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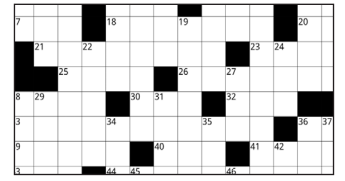
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# THE BURLINGAME B

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## WORKERS ON STRIKE

Burlingame workers strike over speech suppression amid contract negotiations



BY JAKE ROTHSTEIN  
Managing Editor

The San Mateo County American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 829 union picketed in front of Burlingame City Hall for 16 hours on Dec. 4, citing intimidation and suppression of free speech from City Management amid stalled contract negotiations. Although the picketing was attended by over 100 AFSCME members, guest speakers and union supporters and marked the first city strike since 1981, no apparent progress has been made in negotiations in the weeks since.

“There were three incidents of unfair labor practices where city managers threatened employees after they spoke up to the city council and exercised their rights and public comment to advocate for fair wages and better working conditions,” AFSCME representative Rod Palmquist said. “[One example was] after [an employee] spoke at city council, the superintendent of parks told the employee that the mayor of Burlingame, Michael Brownrigg, takes comments personally and that we, as in AFSCME, have to watch what we say.”

In response, AFSCME helped workers file official re-

taliation charges against Burlingame with the California Public Employment Relations Board. Even with the suit filed, AFSCME reported continued suppression of speech from Burlingame managers. The lack of progress was a key motive for the strike, which received support from 96% of the union.

“The retaliation and the unfair labor practices kept happening [after the suit was filed],” said AFSCME member Dante Campana, a sewer lead worker. “Nothing was said from city council or city managers [regarding the suit].”

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Gym construction has remained inactive since May.

## Gym construction cleared to begin

BY CONNIE LU  
Staff Reporter

The Burlingame gym was demolished in May. In the seven months since, the area has remained an inactive pile of dirt. But that’s set to change soon, as the construction plan was approved by the Division of the State Architect (DSA) on Friday, Dec. 7.

Because the gym is such a large construction project, approval has been difficult. The district team spent five hours reviewing the construction plan with the DSA in Oakland on Tuesday, Nov. 28, but still emerged without full approval, needing to revise three structural safety issues.

According to Associate Superintendent and Chief Business Officer Yancy Hawkins, who oversees the facilities department, the gym plan was split into two parts, causing delays. Typically, the demolition and construction of a building are approved together in one plan, but in order to ensure approval of construction of the portables before the school year began, the district team worked with the DSA to expedite approval of that half of the plan — demolition and portable construction — while pushing the actual construction plan for later consideration. So, for the past seven months, the first half of the plan was approved, but construction couldn’t begin until the second half was approved.

These issues with the construction plan have frustrated many members of the Burlingame community, including Principal Jen Fong.

“I’m extremely disappointed that there has not been active construction for the past two, three months,” Fong said. “I was hoping we would have the gym back in January 2025, but in the back of my mind, I knew that [there] was a possibility it would be later. I haven’t been told, but I’m assuming that August 2025 would be a more appropriate date to hope for.”

Hailey Miller, a junior on the varsity girls’ basketball team, is especially frustrated. For the next two seasons, her practices, games — and most crucially, her senior night — will be at another school.

“[Not having a gym for senior night] kind of makes me a little angry because it’s my senior year and I’ve been at the school for four years and so [to] not have the gym is heartbreaking,” Miller said.

Athletic director John Philipopoulos has worked hard with other administrators to ensure that athletic programs have space to practice despite lacking a home gym.

“We’re often getting practice slots that aren’t always the most desirable because we have to work around the home school,” Philipopoulos said.

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