7, 2025. Born on July 14, 1944, in San Jose to Bliss and Eleanore

Goddard, he lived most of his life in San Jose, attending Willow Glen High School. Clark grew up in the Santa Cruz mountains and San Jose. His first job was a paper route for the Mercury News.

At just 17, Clark enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving as a boilerman aboard the USS Skagit immediately before the Vietnam conflict. His time in the Navy shaped his character—instilling in him a deep sense of discipline, camaraderie, and resilience that he carried throughout his life. Clark lived a life defined by service, loyalty, and an unbreakable spirit.

After his military service, Clark found his second family on the

open road. As President of the Ghost Mountain Riders Motorcycle Club, San Jose Chapter, he fostered brotherhood, adventure, and a passion for riding that inspired many. His leadership and presence will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

Clark's legacy lives on through his wife, Norma, his daughter Debra Feskens of Salem, Oregon, his sons Emil and Ivan of San Jose, his sister Carolyn Eichin of Campbell, and his beloved grandchildren, Nicholas Feskens of Salem, and Emily and Elliana Goddard of San Jose. He was a man of strength and heart, known for his wisdom, loyalty, and the way he always made those around him feel like family.

In honor of Clark, the Ghost Mountain Riders held a gathering on March 22, 2025. Friends, family, and fellow riders came together to celebrate his life and legacy.

A second commemoration took place the following day in Willow Glen at the American Legion Hall.

Clark Goddard's journey does not end here—his memory will ride on in the hearts of all who knew and loved him. Ride in peace, Clark.

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# San Jose rejects development due to 'ridiculous' red tape

By Vicente Vera  
*San José Spotlight*

San Jose planners have rejected a proposed project because it was filed at 1.2 inches instead of 1 inch, leaving the developer stunned.

Real estate developer Donovan Adesoro said the planning department denied his housing proposal over incorrect paper sizing, a rejection that can create unnecessary setbacks when city standards are so rigid. To right this problem the city has been passing regulations to make it easier for developers to move forward with projects, but Adesoro still got caught in the web of regulations.

"I understand the importance of these requirements at the end of the day, but the big thing cities and the state should be looking for is if the building safe to live in," Adesoro told San José Spotlight. "Rejections should come from more than just if the margin's off, and this happens a lot."

He shared his frustration on social media, catching the attention of Mayor Matt Mahan, who responded.

"I'm sorry we rejected your map. But if we hadn't, the County would have rejected the map later and then added the time and cost of doing the entire process twice, so our team was trying to get ahead of that," Mahan said on X. "That said, we should have better communicated why we did this and obvious-

ly we need to work together to improve the upstream regs and/or downstream process at the County."

Adesoro moved to California from Houston, Texas about six months ago because of Senate Bill 684, which streamlined the approval process for development projects of 10 or fewer homes on urban lots under 5 acres. This motivated him to move to the Bay Area to create more infill housing developments, among other projects. He said small paperwork errors that delay projects put time-sensitive loans in jeopardy and stall housing needs.

"I feel like all developers have been treated like big developers and people think, 'Who cares if they need to wait or spend a little extra money,' but then there's little developers," Adesoro said. "Small-time developers like ourselves, we're on the same team as the city and our goal is to get more housing built."

Mahan pointed out Santa Clara County might have rejected Adesoro's plans as well, over incorrect margins, pen color and more.

"This is the kind of needless bureaucracy that's contributing to our housing crisis and eroding confidence in government as a good partner," Mahan told San José Spotlight.



San Jose City Hall is pictured in this file photo.

"When legislators make rules and regulations, they should make life easier, not harder — and in San Jose, we're digitizing much of our approval process to make it easier than ever to build and do business here."

Nolan Gray, senior director of legislation and research for California YIMBY, said he doesn't think the rejection solely based on a paper sizing error is justified, and the action goes against San Jose's purported goal of increasing housing by any means.

"It's the sort of behavior you expect from a jurisdiction when they are begrudgingly allowing housing," Gray told San José Spotlight. "The sort of things that the department was flagging for (Adesoro) in that case are just so ridiculous and so not necessary."

Housing planning stages that take just weeks in other jurisdictions are taking

months and even years in California, he said, and many of the planning issues can be resolved with simple communication.

"Having things be digital, having the process be streamlined and having opportunities for individual parts of applications to be fixed without requiring the entire application to be completely thrown out — those feel like very, very low hanging fruit," Gray said.

John Gregorchuk, a multifamily housing developer with YIMBY Action Los Angeles, said it's heart-breaking to see a developer who moved to California in hopes of addressing the housing crisis hit such a bureaucratic nightmare.

"One of the things that we're super passionate about, and we think a lot of pro housing groups are missing, is the pro business side of the equation, where it's a business to actually build and develop homes," Gregorchuk told San José Spotlight. "A lot of investors and housing providers are feeling attacked by the politicians, so they're putting their hands up and leaving."

He said it's refreshing to see elected officials like Mahan actively engaging with developers to increase housing supplies across the Bay Area.

"The way we solve the housing crisis, in my opinion, is with the help of a lot of little developers like myself," Adesoro told San José Spotlight. "But there may be other planners and jurisdictions who don't feel that way."

