

WOODSIDE puts brake on charity bike ride. Antipathy toward cyclists one of the factors. Page 5

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

JUNE 21, 2006

www.AlmanacNews.com

VOL. 41 NO. 42



H A S **T** MEASURE **T** MEASURED UP ?

First wave of recreation bond projects are up and running, but not without controversy. [Page 12]

REDEFINING QUALITY SINCE 1990

Reading between the emotional line makes the difference between finding a house and a home.



REDWOOD CITY

Maintaining its old world charm, this beautiful, completely remodeled Craftman-style home has been updated to accommodate contemporary living. The interior boasts the latest amenities including, recessed lighting, granite counters, hardwood floors and allnew cabinetry. This 3bd/2.5ba home on an 7,000+/-sf lot sits in the heart of Mt. Carmel neighborhood.

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\$1,595,000



Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Courtesy Stanford Management Co.

Luxury living

Here's a close-up view of a hotel and restaurant complex to be built as part of a 21-acre complex on Sand Hill Road near Interstate 280 in Menlo Park. Stanford's plan for the site was approved by the Menlo Park City Council last week. See another view on **Page 5** and the story on **Page 9**

Atherton

■ Town to use more parcel tax cash on street, drainage repairs. **Page 18**

Menlo Park

- Mayor Nicholas Jellins won't seek another term on the Menlo Park City Council. **Page 8**
- Police contract negotiations are stalled. **Page 5**
- Draft budget leaves pool, child care questions unanswered. **Page 8**

Portola Valley

■ Town Center teardown, rebuild impacts Portola Valley budget. **Page 15**

Woodside

- Town puts brake on charity bike ride. **Page 5**
- With extra cash, Woodside to "burn mortgage," hire new deputy. **Page 11**

Schools

- Sacred Heart Prep celebrates graduation. **Page 19**

Sports

- Kelly Eaton named California scholar-athlete of the year. **Page 17**

Artscene

- Theater review: A credible "Hamlet" broods on Menlo Players Guild stage. **Page 30**

Also Inside

Calendar	31
Editorial	22
Letters	22
Obituaries	21
Police Calls	21

On the cover

SRI International employees play volleyball at Menlo Park's renovated Burgess Park. Improvements to the park cost about \$3.7 million, and were funded by Measure T, a \$38 million bond measure. Almanac photo by Marjan Sadoughi. See **Page 12**.

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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Fantastic Fruit Finales

As summer mellows toward fall, nothing makes a more fitting meal finale than a dessert featuring the sun-kissed fruits of the season. Peach melba, for example, is a delight for all the senses, with its scarlet ribbon of raspberry sauce snaking around golden peaches bathed in vanilla ice cream. One of the most spectacular yet simple desserts is the all-fruit trifle. Start with an elegant, tall-sided glass bowl and arrange layers of contrasting fruits, such as peaches, blueberries, plums, strawberries, bananas, and grapes. Sprinkle with orange or pineapple juice to prevent discoloring, and add a dash of rum or fruit-flavored liqueur, if desired. Serve with a dollop of lightly sweetened whipped cream.



P.S.: Avocados are really fruits, not vegetables, and are great combined with other fruits in salads and desserts.

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2005 Ameztoi Txakolina Reg. \$16.00 Sale - **\$13.99**


2005 Lagar de Cervera Albarino, Rias Baixas .. Reg. \$19.00 Sale - **\$16.99**


2005 Blanco Nieva Verdejo "Pie Franco," Rueda Reg. \$19.00 Sale - **\$16.99**


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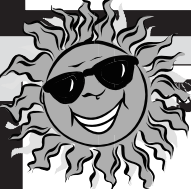
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TERIYAKI SALMON FILET **\$15.98** lb.





15 minutes of fame in Portola Valley

An independent feature film has begun shooting in Portola Valley, the venture of a youthful group with long ties to the town.

Gardner Loulan, a VJ, writer and producer with MTV's college network, came back home to direct the film. He and Joseph Brady wrote the screenplay, a comedy about a young man making a movie in a small town with deep pockets. It explores the great lengths people will go to attain fame and fortune.

Can't imagine where they got that idea.

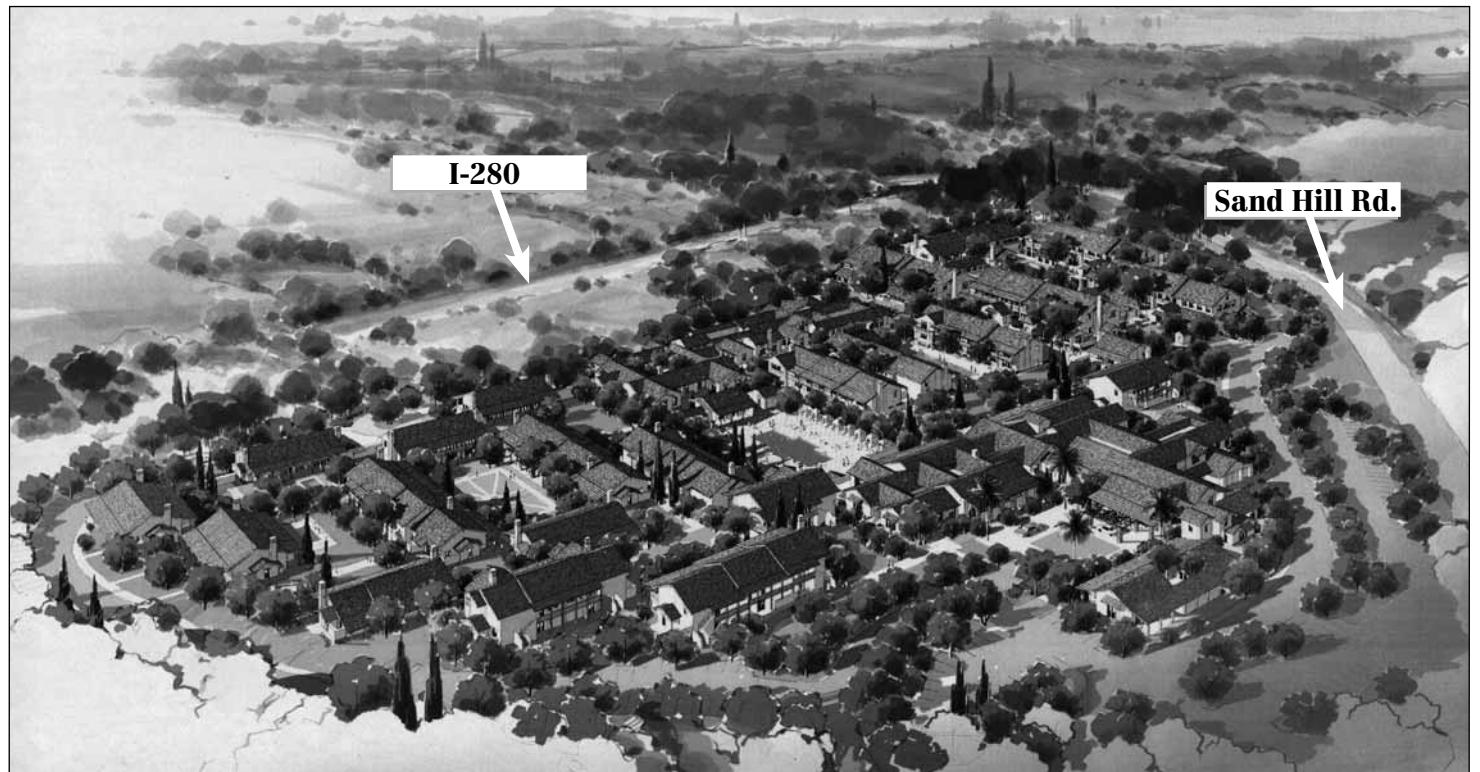
Locals can sign on as "extras" by going to www.auntcolony.com. Filming in Portola Valley, Woodside and Los Altos Hills will wrap up July 15, said producer JoAnn Loulan of Portola Valley.

Stuck at the office

With great fanfare, local transit agencies last year unveiled a program to offer commuters free rides on buses, trains, ferries and BART on smoggy "Spare the Air" days. The catch? Only morning commutes were free, leaving the riders to pay their own way home.

This year, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission appear to have figured out that people who go to work in the morning generally like to come home again in the evening. So, from now through October 13, free rides will be offered all day long on up to five weekday Spare the Air days.

Spare the Air days are declared by the air quality district when weather conditions make it likely that air pollution will reach unhealthy concentrations, and Bay Area residents are asked to avoid driving and other air-polluting activities. The advisories are usually issued the previous afternoon. To sign up for an "AirAlert" e-mail, go to SparetheAir.org. For information on how to get where you're going via public transportation, go to www.511.org.



Courtesy Stanford Management Co.

New Stanford 'campus'

This illustration from the Stanford Management Co. shows what its 21-acre site on Sand Hill Road near Interstate 280 in Menlo Park might look like in a few years. Last week, the Menlo Park City Council approved the building of this 265,000-square-foot hotel and office complex proposed by Stanford University. It includes a 120-room hotel, five extended-stay villas, a restaurant, a health spa, and 100,000 square feet of office space. The hotel, to be operated by Dallas-based Rosewood Hotels and Resorts, is scheduled to open in 2008. **See story on Page 9 and another picture on Page 3.**

Town puts brakes on bike ride

■ Charity ride cancelled as town denies permit.

