



El Cerrito Democratic Club

May 2025 Newsletter

Contents:

1. El Cerrito Democratic Club General Information
2. Information and Zoom Link for the Tuesday, May 27th El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting
3. Minutes from the April 22nd El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting
4. An Informational Evening with Fire Marshall Chase Beckman
5. Future Events – *Mark Your Calendar!*
6. Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions
7. Call for Newsletter Submissions
8. Link to the ECDC Website and Bylaws

ECDC
PO Box 192
El Cerrito CA 94530

Newsletter Editor:
Courtney Helion

1. El Cerrito Democratic Club General Information

Since 1952, the El Cerrito Democratic Club (ECDC)—one of the oldest Democratic clubs in the state—has provided a forum for area residents to discuss and take action on issues and campaigns of local, national, and international importance. Our General Membership Meetings are open to all and usually held on the fourth Tuesday of each month except October and December, when we typically have our annual dinner and holiday party.

Our monthly General Membership Meetings are generally in a hybrid format accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remotely via Zoom.

For monthly meeting and calendar reminders, you are invited to download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) invites to your computer:

https://us02web.zoom.us/joining/tZUpOCvqDkpEtH10GiVZ7NcegZqDI_tJeMI/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGpqjwjHdKXsxGCRpwcBo_CXe3wpnpej7d1zU_CChZpNS31M-V4I5ZWl8z6

For those of us who've been able to come to Hana Gardens, it's been wonderful to be in community and gather in person. Whether you join us in person or by Zoom, we encourage you to come a few minutes early to mix-and-mingle with fellow ECDC members.

The El Cerrito Democratic Club and its activities are supported by volunteers and the annual dues of members. Please see the "Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions" section towards the end of this newsletter for directions on how to join the ECDC or renew your membership. El Cerrito Democratic Club executive board officer elections occur annually each January.

Special thanks to our 2025 volunteer officers:

El Cerrito Democratic Club Officers (2025)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ● President – Neil Tsutsui | ● VP Programs – Ruthie Abelson Olivas |
| ● Past President – Champagne Brown | ● VP Publications – Courtney Helion |
| ● Executive Vice President – William Ktsanes | ● VP Records – Leslie Reckler |
| ● VP Media – Madeline Kronenberg | ● VP Treasurer – Ed Crowley |
| ● VP Membership – Greg Lyman | |

The specific duties of officer positions are described in section "VII. Officers" of the Bylaws posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.

If you're interested in participating more actively in the ECDC, please consider volunteering with the Club and/or joining the Executive Board.

Help is always greatly appreciated!

Courtney Helion, VP Publications

2. Information and Zoom Link for the Tuesday, May 27, 2025 El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting

Our General Membership Meetings are generally held in a hybrid format, accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and via Zoom.

To join the monthly ECDC General Membership Meetings via Zoom, please use this link:
<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Zoom Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Zoom Passcode: c5fQKR

Dial In by Phone: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 408 638 0968;

Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Phone Passcode: 920761

Please note that the Passcode is different if you dial in by phone rather than join through Zoom.

May Meeting Agenda

6:20 pm – Assemble and Mingle, Zoom Logins

6:30 pm – Call to Order

6:31 pm – Review and Approve the May 2025 Meeting Agenda **(Action Item)**

6:33 pm – Review and Approve the April 2025 Membership Meeting Minutes **(Action Item)**

6:35 pm – Officer Reports:

President (Neil Tsutsui)

Executive VP (William Ktsanes)

Membership (Greg Lyman)

Media (Madeline Kronenberg)

Publications (Courtney Helion)

Treasurer (Ed Crowley)

Records (Leslie Reckler)

Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas)

Records (Leslie Reckler)

6:40 pm – Democratic Party of Contra Costa County (DPCCC) Report (Champagne Brown)

6:45 pm – Vote on DPCCC-mandated changes to ECDC Bylaws **(Action Item)**

- i. Update XI of Bylaws to add “*All Bylaw changes during the chartered period must be submitted to the Club Development Committee within 30 days of the change*”.
- ii. Update XIII of Bylaws to change “*California Democratic Party*” to “*California Democratic Party Chair*”.

