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Police chief and commander defend action as part of city’s ‘boutique approach’ to homelessness

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

I n August of last year, Amanda Anderson, a homeless woman who lives in Menlo Park, was sent out of town on a one-way taxi trip to Ocean Beach in San Francisco on the city’s dime, confirmed the Menlo Park Police Department.

A little after noon on Aug. 16, 2018, local business owners called the police department.


The business owners, Dixon said, were not happy that Anderson was there with her shopping carts near their businesses.

There are slightly different accounts of what happened next. According to Dixon, he asked Anderson if there was someplace she’d like to go because the local business owners would like her to relocate, and Anderson replied that she’d like to go to Ocean Beach.

Anderson told The Almanac she was told that she couldn’t remain where she was and was asked where she would go if she could go anywhere other than Menlo Park. She said she recalled that at Ocean Beach there was someplace to wash her hair, so she said she’d go there.

Dixon said he spent a couple of hours with her, waiting for her to wash her hair in Menlo Park and pare down her belongings from something like a dozen shopping carts to three or four.

He then ordered her a taxi, which he said was paid for with city funds, to provide her one-way transportation to Ocean Beach. Her other belongings were taken for safekeeping to the Public Works department, where they were kept for six months before the items were discarded after going unclaimed.

‘There’s no body-camera recording of the interaction because general interactions of “walking down the street and talking to people” aren’t typically recorded, according to lawyer Nick Flegel of the Menlo Park City Attorney’s Office.

While Anderson was in San Francisco, she was robbed of her belongings and found it difficult to find her way back to Menlo Park, she said.

Dixon said he doesn’t know when Anderson got back to Menlo Park after being taxis to San Francisco, but the next reported police call received about her in Menlo Park wasn’t until a little less than a month later, on Sept. 12, according to a summary of the police department’s interactions with her, obtained through a California Public Records Act request.

He told The Almanac he didn’t feel it was his call to decide whether Anderson was mentally fit to navigate the aftermath of being dropped off at the beach.

As for why he intervened in the first place, he emphasized, “She wasn’t doing anything illegal whatsoever.”

All he could do, he said, is ask her not to store her property near the business. He said Anderson told him that she wanted to go to San Francisco, and he made that happen.

It was a “good faith effort to help her get somewhere she wanted to, just like we would for any other person,” he added.

Dixon compared it to another instance where he helped to make arrangements to support a different unhoused person in Menlo Park in accessing transportation to a rehab facility in San Diego.

Two camps

Menlo Park Police Chief Dave Bertini said that the police department is stuck in the middle of two competing camps of locals when it comes to the problem of homelessness in the city. There are the people who wish to defend the city’s homeless and who feel it’s society’s obligation to support them.

There are also those, he explained, such as some business owners and some residents, including those with young children, who say they feel unsafe or threatened around the unhoused, and believe that the police and local government are ignoring their complaints.

“I see the argument for both sides,” Bertini said. “From the law enforcement side, our hands are tied. ... Ordinances in the past to control this type of behavior (have been) deemed to be unconstitutional.”

Portola Valley geophysicist, explorer Sheldon Breiner dies

Sheldon Breiner, a well-loved member of his community, was photographed on Longspur Road at Portola Valley Ranch in 2015 by Michelle Le.

By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

S heldon Breiner, the Portola Valley resident and open space advocate who used magnetism to find sunken ships and lost cities, died on Oct. 9 at the age of 82 after a long illness, according to his wife Mimi Breiner.

Breiner, a community icon who held bachelor’s and master’s degrees and a doctorate in geophysics from Stanford University, founded a company called Geometrics in 1969 that built magnetometers, which measure magnetic fields.

A magnetometer senses the Earth’s magnetic field, which is present everywhere all the time, and notes anomalies in the field caused by the presence of materials regardless of whether they have magnetic properties.

The devices are thousands of times more sensitive than an airport metal detector.

Breiner used the magnetometers to help archaeologists search deep below the ground or water, joining explorers looking for sunken ships off the coast of California and Mexico.

He also helped discover the ruins of Sybaris, an ancient city in Southern Italy, as well as more than 100 ancient artifacts from the Olmec civilization in Mexico, which existed between 1200 and 400 B.C.

Breiner was one of six people chosen as winners of the 2014 Lowell Thomas Award from the New York-based Explorer’s Club, founded in 1905 to honor “explorers of the planet.”

The club cited his work in discovering “ancient objects hidden from view by the ground or the sea using magnetometers.”

Among his discoveries cited in the award was a 400-ton Spanish galleon that may have run aground off the coast of Baja California on a return trip from China with a cargo that included silk, beeswax and Ming Dynasty porcelain.

Others receiving the award included astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Kathryn Sullivan, deep-sea explorers Robert Ballard and David Gallo, mountaineers Sir Edmund Hillary and Barbara Washburn, and naturalists Diana Fossey and Sir David Attenborough.

Breiner sold Geometrics in 1976, but continued leading the company until 1983, when he founded Syntelligence, an artificial intelligence company that designed software for banking and insurance underwriting.

He later helped found Quorum Software Systems, which built software that allowed Apple applications to work with hardware made by other companies.

While he was at Stanford he worked for Varian Associates, a Palo Alto company that made electromagnetic equipment, and he stayed at that firm until he founded Geometrics.

While at Varian, he demonstrated the use of a magnetic device for detecting weapons, which was used by the U.S. government to find a hydrogen bomb that had fallen into the ocean off the coast of Spain in 1966.

Community involvement

Besides his business ventures, Breiner was co-founder of of the Peninsula Open Space Trust and, with Mimi Breiner, established an endowment to support scholarships for Stanford students in geophysics.

He also served as chairman of the Geologic Safety Committee for Portola Valley, which lies on the San Andreas Fault.

The fault was an attraction, if anything, to Breiner when he moved to Portola Valley in the 1960s, and he had a seismograph in the basement of his home, according to a 2002 article in
Caltrain protesters push agency to pass affordable housing policy soon

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Clustered together on the crisp evening of Oct. 29, protesters gathered around the Menlo Park Caltrain Station with a specific goal: to push the board that governs Caltrain to enact an affordable housing policy.

The protest, led by the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, generated a crowd of roughly 30 people of all ages, many holding signs emphasizing that they’re locals, such as “We are the community” and “We’re already home.”

Greenbelt Alliance and a coalition of housing organizations and service providers called “Home could be Here” also participated in the protest.

The action was in collaboration with StreetLife Ministries’ usual twice-weekly dinner held at the station, so attendees who participated could also join the group’s dinner.

According to the Housing Leadership Council, the Caltrain Board of Directors has been talking since 2016 about developing a “transit-oriented development” policy that would include an affordable housing requirement and would be used to guide decision-making around leasing or selling land the agency owns.

“Over the past two years, the number of people who are living without shelter has more than doubled in this area,” said Leora Tanjuauto Ross, organizing director of the housing leadership council. “Tonight, we’re all standing together to talk about solutions. We need to build more homes.”

“When we talk about homes, we’re really talking about families, we’re talking about birthday parties and (barbecues) and relaxing at the end of a long day.”

Other transit agencies, such as BART and VTA, have already created such plans. BART’s policy, adopted in 2016 and amended in August of this year, requires that no less than 20% of the total number of housing units on a property should be designated as below-market-rate, with priority for units that are intended for rent at the low- and very low-income levels, or for households earning under 80% of the area median income.

In 2016, VTA also adopted a requirement that 20% of the housing units at each development on its property be affordable to households earning 60% or less of the area median income.

Caltrain’s board hasn’t been as quick to adopt such a policy as those other nearby transit agencies. According to documents from the agency’s Work Program Legislative Planning Committee agenda from Sept. 25, as of now, the agency appears to be focused on developing a Rail Corridor Use Policy first, which will map out all of the agency’s properties, evaluate what the zoning should be, and determine whether future capital projects should be developed at those sites in alignment with the agency’s business plan, which is itself still a work in progress.

A transit-oriented development policy would build on the use policy map to assess potential opportunity sites for development projects, according to a staff report from the agency.

Such a policy could be finalized in March 2020, according to the agency.
Stanford abruptly withdraws application for massive campus expansion plan

University cites ongoing disagreements with Santa Clara County over development agreement, traffic requirements

By Gennady Sheyner

S

Tanford University on Nov. 21 abruptly abandoned its contentious plan to expand its campus by 3.5 million square feet, citing ongoing disagreements with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors over the approval process.