By **Andrea Gemmet**
Almanac Staff Writer

Plans for a fundraising bicycle event, the Ride to Defeat ALS, have come to a screeching halt in Woodside.

The town's limit of two events permitted in a single month — along with an abundance of antipathy towards cyclists — led the Woodside Town Council to deny the charity group's request for a permit.

And without the permit, there will be no ALS ride on the Peninsula. (The ALS Association's Greater Bay Area chapter also sponsors a bike ride in Napa in September.)

Also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a fatal neurological disease.

Charity ride volunteer coordinator Alan Fitch Jr., whose father is a Woodside resident and whose mother died of ALS, said that when the group learned of Woodside's restrictions, organizers rearranged their plans for the ride, which had been scheduled for July 22.

■ WOODSIDE

Send your response to this article to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; residence (street and town); and phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

They changed the route to skirt as much of the town as possible; they moved rest stops out of town; and they planned to have a monitor staff the corner of Cañada Road and Jefferson Avenue, Mr. Fitch told the council at its June 13 meeting. The ride was to start at the Elks Lodge in Emerald Hills.

But a divided council, citing safety concerns about a route that would send some of the riders down Jefferson Avenue, denied the permit on a 5-2 vote, with Deborah Gordon and Pete Sinclair opposed.

"We decided that we were unable to put on the kind of presentation that we wanted to, so we cancelled it," Mr. Fitch told the Almanac. "We went in with

every intention of accommodating them, we rerouted to avoid Woodside, and we'd done as much as we could to minimize any impact on the town."

Mr. Fitch said plans for the ride were vetted and approved by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and the Woodside Bicycle Committee.

"We were not aware of any safety issues on Jefferson," he said.

Frustrations

At the council meeting, a number of bicycle-related frustrations and complaints came up, none of them specific to the ALS charity ride.

"We are so impacted (by bicycles), not just on weekends but daily," said Woodside Road resident Stephanie MacDonald. "They're loud, rude, and they don't let me out of my driveway. They're interfering with residents' enjoyment of their properties."

Town officials have said they need to review their policies and come up with a strategy for handling the huge numbers of recreational bicyclists riding through town, but have not yet

Cop contract negotiations are stalled

By **David Boyce**
Almanac Staff Writer

With a two-year labor agreement between the city of Menlo Park and the city's police officers due to expire June 30, and with no new agreement reached despite 10 bargaining sessions, the city and the Menlo Park Police Officers Association have agreed that they're at an impasse and that a mediator is needed.

Talks so far have been "cordial and professional" and have produced some progress, "but we haven't yet reached a point where we have an agreement," said Glen Kramer, the city's personnel director.

Indeed, there has been progress, said John Noble, a labor relations consultant representing the police officers association from the Santa Rosa-based law firm of Rains, Lucia and Wilkinson. But the last several meetings have

See **BIKE**, page 9

See **COPS**, page 9



Your Child's Health University

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital offers classes and seminars designed to foster good health and enhance the lives of parents and children.

* RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE TOUR

The first Friday of every month, join the staff at the Ronald McDonald House at 11:30 am for an informative tour and lunch. Learn about the caring environment families and children receiving treatment at Packard Children's Hospital depend on while they are away from home. Call (650) 470-6005 to reserve your spot.

- Friday, July 7 and August 4

* BECOMING GRANDPARENTS

Designed for new and expectant grandparents, this class examines the changes in labor and delivery practices, the latest recommendations for infant care and the unique role of grandparents in today's society.

- Thursday, July 13

* BABY SAFE PROGRAM

Parents and other childcare providers will learn the techniques of infant CPR and obtain essential information about environmental and transportation safety for newborns.

- Monday, July 17

* PEDIATRIC WEIGHT CONTROL PROGRAM

This family-based, behavioral and educational weight management program promotes healthy eating and exercise habits for overweight children and their families. More than 80% of children achieve long-term weight loss through this program — and parents lose weight too! The new session starts soon, so call (650) 725-4424 to pre-register. Spaces are limited.

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New superintendent named for Las Lomas district

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Shirley Martin, for the past six years the director of curriculum and instruction for the Millbrae School District, has been named superintendent of the Las Lomas Elementary School District to replace Mary Ann Somerville, who is retiring.

Ms. Martin has signed a contract to start at the K-8 school district on August 6, said school board president David Bailard. Ms. Somerville will stay on through July.

The district has about 1,057 students enrolled at two schools: Las Lomas (grades K-3) in Atherton and La Entrada (grades 4-8) in Menlo Park.

The board will formally vote on the contract at its Wednesday, June 21, meeting, which begins at 4 p.m. in the district office at 1011 Altschul Ave. in Menlo Park.

During a 35-year career in education, Ms. Martin has been a middle school teacher, a learning coordinator, an acting principal and a principal, all in California school districts.

She has a doctorate in institutional management from Pepperdine University, a master's degree in education with an administrative credential from California State University, Fullerton, and a bachelor's degree

in education from the Oregon College of Education. She was an adjunct professor with La Jolla-based National University.

The five-month search for a superintendent involved about 20 candidates. Familiarity with the Bay Area education scene was an important component, Mr. Bailard told the Almanac.

"What really impressed us was that we had a large number of very qualified applicants," he said. "It was really a pleasure to do the search."

Mr. Ballard thanked Ms. Somerville for "10 years of exceptional service to our district."

Ms. Martin said she is looking forward to working with the teachers, administrators, school board, parents and support staff "that is the glue holding everything together."

"My belief is that open and two-way communication is an important key to our success," she added. "When you have the collaboration and commitment to excellence from the entire community

like there is in the Las Lomas district, then you can accomplish anything for the children, and I look forward to starting my new position in that environment."

Ms. Martin, 59, is married and lives in San Carlos. She has two stepchildren and one 5-year-old granddaughter. ■



During a 35-year career in education, Shirley Martin has been a middle school teacher, a learning coordinator, an acting principal and a principal, all in California school districts.

New leader for environmental group

Holly Van Houten, the new executive director of the environmental non-profit Committee for Green Foothills, will be introduced to the public at a event on Thursday, July 6, at the Hewlett-Packard corporate auditorium in Palo Alto.

Also at the event will be author Daniel Imhoff, who will talk about his book, "Farming with the Wild: Enhancing Biodiversity on Farms and Ranches."

Ms. Van Houten, who lives in San Mateo, came to

Holly Van Houten was executive director of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council.



the Committee for Green Foothills from the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, where she was executive director. She has also worked for the National Park Service, as a legislative aide in the U.S.

House of Representatives, and for the Presidio Trust.

Mr. Imhoff's book, written for a broad audience — from consumers to ranchers — features farmers and ranchers who are working to protect the environment; sustain family farms; and show that agriculture doesn't have to destroy the planet to feed it.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in the auditorium at 3000 Hanover St. in Palo Alto.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Why home buyers must be mindful of existing easements.

Q: The house we've bid on has something called an "appurtenant easement" attached. Should we be concerned?

inheritance of the two properties involved.

A: Because an easement is a "burden" or, encumbrance to a property that can affect the value, buyers must be mindful of their implications. Easements mean that someone else has the right to use part or all of your property.

The easement in gross is a "personal" right that has been acquired by someone who does not own an adjacent property. Usually, this easement is held by a utility company or governmental entity. This gives the easement owner (utility) the right to use or cross the property in maintaining power lines, pipes, and cables etc.

There are two basic easements: An appurtenant easement is the type whereby an adjacent property owner has the right to use or cross your property. This right goes "with the land" and continues in force despite sale or

Consult with your Realtor or title company; they can give explain the recorded easements as noted on a standard title insurance report.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at gdarke@apr.com or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property.

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Mayor Nicholas Jellins won't seek third term on council

■ Winkler and Duboc have not announced whether they will seek re-election.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park Mayor Nicholas Jellins, a member of the Menlo Park City Council for eight years, said he will not seek re-election this November.

Mr. Jellins was elected to his first four-year term in 1998, and re-elected in 2002. He is currently serving as the city's mayor for the third time.

He is one of a three-member

council majority that often votes together on major issues.

All three of their seats are up for election in November. The other two members — Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc — have not announced whether they will run.

"It's disappointing that [Mr. Jellins] isn't running again, but I wish him the very best," said Ms. Winkler. "He's done a great service to our city the years he's been on the

■ MENLO PARK

council."

Mayor Jellins said he made his decision for "personal and professional reasons."

The council majority — council members Jellins, Winkler and Duboc — tend to win more support from business interests than the other two council members — Kelly Ferguson and Andy Cohen.

The majority has pushed for privatization of public services, and voted February 28 to contract out the operation of

Nicholas Jellins said he made his decision for "personal and professional reasons."



Photo by Kainaz Amaria

the new \$6.8 million Burgess Aquatics Center.

Mayor Jellins also consented to a push by council members Duboc and Winkler to explore privatizing the city's child care programs.

Candidates who back the positions of the majority must win all three seats to stay in control

of the council.

"I make this announcement at this time because I am comfortable with my decision and to provide additional opportunity for potential candidates to consider fully the enormous responsibility of the position to which they aspire," said Mayor Jellins in an e-mail.