6:50 pm – Select Alternate Club Representative to the DPCCC **(Action Item)**

6:55 pm – Vote to endorse “No” on DA Becton Recall **(Action Item)**

7:00 pm – Program: “An Informational Evening with Fire Marshall Chase Beckman”

7:45 pm – Announcements (please limit to 2 minutes)

7:55 pm – Good of the Order

8:00 pm – Adjourn

Neil Tsutsui, ECDC President

3. Minutes from the March 25th El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting

El Cerrito Democratic Club
General Membership Meeting Minutes
6:30 PM, Tuesday, April 22, 2025
(in person at Hana Gardens, 10860 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito; and via Zoom)

Call to Order

President Tsutsui called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Review and Approve the April 2025 Meeting Agenda

On the motion of Walter and the second of Ruby, the agenda was adopted as presented.

On the motion of Akacic and the second of Crowley, an amendment was added to take a position on the Richmond Street project that was presented at the March 25, 2025 General Membership meeting. The motion failed 9 Yes 11 No 1 Abstention.

The Executive Board will consider how to agendaize taking a position on the Richmond St. project at their next meeting.

Review and Approve the March 2025 Membership Meeting Minutes

On the motion of Ktsanes and the second of Tsutsui, the minutes were approved as presented without the names of the motioner and second on the budget item. No one present could remember who motioned and seconded the item. The motion passed unanimously.

Officer Reports:

President (Neil Tsutsui) The rechartering process has begun. Champagne will help as a resource. Rechartering is separate from pre-endorsement. Membership numbers are important in the rechartering process. Lyman asks if any bylaws changes are required for rechartering. Tsutsui will check.

Membership (Greg Lyman) 114 members Two years ago 155 members. One year ago 141 members. It is important that your club name matches your voter registration name otherwise you will not be counted as a member.

Media (Madeline Kronenberg) No report.

Publications (Courtney Helion) If you have newsletter items, send them to:

ecdc.pubs@gmail.com

Treasurer (Ed Crowley) \$2094.66 in the account. Need \$3,000 balance to avoid paying Mechanics Bank \$10 per month in fees. Received \$216 bill from the city as a deposit for Hana Gardens.

Records (Leslie Reckler) No report

Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas) No report

Democratic Party of Contra Costa County (DPCCC) Report (Champagne Brown)

DPCCC made an endorsement in the Martinez Unified School District race. The club is holding hybrid meetings. The last meeting was in Brentwood. The next will be in El Cerrito at Hana Gardens.

Nye The newsletter has been revived. It should be sent out via email. DPCCC has new brochures that were given to all club presidents.

Update on WCCUSD, Board President & Area 5 Trustee Leslie Reckler

“How Trump will affect the School District”

WCCUSD receives about 6.5% of funds about \$30 million from federal sources. The money is predominantly for Title 1(low income) students and for special education students. Other funds support immigrant students, teacher training, career, technical education and more.

February 14, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) mailed a “Dear Colleague” letter to all school districts telling them they had two weeks to cease all DEI programs and efforts. DEI under the DOE was, and is not clearly defined, nor are DEI programs currently illegal. The CA Department of Education (CDE) responded to DOE for districts saying that schools would not cease, as it was not clear what was illegal, there are legal ways to pass laws and a “Dear Colleague” letter is not it, and CDE would consider legal action if necessary.

DOE opened a “End DEI portal,” where anyone can report a DEI-related discriminatory practice. It is not clear how districts get notified, or who investigates these submissions, or the criteria used to determine that a DEI practice is discriminatory.

Trump is moving to dismantle the Department of Education (DOE). DOE employees were laid off, and it is not clear what the plan is. Are parts returning to the states, reassigned to different federal departments? Don’t know.

Schools used to be hands-off for ICE, Trump now says that schools and places of worship are fair game. This has scared families.

Early April, DOE sent another letter to school districts asking them to confirm and to sign that they had discontinued their DEI programs and practices. CDE suggests not signing it.

WCCUSD and hundreds of other districts across the nation are on a DOE-compiled DEI list. It seems the districts were chosen because they have an equity policy, have equity statements or DEI policies or practices. Again, there is no indication that these practices are illegal. It is not clear what will happen to districts that are on this list.

Transgender athletes. It is CA law that transgender athletes play on the team that corresponds to their gender identity. In CA, there were two bills that were looking to change the law in various ways, but they were both blocked. However, Maine is in a legal battle with Trump over transgender athletes, and Trump is threatening federal funding. It is hard to say what is going to happen.