The university’s announcement came just before the board was scheduled to hold its fourth and potentially final meeting on Stanford’s general use permit, a development application that is often referred to as the “largest in the county’s history.” If approved, the permit would have allowed Stanford to build more than 2,275 million square feet of academic space and 2,600 student beds between now and 2035. The announcement also came days after the university had agreed to build 2,172 units of staff housing, consistent with recommendations from county staff. Stanford’s application had initially proposed 550 units of workforce housing.

The biggest split between the county and the university came over a possible “development agreement,” a negotiated contract that would have guaranteed Stanford development rights in exchange for a list of public benefits. The county authorized in October 2018 the use of a development agreement in approving Stanford’s expansion, but negotiations broke down in April and never resumed.

While Stanford has repeatedly stated that it would not accept approval of the general use permit (GUP) without an accompanying development agreement, supervisors have been reluctant to restart negotiations, opting instead for a traditional regulatory process that analyzes the impacts of proposed developments and imposes requirements that mitigate those impacts.

In the case of Stanford’s GUP, the requirements from county planners included additional workforce housing and more stringent traffic regulations, including new requirements that the university not significantly increase average daily trips and reverse commutes to and from campus.

In its announcement, Stanford cited the county’s proposed traffic requirements and the ongoing dispute over a development agreement as the two factors that prompted the withdrawal of its application. The university argued that the traffic requirements sought by the county would not be feasible given the additional housing mandated by the county. Stanford has consistently argued that a development agreement is necessary so that it could have “predictability” for future growth in exchange for delivering community benefits such as housing, traffic improvements and funding for the Palo alto Unified School District.

The university also announced that it is “committing to a new phase of engagement and dialogue with neighbors and surrounding communities.” This was taken as a step towards compliance with the University’s contract and revised in June.

The majority of the Board of Supervisors on Nov. 5 had already won the approval of the county Planning Commission, though the commission rejected a development agreement that Stanford offered in June.

The county and the university have characterized Stanford’s application to “gain deeper mutual understanding of the challenges facing our region, how Stanford can contribute to its economy, health and quality of life.” Tessler-Lavigne also said that through the new engagement process, the university hopes to “glean deeper mutual understanding of the challenges facing our region, how Stanford can best enhance its contribution to addressing those challenges, and what the implications are for our longer-term campus development.”

This university’s plan has become increasingly contentious, with hundreds of people packing into Palo Alto City Hall for the Oct. 22 hearing on the general use permit to demand more contributions from the university. The university was preceded by protests from more than 1,000 undergraduate students, who argued that the Stanford should provide more housing as part of the expansion, which is expected to increase the campus population by more than 9,000 people. Graduate students and post-doctoral researchers requested more financial support and child care services, while elected officials from San Mateo County demanded “full mitigation” of the expansion’s housing and traffic impacts.

The coalition of San Mateo County cities, which includes East Palo Alto, Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Redwood City and Woodside, as well as county staff requested $196 million for an affordable-housing fund, $4.62 million for roadway improvements, $15 million for bike and pedestrian connections, $5 million for stormwater management and $6.78 million in “in-lieu property taxes” to compensate communities where Stanford owns properties and enjoys property-tax exemptions.

In a sign of the growing rift between Stanford and the surrounding communities, elected officials co-signed a letter last month accusing the university of not paying its “fair share” for things like road improvements, public safety and other services.

“Here’s what every resident in San Mateo County needs to know: Stanford — with its $26.5 billion endowment — expects to reap all the rewards while leaving local taxpayers grappling with the resulting traffic gridlock, spiking housing prices, impacted schools and environmental consequences,” the letter stated.

Stanford submitted its application through the application process since 2016, was scheduled to hold its fourth hearing in front of the Board of Supervisors on Nov. 5. It had already won the approval of the county Planning Commission, though the commission rejected a development agreement that Stanford offered in June.

The county and the university have characterized Stanford’s offer in strikingly different ways, with the university valuing it at an initial $6.5 million, while the county staff requested $196 million for an affordable-housing fund. The majority of the purported benefits, county staff argued, were things that the university would be required to provide or that were part of the application.

Deputy Executive Director Sylvia Gallegos said at the Oct. 8 hearing that the university and the county remain “very far apart” on what a development agreement should entail.

See STANFORD, page 10
Menlo Park's new arts nonprofit forges ahead

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

A new nonprofit is now working to get thought-provoking art installed throughout the city of Menlo Park. The nonprofit, called Menlo Park Public Art, was formally launched only weeks ago, and is led by Katharina Powers, owner of Art Ventures Gallery at 888 Santa Cruz Ave. in downtown Menlo Park.

At the Menlo Park City Council’s Oct. 15 meeting, Powers announced formation of the nonprofit and explained its mission, asking the council to put on its agenda a discussion about potentially installing an abstract sculpture in Fremont Park.

The council is scheduled to consider the proposal at its Nov. 5 meeting, which occurred after The Almanac’s press time. (Go to almanacnews.com for an update.)

According to a staff report, the council was asked to consider a project and the Parks and Recreation Commission would be expected to weigh in on the proposal first before the matter is brought back to the council.

As its first project, the nonprofit is working with East Palo Alto-based sculptor Oleg Lobbykin to set up a temporary installation of his 18-foot-tall “Talking Heads” sculpture, which was featured at Burning Man, an annual art festival in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert.

It’s interesting timing, because Lobbykin explained that he made the giant sculpture by first carving it by hand, then enlarging it, 3D scanning it, and then building another prototype of the sculpture. Eventually he built it in small pieces using stainless steel and sheet metal. The reflective surface enables viewers to see either themselves or their surroundings in distorted reflections.

Powers told The Almanac she’s working with City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson to develop a contract between the artist and the city for placing the artwork, and is finding insurance for it.

The nonprofit has so far identified potential sites for art installations at Fremont Park; along Bayfront Expressway; on Sand Hill Road somewhere between the Rosewood Hotel and the Sharon Heights Golf & Country Club; at the west exit of Marsh Road where it intersects with U.S. 101; and at the Santa Cruz Avenue and El Camino Real intersection, near Cafe Borronne.

It’s board is made up of Menlo Park residents: InMenlo co-founder and editor Linda Hubbard, architect Ana Williamson, and photographer Mark Tuschman. Officers are Powers, the nonprofit’s CEO; Joan McLoughlin, secretary; and Liz Mayta, treasurer. Mayor Ray Mueller is listed as an adviser.

Defining public art

At an event held at Art Ventures Gallery on Oct. 22, Powers hosted a discussion with the artist currently showing his work there, Ryan Carrington, to talk about some of his experiences with creating public art.

Ryan’s work focuses on the symbols of working-class America. He teaches sculpture at Santa Clara University, and before that he was a faculty member at San Jose State University.

He and colleague Steve Davis are the artists responsible for the 19 life-size sculptures of children playing that add whimsy and visual interest to the Guadalupe River Parkway trail in San Jose.

According to Carrington, the San Jose chapter of the Rotary Club commissioned the first five figures in 2012. Later, in 2016, an additional 14 figures were commissioned through a gift from the San Jose Water Company.

But public art can be about more than a statue in a park, Powers emphasized.

What principles should apply? As she sees it, art doesn’t have to be beautiful. You don’t have to like it. It should make you stop and think. It can be whimsical and kid-friendly; it doesn’t have to have to scream a serious, intellectual message. It can serve other purposes: Creative bike racks, signs, interesting benches and filling empty flower boxes count too, and are among the nonprofit’s goals for smaller projects to enlivens downtown.

One of the challenges is just how much leverage committees should be given in deciding what constitutes public art. Powers said she’s hoping to establish a diverse group made up of locals to weigh in on each project, promoting public buy-in but not dictating creativity. By making the installations temporary, it would be OK if someone doesn’t like a piece; they won’t be stuck looking at it forever and may like the next one better, she said.

“Good art is good art, whether you like it or not,” Carrington added.

As a teacher, he said, he often hears students say “I don’t get art” or “I’m not an artist,” but he said that today, all people make daily choices about aesthetics. Seeing a new group forming to promote art — however that’s defined — and hoping to “make space better” is an exciting thing, he said.