Three candidates have announced they intend to run for council in November. They are Parks and Recreation Commissioner Richard Cline; former mayor Steve Schmidt; and Bayfront Park advocate Elizabeth Lasensky. ■

Draft budget leaves pool, child care questions unanswered

■ Council meets on budget Tuesday.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

How much will Menlo Park save by privatizing the new Burgess Aquatics Center? How much do the city's child care programs cost?

If you're asking these questions, don't look to the city's budget for definitive answers.

Staff has submitted the draft 2006-07 budget for City Council approval, and it calls for about \$1.16 million in personnel and operating cuts and \$378,000 in fee increases.

But the city will still have to pull \$1.8 million from its unallocated reserves to bridge the gap between revenues and costs, largely due to high employee costs, according to a staff report by City Manager David Boesch.

"The pressure of substantial cost increases, especially in employee retirement and health benefits, has exacerbated the budget balancing process," he said in the report.

The council's consideration of the proposed budget is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. Tuesday,

June 20, in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Pool savings

Privatizing the city's new, \$6.8 million Burgess Aquatics Center is projected to save the city \$415,000, but the draft budget doesn't make clear how that figure was arrived at.

The council voted 3-2 February 28 to privatize the facility, handing over operation to Tim Sheeper, founder of a local for-profit competitive sports program. Mr. Sheeper said he could run the facility at no cost to the city.

Council members Nicholas Jellins, Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc cited the savings as motivation for privatization, but council members Kelly Fer-

gusson and Andy Cohen said the city should have opened the pools as a city-run facility and determined its personnel and operation costs before making any decision to privatize.

Costs associated with operating the facility are still listed in the city's draft budget, but Finance Director Carol Augustine said that's because the city will pay for certain aspects of operating the pool — such as maintenance of the facility and the electrical bill — but Mr. Sheeper will reimburse the city's costs.

'The pressure of substantial cost increases, especially in employee retirement and health benefits, has exacerbated the budget balancing process.'

CITY MANAGER DAVID BOESCH

track the separate costs of aquatics programs at the Burgess and Belle Haven facilities, and the overhead costs associated with the Burgess facility — staff costs that won't disappear with privatization — are yet to be determined.

■ MENLO PARK

■ To view the draft budget, go to MenloPark.org, and click on "Draft Budget 2006-2007."

■ Send your response to this article to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; residence (street and town); and phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

Ms. Augustine said the projected savings of \$415,000 are accurate because the city won't have to cover the costs of staffing and operating the pool.

Child care costs

The city is seeking bids from private operators to take over its child care programs in the new Menlo Children's Center at the Civic Center.

But like data associated with the pool, an updated financial analysis of the programs has not been publicly released.

After being challenged by residents during budget hearings in April and May, city staff acknowledged that initial estimates that pegged the net costs of

the city's child care programs at \$444,000 a year were too high.

The budget does not distinguish costs incurred by programs held at the new Menlo Children's Center, leaving the net cost of the programs — what the city would save if a private operator took over — undefined.

Ms. Augustine said the council will be given information about the programs in a separate report.

Budget process

Heading into the current fiscal year, the city projected a budget shortfall of \$2.9 million.

In May 2005, the city began a community outreach program that asked residents and business owners — through a community-wide survey and budget workshops — what services to reduce and/or what taxes and fees to increase to cut the city's projected deficit.

A 1 percent utility tax could add about \$800,000 to the city's coffers a year, according to city staff.

The council is also scheduled to consider other budget strategies, including employee layoffs and additional fee increases, in January. ■

Cohen lashes out at mayor, manager on Belle Haven programs

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

A discussion by the Menlo Park City Council about the Belle Haven summer school program prompted some harsh criticism during the City Council's June 13 meeting.

Councilman Andy Cohen — who often calls for improving programs in the predominantly low-income Belle Haven neighborhood — lashed out at city staff and Mayor Nicholas

Jellins during discussion of the community's summer school program.

Michael Taylor, the city's acting community services director, said to simplify the program's scheduling, parents will no longer be able to enroll their children in the program part time. Instead, children must be enrolled for the full eight-week program at the full price.

Mr. Taylor's decision sparked several e-mails to the City

Council, including messages from parent Angel Dodson, who said the change in policy will force her child out of the program for financial reasons.

Mr. Taylor said exceptions — such as hourly rates for parents whose children attended classes part time — were made last year, but scheduling such exceptions disrupts the program. He said parents were sent notices of the policy change several months in advance.

Parents from the Belle Haven neighborhood said exceptions have consistently been made in previous years to accommodate low-income families, and they received no notice.

The program, based at Beechwood School near the Onetta Harris Community Center, serves 71 children from four school districts.

"Fed up"

When Mr. Taylor said sched-

uling part-time students in the program is difficult, Mr. Cohen replied, "I flat out do not believe you."

City Manager David Boesch asked Mr. Cohen to respect Mr. Taylor's explanation, but Mr. Cohen said Mr. Boesch was "completely out of line."

Mr. Cohen said Mr. Taylor's action goes directly against a conscious decision made by the

Stanford hotel-office complex gets green light from council

■ Menlo Park council approves Stanford's plan for 21-acre site on Sand Hill Road at I-280.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

See pictures on pages 3 and 5.

Visitors to Menlo Park should have a new hotel to check into by 2008.

Stanford University's plans to build a 120-room luxury hotel and 100,000 square feet of office space were approved 3-1 by the City Council at its June 13 meeting.

Councilman Andy Cohen opposed the project, and Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson did not vote due to a conflict of interest: she has a relative who is a Stanford employee.

Stanford is teaming up with Dallas-based Rosewood Hotels and Resorts to build the hotel, five extended-stay villas, a restaurant,

a health spa and four office buildings on a 21-acre site on Sand Hill Road at Interstate 280.

Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin this fall, with the hotel open by 2008.

"This will further put Menlo Park on the map," said Councilwoman Lee Duboc, who voted for the project along with council members Nicholas Jellins and Mickie Winkler.

The hotel could generate an estimated \$1.3 million for the city when it opens in 2008 and \$1.9 million by 2011, according to a financial study. The bulk of those revenues would come

from the city's hotel tax.

Council consideration of the project was nearly delayed, as Mr. Cohen left the meeting before Stanford officials could present the proposal.

City Attorney Bill McClure said because Ms. Fergusson could not vote on the project, and Ms. Duboc was participating via telephone from Chicago, Mr. Cohen had to be present for a council quorum.

Mr. Cohen, who stormed out of the meeting after a heated disagreement with Mayor Jellins and City Manager David Boesch during discussion of an earlier agenda item — the Belle Haven summer school program — returned to the council chambers after being contacted by Mr. McClure. ■

Woodside puts brake on charity bike ride

BIKE

continued from page 5

done so.

"Given the current circumstances in town, with the incredible presence of people taking advantage of the beautiful surroundings, approving a third bicycling event during the summer seems like the last thing you'd want to do," said former Town Council member Robert Susk.

In all, five people spoke against the ride, two spoke in favor of it, and one encouraged town officials to clarify their policies and the role of the town's Bicycle Committee.

"I'm not a bicyclist, but I would absolutely approve this ride," said Marna Page. "We don't own the roads — they're for everybody. The more people who ride bicycles aren't polluting the air (with

vehicle emissions)."

Councilman Sinclair pointed out that the town had approved permits for three events in a single month before, and ought to approve the Ride to Defeat ALS.

"As much as I hate to say it, we don't own the roads. We can't say we don't want to share our roads with bicycles," Mr. Sinclair said. "Given the law, the ordinance we have, and the precedent, I believe this is an event we should permit."

Too many

Councilman Ron Romines said there are too many people using Woodside's roads, and an organized ride would only introduce more bicyclists to the town.

He and Councilwoman Sue Boynton also cited an increasing amount of road rage among driv-

ers as a reason to deny the ALS ride. Councilwoman Carol Ann Hodges called for a council study session on the issue, and cited safety reasons for denying the permit.

"Jefferson does not sound like the safest road in the world with which to conduct a bike ride with any number of participants," she said. "Traffic on a winding road can get very impatient when it's held up by a group of bicyclists."

Mayor Gordon took issue with her colleagues' reasoning.

"Both Ron and Sue brought up road rage. Because people are angry and make it unsafe for bikes, saying that that supports taking bicyclists off the road is not an acceptable reason," she said. "These people are obeying the laws and we're telling them that they can't ride in town. They're not the ones doing things that are illegal." ■

COPS

continued from page 5

been "frustrating," he added. "The whole process has been extremely slow, from the association's point of view."

The first mediation session is scheduled for Wednesday, June 28, with a representative from the state's mediation service, Mr. Kramer said.

Neither side would be specific about the issues dividing them, but Mr. Noble did say that the city wants to modify "some (police officer) benefits ... that we don't think are in the best interests of the city or the association."

Since 2005, the city has lost 11 patrol officers to outside recruiting,

said Mr. Noble, a figure Mr. Kramer said "sounded about right."

The association "is concerned over the continuing loss of veteran police officers to other police agencies," said Mr. Noble. The city's efforts to recruit experienced

The association 'is concerned over the continuing loss of veteran police officers,' says spokesman John Noble.

officers have been difficult "due to wage and benefit inequities."

Menlo Park, which has positions for 37 officers in the patrol division, has three current vacancies, said Mr. Kramer. Three new police

academy graduates started 16 to 18 weeks of field training this week.

Each academy graduate costs the city about \$75,000 to train, said Mr. Noble.

