Local water company faces allegations of election fraud and company mismanagement

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Woodside

445 Manzanita Way
$22,000,000
5 Bed 6 Bath
Scott Dancer
650.888.8199
Scott@scottdancer.com
DRE 02068352

5 Woodview Lane
$17,950,000
6 Bed 6 Bath
M. Andrighetto/B. Bianchini
650.796.4902
mario.andrighetto@compass.com
DRE 01993500, 00878979

Woodside

308 Olive Hill Lane
$7,995,000
3.3-ac Lot w/approved plans
Helen & Brad Miller
650.400.1317
brad.miller@compass.com
DRE 01142061, 00917768

Menlo Park

1336 Orange Avenue
$4,098,000
4 Bed 3 Bath
Ruchi Goel
650.796.9600
ruchi@rgoel.com
DRE 02058607

Palo Alto

2239 Wellesley Street
$3,495,000
2 Bed 1 Bath
R. Flores/M. Lockwood
650.454.4338
MargotandRicky@compass.com
DRE 02027985, 01017519

Redwood City

238 Beresford Avenue
$3,998,000
5 Bed 4 Bath
Stacey Jamison
650.867.7976
stacey@staceyjamisonrealestate.com
DRE 01996600

Menlo Park

2044 Ashton Avenue
$2,698,000
4 Bed 2 Bath
Brad Verma
650.665.0894
brad.verma@compass.com
DRE 02033592

Redwood City

415 Sequoia Avenue
$2,498,000
3 Bed 3 Bath
Maggie Heilman
650.888.9215
maggie.heilman@compass.com
DRE 01206292
Walk to Town from this Central Woodside Beauty

HOME: 4 Bedrooms / 3 Full and 1 Half baths in desirable layout
• Approximately 3,105 sf living space (not incl. attached garage)
• Designed for comfortable living and entertaining
  – Chef’s kitchen with marble counters and full appliance array
  – Three dual door portals lead to large entertaining deck
  – Rear deck and custom pergola stubbed for outdoor heating
  – Recreation/media room with surround sound and equip rack
  – Home features Cat 5 wiring and a host of built-in speakers
• Large master suite w/Jacuzzi tub, steam shower, walk-in closet

LOT: Approx. 15,638 sf (.4 acres) on quiet, partially flat cul-de-sac
• Attractive rear lawn, gardens, and hardscaped winding pathways
• Side pavered area with full RV station (cable, water, power, sewer)
• Lower lot has custom playhouse with power and full insulation
• Irrigation system and full French drainage network installed

Attached 2-car, 435-sf garage with workbench, 220 V and overhead storage
Near acclaimed Woodside School (pre-K to 8th grade); buyer to verify
Close to Town Center shops and restaurants and I-280 freeway access

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Troubled water
Local water company faces allegations of election fraud and company mismanagement

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

T
he day he left East Palo Alto to attend his grandmother’s funeral across the country, Justin Turner’s water was shut off.

He had to leave his wife, nine months pregnant and due to deliver any day, at home without water, after trying fruitlessly for months to have a simple question answered by his water company, the private nonprofit Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company: Why is my bill so high?

While doing work to remodel his home, Turner asked the city of East Palo Alto to work with other agencies to make sure his plans were squared away. It came as a surprise, then, that toward the end of the project, a $5,000 “impact fee” appeared on his household monthly water bill from the water company, which serves 692 connections and a total of about 2,500 people, according to a 2012 report cited by the state water board.

Finding no information about such fees on the water company’s website, Turner asked the city of East Palo Alto for more information. He said he was told that the water company should not have been imposing the fees, and was directed to a 1994 class action lawsuit that water customers had won against the water company, declaring that the company could not impose impact fees except under very specific conditions.

He started asking the water company for an explanation, trying to understand how it was legally permitted to apply the fee when there is a lawsuit settlement saying it is not.

He wasn’t trying to be difficult, he explained.

He said he felt his home was unfairly singled out because it was visible from the water company headquarters and therefore easier for the company staff to see he was doing work on his home than if he lived in another area served by the company. He said the water company seemed to be applying inconsistent fees arbitrarily to any home that appeared to have been modified.

“In my opinion, if it’s not formulaic, it’s not equitable,” he said.

After about 20 attempts to get an explanation from the company, he said, the water company agreed to check with its attorney to see how much it would cost to get a clear legal explanation. But, Turner said, the water company never followed through.

Meanwhile, his bill kept growing, dramatically and erratically. The demanded $5,000 impact fee rose to nearly $20,000. After receiving the news about his grandmother’s death, he informed the company that he had decided to install as a new board.

Shortly afterward, his water was shut off, with a 24-hour notice but no explanation.

After two or three days without water, Turner said, the couple was given only one option to restore the water: Pay up.

To have their water turned back on, they had to agree to a payment plan of an additional $200 per month on top of their $60 per month flat rate.

Turner’s is not the only household served by the Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company subjected to surprise and seemingly arbitrary fees, muddled or nonexistent explanations from the company’s leadership, and having its water access cut off by the only available provider unless the residents do what the company demands.

Stories like Turner’s have spurred some of the residents served by the water company to organize a group to challenge the incumbents on the company’s board of directors. Calling themselves “Neighbors for Better Water” (NBW), they established a slate of five members they hoped to install as a new board.

They’ve been trying since 2017 to get a fair election, but each attempt thus far has been thwarted by incumbent company leadership, they say.

The group filed a lawsuit in February alleging that during the most recent election attempt, held over three days in May 2018, the water company used methods of forgery, fraud and manipulation to declare the re-election of the incumbents.

The water company has denied all of the allegations. The lawsuit’s next day in court is a case management conference scheduled for Aug. 23.

The company
The Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company was formed in 1924, when the area was largely agrarian and there was no U.S. 101 or city of East Palo Alto. Its territory is bounded by Donohoe Street, Bay Road, Menalto Avenue and Glen Way, and water comes primarily from groundwater wells. The vast majority of household holds it serve are in East Palo Alto; it serves eight parcels along Menalto Avenue in Menlo Park near U.S. 101, according to the city of Menlo Park.

A mutual water company, it is a private nonprofit corporation, and its water must comply with state and federal drinking water standards. About 1.3 million residents receive water from mutual water companies across California, according to the website of the state association for such companies.

According to the company’s bylaws, each property owner in the company’s territory is considered a shareholder. He or she is allotted shares based on the amount of land owned; one share per 2,500 square feet of property.

East Palo Alto resident Katherine Loudd served as manager of the company from the late 1980s until the start of 2018, when her daughter, Niambi Lincoln, was named manager.

Lincoln said she could not provide comment for this story due to the current litigation, but said: “I live here. I love this community. I raised my kids here. … I drink the water. And I want the community to feel safe and know

County election communications aren’t secure, grand jury claims

By Matthew Vollrath
Special to The Almanac

As 2020 approaches, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury has released a new report that raises concerns about the security of county election communications. The threat: that the county’s online election communications could be hacked.

The 34-page report, published July 24, is not about the security of election systems themselves, as the county has strong safeguards against voter fraud and manipulation of election results, the report’s authors clarify. But if hackers wanted to infiltrate the Elections Office’s website, emails, Facebook and Twitter pages, the grand jury maintains, it would be relatively easy to do so.