However, temporary installations can create their own challenges, he said. Commissioning art can be expensive, and making sure artists are fairly compensated should be an important consideration, he emphasized. A $40,000 art commission may sound like a lot, but by the time the artist spends six months to make it and a good third of the commission on materials and fabrication costs, it doesn’t leave much for the artist to live on, he noted, citing an example of a public art project done elsewhere in California.

How the project will be funded is another question. In 2002, the city initiated a “1% for public art” program for commercial projects over $1 million, but it was discontinued in 2004 after local business owners, including the owners of 7-Eleven and the Chevron station, opposed it. The entire Arts Commission resigned in protest and there hasn’t been another since.

A carve-out for arts funding has enabled large-scale art projects, particularly at large-scale developments. One percent of a large sum of money goes a long way, Carrington said. For example, the public art at the San Francisco International Airport belongs to the collection of the San Francisco Arts Commission, which is funded, in part, by a 1%-for-the-arts program that allows developers to either contribute accepted art or pay into a public art trust fund at a value equal to 1% of project costs.

Without such a developer-controlled program, the nonprofit will have to figure out other funding sources.

Powers said in an email to The Almanac: “My job as the CEO of the nonprofit is to raise money, get donations and offer companies and citizens naming possibilities, plaques to put their name on to be part of public art. I would like to see all companies on Sand Hill Road participate.”

“In order to do this we have to educate people about the importance of public art, how it can ignite imagination, start a conversation, and be part of public art. I would like to see all companies on Sand Hill Road participate.”

Man charged with Skyline Boulevard slayings ruled incompetent

By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

The man charged with killing two men in separate incidents on Skyline Boulevard in June was ruled incompetent to stand trial on Nov. 1 by a San Mateo County Superior Court judge. The court will receive a report recommending where to place Malik Dosoqui of Pacifica for mental health treatment on Dec. 13, according to Deputy District Attorney Al Serrato.

The District Attorney’s Office had previously asked for time to review the psychiatrist’s reports, but ultimately decided not to contest the evaluations, Serrato said.

“We wanted to take a deeper look at the reports, but decided not to contest them,” Serrato said. Judge Robert Foiles “went ahead and decided that he was incompetent.”

Dosoqui has been charged with two counts of murder in the deaths of cab driver Abdulmalik Nasher of Pacifica and tow truck driver John Pekipaki of East Palo Alto, and five other felony counts, including two counts each of assault with a deadly weapon and infliction of great bodily injury, and one count of special circumstances for multiple murders.

On the evening of June 17, sheriff’s deputies found the body of Nasher, 32, a cab driver who had reportedly been called to a remote location on Skyline Boulevard near Reids Roost Road to pick up a passenger. Nasher had been stabbed multiple times, according to the Sheriff’s Office.

The next evening, deputies investigating Nasher’s death heard cries for help from Pekipaki, 31, who was also found with multiple stab wounds and who died at the scene.

Dosoqui was arrested after he allegedly drove his car at deputies, who shot at him and then captured him after he drove into a ditch. He was taken to the hospital for an arm laceration before he was released and booked into San Mateo County Jail. Dosoqui pleaded not guilty to the charges.

According to the DAs’s office, Dosoqui was “laughing inexplicably” during court proceedings and said he would be getting out of custody soon.

After the judge asked for the doctors evaluation, Dosoqui dropped the request to be his own attorney.
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“The review and processing of a development application is a regulatory process. It's not a negotiation,” Gallegos told the board.

Disagreeing over the development agreement

Board of Supervisors President Joe Simitian, who was part of a two-person subcommittee charged with negotiating with Stanford along with Supervisor Cindy Chavez, told the Palo Alto Weekly he felt Stanford’s withdrawal of its application was surprising, given that its proposal was heading for approval.

“I thought we were headed for a win-win,” Simitian told the Weekly. “The authorization of 3.5 million square feet over 15 to 20 years would’ve been a substantial benefit to the university. But given the requirement for full mitigation, they chose to walk away. I respect their decision, as an applicant, to walk away.”

Simitian noted that a development agreement is a tool that the county has never used in its 169-year history. And while he said he was open to the notion that a development agreement “is an appropriate tool for some narrow and limited set of benefits,” he was not willing to support an agreement that would have required the county to effectively abdicate its police powers and its land-use authority by pre-approving future development.

“The land-use authority and police power of public and county are not for sale, nor should they be,” Simitian said.

Jean McCown, Stanford’s associate vice president for government and community relations, told the Weekly that the university viewed a development agreement as a necessary tool because of the “laundry list” of requests Stanford had received from cities pertaining to issues they need help with. This includes contributions that fall outside the scope of what Santa Clara County can require in its conditions of approval. This includes contributions to Palo Alto schools and to San Mateo cities.

“Since we’ve been very consistent in saying that the development-agreement piece is critically important to what we’d like to do and what the community would like us to do, we didn’t see how we could move forward,” Stanford noted in its Nov. 1 announcement that it had revised its proposal and agreed to build the 2,172 housing units that the county had requested. This includes 933 units of below-market-rate housing, as recommended by the county’s analysis.

Stanford’s letter to the county also notes that through a development agreement, “some of this housing can be provided more quickly than through the conditions of approval.”

In its prior proposal, the university was seeking credit for several developments already under construction, including the Escondido Village, a 650-unit development on campus for graduate students, and Middle Plaza, a 215-unit development in Menlo Park.

Last week, Stanford indicated that it would no longer request credit for the existing projects, according to the announcement. It also requested that the county delay its upcoming hearing so that Stanford and the county could begin “substantive discussions” on a development agreement. But it received no evidence that the majority of the supervisors would endorse such a delay.

While Stanford did not rely on a development agreement for its last general use permit, which was approved in 2008, it had used development agreements for all of its major projects since then, including the new Stanford Hospital in Palo Alto and the recently completed campus in Redwood City, said Martin Shell, Stanford’s vice president and chief external relations officer.

Shell told the Weekly that with the GUP application withdrawn, the university now plans to “pause to assess what the priorities are.”

“We clearly heard a lot from the community over the past many weeks and months, and we want to reflect on what we heard,” Shell said. “We may be needing to focus more of people and programs for a while, and a little less on facilities.”

The withdrawal of the application makes moot, at least for the time being, Stanford’s pending agreement with the Palo Alto Unified School District, which called for $138 million in contributions from the university to the district. That agreement was contingent, however, on a development agreement—a condition that county supervisors rejected.

Tessler-Lavigne said in the statement that he appreciates the engagement of “so many community members throughout the process, the hard work of county planning staff in reviewing our permit and exceptional efforts of those in the university who worked to put forward a comprehensive, balanced plan for the county’s consideration.”

“I also deeply appreciate our strong collaboration with the Palo Alto Unified School District,” Tessler-Lavigne said in a statement. “The Palo Alto public schools are a critical partner with Stanford, and we will continue seeking ways to work together to expand educational opportunities for local students.”

Don Austin, Palo Alto Unified School District superintendent, said in an emailed statement that he looks forward to a continuing relationship with the university.

“Stanford’s decision to withdraw their GUP application means no new housing and no additional students to mitigate,” Austin said. “The school district loses nothing in the decision. More importantly, we have gained a strong partner for the time we spent together active-ly problem-solving and better understanding our shared interests. I expect great things to come from our new relationship and hold Stanford University in the highest regard.”

Members of the Stanford Coalition for Planning an Equitable UC (SCPE2015), some of whom hailed before the county’s Oct. 22 hearing, expressed dismay over Stanford’s action.

“We are saddened and frustrated to learn that Stanford has decided to withdraw its general use permit application,” the group stated in a post on its Facebook page. “The goal of our activism was never to stop this project — our demand is that any development Stanford under-takes support the most impacted communities on and around our campus — namely, workers and neighboring communities like East Palo Alto. We want Stanford to acknowledge the impact on the neighborhood and do so in a way that benefits everyone.”

Despite Shell’s assertion that the university is halting its proposal so that it can reflect on the community’s feedback and determine its priorities, the student group accused university administrators of simply deciding to wait out those who demanded more from the current application.

“They are waiting for student activists to graduate, for county Supervisors to term out or be up for re-election, for the community to forget. Once that happens, they will submit their application again with nothing changed,” the group wrote.  