There is a case that was heard today in the Supreme Court. A Maryland school district adopted an English Language curriculum that is very diverse and shows many different types of people in many different types of settings (dog gets lost at a Pride parade).. Parents complained that it violated their religious beliefs- particularly curriculum that reflects LGBTQIA+ people or settings. School district did not let kids opt out because it is the curriculum and it would be impossible for the school district to manage all of the opt-outs. Conservative justices were not convinced of the argument. The case could have far-reaching implications for all districts about curriculums, diversity in curriculums and a parent's ability to opt-out of curriculums for religious reasons.

The West Contra Costa Unified School district cannot afford to lose federal funding.

Program: John Gioia, Contra Costa County Supervisor, District 1:

There is uncertainty and risk to local services. There are budget hearings at the Board of Supervisors next Monday and Tuesday. The majority of health services are funded by the federal government. Out of \$7billion, \$4 billion is for the health system. There could be a substantial cutback in Medicaid funding in CA. 50% is paid by the feds and 50% is paid by the state of CA. The Feds have said California will not have its waiver renewed. 40% of households in the county have someone in the household that receives Medicaid funding. If Medicaid is reduced, there will be reduction of hours at clinics, loss of providers, higher co-pays and people losing health coverage. Less healthy county and community.

These cuts affect all communities blue and red. Red and blue counties are trying to speak with a single voice because it affects everyone.

Food Stamp program (CalFresh) is funded 50% federal and 50% state. Reductions in funding could impact food stamps.

Head Start is at risk of cuts.

EPA Grant - Received \$19 million grant for North richmond/ EPA canceled that grant.
KTVU Channel 2 reported on it.<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAQU5rKaXkA>

Richmondside did a story on what could happen with healthcare cuts.

<https://richmondside.org/2025/04/22/federal-budget-cuts-could-hurt-contra-costa-medical-clinics/>

A suggested strategy is to work with colleagues in swing districts to stand up to oppose these cuts. Tell stories about what this means in our communities.

Collective advocacy to prevent a budget passed with significant cuts to Medicaid.

They could potentially make decisions quickly. There will be immediate impacts. State can't make that up. Locally, I can't make it up. Advocacy in swing congressional districts. There are enough

Be prepared to be flexible. Advocacy, and be prepared for litigation.

Announcements

Mobility Fair, El Cerrito Plaza, this Saturday, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Becton Recall Approved to collect signatures. How to help: do not sign the recall petitions, donate to the Support Becton campaign, and talk to the community directly.

DPCCC Training Series. Six sessions on governance. Elected/Leadership positions can sign up for the training. Encouraged for commissioners, club leadership or anyone that wants to run for office.

Adjourn 8:06 P.M.

4. An Informational Evening with Fire Marshall Chase Beckman

ECDC is proud to host El Cerrito's own Fire Marshall and Battalion Chief Chase Beckman. Fire Marshall Beckman will discuss defensible space requirements, zone zero, home hardening, fire hazard severity zone maps, and Measure X.

Biography: Chase Beckman has over 25 years experience in the fire service field. He began his career in 1998 as a seasonal firefighter with CAL FIRE, where he continued to work for the next 20 plus years. During his long tenure with CAL FIRE, he worked as a Firefighter, Helitack firefighter, Schedule A & B Engineer, Engine Fire Captain, Hand Crew Fire Captain, Deputy Fire Marshal, and as a Fire Captain in the Northern Region Land Use Planning Program.



Chase joined the El Cerrito Fire Department in January of 2022 as a Battalion Chief and Fire Marshal. Chase is responsible for shift coverage and associated operations, as well as all exterior hazard abatement inspection, plan review, public education, ordinance adoption and code interpretation and violation enforcement operations for the El Cerrito Kensington Fire Department. Chase is a Board member of the Diablo Fire Safe Council. He has an A.A Degree in Liberal Science and holds numerous State Fire Marshal certifications and fire line qualifications. Chase is a baseball coach in the greater East Bay area where he lives with his wife and 3 children in Martinez.

photo credit: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/directory.aspx?EID=142>

5. Future Events - *Mark Your Calendar!*

El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meetings and Events

ECDC May General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, May 27, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: An Informational Meeting with Fire Marshall Chase Beckman

ECDC June General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, June 24, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC July General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, July 22, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC August General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, August 26, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC September General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, September 23, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC Annual October Dinner – 73rd Annual Dinner; Saturday, October 25, 2025. Location and time

TBD; no General Membership Meeting in October; guest speaker and topic TBD

ECDC November 2025 General Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, November 25, 2025;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link

<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: TBD

ECDC Annual Holiday Party – time, date and location TBD; no General Membership Meeting in December

* There are no El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meetings in October or December; ECDC's Annual Dinner is in October and its Holiday Party is in December.