Hacking these online accounts could allow attackers to spread misinformation about where and when to vote, or to convincing misreport election results to the public, the report says.

These threats are “not theoretical,” the grand jury warns. In 2016, Russian hackers took control of election networks in two Florida counties, according to the report published by former special counsel Robert Mueller on Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Similar attempts were recently made in Contra Costa County and Knox County, Tennessee. And in 2010, the San Mateo County elections website, smcacre.org, was successfully hacked (though not during an election period), and several county emails were compromised in 2016.

The grand jury report identifies several areas of ongoing vulnerability. For one thing, password sharing among social media accounts is part of official county policy, it found. Widespread access to these accounts greatly increases their vulnerability to “phishing” campaigns — scams where hackers try to steal login credentials through an infected link, which account for as much as 91% of cyberattacks.

These social media accounts also generally lack multi-factor authentication. Except for its Facebook account, the online profiles used for official election communications aren’t protected by anything other than a single password. Nowadays, additional security, such as a one-time pass-word sent through text, is crucial to stave off phishing, the grand jury asserts.

The grand jury recommends a number of measures based on its findings. First and foremost, the county should take advantage of the many election security services offered by the Department of Homeland Security, including
By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

A Menlo Park man who worked as the Ladera Recreation Center swim team photographer is being accused of sexually abusing young boys and was arrested on July 25, according to the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office.

The alleged assaults of boys from 8 to 13 years old by Randy Haldeman, 47, occurred at the Ladera Recreation Center in Portola Valley and at the suspect’s home, for possibly as long as 30 years, according to Rosemerry Blankswade of the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office.

During an investigation by sheriff’s deputies, which had begun in January, multiple victims came forward saying that they had been assaulted by Haldeman, according to Blankswade.

The last incident reported was in 2015, Blankswade said.

Haldeman was arrested at his home on two counts of lewd and lascivious acts with a child under 14 years old and was booked into San Mateo County Jail, according to the Sheriff’s Office.

He posted $200,000 bail the same day, Blankswade said. He has been given an initial court date of Aug. 26, San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said.

Haldeman was arrested Monday, July 29, the case had yet to be referred to the District Attorney’s Office by the Sheriff’s Office.

Randolph Haldeman was arrested at his home on July 25, Sheriff’s Office, Wagstaffe said, but he anticipated receiving it later this week.

On his LinkedIn page, Haldeman describes himself as a “CEO, CMO, Innovator, Mentor.” He is chief executive officer and president of Code-N, a Menlo Park-based “next-generation cloud computing company,” according to the company’s website.

Wagstaffe’s investigators believe that there are more victims who haven’t come forward, Blankswade said.

The San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office encourages anyone who had contact with Haldeman or whose children had contact with him or know of someone who was victimized to contact Detective Joseph Fava at 650-363-4192 or e-mail fava@smcgov.org or Detective Sergeant Joe Cang at 650-363-4008 or jcang@smcgov.org.

By Rick Radin

Our Free Week continues from page 5

a “Cyber Resilience Review” and a “Phishing Campaign Assessment,” according to the report. All of these services are available to local elections offices for free.

In the meantime, the grand jury recommends the immediate use of “FIDO keys,” physical devices containing login credentials, which experts say are far more secure than passwords.

Various county agencies must now respond to the report, including the Office of the Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder & Elections (ACRE). According to Jim Irizarry, assistant chief elections officer, ACRE recognizes the seriousness of the findings, but is confident in its ability to respond.

“The issuance of the Grand Jury report is timely and appropri-ate,” Irizarry wrote in an email. He noted the significance of its release on the same day Robert Mueller testified in Washington, D.C., about foreign election interference, which “speaks to the high level and sophistication of these cyber threats,” he said.

However, “San Mateo County Elections technology … is among the safest and securest in California and the Nation,” he wrote. Some of the report’s recommendations were already implemented independently prior to its release, he asserted. For many of the remaining concerns, including multi-factor authentication and FIDO keys, ACRE will work with other departments “to identify … and implement (them) as soon as possible.”

“We are always vigilant and concerned about elections and security,” Irizarry concluded. “We feel very confident that our efforts to harden our cyber defenses and our extensive voter education and outreach programs will protect the security and content of our elections web page.”

ACRE and the other agencies have 60 days to release an official response.
Two and a half years after it was approved, in concept, by the Menlo Park City Council, Facebook is moving ahead with its plans to build a new hotel at the corner of Chilco Street and Bayfront Expressway.

Facebook has contracted with citizenM, a Netherlands-based hotel chain, for the hotel project, and last night (July 32), citizenM representatives argued their case before the Planning Commission for why they should be permitted to build 40 additional rooms beyond the 200 already approved, decrease the number of parking spaces at 120 parking spaces from 245, and move forward with the proposed modular architecture.

The proposed hotel would be five stories tall and about 91,000 square feet, about half of the square footage of the 174,800-square-foot hotel originally proposed, according to a staff report. The hotel would also contain a restaurant.

According to Ernest Lee, a member of the citizenM development team, the hotel chain focuses on high-quality designs at an “accessable price point.”

Rooms run small while shared amenity spaces are more spacious, he said.

The group plans to feature art prominently at the hotel, as well as offer extensive outdoor landscaping.

The 12-year-old company is currently developing hotels in Seattle and downtown Los Angeles and other U.S. cities, and operates hotels in London and Amsterdam, among other cities. It just opened its 18th hotel worldwide, Lee said.

Part of the reason for the request for additional rooms has to do with demand. Currently, local employers generate demand for about 400 to 450 hotel rooms a night on a daily basis, he said.

In 2016, the City Council approved a 200-room hotel on Facebook property as part of the company’s West Campus Expansion development agreement.

The citizenM representatives noted that they’re working with Facebook to develop a shared parking agreement, with plans to use a nearby Facebook parking structure.

Commissioner Henry Riggs expressed skepticism that the parking demand of the hotel could be met by sharing some spots with another nearby parking area. People traveling to visit the Bay Area often want cars to drive to visit the coast or the East Bay, and Facebook’s parking lots are often full, he noted.

Chair Andrew Barnes, is that the new onsite wastewater system at Facebook being used to recycle black water for toilets and irrigation will be maxed out at the company’s other new buildings and won’t have capacity to work at the hotel, according to Fergus O’Shea, director of campus development at Facebook.

When it comes to figuring what kind of art to include, Commissioner Michele Tate recommended that the developer conduct public outreach with nearby residents. She also urged it to focus on hiring locals as staff.

While approval of the first 200 rooms of the hotel was covered under the previous development agreement the city worked out with Facebook, the addition of 40 new rooms, as well as the proposed parking reduction, will eventually have to be approved by the City Council to proceed.

Those 40 rooms will also be counted toward the cap created in the ConnectMenlo General Plan update of 400 new total hotel rooms on the city’s Bay side, according to Kyle Perata, acting principal planner with the city.

The Planning Commission’s discussion about the hotel was during a study session, so the commission did not take a vote. The matter will be brought back to the commission at a later date for it to make a formal recommendation to the council in support or opposition to the proposal, according to staff.
that the water is safe.” Lincoln also declined to comment on the company’s practice of using water and alleged lack of transparency.