The police officers association is interested in providing "incentives to retain veteran officers who have been loyal to the community and will be instrumental in rebuilding the police department," he said.

The current contract most likely includes a no-strike clause, said Mr. Noble. Asked if Menlo Park police are free to strike after an agreement expires, both Mr. Kramer and Mr. Noble said it was their understanding that such strikes are not allowed in California. ■

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What sickened kids at Burgess pool still a mystery

■ Mother critical of staff's response; pool operator says panic was main culprit.

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Eight children who had been using the new children's pool in Menlo Park's Burgess Aquatics Center one afternoon last week were hit with a range of harsh physical symptoms that brought fire district paramedics rushing to the scene and prompted an environmental health department inspection.

The source of the problem, which sent one youngster to the hospital for observation, remains a mystery. But the June 16 incident appears to have been triggered by the accidental shutdown and subsequent startup of the system that circulates water in the small pool designed for kids.

The pool reopened within an hour after the incident occurred; the health department inspection and water testing done by the pool operator found no problem.

Emergency services were

called in at about 3:15 p.m. that day after the eight children experienced burning eyes and throats and other symptoms, according to Tim Campbell, a battalion chief with the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

While some at the scene, including Mr. Campbell, suspected a problem with the chlorine flow into the pool, aquatics center operator Tim Sheeper refuted that, and said panic was a more likely suspect.

At least one mother on the scene, a registered nurse who didn't want to be identified, said she believed the children were under real physical distress, and said she observed some of them gasping for air, coughing and vomiting. One little boy, she said, was lethargic and appeared to be losing consciousness.

Battalion Chief Campbell said he was told that some of the children were stricken while in the pool, but Mr. Sheeper said that was not the case. He said

the children had been taken out of the pool before any physical symptoms were reported for an entirely different reason: A child had hit an emergency stop switch, shutting down a pump that circulates water in the pool.

The children were being taken to a different area of the pool complex when the complaints began. Mr. Sheeper said a likely scenario is that they were still near the pool when the pump was turned back on, allowing the water to flow again; the strong smell of chlorinated water returned to the air, causing kids and their parents to think something was amiss.

Mr. Campbell, the battalion chief, said at least one witness reported seeing a vapor cloud over the pool when the water flow resumed.

But Mr. Sheeper insisted that nothing out of the ordinary occurred. "Those people don't have an intricate understanding of the pool or the chemical content of the water," he said. "We deal with this pool 14 hours a day, and it was fine."

The incident, he said, arose "more from a sense of panic,

(from) just not knowing what was actually going on.

"Parents get scared, and end up scaring their kids," he said. "On the other hand, I'm a parent of three kids, and I understand the parenting instinct (to protect one's children)."

Mr. Sheeper and Michael Taylor, the city's acting director of community services, said the chlorine level of the pool's water was manually tested immediately after the children started complaining of symptoms, and there was nothing unusual in the chemical balance.

The registered nurse who was at the center with her son and spoke with the Almanac afterward was highly critical of the response of the center's staff. They "had no idea what to do," she said, and they wouldn't call for help.

"I said to them, this is not a

normal reaction — you need to call a paramedic," she recounted. Instead, she said, staff members suggested that the children sit down in the shade.

Finally, she said, she reached over to one of the phones and called 911.

The police dispatcher fielded two calls, just seconds apart, one from a parent and one from a pool manager, said Nicole Acker of the Menlo Park Police Department.

Mr. Sheeper said once the staff's decision was made to call 911, the mother had already called in. But, he said, staff members were not negligent. "We were trying to get a handle on what the issue was."

Although he believed there was no real problem, he was unable to "defuse the fears" of the parents, and that's when staff called 911, he said. ▀

'Yankee Doodle Dandy' at Menlo Park church

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24, starting at 7:30 p.m. at LDS Church, 1105 Valparaiso Ave. in Menlo Park. Donation at the door are \$5 adults and \$3 for children. Call 854-3079 for reservations.



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With extra cash, Woodside to 'burn mortgage,' hire new deputy

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Woodside officials plan to celebrate the town's 50th anniversary of incorporation by paying off the town's almost \$2 million debt early.

Woodside's proposed \$6.4 million budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 includes using some of the \$3 million in windfall money to send the town's long-term debt into early retirement.

Woodside pays \$243,000 annually in debt service for certificates of participation used to raise money to build Town Hall and purchase the Mathisen property for the parking assessment district in the early 1990s.

"Let's burn the mortgage," Town Manager Susan George told the council at a special budget meeting June 12. "We are in an enviable position to be able to do this, and it would make a lot of sense."

Woodside has \$1.85 million in outstanding debt. It would cost the town \$1.94 million to pay it off, including accrued interest and a 3-percent prepayment penalty of \$55,000, Ms. George said.

Council members, by consensus, agreed to the plan.

"I can't think of a more appropriate way to celebrate our 50th anniversary," said Councilwoman Carroll Ann Hodges.

Almost \$2 million of "windfall" money came from the town's 20-percent interest in a property on Mountain Home Road that was donated to the town in the 1960s, Ms. George said. The surviving member of the couple passed away two years ago, and the property made its way through probate and was sold in March, she said.

An additional \$1.1 million in back property tax payments came from San Mateo County after Portola Valley officials discovered that Portola Valley, Woodside and two other cities in the county were being paid less than the 7-percent minimum of property tax revenues set by the Tax Equity Allocation mandate.

Woodside can expect an additional half-million dollars a year on an ongoing basis because of the so-called TEA mandate, Ms. George said.

Besides the windfall money, Woodside's regular sources

WOODSIDE

Send any response to this article to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; your street and town; and your phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

of revenue, such as property and sales taxes, are performing well above expected levels, Ms. George said.

One of the biggest spending increases in the proposed budget is for the police services provided by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Woodside and Portola Valley split the cost of law enforcement rather than pay for their own police departments.

Woodside's share of the first year of a new, three-year contract with the Sheriff's Office is more than \$700,000, with costs continuing to rise in subsequent years. It's a 31.5 percent increase over the current year's cost of \$534,000, said Ms. George.

"The county manager is insisting we pay for more and more things that we never paid for before," including overhead and command supervision, Ms. George explained. "We've gotten a free ride for many, many years. That doesn't make it any easier for us to write the check, but I do think it's equitable."

At Ms. George's proposal, the Woodside Town Council is poised to approve a significant expansion in its law enforcement services by adding a full-time deputy to do traffic enforcement only in Woodside. The one-year trial program would cost about \$180,000, Ms. George said.

"In general, we're all really supportive of this," said Mayor Deborah Gordon. "I think it's an excellent idea."

Woodside is facing traffic problems, such as increased speeding and anecdotal reports of road rage. Two people complained at the meeting about the large numbers of bicyclists that ride through the community, especially on weekends. The problems are across the board, with no single user group — vehicles, bikes, horses or pedestrians — being solely responsible, Ms. George said.

"I think this would be a wonderful investment for the community and will make Woodside a nicer place for all of us,"

said Bob Page, a member of the Woodside Bicycle Committee.

One question that remains is where the additional deputy will put his desk. Woodside Town Hall has gotten so overcrowded that, in order to make a room for the new development services engineer starting this week, sheriff's deputies are losing their "substation" office and are being temporarily assigned to a hallway across from the council's mailboxes, Ms. George said.

"We're just out of room," she said.

The proposed budget includes up to \$40,000 to hire a professional space planner to assess town hall and make recommendations for more efficient use of

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Key proposals in Woodside's draft budget for the year starting July 1:

- Significantly expand traffic enforcement in town by adding a deputy for 40 hours a week.
- Purchase a new software system

so residents can track the status of building permits online.

- Extend for a second year an administrative technician position in the Planning Department due to the heavy workload there.

the space, but town officials may have to think about adding on to the back of the building, Ms. George said.

Other new items include \$70,000 for a one-year extension of an administrative technician position in the Planning Department to help keep up with the heavy workload, and the acquisition of building permit tracking software that will enable people to check their permit status via the town's Web site. Staff will develop a recommendation for the software over the summer and come up with a cost estimate to present to the

council in the fall, Ms. George said.

The fiscal year beginning July 1 is the second year in Woodside's two-year budget cycle. The proposed budget is 11% higher than the preliminary budget reviewed by the Town Council in June 2005.

The Town Council is set to formally vote to adopt the budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year at its regular meeting on Tuesday, June 27. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. in Independence Hall, 2955 Woodside Road. For information call 851-6790, or go to WoodsideTown.org. ■

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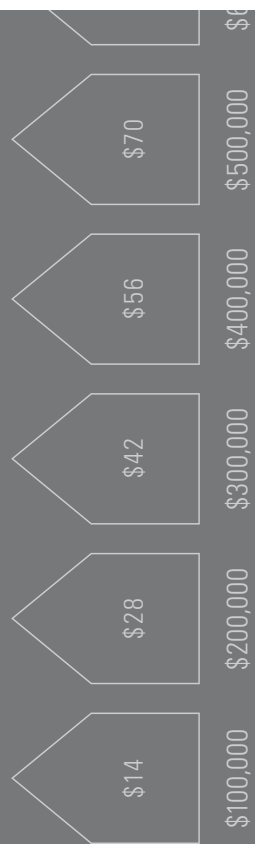
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C O V E R S T O R Y

The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Pierre Beau De Lomenie, a child in Menlo Park's preschool child care program, pushes a toy train in the Menlo Children's Center. The city is seeking bids from private operators to take over the preschool and school-age programs.