Gennady Sheyner is a staff writer with the Palo Alto Weekly, The Almanac’s sister paper.

Menlo Park buys property fire district wants for station

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Following a private discussion about potential liabilities, the Menlo Park City Council unanimously approved the spending of $3.6 million to acquire 1285 Willow Road, a vacant property formerly home to a gas station, at its Oct. 29 meeting.

While the details of those potential liabilities aren’t public, as they were discussed in closed session, council members talked through what options they were holding them back from simply approving the purchase without discussion as part of the consent calendar, as they were initially scheduled to do earlier that evening.

The Menlo Park Fire Protection District had also expressed interest in purchasing the property. In a letter sent to the council the day of its meeting, Fire Chief Harold Schapelhousman said the district was interested in acquiring the property for a relocated fire station, to be called Station 88.

He said he envisioned a process to relocate the current Station 77 at 1467 Chilco St. in Belle Haven to Willow Road, and said a relocation would reduce the district’s use of Belle Haven streets when responding to emergencies.

The district would continue operations at Station 77 during the construction of a Station 88, and continue to use the site after construction for other functions, such as fleet services. Schapelhousman said keeping Station 77 would also be beneficial in water rescue because of its position near the Bay.

Nonprofit housing developer MidPen Housing — which previously purchased the Willow Road property and transferred it into an LLC — intended to build a mixed-use affordable housing project there but, the organization decided to sell the property for tax purposes by the end of 2019. MidPen plans to put the property into an LLC to begin the process of redeveloping its adjacent Gateway Apartments property at 1345 Willow Road.

Before the council went into closed session, City Manager
Big garbage, recycling rate hikes in store for towns

Woodside council meets Nov. 12 on new rates; Portola Valley council meets Nov. 13.

Woodside and Portola Valley have negotiated a new recycling and garbage collection agreement with San Jose-based GreenWaste Recovery that calls for a more than 30 percent average base rate increase.

The higher rates are based in part on the falling value of recycled materials due in part to China's decision last year to stop buying all but the cleanest and highest-value recycling from overseas, according to a mailer sent to residents.

"The value of recyclables isn't coming close to the cost of disposing of them," said Joe Sloan of Sloan Vasquez McAfee, a solid waste, recycling and organics consulting firm that Woodside and Portola Valley to negotiate and do a cost analysis of the agreement.

Rates have also been driven upward by California state rules that prohibit mixing of garbage and items earmarked for composting that will now have to be
gathered and disposed of separately, according to the mailer.

The cost analysis also cited "unanticipated, sustained growing trend of household materials that are being collected in the two towns.

Both towns have had an exclusive franchise agreement with GreenWaste since 2008, which expires at the end of the current fiscal year in June. The new agreement would be for 10 years.

Sloan said his firm evaluated every aspect of the collection process, including the cost of buying and maintaining the recycling trucks, fuel, labor costs, disposal costs and other expenses, and found that GreenWaste's bid covered its costs and provided a reasonable 8% to 9% profit and a franchise fee that goes to the towns.

Sloan Vasquez McAfee also analyzed the risks and rewards of doing direct negotiations with GreenWaste versus putting out a request for proposals to other providers, and determined that it was unlikely that a competitive procurement process would result in improved rates and present the risk of higher rates," according to the mailer.

Baseline service offering the lowest rates include collecting garbage, food waste, yard trimmings and recycling.

The cost of the service is determined by the size of the gray carts used for garbage, food waste and yard trimmings that customers choose for their service. The cart come in 20-gallon, 32-gallon, 64-gallon and 96-gallon sizes.

Customers receive a blue cart for recycling, and can request up to two more at no additional charge.

Curbside customers on streets that are wide enough for large collection trucks to traverse may also request up to three green carts for clean yard trimmings.

Customers who need "concierge services" — that is, whose homes are offset from the roadway enough that workers must drive or walk onto the property to reach their carts — will be charged a new fee, the amount of which will be determined by the distance of the property from the roadway, according to information in a mailer sent to residents.

The higher rates for the concierge services were designed to make up for the fact that it costs more to provide the services to these customers, according to Sloan.

The two towns say that the "additional fees associated with additional labor costs, such as walk-on and drive-on services, represent the cost of providing those services," according to the mailer. "This will result in a larger rate change impact for customers currently using these more costly service options."

However, about a dozen concierge service customers who attended a Tuesday (Oct. 29) community meeting in Woodside protested that the new charges are way out of line with actual costs of providing the extra services.

Katelyn Lewis, GreenWaste's director of sustainability and strategy, said, "The cost increase of the services provided over the years has outpaced the rate we have been charging."

Woodside resident Kevin Greenwood said that GreenWaste workers have to drive 200 feet down his driveway to reach his carts.

"It's not possible for us to drag those huge cans up the hill, so they have to drive on to our property to reach them," Greenwood said. "We're paying for the increased cost of basic service, plus the huge new monthly fee to come down the driveway.

Lewis verified that although Greenwood is now paying GreenWaste about $27 per month, he'll be paying $114 per month under the new agreement with almost all the increase due to the higher charges for the drive-on service.

"Just because these rates were a bargain for these customers in the past doesn't overcome the pain they are feeling with the increases," Lewis acknowledged.

The Woodside Town Council will hold a public hearing on the new agreement at its Nov. 12 meeting with Portola Valley council doing the same the following evening.

The councils may adopt the agreement following the hearings and, if approved, the new rates will be phased beginning on Jan. 1 and take full effect on July 1, 2020, according to the mailer.

U.S. 101 express lane project construction progresses

Construction on U.S. 101 to build express lanes along the highway throughout San Mateo County is currently focused on the highway section between Redwood City and Palo Alto.

This involves adding overhead signs and lighting, replacing barriers, and restriping the road. The express lanes in this segment could begin operating in June 2021.

The second, northern phase runs between the Whipple Avenue interchange and the 1-380 interchange in San Bruno and involves building new express lanes, installing toll equipment and adding pavement in addition to the other steps required in the first project phase. The express lanes in this section could open in May 2022.

Agencies supporting the project are Caltrans, the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County and San Mateo County Valley Transportation Authority.

In developing the project, Caltrans analysis found that simply widening the highway would create more congestion, while creating a carpool-only lane would leave the lane underutilized, according to the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County.

The express lane is a hybrid of sorts, as it can be used by vehicles with one or two people who are willing to pay a toll alongside free-fare, high-occupancy vehicles, which will fill up the rest of the capacity in the lane and lower congestion in the other lanes.

According to Caltrans, the construction in San Mateo County, which involves a total of 22 miles of U.S. 101, is broken into two segments, and is intended to align with simultaneous efforts in Santa Clara County to create and expand express lanes.

The first segment of the San Mateo County work, which was set to run from March through November 2019, is focused in southern San Mateo County and will convert the existing carpool lanes on U.S. 101 from the Santa Clara County line to the Whipple Avenue interchange in Redwood City into express lanes.

While the project has been going on since March, according to Caltrans, work in November will be focused on the freeway shoulders in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Menlo Park, and work on the freeway median will be happening in Menlo Park and Redwood City.

According to the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County, the $514 million project is expected to be completed in mid-2022.

Cars with three or more people, buses and other high-occupancy vehicles will be able to use the express lanes for free, while solo drivers can pay a fee to access them. The fee will fluctuate based on demand, via a term known as "congestion pricing," and revenues collected will be put toward funding for public transit and other efforts to reduce solo driving.

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By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Two years ago, Menlo Park resident Kirsten Mouradian was environmentally conscious, and growing more worried. She rode her bike around town, was a diligent reduce-reuse-recycler, and used solar power.

However, she recently told The Almanac in an interview, “It didn’t really feel like enough compared to climate change. It didn’t seem like there was anything we could do to stop this.”

In her work as a family nurse practitioner at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford, she’d been alerted to the existing public health problems created by climate change. Climate change is affecting public health in long-term and more acute ways, such as by increasing vulnerable people’s risks of heat stroke and dehydration and worsening wildfires that can devastate community resources and health.

Over the last couple of years, the health threats posed by climate-change driven wildfires became painfully real. The huge effects on people’s lives when a community burns to the ground was just one of a spate of depressing possibilities she found herself thinking about.