Loud would not comment about the May 2018 election due to the current litigation. She told the Almanac that she had to request permission from the company board before she could consider responding to the specific problems cited in this story that the respondents did. She pointed out that she had received the proxies in one instance, exceeding the maximum allowable levels for iron and manganese, in particular, which can affect the taste and color of the water. In addition, chlorine is used to treat those minerals, which itself has a distinctive taste and odor.

Lincoln said that the water from the company tends to naturally contain more minerals than the Hetch Hetchy spring water offered elsewhere in the city. It runs high in iron and manganese, in particular, which can affect the taste and color of the water. In addition, chlorine is used to treat those minerals, which itself has a distinctive taste and odor.

When the May 2018 election was brought forward its request to hold an election. Under company bylaws, the shareholders meeting a copy of Mitchell’s tally. The company leadership, including its board and counsel, spent the next several hours inside the company building, refusing to come out.

Around midnight, they emerged, and Pekary and Macias, the union inspectors, presented the results of the calculations for both slates, theirs and Mitchell’s. Lincoln allegedly attempted to interfere with the announcement. A valid election?

The company permitted share-holders to cast their ballots by proxy. Board member Jacqueline Mitchell’s tally and called a break, won 822 to 115 shares; Mitchell’s that they had won 705 shares to 464.

But before the numbers could be announced, Lincoln saw Mitchell’s tally and called a break, while refusing to provide NBW members with a copy of Mitchell’s tally.

Then, the suit argues, Loud took Mitchell’s tally sheets, rolled them into her sleeve, and walked away. Her family members took the binder of company proxies. Pekary also allegedly attempted to take the tapes from the calculator Mitchell used to tabulate the proxies. The company leadership, including its board and counsel, spent the next several hours inside the company building, refusing to come out.

About 4 p.m., Lincoln said that the proxies had not yet been verified, despite protestation from the company secretary, Alber-ta Guerra. “I understand she would reduce my bill, but they were not in his handwriting. “The handwriting on the company proxies, his name reappeared, which, under company bylaws, did a separate set of calculations, which did not factor in those invalidations.

When they finished their pains-taking math — conducted on an ancient hand-calculator with shares calculated down to the thousandths place — both sets of numbers reflected that the NBW candidates had won. Pekary and Macias’ calculations indicated that the challengers had won 822 to 115 shares; Mitchell’s that they had won 705 shares to 464.

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A culture of opacity

One of the chief complaints about the water company from people who work with agencies that cross paths with it is a lack of communication.

“They’ve probably been the least cooperative of the water districts we work with as far as being forthcoming with information,” said Menlo Park Fire Protection District Chief Harold Schapelhouman.

He said he’s observed a defensive attitude, and added that company officials are also “somewhat territorial about us touching their system.”

In addition, the water company’s pressure runs low, which can be a challenge when fighting fires.

High-power fire hoses in low-pressure systems can create a vacuum that sucks up materials other than water that can damage both the pipes in a water system and the firefighting equipment, district Fire Marshal Jon Johnston explained.

East Palo Alto City Councilman Ruben Abrica said that while the water company is a separate, independent entity, there were a number of residents who came to the City Council about a year ago expressing their discontent with it.

The council has had difficult interactions with the company in the past, he said. At one point, the city was working to create a safe routes to school program on the streets within the area served by the water company, but rather than coordinate with the city, its leaders seemed to create obstacles, he offered as an example.

According to Sean Charpentier, East Palo Alto’s assistant city manager, the company has done work on city streets in areas it serves without getting encroachment permits, which can be unsafe if the work doesn’t comply with city codes, and could interfere with other utilities.

“I think the City Council has been very concerned, but we don’t have jurisdiction,” Abrica said. The company, he said, has “deeply entrenched governance problems and administrative problems” — and those problems have been going on for a long time.

As a tiny jurisdiction — “a mini-democracy within a mini-democracy” — it’s incumbent upon the people who live there to “rise up and not let them get away with it,” he said.

A downside of a fragmented democratic system, though, is that a misapplication of power can turn a mini-democracy into a mini-feudal kingdom that has absolute control, with people at its mercy, he said. His sense is that Neighbors for Better Water has pursued the only avenue left to its members: the courts.

Eric Lacy, who works with the State Water Resources Control Board’s Division of Drinking Water in Northern California, noted that while the state has been working with the company on and off over the last decade, it began working more closely with it over the last few years.

For the most part, he said, the water company complies with the Safe Drinking Water Act. California has adopted what are called secondary standards for water quality that are not necessarily health-related, he explained, but have more to do with whether a consumer would find the water acceptable to drink. Over the last few years, iron and manganese have shown up in the water supply above those secondary level standards. Iron occurs naturally in the soil and is present in the steel piping systems.

There are no health studies showing that exceeding that standard affects health, but it does show up as brownish-red in a glass of water. “Most people don’t like drinking water that looks like that,” he noted.

Compared with other small water systems, Lacy said, the Palo Alto Park Mutual Water Company is somewhat uncommon. It’s on the larger side, for a small water system, so has been fortunate enough to have enough revenue and resources to devote a full-time staff to running it.

Other small water companies
Land purchase for affordable PV housing looks like a longshot

By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

A ny hopes Portola Valley may have of purchasing land to build affordable housing may be in vain, according to an email from Mayor Ann Wengert.

The Town Council has been evaluating land that the town already owns for multi-family housing that might fulfill more stringent state mandates in the future to build affordable housing within the town limits. Many residents are demanding that the town place the most attractive property it owns, known alternatively as the road remnant of Alpine Road and the Frog Pond, off-limits to development to protect views, wildlife and recreational open space.

The primary reason behind selecting town-owned properties is the clear economic advantage of not having to acquire land as part of any proposed housing project,” Wengert explained.

“If the Town owns the parcel we are much better positioned to ... develop affordable housing by contributing or leasing the land to a partner agency, thereby significantly reducing project costs,” she added.

But, even if town-owned land is used, “projects still may not be financially feasible due to today’s high cost of developing affordable housing,” Wengert wrote.

Typically developed from subdivisions built in rural areas. Here, however, the city of East Palo Alto grew around the subdivision, and there’s a broader infrastructure system in place. Lacy argues that both sides could benefit: The city could gain from infrastructure it currently lacks and critical well water resources, and the water company shareholders could gain from having a more uniform, comprehensive approach to running water throughout the city.

However, there may also be benefit to staying separate. The company’s water tank was destroyed in the 1989 earthquake and much of the water system had to be rebuilt at that point. Thanks to $5 million in grant funding it received after the earthquake while Loud was the general manager, the company’s current water infrastructure is comparatively new and the residents didn’t have to foot the bill for it.

Having a self-sufficient hyperlocal water system could be an asset to shareholders, especially when contrasted with a current problem in the city of East Palo Alto’s municipal water system. On July 16, the East Palo Alto City Council begrudgingly approved a hike for its municipal water prices 18% to cover contract obligations with water operator American Water Enterprise, which had been hit by rate hikes from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

Although we don’t feel anyone should be trying to raise money privately to purchase land for affordable housing. Breen noted that Portola Valley raised $20 million to build its Town Center. "Too bad (the council) hasn’t raised any money," she said. "So you start a campaign and start raising money. You turn over every stone.”