First wave of recreation bond projects are up and running, but not without controversy



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Lifeguard Steve Haile, right, watches children in the instructional pool during recreational swim at the city's Burgess Aquatics Center. The facility was built with \$6.8 million of Measure T funds.



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Opening day at the Burgess Aquatics Center attracted several hundred people, including Nicholas Gearing, left, and Saoirse Kane. The pool opened May 20, less than three months after it was turned over to a private operator.

E A S U R E D U P ?

In the months leading up to the November 2001 election, something close to a modern-day miracle took place in Menlo Park: Residents came to an agreement.

Political scheming and squabbling was mostly pushed aside as supporters joined forces to push the community to pass Measure T, a \$38 million bond measure aimed at updating the city's deteriorating recreation facilities.

Despite the economic woes resulting from post-September 11 fears and the end of the dot-com boom, voters were willing to do what the bond proposed — pay an extra \$14 per \$100,000 of their property's assessed value annually until the bond's debt is repaid in 2046.

The bond was approved by 70 percent of the voters, with no organized opposition.

Nearly five years later, \$14 million of the Measure T funds have been spent.

But unlike the bond measure itself, which temporarily united the bulk of the community, bond-funded projects have proven divisive, and sparked impassioned community-wide debates about public process, privatization and whether the bond is living up to its promises.

Children's center

The longest-standing controversy concerning Measure T funds revolves around the Menlo Children's Center, the city's

BY RORY BROWN ALMANAC STAFF WRITER

child care center, which opened May 1.

A telephone poll conducted before the 2001 election revealed that a new child care center would garner more community support for a recreation bond issue than any other proposed facility improvement or construction.

A brand new \$6 million children's center was included on a list of Measure T projects and distributed in campaign literature. That, coupled with the support of child care parents, was crucial to the bond's success, said Chuck Kinney, a member of the City Council from 1996 to 2004.

But the \$6 million center, later estimated to cost \$6.4 million, wasn't built.

Council members Nicholas Jellins, Lee Duboc and Mickie Winkler derailed the project, citing the high costs of a facility that would serve only 180 children.

Instead of building the planned 13,900-square-foot center, the city renovated the former police station to create a 9,000-square-foot center that can house about 163 children. The project cost \$3.4 million, and \$1.6 million was funded by Measure T.

"Measure T promised a child care center. A child care center was built," said Councilwoman Duboc in an e-mail. She was also a member of the Measure T steering committee that gathered support for the

bond measure before the election.

"From phone calls... and discussions I had during the [Measure T] campaign, I discovered that many residents were upset by the high cost of the center, and the relatively few children who were being served," she said.

Although Measure T campaign literature didn't specify the size of the children's center, and the city wasn't legally bound to provide the \$6 million center referenced throughout the campaign, Mr. Kinney said that's what the bond measure should have delivered.

"Child care parents were targeted to get the bond passed. ... I believe the spirit of [Measure T] was to provide a brand new center based on the ideas of durability and longevity," he said. Mr. Kinney was also a member of the steering committee.

But Ms. Duboc said the council, based on public input and the city's fiscal situation, made the right decision.

"The city's revenues were halved by a lagging economy and raids by the state on the city's funds," she said. "Many residents were questioning the needs for a \$6.6 million center for under 200 kids."

Proponents of the smaller center applauded the council's decision, but opponents — including Mr. Kinney and Councilman Paul Collacchi, who opposed the decision — felt deceived, because the city had already spent about \$850,000 on

studies and designs for the larger center.

"We didn't build the child care center that voters approved," said Mr. Collacchi. "We have a children's center designed to fit a police station, not a facility designed to fit our child care programs."

City staff has been forced to adjust the child care programs due to some restrictions presented by the facility. The toddler program is under-enrolled, as only one part-time enrollee is signed up for a program that is intended and licensed to accommodate six children.

Parents and some staff members have pointed to the toddler room — a room they say is too small and with too little ventilation — as the reason behind poor enrollment.

Privatization debate

Although Measure T was formed on the premise of improving public recreational facilities, one of the facilities has been turned over to private hands, and another may be.

Council members Winkler and Duboc were the driving force behind a speedy process that turned over operation of the new, Measure T-funded \$6.8 million Burgess Aquatics Center to Tim Sheeper, head of a private, for-profit competitive

Continued on next page



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

The baseball field at Kelly Park in the Belle Haven neighborhood is underused. The field was built with redevelopment funds, but some people have floated the idea of using Measure T funds to build a larger field at the same site.



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

The toddler room at the Menlo Children's Center is vacant for most of the day. The program only has one part-time enrollee, and some parents and staff blame the size and configuration of the room for low enrollment.

M E A S U R E T

Continued from previous page

sports program, with some conditions.

Four weeks after Mr. Sheeper suggested he could operate the three-pool facility at no cost to the city, Mayor Jellins, Ms. Winkler and Ms. Duboc approved a five-year contract giving Mr. Sheeper the ability to set programs and rates for the facility.

The programs and rates were later set in accord with the city manager and won approval from the Parks and Recreation commission.

The contract states that the city will review the rates or program schedule if there is concern from the public that rates or scheduling are restricting access to the pool.

Ms. Duboc and Ms. Winkler have also publicly stated that the city should privatize its child care programs to cut city spending.

But the council has yet to devote a discussion or meeting to determining whether voters are content with turning publicly funded facilities over to private operators, so the privatization debate has surfaced only on a case-by-case basis.

Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson called for a broader discussion, backed by Councilman Andy Cohen, but the topic never materialized.

Mayor Jellins said voters contributed input to the bond measure through the

vote, and it's the council's responsibility to decide how the projects move forward. "Now we're looking at specific projects. ... How they get done is up to the City Council. That's what we do," he said.

He noted that he is always "willing to explore alternatives," including privatization, and he is "not willing to shut down discussion for ideological reasons."

Undefined costs

In talks about whether to privatize the children's center and aquatics center, staff estimates of the actual savings associated with privatization have fluctuated.

After being challenged by residents during budget hearings in April and May, city staff acknowledged that initial estimates that pegged the net costs of the city's child care programs at \$444,000 a year were too high, but even though the city is seeking bids from private companies to operate the programs, the exact costs are yet to be determined.

When the contract between Mr. Sheeper and the city was approved by the council February 28, questions remained about the potential revenue that could be derived from aquatics center programs, and what percentage of the city's projected savings would remain as administrative and overhead costs.

Ms. Duboc said "optimizing revenue" for recreation facilities, whether through

privatization or other means, was a goal of the task force that formed the city's Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 1999.

"Leasing the pool to [Tim] Sheeper is a great win-win for the city of Menlo Park, and completely in tune with the master plan vision," she said.

Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson said she's "disturbed by the privatization effort," and said she's yet to see any data that proves turning over facilities to private operators benefits the city.

"We're pursuing this ideological perspective rather than a fact-based decision-making process, and that doesn't serve the public's interest," she said.

Richard Cline, a parks and recreation commissioner who has announced he plans to run for council in November, said the improvements made to the city's recreation facilities through Measure T have been "very successful," but said the city needs to gauge if privatization is the best option.

"We're looking at alternative operators of these facilities after we've spent the money getting them built, and that's not long-term planning," he said.

'A political issue'

Ms. Fergusson, who frequently disagrees with council members Jellins, Winkler and Duboc, said efforts by her colleagues to privatize services may play a key role in the November election, when all three of their terms expire.

"There's a very high level of frustration, and after the pool and child care talks, it's grown," she said.

Ms. Duboc said some people may use Measure T "as a political issue," but noted that each council has been forced to fund improvements to recreational facilities in a tough economic environment.

"I believe that many who criticize do so because they don't have all the facts and/or they are trying to win political points," she said. "I think the latter is too bad."

When asked if people speak out for or against the council's handling of Measure T projects according to their political affiliations, Mayor Jellins said, "One might reasonably come to that conclusion, but I cannot directly comment."

Mayor Jellins last week announced he will not seek re-election; and council members Winkler and Duboc have yet to announce their decisions.

Playing fields

Measure T funds have gone toward building and improving playing fields at Burgess and Nealon parks and at Oak Knoll and La Entrada schools, but the city's field-shortage is far from solved.

City Manager David Boesch acknowledged that there are public expectations that the next wave of Measure T funding will go toward renovating the Burgess Gym and the Recreation Center, but there may also be demand for more playing fields.

He said the council will set priorities for Measure T projects after hearing recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Commission in early 2007.

Sports groups have pleaded for more playing fields, and rallied behind recent efforts to examine potential field space at Bayfront Park, the 160-acre park off Marsh Road.

In July, the council will decide whether to place an advisory measure on the November ballot that asks voters whether they support fields at Bayfront. But because the park is built on a closed landfill and is adjacent to the Bay, permitting and environmental hurdles may keep fields at the park from becoming a reality.

Mr. Cline said Measure T funds could go toward building fields at the park, but he doesn't want to lose funding for other projects.

"Fields are a top priority because of the current limitations, but the gym and the recreation center are at the top of the queue, too," he said.

