

From: [Sabrina Svendsen](#)
To: [Lara Weisiger](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please distribute in preparation for tonight's meeting
Date: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 5:10:08 PM
Attachments: [We sent you safe versions of your files.msg](#)
[Letter to Amy Wooldridge - Svend Svendsen - Google Docs.pdf](#)

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Hi Lara,

In preparation for tonight's city council meeting, will you please distribute the attached document to members of council as it pertains to item 7B on the agenda. A draft of this was also presented to the Parks and Rec Department in August of 2022.

Thank you so much please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Sabrina Svendsen

January 3, 2023

Dear Mayor Ashcraft and Members of Alameda City Council,

Svend Karl Svendsen (known by all as “Svend”) was born in 1932 in Espegere Denmark, a small fishing village outside of Copenhagen. He was one of six siblings in a family with very limited means. Growing up in Nazi-occupied Denmark, he understood firsthand the meaning of oppression. As a young teen, he helped combat the Nazis by delivering messages for the Danish underground in loaves of bread. After the war he entered an apprenticeship boat building school where he learned to design and build boats. Upon completing his apprenticeship, he volunteered for the Danish military for a tour of duty.

In 1956, Svend was offered a job across the Atlantic, at the Director’s shipyard in Mamaroneck, New York. Reading and speaking no English, he traveled to the United States aboard one of the last immigrant ships. After building ships for a year and being granted only a 5-cent raise in his hourly pay, Svend felt it was time to make his way west to the “land of opportunity.” So, he packed up his tools and drove to California, where he landed in Sausalito in need of a job.

Svend had a knack for innovation and was renowned throughout his professional life for advancing maritime technology. He worked for Freddy Coleman in Sausalito, where he helped build the world’s first fiberglass sailboats; this was revolutionary for the time. Next, he worked for a speed boat racing syndicate and hand-built the world’s fastest boat; he traveled around the country with the boat maintaining

it for competitions. He then worked for William Cryers & Sons on the Oakland Estuary where he built the first flat bottom sailboat with a retractable keel. This enabled the boat to go into the shallow waters of the San Joaquin Delta without running aground. Again, nothing of the sort had been attempted in the boating world that enabled better access of maritime to meet the needs to the neighboring cities.

In 1963 Svend started his own boatyard in Alameda, called “Svendsen’s Boat Works.” It was initially located in the Pacific Marina, now Marina Village. There, he had only one employee – an Italian immigrant (also an Alameda legend), Tito Rivera. Svend quickly earned a reputation in the boating community as an honest and extremely talented boatwright.

In 1966, Svend relocated Svendsen’s Boat Works to The Alameda Marina, becoming the largest tenant, occupying the Marina’s central portion from 1966 to 2019. At five-plus decades, Svendsen’s was the longest occupant of Alameda Marina in the modern era, employing hundreds of people from all walks of life. As an immigrant himself, Svend enjoyed giving, “first opportunities” to vast numbers of people who came looking for jobs. Svend sponsored numerous immigrants looking for work visas, from Scandinavia, Australia, Mexico, Vietnam and Japan, giving them their first American professional opportunities, with fair wages and benefits. Svend even renounced his own Danish citizenship to become a naturalized American citizen. Many of Svend’s talented employees went on to form their own maritime businesses with his blessings and encouragement; most of them located here in Alameda where Svendsen’s attracted boaters from near and far.

Svend was a proponent of family values and regardless of ethnicity or age helped employees get a solid footing and career. He treated his employees like kin, some worked at Svendsen’s their entire careers –

even second generations showed up for work. Svend fostered youth development in Alameda by sponsoring junior sailing programs at Encinal Yacht Club, Island Yacht Club and the Sea Scouts. He also donated to youth sports teams in Alameda (Little League Baseball and golf) as well as the Alameda Boys and Girls Club. Svend was an avid (completely self-taught) Alameda golfer and served as the Treasurer of the Alameda Commuters for 30 years. For decades, he volunteered as a course marshal for its tournament. Almost as many Alamedans related to Svend as a “golfer” as they did a boatbuilder.

Over its many decades of its operations at Alameda Marina, Svendsen’s expanded into boat manufacturing, rigging fabrication, metal fabrication, and the largest marine chandlery on the entire West Coast. Svend was a longstanding board member of the Northern California Marine Dealers Association and spearheaded numerous regional boat shows in Alameda, Jack London Square and the Cow Palace. Along with his son, Sean, he was the instrumental force in luring the America’s Cup to base all of its operations at Alameda Marina in 2013.

The entire Svendsen family (including the second generation) was active in managing the maritime business during its tenure at Alameda Marina. The Svendsens moved to their Alameda residence in 1970 and Suzanne (Svend’s wife) and Sabrina Svendsen (their daughter) still reside in the City. Svend was beloved by the entire boating community for his leadership, innovation, and boater-friendly culture. In his latter years he was named by St. Francis Yacht Club as its “Yachtsman of Year” based upon his lifetime of achievement.

Svendsen’s Boat Works was the epicenter of recreational boating for the entire Bay Area. The business repaired tens of thousands of vessels in Alameda Marina; manufacturing production sailboats (the first ever Fiberglass Nordic Folkboat), custom designed racing sailboats and even

the largest boat built in the Bay Area since World War II – an 80-foot Fiberglass and Mahogany houseboat (currently in Hawaii). That same houseboat was launched into the water at the “graving dock,” which happens to be the very location of the new maritime park.

Svend was also an environmental steward. He developed the first state of the art system for capturing and treating storm water runoff from the boat yard, receiving honors from the state for the ingenuity and environmentally sensitive design and utility. Svendsen’s Boat Works received an official proclamation from the Governor for this innovation.

We hope this provides ample information to you on Svend Svendsen’s character and numerous contributions to Alameda and its maritime community. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share about my father’s life and your consideration of honoring him in this way. I sincerely hope the Alameda City Council will consider memorializing my father’s maritime impact in naming the park Svendsen’s Maritime Park.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Svendsen