Breen said residents are holding the line on the frog pond and trying to get the council to make it designated open space.

"Let’s shut down (the Ad Hoc Housing on Town-Owned Property Committee) and start a fundraising committee," she said.

W ater

continued from page 10

He said he’s encouraged the company to be more transparent in its communication on June 26 and discussed price and terms of payment for a site adjacent to Roberts Market that is owned by the Donald McKinney Trust, but nothing was reported out of the session, according to Town Manager Jeremy Dennis.

Danna Breen, who belongs to a neighborhood group that opposes development of the Frog Pond, said she thinks that the town should be trying to raise money privately to purchase land for affordable housing.

Breen noted that Portola Valley would have $4.5 million in bond funds earmarked for affordable housing, and the annual fund is limited, Wengert noted.

They have been significant pushback.

Another concern voiced among some members of NBW is the appearance of nepotism: when the former general manager, Katherine Lawd, retired in December 2017, she passed the torch to her daughter, Niami Lincoln. Her son, Jabari Lawd, also works at the company.

Since company management passed from Loud to Lincoln, Lacy said, he’s developed concerns about Lincoln’s technical knowledge.

Lincoln told The Almanac that she was previously certified as a Grade 2 water treatment operator, but that her certification had lapsed. She plans to take the test to get re-certified, she said. These licenses are mandatory for running water companies.

In addition to the possible appearance of nepotism resulting from Loud’s passing the company to her daughter, Lacy said, he’s at times noticed an "unwillingness to be open and transparent in how they go about doing business. Instead of being open and accepting constructive criticism or recommendations for improvement, they tend to become defensive and more closed off ... and we’ve really struggled with this."
Beth Polito interested in bringing design thinking, social and emotion learning to district schools

By Angela Swartz  
Almanac Staff Writer

After eight years as the superintendent of the Woodside Elementary School District, Beth Polito is eager to get her feet wet as the head of the neighboring Las Lomitas School District.

Polito, a San Jose resident, began work in her new role on July 1, and already has her sights set on specific goals. She wants to bring ideas that worked in the Woodside district — project-based learning and social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives — to Las Lomitas.

“Eight years is a really long time to stay in one place as an administrator,” she said in a sit-down interview with The Almanac. “I felt I accomplished what I set out to accomplish. It (Las Lomitas) was sold as a great opportunity with wonderful people.”

During the 2019-20 school year, Polito, 50, hopes to put together a strategic plan for the district, including exploring how to integrate “design thinking” strategies into classroom curriculum, an emphasis of the neighboring Menlo Park City School District. Design thinking often goes along with project-based learning, in which students develop skills in a range of subject areas as they study a chosen question, problem or subject.

“It’s (design thinking) really a mindset shift,” she said. “There’s all sorts of young people taking an environmental banner and running with it.”

These students are using outside-the-box thinking and prototyping to find solutions to problems, she said. For example, former Woodside district student Georgia Hutchinson used the strategies to build a system that allows solar panels to follow the sun for maximum energy production. Hutchinson won a $25,000 prize at the Broadcom MASTERS (Math, Applied Science, Technology and Engineering for Rising Stars) national science and engineering competition for the project.

In Woodside’s SEL program, educators teach students to assert their feelings directly, be mindful, make decisions, work well in groups and be self-aware, among other skills. These skills prepare students to be curious, enthusiastic and self-motivated learners who succeed in school and life, according to the district website. Woodside district staff members have participated in the Institute for SEL, an intensive summer workshop; this has allowed the district to create an in-house committee of expert teachers, according to the website.

Incorporating more SEL programming into the Las Lomitas district will likely be part of a strategic planning process. The district will pursue expanding this program only if the community is interested in doing so, she said.

“A comprehensive SEL program that builds from K through 8th is very helpful as the language and key [tenets] are the same and students internalize the program more consistently and deeply with this congruous approach,” she said in a follow-up email. “After seven years of consistent implementation Woodside students were able to consistently speak to the skills learned, vocabulary mastered and intelligently discuss how they implemented what was learned across all grades.”

Polito also hopes to work on the district’s communications with the public. At Woodside, Polito overhauled the district’s communications strategy, with a new website and editorial guidelines for who would create and handle press releases or weekly e-bulletins, she said. “This will also be part of her strategic planning process, she said.

“The absence of information can cause significant frustration,” she said. “It’s better to over-communicate.”

Polito is happy to continue working with students in San Mateo County, who tend to be “friendly, confident and eager to connect,” she said.

Polito replaces Lisa Cesario, who announced her retirement in February after seven years as superintendent.

Polito, who holds a doctorate degree in education from the University of San Francisco, served as assistant superintendent of the Saratoga Union School District for four years before coming to the Woodside district. Prior to that, she was a teacher, dean of students, vice principal, and principal at Redwood Middle School in Saratoga for 14 years.

Polito’s three-year contract includes a salary of $279,000 annually, according to the district. This is a pay bump of $50,226 from her previous role in Woodside (she earned an annual $228,774 as Woodside’s superintendent, according to the Woodside district).

Menlo Park school board member trades her post for district teaching position

By Angela Swartz  
Almanac Staff Writer

Caroline Lucas will resign from the Menlo Park City School District board, effective Aug. 1, to take a teaching role in the district she now helps to oversee.

Lucas, who joined the board in 2016, accepted a part-time Spanish teaching position in the district, Superintendent Erik Burmeister said in an email. California law prohibits district employees from simultaneously serving on their district’s school board.

“The opportunity to work with innovative, student-centered teachers, and progressive instructional leaders whose...
Menlo Park: No. 1 for costliest apartment rents in Bay Area

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

At a steep $4,368 a month, Menlo Park has the highest average apartment rent prices — at least at big apartment complexes — in the Bay Area, according to a recent report from the website RENTCafe.com.

In a trailing second place, Palo Alto apartments average a monthly rent of $3,857, comparable to San Francisco’s average monthly rent of $3,697. Average rent prices nationwide are $1,465, according to the site.

Menlo Park also ranks first in the Bay for the greatest year-over-year percentage increase in rent, up 10.6% from June 2018, the site states.

RENTCafe.com analyzes rent prices at large-scale multifamily properties of 50 or more units, and collects information about rent paid via telephone survey. It also does not include corporate housing rates.

There are about 776 units in apartment buildings of 50 units or more in the city of Menlo Park, according to RENTCafe spokesperson Adrian Rosenberg, citing data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

When asked why Menlo Park might be outpacing its neighbors in generating ever-escalating rent prices, Rosenberg commented in an email that since the start of 2018, rent growth has picked up speed in the city after remaining largely stable in 2016 and most of 2017.

This might be attributed to strong demand from large employers and high-income renters, and exacerbated by a strong local economy and a low supply of housing units. There have been fewer than 1,000 housing units built in the city over the last decade, and most have been high-end, he added.

The city’s renter population also appears to be changing, he noted: The number of renter households has increased about 5% in five years, while median income has increased by 9%. The number of high-income renters, households earning more than $150,000 a year, has increased by 42% in the last five years, he reports.

Access the report online at isgd/rent857 for more information.