## TECH JARGON OF THE WEEK

### Tool calling

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:

#### Tool calling

Two months ago, I started working on tool-calling functions as part of the debug team in my organization. When I began looking into tool calling, I observed that we know what tool calling entails—the trick is how to get an LLM (large language models, which are AI systems that can process and generate text) to actually "call a tool." The only way I could think of was to watch the LLM's output for keywords. Then you must constantly command the LLM that if certain types of questions come in, it should spit out a keyword to run a tool. And you must keep repeating that command over and over because of the context window. Almost every prompt, we must remind the LLM how to use tools.

Contrary to the term, in tool calling, LLMs do not call the tool/function in the literal sense. So, what do they do? Let me explain with a simple example:

Imagine you ask your phone's voice assistant, "What's the weather like?" Within seconds, it

tells you the forecast. But how does it know? The assistant doesn't predict the weather—it simply knows how to ask a weather service for information. This is an example of tool calling, a way for AI models to interact with external systems to get real-world data or perform tasks.

Modern AI models, like ChatGPT, don't always have up-to-date information or built-in calculators. Instead, they use a method called tool calling to fetch information from the right source. Instead of guessing, the AI checks a list of available tools and decides which one to use. If you ask for today's stock prices, the AI identifies a financial data tool and requests the latest numbers. If you need help translating a phrase, it selects a language translation tool.

But here's the catch: AI doesn't directly press a button to use these tools. Instead, it generates a structured request—like a digital order form—describing what it needs. This request is then processed by the right system, which returns an answer. The AI takes this response and explains it to the user in a natural way.

Why does this matter? Tool calling makes AI more useful by giving it access to real-time data and specialized functions. Instead of being limited to what it was trained on, AI can now interact with external knowledge, making it more accurate and practical in everyday tasks.

Next time AI answers a tricky question, remember—it might not know the answer, but it knows where to find it!

#### About the Author

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



#### Helpful Tips:

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- Focus and mount your video on key points of entry or concern
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- Keep batteries charged in your cameras.
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**Maren Sederquist**, school site council chair, said the updates have been effective, resulting in a 22.4% increase in attendance and 56% decrease in tardies since last year. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

## Safety

*Continued from page 1*

a 22.4% increase in attendance and a 56% decrease in tardies since last year. In January last year, the high school had 44% of seniors on track to graduate, and it's already up to 77% as of January.

"At Willow Glen High, our graduation rates for seniors are always between 92% and 97%," she said, "but getting them up to a higher percentage in January is gonna give more of them a better chance."

### How the plan works

Accountability and consistency are the foundations of the updated safety plan. All student searches and suspensions will be equitable. Students are supervised at all times, there are consequences for missed tutorials, gaps are removed from students' schedules, passes are required for leaving class and parents must be present to check their teens out.

"If we walk into a room and it smells like marijuana... every student is going to be searched," Sederquist said. "We're not trying to target certain students. People are being treated fairly."

### 'Did a gun go off?': San Jose school district parents want answers

For added security, all administrators roam the campus throughout the day and cameras are checked frequently. Speakers in classrooms are tested regularly.

Students are less fearful to use the restrooms, Sederquist said, now that they're supervised. Restrooms are cleaner and have less tagging and drug use, she added.

Sederquist said the Why Wait Project has been an invaluable resource in updating the school's safety plan. Last year, parent Trudi McCanna formed the Why Wait Project to provide school site councils — responsible for creating safety plans for individual campuses — with research-based, best-practice approaches to school safety.

Other school site council parents are following what the school's doing, but they need support from the district to ensure their plans can be implemented, McCanna told San José Spotlight.

At the Feb.12 meeting, she said the district puts overwhelming responsibility on schools dealing with safety issues and called for a safety program director at the district level.

San Jose Unified School District Board President Wendi Mahaney-Gurahoo said she partic-

ipated in Simonds Elementary School's site safety plan meeting. She said each school forwarded its safety plan and public comments to the district for evaluation and future planning.

"Although I cannot be at all the school site safety plan committee meetings, I trust that each school is also going through this process which takes into account each individual school's differences," she told San José Spotlight. "This also allows for flexibility of those schools who may want to be more engaged or have other challenging issues to address that are specific to their school site."

Sederquist said SJUSD updated its safety protocols and emergency response and created a seven-page summary for parents. She'd like the district to allow the school to pilot an anonymous reporting system created by the Sandy Hook Promise, where students can report a classmate at risk of harming themselves or others through an app, website or telephone hotline connected to a team of trained counselors.

She said an increase is needed in the availability of naloxone on campus to combat opioid overdoses, as well as trauma kits, battery-powered lights, classroom walkie-talkies and outside lighting.

Parent Holly Gallup said the meeting reassured her about safety on campus. McCanna was also impressed with how much the school site council has accomplished.

"I don't know of any other school in the district that... has looked at the safety plan with such thoroughness," McCanna said. "Willow Glen High School is absolutely leading the way in our district."



Parent **Trudi McCanna** hopes SJUSD will respond positively to Willow Glen High School's efforts and take them a step further. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.



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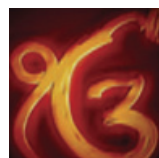
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