Then, a friend of hers asked her how to get trees planted along her street, so she went searching online. It was there she discovered Canopy, a Palo Alto-based nonprofit all about tree planting.

The nonprofit, started in 1996, grew out of a task force created in 1993 by the city of Palo Alto to study the city’s urban forest. In 2006, it expanded its mission of community-supported urban tree canopy growth to nearby communities.

Shortly after finding the organization, she found herself out on a tree walk with the organization. On that walk, she recalled, the group travelled past the sound wall near U.S. 101 where the organization had planted oak trees several years before. The trees had been specifically chosen to trap pollution particles and keep them out of the lungs of neighborhood residents.

She recalled being touched by the effort that had gone into the tree plantings to benefit local kids, and, from that moment, became a proud devotee of the nonprofit.

Today, she serves on Canopy’s board and is enrolled in its community forestry school, a first-in-its-history seminar series aimed at teaching community members all they need to know to confidently plant their own trees and lead others to do the same.

At a recent session of the forestry school that Mouradian attends, held in a classroom tucked at the back of the East Palo Alto YMCA, a group of about 30 adults munched on potluck offerings while eagerly absorbing a lesson presented by the nonprofit’s executive director, Catherine Martineau.

Martineau, also a Menlo Park resident, was teaching the students how to advocate within their communities — which span from Fremont to San Jose to Menlo Park — to get city policies passed that protect trees. When, during the lesson, students split into groups based on the city they’re from to analyze their city’s heritage tree ordinance, Martineau didn’t need to study here: She has spent over a year serving on a city task force focused on revising it.

Updating the ordinance
Since Menlo Park first passed its heritage tree ordinance in 1979, the law has been amended five times, but over the last few years, some called for an update to make the permitting process for heritage tree removals more clear, to have better enforcement of the ordinance, and to address other concerns, explained city staff.

One problem is that the ordinance’s mandate to plant replacement trees when a heritage tree is removed isn’t always heeded, and is enforced only when officials respond to complaints.

Menlo Park Sustainability Manager Rebecca Lucky noted that over the last nine years, the city has approved an average of 700 heritage trees for removal. However, when city staff surveyed people who have applied for removal permits in the last two years, only 54% reported that they had actually planted the required replacement trees.

According to Lucky, the 17-member task force was a diverse one, made up of tree enthusiasts and former applicants for tree removal permits alike, along with developers and people who work in real estate.

Between August 2018 and last June, the task force met 10 times. “Not everyone got what they wanted,” she said. “This community really adores trees, and it came through, even with a diverse group. They compromised in a lot of situations.”

Their recommended revisions moved forward Oct. 29 when the City Council approved the first reading of the updated ordinance. If the ordinance is approved following this month’s second reading, it will take...
Dirt flies as volunteers with Canopy plant a dozen oak trees on Chilco Street, which will shade portable classrooms at Belle Haven Elementary.

effect next July.

In Menlo Park, heritage trees are defined as oaks that have a diameter of 10 inches, any other tree that has a diameter of 15 inches at 4.5 feet above the ground, and other significant trees designated as such by the city.

Like the previous law, under the revised ordinance owners of properties where such trees exist and who do work on their property near them have to submit a tree protection plan and have it approved by a certified arborist; they must have a permit to remove or do major pruning to a heritage tree. Another change: The arborist must now be certified and chosen from a list of arborists approved by the city.

The updated ordinance lays out a series of factors that must be evaluated by city staff when considering whether to allow a tree to be removed or significantly pruned. If the answer is no to any of the questions below, removal may be permitted.

Q. Health: Is it likely to die or fall within a year?
A. Species: Is it a member of a species that is invasive or not desirable?
B. Development: Does it interfere with a proposed development, and is there no alternative that’s financially feasible or reasonable?
C. Utilities: Does it interfere with existing or planned public infrastructure, and is there no feasible or reasonable alternative?
D. Dirt flies when the leaves fall. They can’t be reasonably reduced to a low risk rating, as determined by the International Society of Arboriculture’s tree risk assessment system?
E. Species: Is it a species that is invasive or not desirable?

When it comes to replacement trees, applicants will have to ascertain the value of the tree with an appraisal first, and will then be expected to replace the full value of the tree they plan to remove with in-kind trees. If the property can’t accommodate the number of trees removed, the applicant will pay the difference into the city’s heritage tree fund.

A new requirement in the ordinance that’s expected to cover most of the additional $75,000 to $120,000 annual cost to the city for its enforcement is that replacement trees will have to be inspected by the city, first to verify that the tree has been planted, and then, two years later, to ensure that the tree is thriving.

Beyond those requirements, staff plans to create a new database of heritage tree permits and replacement trees. Over the next six months, staff members will aim to incorporate that database with the new permitting system the city is working with, Accela, which is expected to be launched next month, but if that’s not feasible, they will seek out other software systems to track the permits and tree replacements.

In addition, the ordinance will offer conflict resolution and mediation as an option for community member appeals before or at the start of the formal appeal process.

Growing tensions
Anyone who has sat through a heritage tree appeal process in Menlo Park knows how passionate people can be about their city trees. Anyone who has sat through a lot of them can observe that heritage trees stand for more than what people can always articulate in a public comment.

Often, tree defenders point to the myriad benefits trees provide. According to the U.S. Forest Service, they moderate the climate, reduce building energy use and atmosphere carbon dioxide, improve air and water quality, mitigate rainfall runoff and flooding, boost health and well-being, and lower noise impacts. Urban forests around the country conservatively provide over $18 billion in annual benefits, the agency states.

Others are more blunt and simply emphasize that trees are great for property values.

Urban trees, however, have their limits when it comes to how much they can do to mitigate a community’s carbon footprint. In a year, a tree can absorb up to 48 pounds of carbon dioxide, according to the Urban Forestry Network. Meanwhile, over the same period, a typical passenger vehicle emits about 46.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Simply put, it takes many, many trees to make up for the impacts of driving. And even if local residents drive electric vehicles, it’s likely that the people who work in the service industries that surround them don’t, and have long commutes.

Asked about the uncomfortable environmental tension emerging between the dual needs to cut carbon emissions by having more housing near the Peninsula’s job centers and the need to preserve the urban canopy to better sequester carbon, Martinez said Canopy’s position holds that if development happens, it should be done in a way that incorporates nature and values community input.

“At some point, it’s no longer a question about trees; it’s a

Canopy in Action: Planting trees in Belle Haven

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

On a recent Saturday morning, nearly 100 people gathered at Belle Haven School, including Menlo Park’s mayor and vice mayor and Facebook representatives, to plant 12 new trees along Chilco Street.

The project was a long time coming, explained Theresa Avedian, senior civil engineer with the city. Initially, the school fence had to be moved back from the road, and then the concrete cleared to prepare the ground for landscaping. Funding for that effort was split between a required contribution as part of the Bohannon Group’s development agreement for its Menlo Gateway project, and a Facebook contribution.

The trees were a mix of valley, island and Engelmann oak varieties, chosen so that they’d provide shade to the portable classrooms they stand near during the summer and permit sunlight to pass through the branches during the winter when the leaves fall. They will help students to be more comfortable, explained Lauren Swezey, sustainability and community outreach manager at Facebook.

In addition, installing trees along the side of the road can create the illusion for drivers that the street is narrower, which naturally slows them down, Avedian noted.

Leading the tree planting efforts were high school students from Menlo-Atherton High School, Eastside College Prep and East Palo Alto Academy that Canopy had recruited to participate in its Teen Urban Forestry program. Student participants, called TUFs, are trained in forestry over the course of a semester and taught to lead tree planting efforts. The nonprofit also runs a service learning program at Oxford Day Academy in East Palo Alto.

According to Jack Dorsey, tree care and youth programs coordinator, the students spend one day after school each week, either Thursday or Friday, as well as most Saturdays, and weekdays during the summer, learning and leading programs.

Current TUFs are working to build a new park at an underutilized lot near Bayshore Christian Ministries in East Palo Alto. Over the course of the last nine months and several semesters, Dorsen said, students have gone through the landscape design process.

They are set to begin building the park on Nov. 16, according to Natalie Brubaker, education director at Canopy. Dorsey, a former Canopy intern himself, said he’s inspired by the goal of helping the students he works with to pursue careers in green fields.