Continued from previous page

lofty vision is focused on both learning outcomes and student wellness, is one I just couldn’t pass up," Lucas said in a prepared statement. "As a parent, I experienced the District’s commitment to quality, and as a Board member, I gained an even deeper appreciation for what MPCSD is doing to make learning relevant for students. I cherish the time I have served on the Board and will miss it immensely; however, I’m not leaving, I’m just helping the district realize its vision in a different capacity.”

Lucas most recently taught Spanish and English language development in the neighboring Las Lomitas Elementary School District for six years. She has long respected the quality of education that MPCSD provides, as well as the district’s commitment to world language programs, the press release says.

Board President David Ackerman said he is disappointed to see Lucas go.

“Caroline Lucas has been an effective advocate for transparency, community engagement, and equity,” he said in a prepared statement. "Losing her perspective as a voting member of the Board is a real loss. That said, as a retired MPCSD Principal, I can appreciate the district’s interest in hiring a gifted and committed educator. I expect Caroline will have just as meaningful an impact as a staff member as she has as a Board member and parent.”

Hillview Middle School staff interviewed Lucas for the position and they recommended her for hire in mid-July, according to the press release.

The school board will discuss the process of replacing Lucas, whose term was set to expire in 2020, at its Aug. 29 meeting, according to the press release.

The board may choose to appoint a member of the public to serve the remainder of Lucas’ term or agree to hold an election on the next regularly scheduled election. If the board doesn’t act, an election is automatically triggered after 60 days from Aug. 1, according to the district.

The meeting will take place at 5 p.m. in the District Office Board Room at 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.
Horticulturist, friend of library Timmy Gallagher dies

By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

Marion Timmy Gallagher, a horticulturist and wildflower expert and a longtime Woodside resident, passed away at the age of 99 on July 3. Gallagher was born in 1921 in Boston, married Peter Gallagher in 1941, and moved to Woodside shortly after her marriage. She fell in love with California and its landscape, and shared the extensive horticultural knowledge and expertise she developed over the years with the community, according to her friend Tina Dreyer. Gallagher became a member of the Friends of the Woodside Library and helped run the library back when it was in the Old Firehouse.

When a new library was built in Woodside in 1968, she helped create a California native plant garden containing more than 160 species representing California plant habitats on a half-acre of land behind the building, her friend said. She lobbied the town for funds to create the garden and managed it for 30 years, Dreyer said.

She also wrote a monthly horticulture column, “Plants of the wild,” for the Country Almanac, as The Almanac was previously known.

In the 1970s, Gallagher began to focus on protecting endangered wildflowers, including a rare native lily in Woodside, and suggested using photographs and drawings of flowers as a national Garden Club of America project, coordinating the project for 145 clubs.

When the Filoli home in Woodside became a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and open to the public in 1975, Gallagher planned and taught the docent volunteer program, Dreyer said. She also wrote the text for a coffee table book called “The Gardens of Filoli,” and between 1982 and 2004 raised money for Filoli with the Filoli Traveling Garden Program that took members to several showcase gardens worldwide.

Gallagher was awarded the Garden Club of America’s National Achievement Award in 1982 for her work at Filoli and for several projects to encourage good ecological habits and the preservation of native plants, Dreyer said.

She was preceded in death by her husband and son, Peter Duncan Gallagher, and is survived by daughters Lee Gallagher of Woodside and Noel Dennehy of Atlanta. She has five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. There will be no memorial service at her request, Dreyer said.

AN IMPORTANT NOTICE REQUIRED BY CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable.

La O’Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company has levels of manganese above the secondary drinking water standard.

Although this is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation. Our water system is in violation of a secondary drinking water standard. Violation of a secondary standard does not pose an immediate threat to health.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Average results for water samples for the last four quarters have manganese levels of 58 ppb in well #1 and 153 ppb in well #2 (ppb=parts per billion). This is above the secondary drinking water standard, or secondary maximum contaminant level of 50 ppb.

Manganese concentrations above the standard may have an effect on taste and tend to leave black deposits in some plumbing systems.

What should I do?

• You do not need to use an alternative water supply (e.g., bottled water). There is no health risk.

What happened? What is being done?

O’Connor Water has been above the secondary standard for manganese for many years, and this has been described to members in the annual Report on Water Quality Measurements. Recent state regulations have imposed stricter requirements for complying with the secondary standard for manganese. The state has issued the company a citation for noncompliance.

The state ordered the company to start quarterly monitoring in February 2012, and this monitoring was completed in September 2012. The state also required that manganese monitoring be continued quarterly and that the results of these tests be reported to all water consumers.

The Company is working with State agencies and the City of Menlo Park to complete the planning of a manganese treatment facility that will then be installed and operational on the Company’s property.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this public notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this public notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

For further information contact:
Secretary-Treasurer Telephone 650-321-2723
Email: eocomnorwater@gmail.com
O’Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Co., System 4110019
P.O. Box 1375, Palo Alto, California 94302-1375

National Night Out events set for Aug. 6

National Night Out, an annual event organized to bring neighborhoods together and help residents meet local police departments, will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 6. National Night Out takes place across the country, and the following events are scheduled in Menlo Park and Atherton.

Menlo Park

•In Nealon Park at Little House, 800 Middle Ave., from 5 to 8 p.m.
•On the 700 block of Nash Avenue, from 6 to 8:30 p.m.
•At Cafe Zoe, 1928 Menalto Ave., from 5 to 7:30 p.m.
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Atherton

A bouncy house, helicopter landing and face painting will be among the activities at Atherton’s sixth annual National Night Out in Holbrook Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Ave., from 6 to 8 p.m.

The town’s police and administrative staff are organizing the free event, which will include live music, a DJ, a petting zoo, balloon twisting, a fire truck and more, according to town staff.

During the event, the California Highway Patrol will land a helicopter in the park around 7 p.m. and allow attendees to peek inside of it. Organizers will serve barbecue, cotton candy and snow cones, according to staff.

The town partnered with Menlo Park Fire Protection District, California Highway Patrol, A.D.A.P.T. (Atherton Disaster and Preparedness Team) and others for the event.

For more information, contact Francesca Reyes at 650-752-0500 or freyes@ci.atherton.ca.us.

— by Angela Swartz
Tour de Menlo fundraising ride set for Aug. 17

Submitted by the Rotary Club of Menlo Park.

Peninsula cyclists are gearing up for the 15th annual Tour de Menlo Scholarship Ride, which offers three Peninsula routes for cyclists of all abilities, along with typically good weather, great food, and plenty of SAG support for those who need it. This year’s ride is set for Saturday, Aug. 17.

Riders have their choice of 65-, 46- and 35-mile routes, all well-marked and beginning at Menlo-Atherton High School on Saturday. After taking different routes from the start, all riders eventually will head south on Stevens Creek Road to the final rest stop at Madrone Park, where they can rest and enjoy refreshments before heading back to Menlo-Atherton High School for a relaxing lunch in the courtyard.

The ride is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation and The Almanac. All proceeds are used to support Rotary scholarships, numerous other Rotary Foundation projects, and The Almanac’s Holiday Fund drive, which contributes more than $150,000 a year to 10 local nonprofits.

The 65-mile route is by far the most popular, taking riders up to Belmont and the first rest stop on Polhemus Road. Then, after climbing up to the bike bridge, riders head south to Cañada Road in Woodside and then to the second rest stop at the Portola Road firehouse near Alpine Road.