He added that the city could apply Measure T funds to further modify current fields, such as reconfiguring the soccer field at Burgess Park to make way for a full-sized field, or to fixing the underused baseball field at Kelly Park. ■

Measure T projects

Menlo Park has spent \$14.4 million of the \$38 million Measure T bond measure, approved by voters in 2001. It's unknown what funds will be available for the next set of projects, but the City Council will likely prioritize projects by early 2007.

Measure T funds spent

Menlo Children's Center	\$1,660,000
Burgess Pool	\$6,835,000
Burgess Park	\$3,718,000
Oak Knoll School field	\$210,000
Nealon Park	\$1,106,000
Encinal School Field	\$30,000
Tinker's Park	\$85,000
La Entrada School	\$276,000
Fremont Park	\$91,000
Stanford Hills Park	\$250,000
Sharon Park	\$110,000
Sharon Hills Park	\$60,000
Total	\$14,431,000

Source: Menlo Park Public Works Department

Town Center teardown, rebuild impacts Portola Valley budget

■ Public hearing set for annual budget review.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The cost of tearing down the old school buildings at Town Center in Portola Valley and preparing the site for a planned \$20 million complex that includes a Town Hall, library and community hall is driving up town spending.

The town plans to spend about \$9 million in the fiscal year starting July 1, a 91 percent increase over the previous year. But the \$9 million includes \$1 million from the town's reserves and \$3.3 million from private contributions to help build the new Town Center complex.

The budget number includes both capital and operating expenses. Operations alone are expected to cost \$3.8 million, a 9 percent increase.

The Town Council plans to hold a public hearing on the budget Wednesday, June 28, starting at 8 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse at 756 Portola Road.

Other notable expenses include a 15 percent increase — \$53,000 — for law enforcement services; increases of 18 percent

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Send any response to this article to editor@AlmanacNews.com. Note if it's for publication, and if so, include your full name; your residence (street and town); and your phone number. Your phone number will not be published.

and 10 percent, respectively, for staff retirement and health insurance benefits; and \$56,000 to rent facilities for after-school classes, which will be offset by about \$22,000 in class fees.

The jump in fees for police services reflects the "enormous number of people" retiring from the Sheriff's Office in the next couple of years, said Town Administrator Angela Howard.

The town is planning to spend \$22,400 on emergency preparedness, including \$8,000 for training, \$10,000 for emergency supplies, \$1,000 for staff emergency rations and \$1,200 for communications equipment.

Some revenues to rise

Overall, town revenues are rising, due to a 5 percent increase in assessed property valuations plus \$438,000 in new property tax money coming from San

Mateo County. The latter is due to a state law that says towns that received less than 7 percent of their property tax revenues are entitled to more money.

The word on the street was that the high price of natural gas would cause the town's utility tax revenues to jump this year, but a warm winter led to lower consumption. Recent projections show the town taking in \$641,768 — about 5 percent more than budgeted.

The town may lose \$50,000 in utility tax revenues from cell phone calls if, as is likely, Verizon Wireless wins its court fight with the city of Palo Alto over Verizon's unwillingness to collect local utility taxes for calls made on national calling plans, said Ms. Howard.

The outlook for utility tax revenues "are looking a little bleak and one could argue for no change (in the rate) at this point," said Councilman Ed Davis. The council has been looking at reducing the utility tax rate. ■

Note: Copies of the proposed budget are available weekdays at Town Hall from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. Anyone may submit comments in writing to the council. For more information, call Sharon Hanlon at 851-1700, ext. 10.

Assessed property values rise 8 percent

Last year's strong residential real estate market was largely responsible for an estimated 8 percent increase in the 2006-07 tax assessment rolls in San Mateo County, reports county assessor Warren Slocum.

The increase, amounting to more than \$9 billion, will generate approximately \$90 million in increased property tax revenues this year for schools, the county, cities and special districts, Mr. Slocum said.

"Although the real estate market has cooled in recent months due to climbing interest rates, the impact won't be felt until next year," he added.

In 2006, there were 218,379 real property parcels assessed by the county; just 242 new parcels were added to the rolls, Mr. Slocum said.

Beginning June 10, property owner will be mailed a statement advising them of the assessed value of their property for fiscal year 2006. For most, the increase will be the 2 percent mandated by state law.

Others will be advised of changes to the valuation of their property based on changes

in ownership, new construction, calamity conditions where property owners are eligible for property tax relief, and a few

Property tax payments are not due until the fall.

Owners with concerns can ask the assessor's office for an informal review. If they dispute that decision, they can appeal to the Assessment Appeals Board.

"If the value of a property as of January 1, 2006, was less than the amount shown on the letter, we want to hear from that property owner," Mr. Slocum said. "The owners may be eligible for a temporary relief in the valuation and a break on their taxes."

The assessor's office has set up a temporary telephone bank from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. that people can reach at 572-2854. Information is also available at www.smcare.org.

'Although the real estate market has cooled in recent months due to climbing interest rates, the impact won't be felt until next year.'

SAN MATEO COUNTY ASSESSOR
WARREN SLOCUM

Proposition 8 eligible properties where the property values have declined due to market conditions, Mr. Slocum said.

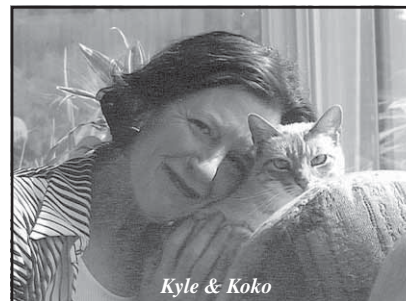


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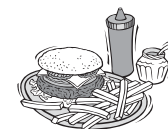
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County starts hearings Monday on \$1.6 billion budget

■ Budget OK this year, but watch for increases in health costs and employee benefits in the future.

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

San Mateo County will be able to maintain its current level of services over the next two years, thanks to still-hot house prices and a healthy surplus. But relentlessly increasing costs for indigent health care and employee benefits make its long term-financial picture murky.

"The cost of doing business is rising faster than our sustainable revenue stream," warned Jerry Hill, president of the Board of Supervisors.

This is the backdrop the supervisors will be contemplating next week as they hold their marathon hearings on budgets for the next two fiscal years. Hearings start Monday, June 26, at 9 a.m., and wind up Wednesday afternoon, June 28, in the Supervisors Chambers at 400 County Center (corner of Bradford St. and Hamilton Avenue) in Redwood City.

County Manager John Maltbie is proposing a budget of \$1.59 billion for the fiscal year start-

ing July 1, up 4.3 percent from the fiscal year ending June 30.

The budget for the 2007-2008 fiscal year is proposed to drop by \$115 million to \$1.48 billion. That drop reflects major one-time expenditures scheduled for 2006-07, Mr. Maltbie explained. These include: restructuring of the computer system; replacement of the election voting system; one-time funding for the Retiree Health Care Trust Fund; completed capital improvements; and litigation settlements.

The budget for the coming fiscal year cover such major programs as opening the new Youth Service Center this fall; a new homeless program called HOPE; strengthening the Planning and Building Division; updating the Local Coastal Plan for the Midcoast; providing housing for youth leaving foster care; and planning to replace the women's jail.

The budget has been helped by a generally strong local economy and increasing revenues from sales and property taxes. These

■ RESPOND
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are up over 8 percent this year, and projected to rise 6 percent next year. "Property taxes are our bread and butter funds; they support essential services," said Supervisor Hill.

Property taxes make up about 19 percent of total general fund revenues, but close to 55 percent of discretionary revenues that the county has control over. Almost \$1 billion in county revenues come from the state and federal government and are allocated to specific programs with strict guidelines.

"Therefore changes in property taxes have a major impact on many vital county services," Mr. Maltbie said. He expects real estate sales to slow and property tax revenues to drop.

Fortunately, the county has \$142 million in reserves, which can offset the \$23 million deficit

projected for 2007-08. "But if expenditures continue to outpace revenues, the county will have to reduce expenditures or increase revenues to balance its budgets," Mr. Maltbie said.

Clouds ahead

The supervisors' biggest worry is the increasing gap between costs to provide health care for those who can't pay, and the reimbursements it receives from the federal and state governments.

The deficit for operating the San Mateo Medical Center is projected to rise by \$14 million in 2006-07. If this deficit continues to grow, it will consume more than 60 percent of general fund revenues by 2014, Mr. Maltbie noted. This will reduce funding available for criminal justice services for unincorporated areas, child welfare, public and mental health, and other human services.

"We're just pinched by inadequate reimbursements from the state and federal governments," said Supervisor Rich Gordon.

Mr. Gordon said the county may have to re-evaluate the levels

of care it provides through its hospital and clinics; it may even have to consider closing the hospital.

The county is required by law to provide care to the indigent, but the law doesn't specify the levels of care, Mr. Gordon noted. "We may have to say to some folks, 'You're not sick enough for us to care for you — yet.'"

Mr. Gordon also suggested working with other hospitals and health providers to share the burden of indigent health care.

The other huge worry is the increasing cost of paying and providing benefits for the county's 5,683 employees, plus its retirees. Mr. Maltbie listed increases in costs for annual salary adjustments, retiree healthcare, employee health care, and recently negotiated increases for probation officers and nurses.

And union contracts are due to be negotiated this year. "We will have to have some serious discussions with the unions," said Mr. Gordon.

For information on the budget or the schedule of hearings, call the county manager's office at 363-4123; or go to co.sanmateo.ca.us and click on Budget. ■

Elections office discards 300,000 ballots

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

The San Mateo County Elections Office had to discard — by recycling — more 300,000 paper ballots from the June 6 election, says

elections manager David Tom.

