

# San Francisco Chronicle

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## Case dropped, stalking suspect back

'I was just meeting people,' he says after complaints

Erin Zerega vividly remembers the call from her daughter, who had just finished baseball practice in San Francisco's Marina district.

"He's back!" the girl said on March 17, sounding frightened.

The man accused of following and touching the teen two

**HEATHER KNIGHT**

*On San Francisco*

years ago was right there, staring at them. (The teen uses they/them pronouns.)

After Zerega raced to the ball

fields to pick up her daughter, she spotted the man and agreed he was the same one whose actions had haunted the girl. Zerega drove to the nearest police station to file a report.

"I thought to myself, 'It's only a matter of time before this blows up again,'" Zerega told

me.

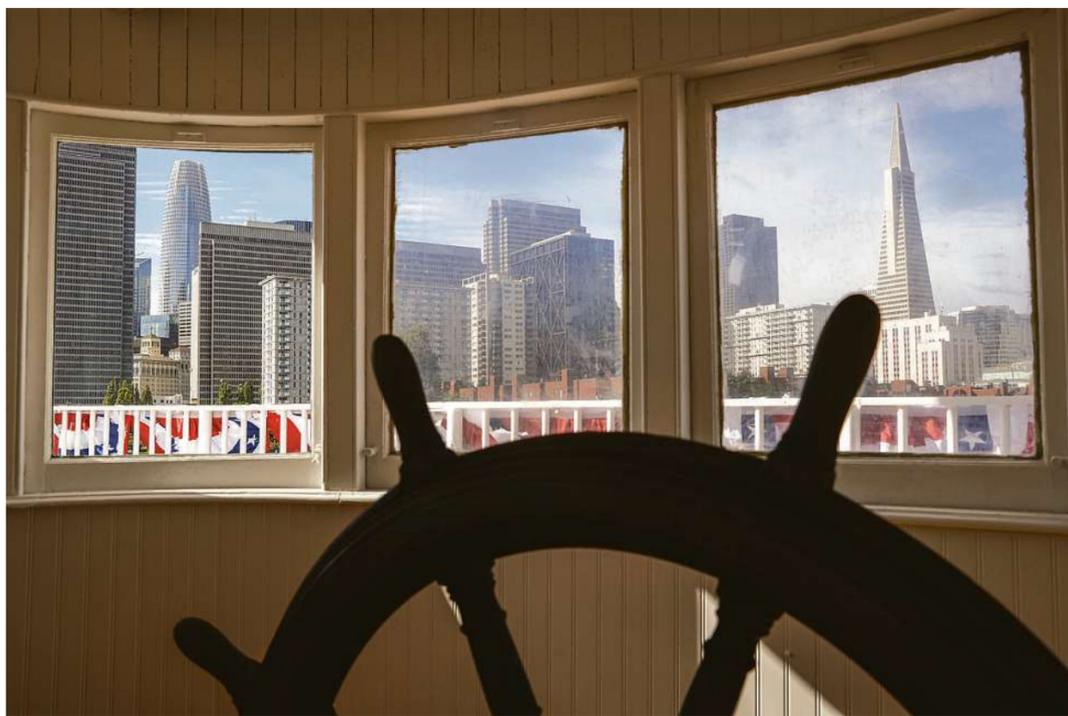
She was right. It's blown up — big time. And Zerega's family is livid that a criminal justice system big on second chances appears to be doling out 10th, 11th and 12th chances, too.

This week, numerous young women around San Francisco have shared descriptions on social media of the same distinctive-looking man — tall,

white, short-haired, covered in tattoos — following, grabbing and, in one case, forcibly kissing them as they walked alone.

Some people have shared photos, and those photos appear to portray Bill Gene Hobbs, the man arrested in the Zerega case. He's roughly 33, stands 6 feet 4, has the letters E-V-I-L inked on his fingers,

*Knight continues on A8*



Photos by Bronté Wittpenn / The Chronicle

Above: The interior of the Klamath, a 1925 ferry moored at Pier 9 in S.F., offers views of the skyline.

Below: The Klamath sits near the Ferry Building, where it serves as the Bay Area Council's headquarters.

## Ferry tale: rooftop garden, bay views

Commuter vessel, retired since 1956, to be open to public

The Embarcadero promenade is a defining feature of today's San Francisco, a 25-foot-wide walkway with skyscraping towers to the west and open water punctuated by magnetic lures to the east.

It shares another trait with the overall city: Unexpected

**JOHN KING**

*Urban Design*

discoveries lie in wait, especially in terms of public spaces that don't cost a dime. Some are easy to miss, but together they offer a perspective on the intersection of city and bay that the promenade can't match.

This thought struck me last week while visiting a new and truly one-of-a-kind spot set 35 feet above the water — the roof of an ex-commuter ferry that in its heyday could hold 1,000 people and 78 cars on journeys across the bay. Now it's back along the Embarcadero, moored along Pier 9, where anyone can soon wander on board



during the week to savor a priceless view for no price at all.

In an inevitable last-minute hitch, it has one final permit to line up before the public can visit, but that should happen within days.

That vessel, the Klamath, first launched in 1925 and hasn't carried

ferry passengers since 1956, when the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge opened and ferries were absent from the bay until lines from Marin to San Francisco commenced operations in 1976. The advertising firm Landor and Associates recast it as

*King continues on A9*

## Deputies in beating got quiet plea deals

Alameda County pair saw charges cut under Boudin

By Megan Cassidy

Two former Alameda County sheriff's deputies who were accused of unlawfully beating a fleeing man in a Mission District alley in 2015 are facing only minor criminal penalties after they quietly struck plea agreements with San Francisco prosecutors late last year.

The agreements were reached under former District Attorney Chesa Boudin, who was recalled in June, but Boudin made no apparent public mention at the time of the conclusion of the long-running case against Luis Santamaria and Paul Wieber. The deals suggest prosecutors weren't confident in taking the case to trial and came despite Boudin's pledge to make law enforcement accountability a central tenet of his time in office.

Judges signed off on the plea bargains, which included diversion to a mental health treatment program for Santamaria and a likely misdemeanor conviction for Wieber that could ultimately

*Deputies continues on A10*

## Heat pumps may be key after state phases out gas

By Danielle Echeverria

In another ambitious move toward California's zero-emissions goals, state air regulators voted Thursday to approve a plan that would ban the sale of commercial and residential natural-gas heaters by 2030 — a decision that means an alternative heating technology powered by electricity might soon become far more widespread in the state.

The unanimous decision by the California Air Resources Board is part of a larger state plan to reduce ozone emissions from a variety of industries, including transportation and consumer products in addition to commercial and residential building.

It comes shortly after Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a slate of climate bills that will require the state to become carbon-neutral by 2045 and

*Pumps continues on A7*

## Reparations panel faces critical question

By Dustin Gardiner

California's task force to study reparations for Black people is preparing to debate the most crucial piece of its work: How much restitution is due, and what form should it take?

Those questions will take center stage Friday and Saturday as the panel begins the final phase of its historic mission. The nine-member task force began meeting more than a year ago, but it has yet to make any recommendations with a specific dollar figure

attached.

Whether the panelists decide to endorse direct-cash payments or other forms of compensation, such as land grants and subsidized education, could have wide ripple effects as the task force is the first state-led reparations effort

in the nation.

But the path forward is fraught. Beyond external opposition from conservative critics of reparations, bitter internal disputes have spilled over into heated exchanges that overshadowed several of the task

*Reparations continues on A9*

Weather



Partly sunny.  
Highs: 69-92.  
Lows: 53-62.

B7



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