Jada Riley, a senior at Eastside College Prep in East Palo Alto, is in her third year of working with Canopy as a "teen urban forester." In her time working with the nonprofit, she said, she’s come to appreciate the Saturday morning ritual of going out and planting trees, even on the weekend days she’d like to sleep in.

In low-income neighborhoods in East Palo Alto, Riley said, "They look at nature like it’s a privilege, but it shouldn’t be seen as that. It should be something that we have, something that we take care of.”

She added that trees can be expensive to plant, so when the funding does come through to do plantings in those areas, the community cherishes them.

Through her training, she’s learned how to work with younger kids, which meant learning how to be more patient, she said, adding that she hopes to continue work with the nonprofit.

Junior Bresy Pedraza Perez, who’s in her first year of the forestry program, said that the program has helped her find value in spending time
question about development," she said. "If development is going to happen, how do we ensure that it is done in a way that incorporates nature still? ... The community needs to weigh in on those choices.

What's next

As neighboring cities have proven, and as Martineau explained to her community forestry students, a heritage ordinance is just one of a number of policy tools that can be used to protect and preserve a community's urban canopy.

In Palo Alto, Mountain View, San Francisco and Sacramento, cities have created some variation of what's called an urban forest master plan, which lays out big-picture strategies for tree growth and preservation in a community. Canopy has a contract with East Palo Alto to help create such a plan.

But there's a long way to go. A 2017 report from the forest service states that even though California has an estimated 173.2 million trees that provide ecosystem functions valued at $8.3 billion a year, the urban canopy statewide is the lowest per capita in the U.S., with about 109 square yards of city tree canopy per person compared with states like New Hampshire, at 1,514 square yards of urban canopy per person, or Alabama, with 1,182 square yards of urban canopy per person.

In addition, the area's tree canopy is far from equally distributed. A map produced by the U.S. Forest Service that shows how much each census tract's territory is covered in tree canopy demonstrated significant disparities, with wealthier areas having a higher proportion of tree cover. Most of Atherton is in the highest category, with 42% to 89% of the town covered by tree canopy; most of Menlo Park west of U.S. 101 falls into the 23% to 41% category. Belle Haven and most of East Palo Alto fall into the lowest category, with just 0% to 11% of the area covered by tree canopy.

Lucky told The Almanac that creation of an urban forest master plan is expected to come up for consideration during the city's annual goal-setting process next year.

While calls to plant more trees are well-advised, there are science-based best practices that should be followed, Lucky explained. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) offers a set of best practices that interested backyard foresters should consider in order to protect their property from fire risks when planting trees. And Canopy, Martineau said, also puts high priority on placing "the right tree in the right place."

Mouradian noted that part of what she's learned about trees since she became involved with Canopy is that trees are far more responsive to their environments than the casual observer might assume. For instance, apple trees draw on reservoirs of carbohydrates and nitrogen they've stored up from the previous year for their spring growth.

"I never thought a tree had the ability to plan ahead. ... It's a very dynamic and very interactive and very adapting thing," she said.

Like the individual trees in Menlo Park, the city's urban forest, with the policies established in the updated heritage tree ordinance, seems well-positioned to adapt and expand in changing times. "

CANOPY continued from page 15

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Community is that building community and being outside, even while living in a region focused so much on tech. She said that with her training, she has a whole new appreciation for big trees when she sees them, knowing how much work went into them.

As part of the program, teen urban foresters are paid the Palo Alto minimum wage — currently $15 per hour — and receive raises as they stay with the program over multiple semesters, said Operations Director Shannon McDonald.

Funding comes from individual donors and a number of local family foundations.

According to its 2018 annual report, the nonprofit generated about 6,700 hours of volunteer work from 1,499 volunteers. It paid 18 teen urban forester interns.

Since it started, the nonprofit has planted about 1,000 trees at schools in the Ravenswood City School District, and has a new partnership with the Redwood City School District to plant trees there, as well as at schools in Mountain View.
To fulfill its mission of educating children during their first five years of life, the nonprofit All Five preschool in Menlo Park’s Belle Haven neighborhood is kicking off a campaign this month to raise $800,000 to expand its services.

Officials want to expand the school, which now serves students 2 years and 9 months to pre-kindergarten in its full-time program, to enroll infants and toddlers starting in fall 2020.

School officials hope to break ground in March to retrofit three portable classrooms — through a lease agreement with the Ravenswood City School District — adjacent to its campus at 1391 Chilco St. They will bring the classrooms up to fire code, add running water, install bathrooms and make the rooms Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant, according to All Five leaders.

"Full-time, high-quality infant and toddler care is in short supply across the Peninsula, even for families with means," according to informational material provided by the nonprofit. For low- and middle-income families, "there are very limited options and they are perpetually oversubscribed."

Once the expansion is completed, the preschool will have capacity for 36 to 40 preschoolers, three infants and six toddlers. About 24 preschoolers now attend the preschool, said All Five Executive Director Carol Thomsen.

Families are desperate for infant and toddler care on the Peninsula, according to All Five. The school regularly maintains a lengthy waitlist that is nearly triple its capacity for students, according to the presentation.

School in San Mateo County will need to fill about 2,500 teaching spots by 2025 to keep pace with the growing need for early childhood education programs, according to a 2016 early learning facilities needs assessment for the county. Between now and 2025, there is a projected shortage of about 14,000 slots for children in early education classrooms, according to the assessment.

And early childhood education is important because "brains grow more in the first five years of life than during any other time (in) our entire lives," Thomsen said.

The preschool recruited one employee from the Menlo Park-based nonprofit Community Equity Collaborative’s newly created Teacher Pipeline Program. The program includes early childhood education courses through Foothill College, along with meals, child

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**Announcing Part Three of the Kensington Place Brain Health Speaker Series: PREVENT**

**Thurs, Nov 14, 2019 • 5:30-6:30pm • Bloomingdales at Stanford Shopping Center**

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Kensington Place is a memory care residence that exclusively serves individuals with memory loss and their families. Our team has built strong relationships with progressive industry leaders who are making a difference in the lives of people living with dementia and who are searching for a cure. Please join us for a presentation by Dr. Frank Longo, a George E. and Lucy Becker Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology and Neurological Sciences at Stanford. Dr. Longo will discuss the science behind a potential cure for Alzheimer’s and will share measures that could possibly PREVENT the disease.

RSVP to info@kensingtonplacedw.com or call (650) 363-9200.
By Rick Radin
Almanac Staff Writer

The Woodside Town Council has reversed a ruling by the Planning Commission that denied a conditional use permit for a bridge that will enable equestrians to bypass a washed-out section of a trail.

The bridge to be placed across Bear Gulch Creek near the intersection of Woodside Road and Why Worry Lane will reopen the Center Trail, a riding trail that has been in use for more than 100 years, according to the staff report on the project. The trail closed following a storm in 2017.

The proposal calls for a $35,000 investment from the town’s general fund and $50,000 from related fiduciary funds, along with $115,000 that has been raised from equestrian groups.

At its meeting Oct. 22, the Town Council unanimously approved the permit, months after it approved the town’s portion of the funding at a sparsely attended council meeting in May.

But opposition gathered steam when the Planning Commission voted 3-1 with one member absent on Sept. 4 to reject the permit on the rationale that the bridge would not benefit all the town’s residents.

Using the Center Trail that leads from the Town Council parking lot to the general public uses to riding and denies use by horse back riding is an expensive specialized use.

El-Fishawy, who led the argument against approving the project at the Sept. 4 meeting, came to the council meeting to repeat the reasons why he’s opposed to using public funds for horse trails.

“Why Worry Lane will reopen the section of Woodside Road and Bear Gulch Creek near the intersection,” he said, “but it involves a lot of expense and it doesn’t serve the community as a whole. It doesn’t serve horse riders — came down on the side of approving the permit and the public funding.”

“El-Fishawy summed up his reasons for voting against approval. "If the trails are open to everyone people from (other communities) come here to ride through your yard," "El-Fishawy said. "They divide the community and exacerbate tribalism."

Brown said, pointing to the community’s "equestrian tradition" that is established in Woodside’s general plan.