Under the law, every polling place must provide ballots for 75 percent of the registered voters in the precinct, he explained.

But on June 6, due to a low turnout and the fact that about half of the voters voted by mail,

only 16 percent of registered voters actually went to the polls.

"Think of the paper you have to throw away," said Mr. Tom.

Thinking about that, election officials have not decided how to handle the November elections. They may use nothing but

the new eSlate electronic voting machines, or a combination of eSlates and the existing Eagle paper ballot machines.

The eSlates do produce a paper record, but it's much smaller than regular ballots, and it's printed only for people who vote on the machine. The county doesn't have to produce paper ballots for registered voters who

don't show up at the polls.

Complexity

Elections, even in San Mateo County, are mind-boggling in their complexity.

Two thousand poll workers staffed 472 precincts on primary day, June 6. They had to deal

See **BALLOTS**, next page

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Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Kelly Eaton named scholar-athlete of the year

By Jane Knoerle

Almanac staff writer

Kelly Eaton of Menlo Park is taking a day off from her busy schedule on Thursday, June 22, to head for Sacramento, where she will receive a \$2,000 scholarship in a ceremony on the floor of the state Senate.

Kelly, a new Menlo-Atherton High School grad, has been named the 2006 California Interscholastic Federation's female scholar-athlete of the year. This marks the first time in the 24-year history of the CIF prize that it has been awarded to a San Mateo County student.

This fall Kelly heads for Stanford University, where she has signed a letter of intent to play water polo.

She has been named by the San Francisco Chronicle as one of the Peninsula's top female high school athletes, water polo player of the year by both the CIF Central Coast Section and San Jose Mercury News, and league swimmer of the year by the San Mateo Times.

She was also named M-A's 2005 athlete of the year and 2006 senior athlete of the year.

You won't find Kelly hanging out at the mall or glued to the TV this summer. She's up at 5:30 a.m. to practice with the Stanford water polo club, then off to Menlo Country Club for activities with kids at

the summer day camp. At 4 p.m. she's back at Stanford to coach the 14-and-under girl's water polo team.

Kelly's mom, Mary Etta Eaton, attributes her daughter's love of water sports to her early years when she was a "water baby" in Maui. After three years in Maui, the family returned to Menlo Park so the children, Kelly and Robbie, could attend local schools.

Kelly entered kindergarten at Las Lomitas School and graduated from La Entrada before entering Menlo-Atherton High School.

She didn't join a swim team until she began playing for the girls water polo club at Stanford after sixth grade. At Menlo-Atherton, she has been on the starting team for each of her four years and holds records for the backstroke at both M-A and the Peninsula Athletic League, where she was voted most valuable player. During the summer of 2004 and 2005, she was named PAL swimmer of the Year.

Kelly doesn't spend all her time in the water, either. She pulled down at 4.2 grade average and aced 1405 on her SATs.

Since junior high, she has had a vacation services business called "Kelly



Kelly Eaton



Photo by Matt Thomas

Kelly Eaton was named M-A High's 2006 senior athlete of the year.

Cares." She has also played in the M-A advanced concert band (alto sax, flute, piccolo), intermediate jazz band and helped found the school's knitting club.

And she owns a black belt in jujitsu.

On June 22, Kelly's parents, Mike and Mary Etta Eaton, will be on hand to see

her receive the prestigious CIF award. Right from Sacramento, she will fly to Los Angeles to go into training with the U.S. Junior National water polo team.

"It would be a dream to make the traveling team that will be going to Italy and Greece in July," says her proud mom. ■

Information night for school board candidates

Those interested in running in the November election for the governing board of the Menlo Park City School District are invited to a candidates information night at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 22, in the board room of the district office, 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.

Trustees Terry Thygesen and Bruce Ives, who are in their second four-year terms on the board, will talk about the roles and responsibilities of school board members. They also will discuss initiatives and challenges ahead for the elementary school district.

Three trustee positions are up

■ NOTES

for election November 7. Laura Rich, president of the board, said she will seek re-election. Trustees Nancy Serrurier and Carol Orton said they won't run for another term.

The filing period for potential candidates is July 17 through August 11. Information and filing documents are available at the Registration and Elections Division of San Mateo County, 40 Tower Road in San Mateo; or by calling 312-5222.

ing places the last day — "like income taxes," Mr. Tom said.

Under pressure to comply with new federal and state requirements, the county set up voting centers with eSlate voting machines that can be used by people with disabilities. A total of 381 people voted at the nine centers around the county.

Under the law, every polling place must have a machine that can be used by people with visual, hearing and mobility problems. The machines must also be able to provide a paper record. ■

Consolidating student loans

Because interest rates on federal student loans will rise July 1, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton, is urging parents and students to lock in lower interest rates now.

Student borrowers who consolidate before July 1 may be eligible to lock in a rate as low as 4.75 percent. After July 1 the rates will climb to 6.625 percent for continuing students, 7.25 for graduates and 8 percent for parents. Information about consolidation can be found at eshoo.house.gov.

Stephanie Barrales gets scholarship

Stephanie Barrales of Redwood City, a senior at Menlo School in Atherton, has won a \$1,000 Sam Walton Community Scholarship. The scholarship is one of some \$350,000 in scholarships awarded by Wal-Mart across California, including \$31,000 to students in the Bay Area. Ms. Barrales is heading for the University of California at Davis next fall, said her sister, Amelia Barrales, who works in communications at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park.

La Honda Faire & Music Festival this weekend

The Banana Slug String Band, Pacific Vibrations, and the Gary Gates Band are among entertainers at the La Honda Faire & Music Festival, to be held Saturday and Sunday, June 24-25, at La Honda Gardens, 8865 La Honda Road in La Honda. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The free festival will feature 30 juried arts and crafts vendors. "The faire is a lot like the Kings Mountain Art Festival only smaller and more intimate," says Tom Burden, who is co-coordinator with Bonnie Fiedler.

There will be a bounce castle, crafts, games and face painting for the children. Pioneer Market and La Honda House Cafe will sell food, along with vendors of Chinese and German fare and

snack food. Beer and wine will be available.

The faire began in 1989 when the community revived an event from the 1960s called La Honda Days. All proceeds go to the La Honda Educational Foundation. During the 2004-2005 school year, the foundation gave \$60,000 to the La Honda Elementary School to fund an additional teacher and art and music programs.

Faire visitors are advised to bring lawn chairs and blankets to sit in the sun or the shade of the redwoods to listen to the local bands. The faire is located on Highway 84, six miles past the Highway 35/Skyline Boulevard intersection to La Honda Center. For information, call Bonnie Fiedler at 747-0640 or go to la-honda-faire.org.

Atherton Gallery closes after 47 years

After 47 years in business, owner Albert Smith of Menlo Park announced the closing of the Atherton Gallery at 1616 El Camino Real in Menlo Park on June 17.

The gallery was noted for its collection of antique etchings,

18th and 19th century botanicals, early maps of the U.S. and the West, Asian paintings and wood block prints, and 19th century English watercolors. The gallery also specialized in custom framing.

BALLOTS

continued from previous page

with at least 30 different ballots in three languages as voters selected candidates for some 200 offices in five political parties.

Of the 350,305 registered voters in the county, only 27 percent turned out (including by mail). The final tally, expected to be released this week or next, will be slightly higher when all ballots are counted, including mail-in ballots that arrived on election day.

More than 50,000 ballots were mailed in, or dropped off at poll-

Atherton to use more parcel tax cash on street, drainage repairs

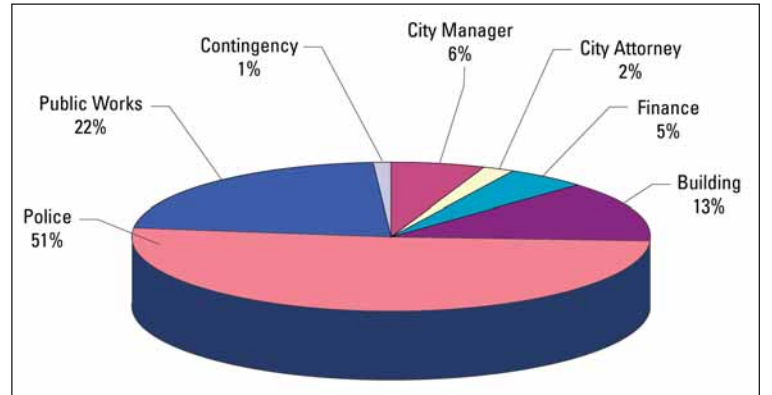
By **Andrea Gemmet**
Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton is directing more of the town's resources toward road and drainage repairs, and for the first time, will have a separate category dedicated to emergency preparedness projects in its annual budget.

At a special meeting held June 14, the Atherton City Council unanimously approved a \$9.2 million operating budget and \$3.9 million capital improvement program budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The 2006-07 budget calls for using only \$450,000 of parcel tax revenues for operating expenses, \$349,000 less than in the current year's budget, said Finance Director John Johns. The remainder of the nearly \$2 million in annual capital improvement projects such as road repair, storm drain system improvements and other infrastructure work.

The \$3.9 million budget for capital improvements includes a \$1.65 million project to repair Atherton's side of Valparaiso Avenue.