ECDC Executive Board Calendar – The El Cerrito Democratic Club's Executive Board (E-Board) meets monthly via Zoom for about an hour to handle routine club business, plan programs for the monthly General Membership Meetings and discuss newsletter content. As with the General Membership Meetings, the E-Board meetings are open to the public. The Zoom Link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89264608412?pwd=c2sySEl5ZEplJl1lHVUM5bERCZGpEQOT09>.

Below is the ECDC E-Board Calendar through June 2025:

2025 El Cerrito Democratic Club Executive-Board Calendar (E-Board)					
Monthly ECDC Executive Board Meeting (E-Board)	Deadline for Submitting the General Membership Meeting Agenda and Articles for the ECDC Newsletter	Monthly Newsletter Completed	Monthly ECDC Newsletter Postal Mailed (to those who have paid extra for USPS delivery)	Monthly ECDC Newsletter Emailed (by 6:00 pm)	General Membership Meeting Date
Thursday, 5/1/2025	Thursday, 5/15/2025	Tuesday, 5/20/2025	Wednesday, 5/21/2025	Saturday, 5/24/2025	Tuesday, 5/27/2025
Thursday, 6/5/2025	Sunday, 6/15/2025	Tuesday, 6/17/2025	Wednesday, 6/18/2025	Saturday, 6/21/2025	Tuesday, 6/24/2025

Other Community Events

El Cerrito City Council Meetings – 6:00-9:00 pm, first and third Tuesday of most months; hybrid format; in the City Council Chambers at City Hall (10890 San Pablo Avenue) and via Zoom; agendas and recordings available; <https://www.el-cerrito.org/113/City-Council>

El Cerrito Farmers Market – 9:00 am-1:00 pm, every Tuesday and Saturday; El Cerrito Plaza, 9000 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; southwest corner parking lot between Trader Joe's and Wells Fargo Bank; www.contracosta.ca.gov/7549/Contra-Costa-Certified-Farmers-Markets



DPCCC and West County Dem Events

<https://contracostadems.com/events/>

West County Dems Monthly meeting - 6:00 - 7:30 pm, second Tuesday of the month; This is a local Democratic club chartered by DPCCC. Meetings are via Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83146226722?pwd=cHRneSsxYkVnWWdTcTNQRnBBTmhzd09>

For more info, contact the club. <https://www.westcountydemocraticclub.com>

DPCCC General Membership Meeting - 7:00 - 10:00 pm, May 15th, 2025; If you are not a DPCCC member and wish to attend, please RSVP to the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you are a DPCCC member, you should have received an email with details for the meeting about seven days in advance. If you did not, please email the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you know of other community events that may be of interest to our members, please submit them to Courtney Helion at ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for publication in future newsletters!

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

6. Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions

REMINDER! – ECDC annual memberships expire annually on **September 30th**. If you have not yet done so, please renew for 2025. **Now is the time!**

You can do so online at: <https://ecdclub.org/join/>

Or by mailing a check to: ECDC Membership
PO Box 192
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Dues are \$5 for students, \$20 for individual members, and \$30 for two adults at the same address. The newsletter comes with membership and is delivered electronically by email. The added cost for a printed, hard-copy, postal mailed newsletter is \$18 (in addition to dues). Please make checks payable to “El Cerrito Democratic Club” and provide an email address for all individual members.

If you have membership questions, please email Greg Lyman at membership.ecdc@gmail.com.

Thank you!

- Greg Lyman, VP Membership

7. Call for Newsletter Submissions

The El Cerrito Democratic Club Newsletter is published eleven months a year (each month with the exception of a combined December-January issue) in advance of the General Membership meetings. ECDC members, friends and supporters are invited to submit articles and announcements regarding local issues and events of interest. Submissions should be emailed to ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for review and editing.

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

8. Link to the ECDC Website and Bylaws

Periodically the Club updates our Bylaws. The bylaws were changed in October 2018 to meet DPCCC requirements; revisions were proposed and adopted during the January 2021, August 2022 and March 2023 ECDC meetings. The ECDC Bylaws are posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.