Brown also noted "the conflict as another example of a disagreement between newer and older town residents, similar to the battle over zoning and home expansion in the Glenns." Brown said the conflict "is a foreign concept in most countries that she’s aware of. However, the majority of about 25 speakers at the Association meeting said some but not all of whom said they were horse owners and riders — came down on the side of approving the permit and the public funding.

"I’m not rich, but I worked my ass off to live in Woodside for the equestrian lifestyle," said horse owner Maggie Mah. "We need dedicated trails that don’t allow all forms of traffic."

Mah and others also pointed to the easements granted by neighboring homeowners for the Center Trail that restrict uses and deny uses by the general public.

The Almanac.

Breiner gave well-received presentations about earthquakes to students at Corte Madera School in Portola Valley, and to the Portola Valley Science Committee about his work in archaeology and photography. He was the distance runner who competed in 10 marathons, including the Boston Marathon, and enjoyed skiing, hiking, photography and travel.

Neukermans and Breiner were neighbors in the Ranch neighborhood in Portola Valley for about 20 years.

"He lived in Portola Valley for a very long time, from the time the Ranch was started," Neukermans said. "Yvonne Damele passed away peacefully on October 31, 2019.

Yvonne Damele, 1928 – 2019

Yvonne Damele passed away peacefully from ovarian cancer on October 31, 2019 at her home in Menlo Park.

Yvonne was preceded in death by her husband Joseph John Damele and her parents Fredrick and Alma Steinmetz.

She is survived by her brother Charles Steinmetz, sister Mary Morris (Cal), children Mark Damele, Michelle McMillan (Gordon), Catherine Damele (Chris Steckel), Christine Lies (James) and John Damele, nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Yvonne was born on April 23, 1928 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania the middle of three children. She graduated from Marymount University in Los Angeles and worked for TWA as a flight attendant. She met Joseph Damele in San Francisco at a fraternity mixer for UCSF dental students.

She studied earth sciences. He complied with the university offer at the University of Munich, Germany from 1954 to 1957.

Neukermans of Portola Valley, a longtime friend.

"She was a valuable individual, kind of the Indiana Jones of Portola Valley," Neukermans said. "He didn’t invent the magnetometer, but he made good use of it."

Neukermans and Breiner were neighbors in the Ranch neighborhood in Portola Valley for about 20 years.

"He lived in Portola Valley for a very long time, from the time the Ranch was started," Neukermans said.

Born on Oct. 23, 1936, in Milwaukee, Breiner spent his childhood in St. Louis, Missouri, where his parents, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, owned a bakery.

He entered Stanford in 1955 after the university offered to pay for his education if he studied earth sciences. He completed his doctorate in the field in 1967.

"If I’d have stayed in St. Louis, I would have had to fix the bakery equipment in my spare time," Breiner said in the 2002 story.

He met Mimi Farrington while at Stanford, and they were married in 1962. He is survived by Mimi’s son, David (Sharon Geaghan); a daughter, Michelle Dirkiss-Smith (Alexander Dirkiss-Smith); a brother, Richard (Dorothy); and five grandchildren: Charlotte, Meredith, Julia, Beatrix, and Elyse.

A community celebration of his life will be announced later, according to Mimi Breiner.

The family prefers memorial donations be made to the Peninsula Open Space Trust at openspacetrust.org/donate.
Both groups pressure the police department to do something about Anderson's situation in particular, Bertini said. "I get more complaints and emails from residents and business owners about her than anybody else," he told The Almanac.

Anderson is delusional, but doesn't meet the requirements to be considered a threat to herself or others, he said.

He defended Dixon's decision to send her by taxi to another jurisdiction.

"This is what she wanted at the time," Bertini said. "She's a functional adult. We can't force her to go anywhere."

Menlo Park isn't alone in seeking to send the unhoused to other cities. Many cities have formal busing programs for homeless people to offer individuals one-way tickets to their hometowns or other places they have a network upon which they can rely for support. These programs are generally more common in larger cities and have experienced mixed outcomes.

The New York Times recently reported that among those who have used San Francisco's "Homebound Bus" transporting program, about one in eight recipients had returned and sought homeless services again in the city within a year of the travel ticket being used.

In general, these programs have rules that the person or agency who provides the transportation service for homeless people pursue some degree of due diligence to ensure that they will be met on the other end of their journey with some kind of support network from family, friends, or social services. That didn't happen here.

When asked why not, Bertini said the police department didn't follow those practices because Menlo Park doesn't have a busing program.

Instead, he explained, Menlo Park has a "boutique approach" to homelessness in which Dixon, the police department's lead officer for interacting with the homeless, knows the few unhoused people in the city by name and knows their stories and problems.

That approach — and the possibility of using city funds to send unhoused people to other jurisdictions — appears not to be specifically codified in the written language guiding the department's approach to homelessness, considering the police department's policies surrounding interactions with homeless people in its procedure manual.

On the topic of assisting homeless people, it states, "Officers may contact the homeless for purposes of rendering aid, support and/or community-oriented policing purposes, and adds, "Officers may provide homeless persons with resource and assistance information whenever it is reasonably apparent that such services may be appropriate."

"It's an ancient societal role," Bertini said. "Again, it's unfair that the police department gets saddled with it. Whenever there's a problem that can't be solved, it ends up in the police department's lap. ... Until some other solutions come to light, we're going to have to do this one-off boutique approach to dealing with these folks."
By John Orr

The Pear’s latest production, “Sweat,” is a play to treasure and savor, not only for the brilliance of Lynn Nottage’s Pulitzer Prize-winning script but also for the stunning excellence of most of the performances.

The story begins with two men — one white, one black — recently released from prison and meeting with their parole officer.

The white man, full of anger, has Nazi tattoos on his face and neck, received, apparently, when he was in prison. The black man is emotionally confused but seems nice enough, and talks about having run into the white man and giving him a hug.

That scene is set in 2008. Then a couple of walls are winged out on Kevin Davies’ flexible set, and we are in 2000, in a bar, for a birthday party. Televisions mounted behind the bar tell us the date.

Devin Cunningham, as the young black man, Chris, and Jonathan Covey, as the young white man, Jason, are best friends. No tattoos (Covey must have spent a lot of time in front of a mirror between scenes, with the help of costume and makeup designer Kathleen Qiu). Diamonds in Chris’ ears, Air Jordans on his feet. He’s hoping to go to college and his friends tell him to stay in Reading, Pennsylvania, and work in the plant, like everyone else.

It’s party for Jessie, played by the always appealing Kristin Walter. Bartender Stan (Tom Gough) warns Jessie’s girlfriends — Alicia Stamps as Cynthia and Kristin Brownstone as Tracey — they shouldn’t drink anymore, but they say it’s OK, because Jessie is their designated driver. Trouble is, Jessie is already passed out, her “happy birthday” tiara barely holding on.

The play advances through the year 2000, as Cynthia and Tracey, exhausted by years of working on the floor of the mill, both apply for a management job.

Brucie (Fred Pitts) has already been walking a picket line where he used to work, but was locked out when he took the union’s side. Everybody else plans their lives around the money they think will always be theirs because of their union jobs at the mill.

But then management moves half the mill’s equipment to Mexico, and demands pay cuts for the workers left behind. A strike and a lockout happen, and misery becomes the norm. When Cynthia gets the management job, her old friends hate her. When the bar’s busboy, Oscar (Armando Torres), crosses the picket line for a mill job that pays a little better than his bar job, real trouble happens.

Massive kudos to Caroline Clark, who has done a brilliant job directing this very difficult play, which bounces between years, as the story develops emotionally, not historically. And Clark works magic in getting everyone in the cast to find their way with their characteristics.

Pitts is amazing to watch as Brucie, a man who walked a union line for way too long, and who is so broken and drug-dependent that he pitifully bows and scrapes to his grown son to beg for money.

It’s like a symphony of emotions in Pitts’ expressions and body movement. There must be a thousand things he does with his eyes, his face, his body, to make Brucie come alive. It is a stunning performance, perhaps the best in a non-musical I’ve seen this year. James “G” Glass is wonderful as Evan, the parole officer. A sergeant first class in the U.S. Army, stationed in Mountain View, Glass only started acting this year. He only has a few scenes but is very impressive in all that he does. He is physically imposing and threatening when talking to Jason but has sincere kindness in his eyes when talking with Chris, who is just trying to figure out how he can get his life back together.