Riders on the 46-mile route also stop at the firehouse: both routes then circle around to Page Mill Road, with the longer route climbing up to Alkamont Road and the others over to Arastradero Road and Los Altos. All riders meet south of Los Altos as they roll out Stevens Creek Road to the final rest stop at Madrone Park, before heading back to Menlo-Atherton via Foothill Expressway.

After riders on the 35-mile route turn south on the Alameda de las Pulgas and Santa Cruz Avenue, they ultimately use Foothill Boulevard and then Stevens Creek Road to reach the Madrone Park rest stop, where the route makes a 180-degree turn to return to the Menlo-Atherton campus for lunch. The 35-mile route is virtually flat, but gives riders a good workout. There is also a water stop on Foothill Boulevard at the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce office.

The Tour de Menlo was started in 2004 and brought riders to the present courses for the first time in 2008.

Last year, the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation awarded over $125,000 in need-based scholarships to high school seniors at Menlo-Atherton, Eastside Preparatory, East Palo Alto High and Sacred Heart Prep. Most of the awards are made to students planning to attend four-year colleges and universities, but other grants go to students who begin at local community colleges.

Full SAG support

The Tour de Menlo offers four rest/water stops and lunch catered by Lutticken’s after the ride. The course will be well-marked with route arrows, and Rotary Club members will give directions at critical intersections. A telephone-dispatched SAG vehicle will patrol the entire route to make sure all riders safely complete the course.

The ride starts and finishes at Menlo-Atherton High School, 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton, where there is plenty of free parking. Register and begin the 100 kilometer ride after 8 a.m. Riders doing the 35- and 46-mile rides are asked to leave after 9 a.m. so as not to arrive back at M-A before lunch is prepared.

Registration includes lunch, served from noon to 2:30 p.m. at the high school.

Non-riders may purchase tickets for $10 each. To register, go to tourdeMenlo.com. Riders can also register the morning of the event.

Environmental review ahead for 483-unit housing development

By Kate Bradshaw

Menlo Park City Council voted 4-1 on July 16, with Vice Mayor Cecilia Taylor opposed, to approve a contract with LSA Associates, a consulting firm, to conduct the environmental analysis for “Menlo Uptown,” a proposed 483-unit housing development at 41 Jefferson Drive and 180-186 Constitution Drive.

The vote does not represent an endorsement of the proposal, but instead a legal requirement — and would remain so even if the council had chosen to implement a development moratorium, as it discussed last month.

City Attorney Bill McClure said the city is legally required to process development applications it receives, so not approving the contract could leave the city exposed to potential litigation, he added.

Several council members encouraged the developer to evaluate more community-serving square-footage in its environmental analysis, since it’s not near any of the services the development’s residents would otherwise need to access by car, such as a grocery store, a pharmacy, or restaurants.

Taylor also urged the developer to allocate more units for ownership rather than rent, and to provide residents air filters or other aids to protect them from air pollution from the development’s proximity to the highway.

Man who allegedly assaulted woman in Menlo Park pleads not guilty

By Kate Bradshaw

A Redwood City man who allegedly grabbed a woman and pinned her against the wall in Menlo Park before she broke free on July 22 has pleaded not guilty to two misdemeanor charges, of false imprisonment and assault and battery, according to the San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office.

Around 7:30 a.m. that day, a 35-year-old man was walking to work in Menlo Park and was at the intersection of Harv ard Avenue at El Camino Real when Douglas Walter Malone, 54, reportedly approached her, grabbed her by the wrist with one hand, and used his other hand to push her by the chest against a wall.

He then allegedly held her there for about five seconds and called her a bitch.

The woman was frightened but pushed her way free, according to the DA’s office. Malone allegedly lunged at her again, but she ran away and called 911.

The case was set for an Aug. 19 jury trial, with a pretrial conference scheduled for Aug 2. The defendant had been on probation for felony assault. He remains in custody at $5,000 bail.

Menlo Charity Horse Show trots back to Atherton

Horses and humans will once again fill the grounds of Atherton’s Menlo Circus Club for six days of equestrian competition to benefit a local charity.

Now in its 49th year, the Menlo Charity Horse Show, running from August 6-11, will feature 500 horses and their riders competing in hundreds of events across the Circus Club’s three equine venues. Prizes will be awarded in some 300 classes, including the Rosewood Sand Hill Jumper Classic, the USHJA International Hunter Derby, and the $40,000 Stephen Silver Grand Prix.

Started in 1970 as a one-day horse show, the Menlo event, according to its website, is “unique in that its origin is one of philanthropy.” Throughout its history, the show has donated its proceeds to Bay Area charities including Planned Parenthood and Amigos De Las Americas.

This year, as for more than a decade, proceeds will go to the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Palo Alto. The Vista Center aims to help visually impaired individuals increase their independence through “evaluation, counseling, education, and training,” and served over 3,700 clients last year.

In addition to riding events, the show will feature an auction, a Wild-West-themed gala dinner on Saturday night, and an assortment of luxury brands for both animal and human.

Tickets are $10 for a single day and $35 for a weekly pass, with seniors and children under 12 free. For more information, visit menlocharityhorseshow.com.

— By Matthew Vollrath
Scouts achieve Eagle rank for service, leadership, outdoor skills

By Karen Askey, Portola Valley Troop 64

Five scouts from Portola Valley Troop 64 — Seatle Hmelar, Nick Hovsmith, Reynolds Shenk, Duncan Vaughan and Alec Vercruyssse — have earned the rank of Eagle Scout and were recognized in a Court of Honor at Portola Valley Presbyterian Church in May.

To achieve this highest honor in Boy Scouts of America, these young men earned at least 21 merit badges, acquired leadership and outdoor skills, and completed independent service projects.

Seattle Hmelar, a recent graduate of Palo Alto High School, started scouting while in sixth grade. He jumped into scouting quickly and attended Camp Oljato summer camp for two weeks after being in the troop for just two weeks. At Camp Oljato, he earned six merit badges and discovered a love for target and skeet shooting.

Seatle has planned and led two different “Trail to First Class” camps and has attended many other camps, including summer camping. His Eagle project was the construction of a large storage deck for the Children’s Theater in Palo Alto.

In addition to scouting, Seatle has played high school football and baseball, enjoys participating in the faith-based organization Young Life, and working on his 1967 Mustang and photography.

Nick Hovsmith just graduated from Woodside High, and has been scouting for eight years. He especially enjoyed camping and selling Kiwanis Christmas trees.

New Eagle Scouts, from left: Nick Hovsmith, Alec Vercruyssse, Duncan Vaughan, Seatle Hmelar and Reynolds Shenk.

Nick has served as quartermaster, bugler, patrol leader and senior patrol leader. Sailing for a week at Sea Base in the Bahamas was a highlight. To fund his trip, Nick started a weekend job at Buck’s restaurant, and is still working there after four years.

For his Eagle project, Nick designed and built customized toddler tables and benches for Ladera Preschool, which involved 147 hours and 13 volunteers. He also competed all four years in high school on the varsity water polo and swim teams, and performed each year in the school musical. He will attend Princeton this fall.

Reynolds Shenk, a rising senior at Sacred Heart Preparatory, who started scouting in the first grade, is committed to varsity basketball and his film/production activities. His Pinewood Derby car won the Redwood District championship.