Brownstone is intimidating as Tracey, who becomes more angry and embittered as the show goes on.

The last scene in 2000 shows us what put Jason and Chris in prison. The final, heart-breaking, scene in 2008 shows us the tragic truth of what can happen when broken people fight, instead of finding a way to survive together.

“Sweat” is a powerful tragedy about the American blue-collar worker, used up and abandoned by companies that increased their profits by taking jobs away from American factory workers. These workers just want to do their jobs and live their lives and are shocked as they learn how little their bosses care about them.

Nottage’s play brilliantly explores human dynamics of American workers, touching on desperation, poverty and racism. It completely earned its Pulitzer Prize. The Pear’s production should be in line for plenty of Bay Area theater awards itself.

John Orr is a freelance writer.

INFORMATION

What: “Sweat.”
Where: The Pear, 1110 La Avenida St., Mountain View.
When: Oct. 17-Nov. 10. Shows times vary.
Cost: $33-
Info: thepear.org.

Ani Wandless, left, plays the part of Otto Frank and Kealy Bryman, right, portrays Anne Frank in Hillview Middle School’s production of “The Diary of Anne Frank.”

Photo courtesy of Hillview Drama

Artscene

people and performances in arts and entertainment

Anne Frank, Helen Keller come back to life on Hillview Drama stage

Hillview students will stage “The Miracle Worker” and “The Diary of Anne Frank” beginning on Thursday, Nov. 7. The dramas tell the stories of two girls who are now legends renowned for their heroism and human resilience: Helen Keller and Anne Frank.

In the 1880s, Helen Keller falls ill and loses her sight, hearing, speech and ability to connect. The play follows her relationship with Anne Sullivan, a teacher who introduces Helen to education and activism.

About 60 years later, German Jewish teenager Anne Frank keeps a diary of her experience hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam during World War II.

Both plays explore adversity and emerge as last symbols of strength and resilience, according to a press release from the school.

“Like that Anne and Helen are real and that they’re women,” said Director Bill Hairston in a prepared statement. “Both are extraordinary examples of the best that humans can be under unbelievable circumstances.”

Each play is about an hour long. There will be an intermission between the two stage works.

The show runs Thursday, Nov. 7, at 6:30 p.m.; Friday, Nov. 8, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 9, at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets are $10 for students and seniors; and $12, general admission. Shows are staged at the Hillview Performing Arts Center, 1100 Elder Ave. in Menlo Park.

Tickets are on sale at hillview-drama.org/p/tickets.html.

— By Angela Swartz
Music
The Music@Menlo chamber music festival presents a program, “Art Under a Tombstone,” on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 7 and 8, that explores Russian art’s transformation from the Romantic era through the period of Soviet oppression, according to a press release from the festival.
On Thursday, a “behind the music” discussion is on the program, with pianist and conductor Ignat Solzhenitsyn reading poetry by his father, the Nobel Prize-winning writer and Russian dissident Alexandr Solzhenitsyn. The reading will be accompanied by a performance of excerpts of works by Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich.

The program, at 7:30 p.m., will be held at Martin Family Hall at Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton.

The following evening’s program, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., will feature the works from Thursday program, and will also include Shostakovich’s Seven Romances on Poems of Aleksandr Blok, performed by soprano Hyunah Yu. Cellist David Finckel, co-founder of Music@Menlo, will also perform, as will other acclaimed artists.

The Friday evening event will be at Chabot Space & Science Center, 2650 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park.

Tickets from $15 are available at musicatmenlo.org or by calling 650-331-0202. Ticket discounts are available for those under age 30.

Teens
International Games Week International Games Week is an annual celebration of games with other public libraries worldwide during the first week of November. Play cards, team board games, and more. Grades 4-12. Nov. 8, 11-3:30 p.m. Free, Bible Haven Library, 413 Ivy Drive, Menlo Park, menlopark.org

Ignot Solzhenitsyn will read poetry, perform excerpts of Russian music and discuss Russian art’s transformation during the period from 1880 to 1970.

Supporting 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.
We must become more resilient to wildland fire

By Ana Maria Ruiz

Fire is a fact of life in California, and we all have a responsibility to expand our individual and collective resiliency to it. The occurrence and severity of fire is dependent on three essential elements: oxygen, fuel and a heat source responsible for ignition. Together, we can work to manage two of these elements: fuel and ignition.

Fuel for wildland fires is mainly provided by vegetation. In fact, California’s native plant communities have adapted to periodic fire. However, dense regrowth after heavy historic logging coupled with more than a century of fire suppression has resulted in a buildup of vegetation.

Midpen maintains fuel breaks, defensible space, hundreds of miles of fire roads and emergency access routes across our preserves. On our coastal lands, 11,000 acres are leased to ranching tenants for conservation cattle grazing to reduce vegetation and enhance grasslands.

Midpen is making significant investments of public funds to expand our vegetation management this year in an environmentally sensitive manner. We’re working with local fire agencies to identify priority areas, and will continue expanding our work into new areas of the wildland-urban interface. Examples include new fuel reduction projects in our windy hill, Pulgas ridge and Bear Creek Redwoods preserves, among others. We are also planning to reintroduce prescribed fire under the direction of Cal Fire to reduce vegetation and restore natural habitats starting in 2022.

In the Bay Area, we are experiencing increasing episodes of extreme heat. Our changing climate is contributing to and exacerbating these extreme weather patterns. At Midpen, we are working toward aggressive, voluntary reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions. The natural lands we manage are continuously removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in forests, grasslands and soils.

According to Cal Fire, humans cause 95% of California wildland fires. Midpen rangers work to help visitors safely enjoy the preserves and enforce regulations prohibiting high fire-risk activities, including smoking, campfires and off-road vehicles. Should a fire affect Midpen open space lands, we are prepared. We equip ranger trucks with water pumps during fire season and our rangers are trained as wildland fire first responders to assist the local fire departments responsible for fire suppression.

Join us in making our community more resistent and resilient to wildland fire. Reduce your carbon footprint to help address climate change. Prevent fires by avoiding activities such as mowing, barbecuing, smoking, camp fires and parking on grass, particularly on red flag warning days. If you live in the wildland-urban interface, harden your home, create an evacuation plan as a precaution and maintain defensible space around structures.

Together, we can do the work necessary to live safely with fire in California.
Despite of many misconceptions, overseas Chinese buyers still comprise a large part of the buying pool for homes in Silicon Valley. In order to reach more of these buyers, DeLeon Realty CEO Michael Repka and Listing Manager Audrey Sun will again be hosting our annual participation booth at the prestigious Luxury Property Showcase (LPS) in Shanghai from December 6-8, 2019, as well as the Hong Kong Smart Expo from November 23-24, 2019. List your home with DeLeon Team by 11/15/2019 to receive maximum exposure to tens of thousands of international buyers at these elite events!
CENTRAL WOODSIDE
5 bed, 5.5 bath main home / 1 bed, 2 bed guest house
700-bottle wine cellar / Pool / 4-stall barn with tack room
2-car garage / Woodside school / gullixson.com

ATHERTON - MENLO CIRCUS CLUB
~12 acres in the Menlo Circus Club area
4 bed, 4 bath home, remodeled in 2008-2009
Pool, BBQ area with trellis/arbor/firepit & pizza oven
Solar-panels for electricity $11,800,000

725 EVERGREEN STREET, MENLO PARK gullixson.com
Mid-century 4 bed, 2.5 bath home / Great West Menlo Park location
Attached 2-car garage / Lot ~10,010 sf
Menlo Park schools: Oak Knoll (K-5)
Hillview (6-8) (buyer to confirm) $3,800,000

1 ODELL PLACE, ATHERTON
European country villa built in 2010 in Central Atherton
5 bedrooms, office, 5.5 baths / Main residence: ~5,885 sf
~0.78 acre / Temperature-controlled wine cellar
Excellent Menlo Park schools $7,495,000

FOR RENT
750 FREMONT STREET MENLO PARK (Front House)
2 bed, 1 bath
Close to town location $4,500 month

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Video tour the home & neighborhood at: 1odell.com

RANKED THE #25 TEAM IN THE NATION IN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL REPORT OF THE TOP RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS (Published in June 2019).

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Premier Woodside street less than ½ mile to town