In Boy Scouts, he has served as historian, assistant patrol leader, and senior patrol leader. He loves camping, skills training, and adventures with his troop, the most exotic being a week sailing with Virgin Islands Sea Base.

Ren supports the Kiwanis Club and troop service projects, and loves guiding younger scouts towards advancement. For his Eagle project, he and his recruited volunteers constructed bike mounts, created wheel storage, installed walkways, and donated portable bike racks to Siena Youth Center. Ren has grown immensely from his scouting experiences.

Duncan Vaughan, a rising senior at Woodside High School, started scouting at age 6. Since joining Troop 64, he has served as patrol leader, quartermaster, troop guide, den chief, assistant senior patrol leader, and senior patrol leader.

Favorite scouting moments: Camp Cherry Valley on Catalina Island, shooting camp, sailing in the Virgin Islands, helping to find the perfect tree at the Kiwanis lot, climbing Unicorn Peak, and rafting local rivers.

For his Eagle project, Duncan raised over $1,000 and led 15-plus scouts and others in building six storage shelves for the Woodside High Athletic Department, totaling more than 140 hours of service time. Duncan plays club and varsity water polo and also competes on the WHS varsity swim team.

He is an active member of the Young Men’s Service League, Alpine Chapter, which focuses on assisting, serving and supporting those who are in need in our community.

Alec Vercruyssse joined Troop 64 in sixth grade, which has fostered his love for the outdoors and introduced him to many new adventures, such as rappelling down Moaning Caverns, camping, fishing and kneeboarding at Lake Berryessa, camping in snow caves at the Klondike derby, backpacking trips and summer camps.

For his Eagle Scout Project, Alec built a pergola in the backyard of the nonprofit Redwood Family Home, providing shade and a private area for residents. He raised over $2,000, obtained the permits from the county’s Building and Planning Department, and built and led the construction with the help of the troop and troop parents.

Alec recently graduated from Menlo School and will be attending Harvey Mudd College this fall.
Ladera Preschool closes after 53 years

By Matthew Vollrath
Special to The Almanac

On the sunlit patio of the church on Alpine Road, members gathered to eat cake and reminisce. In the fellowship hall were rows of boxes—class photos of 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds going back more than half a century. Several of the young children pictured were outside with the others, now college students or recent graduates.

The celebration on July 14 commemorated the legacy of the Ladera Community Church Preschool, which closed last month after 53 years of operation.

Moderator Peter Sass, the lay leader of the church, spoke to the bittersweet feeling that defined the day: “The decision to close the preschool was not taken lightly, nor was it done hastily,” he said. “Our love and commitment to children is woven into the fabric of this church and we are looking forward to its next expression, whatever that may be.”

The preschool opened its doors in 1966, 12 years after the founding of the church. Citing a growing need for “nursery education,” its founders established the school as an outreach of the church, operating on its grounds but governed by an independent board of parents and church members. The preschool was envisioned as “a safe place, rich in possibilities for exploration” where children could “grow, develop, and learn through play,” its mission statement reads.

Families flocked there almost immediately. In the first three years, enrollment increased from four students to 66. These levels remained steady in the decades that followed, with long waiting lists many years, according to the preschool’s annual reports.

Ladera Preschool was special to families for a number of reasons, says Sue Bartalo, a 15-year preschool board member and parent of three former attendees. One was the small class sizes — the average teacher-student ratio was one-to-five, she said. Ladera was also known as a good place for children with special needs, she added.

“[And] they loved our teachers,” Bartalo said. “The teachers were well-loved.”

But one of the most unique aspects of the preschool, says Mia Clark, another longtime board member, was its programs for very young children.

When Ladera opened, most preschools accepted only older, potty-trained kids, she noted. But because of the church’s large property, Ladera offered classes for 2- and 3-year-olds, and had separate classrooms and play yards for each.

Having these separate, single-aged programs was crucial for the youngest students, says Linda Fenn, who taught the 2’s class for 12 years. “They grow so fast at that age,” Fenn said. “When it’s just the 2’s, it gives them a chance to really feel confident in their peer group.”

Confidence-building was a big part of the 2’s program, said Fenn. For instance, she and her fellow teachers used the music of Fred Rogers on a daily basis. “So many of the songs were meaningful to that age group. It spoke to their anxieties; it taught them to be brave,” she said. “They would line up on the counter where the CD player was, and lean in to hear his words.”

For the older kids, there was a similar focus on “social and emotional growth,” says Jennifer Pilling, another well-loved teacher who taught in the 4’s class. Pilling started working with the preschool while in college, and ended up teaching there for 32 years.

“I never expected to stay that long,” she said. “I loved it. I never left.”

Like the rest of the preschool, the 4’s program was focused on play-based learning, Pilling says. While certain parents began pushing for greater pre-K preparation in recent years, the teachers and the board remained committed to this approach. “[I think] formal education comes soon enough,” Pilling said. “You have to be emotionally available to learn. We try to do it in a fun way, where it’s not a stress situation.”

One way they did this was by bringing in guest teachers such as church member Linda Drey-Nightingale, affectionately called “Science Teacher Linda,” who was known for her interactive lessons on the wonders of life. “She’d bring in big jars of dirt from her garden that had worms and salamanders and newts,” Pilling recalled. “Teachers like her brought so much to the program.”

But although the preschool was thriving, the church decided last year that it could no longer oversee the program. “We came to the realization that the model of governance was no longer sustainable for us,” said Sass. The preschool board required a majority of church members, and there weren’t enough volunteers available, he explained. Last October, the church voted to close the school.

Sass says the church recognizes the community need for early childhood programs, however, and hopes to find a way to address that need in the future. “I do think a privately-run preschool may be the next thing,” he said, adding, “if we did that, we’d want that organization to be consistent with the values of our church.”

But for now, he said, “our focus has been to really honor everyone who contributed over 53 years.”

Pilling, for one, says she’ll come away with many fond memories. “I think I’ll remember every face, every student,” she said. “They all come in with a great sense of curiosity. Most kids — they loved coming to school.”

Writer Matthew Vollrath is a graduate of the Stanford class of 2019, and the Ladera Preschool class of 2002. He is also a member of Ladera Community Church.
997 All Other Legals

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

Petitioner: STACIA SHERMAN GARR
and MATTHEW EVAN GARR filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: GENEVIEVE SHERMAN GARR to EVANGELINE GENEVIEVE GARR

The Court Orders that if any person interested in this matter appears before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause why the proposed change of name should not be granted, the person shall file an answer in the form of a written objection. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING: September 17, 2019, 9:00 a.m., Dept. P of the Superior Court of the County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94003.

A copy of the ORDER TO CHANGE NAME shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:

THE ALMANAC
Published in East Palo Alto, CA 94303

This petition requests authority to administer the decedent's will and to distribute the estate of the decedent known and described in the petition.

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF GILBERT LAWRENCE DRAPIER

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

The petition requests authority to administer the decedent's will and to distribute the estate of the decedent known and described in the petition.

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF GILBERT LAWRENCE DRAPIER

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

To all persons interested in the estate of the decedent: If you are a person interested in the estate of the decedent, you may file with the court a Request for Notice or Consent to the Proposed Action. You may also file a Request for Notice or Consent to the Proposed Action if you are not a person interested in the estate of the decedent but you believe that you have some interest (for example, if you are the decedent's former spouse or a creditor of the decedent). If you are a person interested in the estate of the decedent, you must file with the court a Request for Notice or Consent to the Proposed Action if you do not wish to receive notice.
honesty and vulnerability." Fadiman, 50, is planning to take her show on tour in the future, and her dream is to eventually make it to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the largest arts festival in the world. She hopes that her performance will give those who have an autoimmune disorder comfort. "As I started to come out of the illness," she said, "I realized how much I would have liked to have seen a show like this, to have seen someone else who has gone through this.

She also wanted to do this for the people who live with someone who has an autoimmune disorder, people who, she recognizes, bear a significant burden.

Fadiman said she hopes her audience walks away with a broader message about overcoming any challenge. "Autoimmune aside, there's the message of having huge challenges and being able to work through those and come out on the other side," she said. "It really is a fun and difficult story that is about all of us and all challenges.

To the event is of interest to a large number of people, also e-mail a press release to Editor@AlmanacNews.com.

Submit items for the Calendar
Go to AlmanacNews.com and see the Community Calendar module at the top right side of the page. Click on "Add your event." If the event is of interest to a large number of people, also e-mail a press release to Editor@AlmanacNews.com.

Visit AlmanacNews.com/calendar to see more calendar listings.
It’s past time for Menlo Park to go electric on blowers

By Lisa Williams and Leah Elkins

Up and down the Peninsula, towns and cities are being proactive around our climate change crisis. One of the ways this is happening is by phasing out the use of gas-powered garden tools.

Many cities have started with a particularly obnoxious offender, the gasoline leaf blower. Throughout Menlo Park, these machines spew polluting fumes and high-pitched whines as gardeners and homeowners blow leaves from one driveway to the next.

Los Altos banned gas-powered leaf blowers in 1991, Palo Alto in 2000, and Los Gatos in 2014. In January 2019, Portola Valley passed a ban with a two-year phase-in period; the Atherton City Council has already had this on its agenda twice so far this year.

We invite Menlo Park to follow suit. Phasing out gas-powered leaf blowers is an easy step to reduce our carbon emissions — and bring some quiet to our neighborhoods. Battery-powered garden tools are significantly quieter than their gas-powered equivalents and have been improving. For information from AGZZA American Lung Association Color Zone, sourced from WHO, EPA, NIOSH, OSHA, ANSI, American Lung Association and Quiet Communities.com, go to tinyurl.com/leafblowers-31.

Gas-powered leaf blowers use an inefficient polluting two-stroke engine that lacks a separate lubrication system. The oil is mixed in with the gasoline it uses for fuel. They are designed to be air-cooled, causing the engine to spew one-third of its fuel as an unburned aerosol directly into the environment. Not only do gas blowers’ greenhouse gas (CO2) emissions contribute to our climate crisis, but the resulting carbon monoxide compromises our brains, particulate matter harms our lungs and hearts, nitrous oxide hurts our throats, and hydrocarbons irritate our throats, noses and eyes.

Not only are gasoline blowers far greater ozone and particulate polluters than the four-stroke engines in gas-powered automobiles, their VOCs (hydrocarbons) emissions are carcinogenic. Last but not least, their noise pollution damages our nervous system and hearing.

According to the California Air Resource Board, operating the best-selling commercial gas leaf blower for just one hour emits smog-forming pollution comparable to driving a 2017 Toyota Camry about 1,100 miles, or approximately the distance from Los Angeles to Denver.

Also of concern is that gardeners are directly exposing themselves to multiple toxins and continuous loud decibel levels, often not wearing protective gear such as dust face masks and noise reduction safety earmuffs or earplugs. By phasing out gas-powered leaf blowers, the Menlo Park City Council would be tangibly demonstrating our city’s commitment to our Climate and Sustainability Resolution, which Mayor Ray Mueller signed on Earth Day last April.

It’s time for Menlo Park to follow the majority of our neighboring cities and towns and transition to electric blowers. Lithium-ion battery technology has advanced to a level where the commercial electric leaf blower is now comparable in power to the gas blower but without the carbon emissions and other air pollutants, while being significantly quieter.

We invite all interested Menlo Park residents to join our “go electric” coalition to let our City Council know that we want them to take this important step forward. To make sure your voice is heard, please contact Lisa Williams at lisawilliamsbb@gmail.com or Leah Elkins at leahelkins@gmail.com.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Speedier transit system could help housing crisis
Editor:
Our housing crisis is paradoxical. In any other market, booming demand would increase supply. But the cost of land, high-rise construction and infrastructure like schools and roads, drive costs to unaffordable levels. And rent control shuts down any hope for rental development.

But there is a “win-win” solution to the housing crisis and three-hour daily commutes that waste millions of hours a year — high-speed transit (HST). It could speed commuters to outlying towns within minutes where housing is 70% less expensive.

The $50 billion being spent to extend the HSR to Bakersfield can’t serve this need and should be used to build a Bay Area HST system. Bay Area companies could continue to expand and offer world-class jobs to people here. It would be a way to end the dispute over the federal government’s funding of the high-speed rail to Bakersfield by agreeing to divert it to high-speed transit, which has a higher and better use.

Ed Kahl
Whiskey Hill Road, Woodside

Support for Brownrigg for the state senate
Editor:
With state Senator Jerry Hill termed out, several candidates have stepped forward to fill the seat. The district runs from South San Francisco to Sunnyvale.

On a recent weekend, I attended a two-hour group chat with Michael Brownrigg, a nine-year member of the Burlingame City Council. The candidate explained it was his 39th such chat already.

Mr. Brownrigg struck me as thoughtful and honest. Plus, unlike a corporate bigwig who has never held public office, Mr. Brownrigg had to grovel and listen to get elected and re-elected locally. I like that he has a record of public service — not just a pitch about what he might do.

And on an issue critical to Peninsula residents, he joined the Burlingame City Council in denouncing a proposed law (Senate Bill 50) that would empower developers to build high-density condo or apartments (their choice) with little or no onsite parking — throughout most Peninsula cities, including in areas otherwise zoned for single-family homes.

This candidate for state office appears to actually believe in the importance of maintaining substantial local control of land use, while recognizing that the state must vigorously address the housing shortage created largely by big corporate employers moving into the suburbs.

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Offered at $2,488,000

Gorgeous grounds including a zen garden and backyard oasis across an 11,987 square foot lot (per city) grace this beautiful 3 bedroom, 2 bath home of 2,414 square feet with a 94 square foot loft (per independent third-party measurement). Handcrafted details and updates warm the interior of the home, which is rich with character and features wood paneled ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, a second-floor loft, open-concept gathering areas, Sub-Zero refrigerator, and spacious bedrooms. In this quiet community, you’ll be moments away from 22-acre family-friendly Greer Park, scenic Baylands Nature Preserve, vibrant Midtown Shopping Center, and excellent top-ten PAUSD schools.

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Saturday & Sunday
1:30 - 4:30 pm

Listed by Michael Repka of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Palo Alto

For more information, video tour & more photos, please visit:

www.1020Moffett.com

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For video tour & more photos, please visit: www.2281ByronSt.com
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