Town of Atherton

How Atherton plans to split town spending in the year starting July 1.

Emergency repairs to shore up the Atherton channel along Marsh Road before the winter rains come are anticipated in the budget, but a specific dollar amount hasn't been determined yet.

Public Works Director Duncan Jones said that major repair work to the channel's retaining wall is badly needed, but that the work won't get underway until next year.

Vibration caused by the traffic along Marsh Road is causing the concrete-lined channel to fail more rapidly than expected, Mr.

Jones said. Besides repairing the retaining wall, a vehicle barrier wall is also recommended because "the police have to keep fishing people out of the creek," he said.

Town officials expect to see slight decreases in revenues in the coming fiscal year, as compared with the current year, including about \$100,000 less in building permit fees than anticipated and almost \$10,000 less in tax on real estate sales.

See **PARCEL TAX**, page 20

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Sacred Heart Prep celebrates graduation

Sacred Heart Preparatory's Class of 2006 received diplomas June 1 after a round of celebrations that included a Mass, honors convocation and the traditional "Alumni Pinning Ceremony," welcoming the 117 graduates into the Sacred Heart Schools Alumni Association.

CLASS OF 2006

with a farewell song, "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," sung by graduating senior Dillon Chambers.

Graduates

A-B Aram Amid-Hozour, Kevin Waterman Andrews, Vincent Domenic Andrighetto, Randolph William Cua Ang, Ruth Abrams Bacon, Dante Greco Baruh, Eric Christopher Berlin, Elizabeth Ann Brezinski, Campbell Williams Browne, Brittany Rose Brugos, Nicola Jane Budd-Thanos



Valedictorian **Claire-Marine Sarner** of Atherton.

C Edie Rose Campbell-Urban, Rebecca Ann Carr, Lia Gianna Casanego, Scott Laib Cattaneo, Andrew Bernard Cattermole, Dillon Scott Chambers, Rebecca Michelle Child, Nicholas George Chrisman, Charlotte Anne Chuter, Christina Marie Clark, Patrick Kelley Coffey, Alexander Loong

Hoi Collette, Ashli Meghan Comstock, Eric Thomas Cowell, Anne Marie Coyne

D-F Mikel Jose Davila, Kevin Bull-ock Deggelman, Elizabeth Marie-Gomez Dillingham, Kevin Anthony Dos Remedios, Sophia Elizabeth Duluk, Alexander Dwight Dunlevie, Charles Edward Espeleta, Hailey Elizabeth Evans, Lauren Lynne Evans, Adam Peter Fagin, Daniel Peter Filice, Juliana Denise Filippi, Ada Valeska Flores-Lemos, Catalina Fries, Christopher Joseph Fung

G-K Julia Elena Garces, Samuel Chadwick Gibbs IV, Charles Van Arsdale Greene, Melissa Carroll Greenleaf, Nicolas Adam Haderer, Mark David Hanson Jr., Cory John Hatton, Christian Bernard Hebert, Robert John Horsley Jr., Grant Keone Hutchins, Melissa Willett Irvine, Michelle Monique Ivery, Kimberley Hillyard Jackson, Kelly Marie Jandro, Lauren Emilie Jollymour, Sean Timothy Jordan, Jeffrey Arthur Juelsgaard, Rachel Lynn Kavanaugh, Sarah Nicole King

L-M Christine Elvira Lahlouh, Atilla Persik Lazar, Jeffrey Keegan Leary, Jonathan Edward Lervold, Alayna Cantrell Lim, Michael Alexander Lim, Jamie Nicole Lowe, Olivia Un-Wei Lu-Hill, John Travis Lucian, Matthew Alexander Manos, Layne Alice Marr, Elizabeth McHugh Mason, Shayne Germae McGanney, Kristen Emily McMillan, Brandon Ming Deh Miao, Brooks Robert Miller, Margarita Cabangangan



Sacred Heart Prep graduates, from left, Kevin Deggelman and Melissa Mordell, both of Portola Valley, and Cory Hatton of Redwood City share some happy moments.

Miranda, Melissa Josephine Mordell, Andrew Bell Moudry, Jacquelyn Christine Mumford

N-R Kelly Christine Nicholson, Andrew Lee Ninnemann, Julie Anne Oberhausen, Andres O'Donnell, Alexander Luciano Ortiz, Irene Palafox, Mollie Lane Parker, Thomas Edward Pierson, Aubrie Claire Pollock, Jason Michael Powell, Julia Lauren Powers, Thomas Jefferson Powers VII, Kevin Lew Reynolds, Adam Michael Rhine, Christina Ann Richards

S-Y Claire-Marine Marthe Sarner, David Thomas Schaller, Alden Taylor Seabolt, Zachary Spenser Skelton, Brandon Joseph Delgadillo Smith, Brenda Emily Soto, Lois Kimiko Stephens, Edessa Mary Tailo, Diana Elizabeth Tarantino, Samantha Louise Tucker, Elodie Solange Gloria Turchi, Stephanie Charlotte Vertongen, Lauren Coleen Virnoche, Jonathan Alexander Wang, Dylan Reid Wengert, Carrie Elysia Wilkins, Katherine Mae Wilkinson, Marcus Dion Williams, Carmen-Rosa Wishart, Tiffany Hoi-Man Yim, Garrick Kar-Hang Yuen.

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Environmental group sues Stanford over trail

By Don Kazak
Palo Alto Weekly Staff

The Palo Alto-based Committee for Green Foothills has filed a lawsuit against Stanford University and Santa Clara County over the county's approval of the location of a proposed hiking trail on the northern edge of campus, claiming that trail was approved without adequate environmental review.

The lawsuit asks Santa Clara County Superior Court to void the approval of the C1 hiking trail, which is to be located along Alpine Road in San Mateo County. The location of the proposed trail has been heavily criticized by environmental groups and residents along Alpine Road.

Stanford's proposal is currently before the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. "It may be

premature to take action because of the lawsuit," said Supervisor Rich Gordon. "If we took action, it might impact the suit."

Stanford attorneys think the lawsuit is "without merit," said Larry Horton, director of government and community relations at Stanford. "We feel there are errors of fact and law in the lawsuit."

Horton added that Stanford does not comment on the specifics of litigation, "but we will be responding to them in due time."

As part of the general use permit (GUP) approved for the Stanford campus by Santa Clara County in 2000, Stanford is required to build two hiking trails on its lands. But the location of the two trails has been hotly contested by Stanford neighbors.

"Stanford promised to build two trails to make for the impacts from a massive expansion in campus development," said Brian Schmidt, Santa Clara County legislative advocate for Committee for Green Foothills. "Now they've pressured Santa Clara County to drop one trail requirement and simply expand an existing sidewalk along the heavy traffic of Alpine Road. The expanded sidewalk will have no recreational value, will provide little additional use, will be enormously expensive and cause environmental damage to hillsides and a major local creek."

Stanford did an environmental review for a second trail, called the S1 trail, on the southern part of its lands. That trail location is not being challenged. But Stanford said it would accept approval of the S1 trail as long as the location of the C1 trail was approved at the same time.

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors approved Stanford's request on a 4-1 vote last year with Liz Kniss, the supervisor representing Palo Alto, Stanford University and North County, dissenting.

The lawsuit alleges that the approval of the C1 trail violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by not having adequate review of the environmental review of the impacts of the trail.

Many of the points raised in the lawsuit were made by Kniss last year, she said. Stanford's desire to build the C1 trail in San Mateo County also "creates a precedent of requiring a county to mitigate the impacts (of a project) on a neighboring county," Kniss said.

Marion Softky contributed to this report.

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Marion Softky contributed to this report.

Tree ordinance goes to panel

For all the woody ambience in Woodside, the town has no tree protection ordinance. An attempt to get one on the books stalled at the Town Council's June 12 meeting.

Council members agreed the town needs a clearer set of rules for protecting significant trees, but couldn't agree on the details of a draft ordinance recommended by the town's Planning Commission and Conservation and Environmental Health Committee.

Several council members said some definitions and provisions need to be clarified to make the ordinance user-friendly for property owners.

Rather than scuttle an ordinance that was two years in the making, Mayor Deborah Gordon, Councilman Pete Sinclair, Planning Director Hope Sullivan and CEHC vice chair Stephanie MacDonald agreed to meet and hammer out a compromise to bring back to the council.

Science lectures under the stars

Starting Thursday, June 22, Stanford and the Cantor Center for the Visual Arts are offering five evening programs that mix enjoyment of the museum with free lectures under the stars that explore current scientific issues ranging from the environment to earthquakes and stem cells.

On June 22, Stephen Palumbi, professor of biological sciences, will speak about the transformation of Monterey Bay from the over-fished ecosystem of John Steinbeck's day to one of the nation's most beautiful shorelines.

The museum is open and free from 5 to 8 p.m. Lawn chairs will be provided for the lecture, but people may bring blankets and picnics, or purchase refreshments from the Cool Cafe.

Future lectures are set for July 6 and 20, and August 3 and 31. Topics, presented for the layman, will include evolution and disease, earthquakes, and issues surrounding stem cells. For information, call 723-2558, or go to Stanford.edu/news.

PARCEL TAX

continued from page 18

Atherton is losing more than \$150,000 in law enforcement grant money and is facing a 10 percent increase in the cost of employee health insurance premiums.

All in all, the budget will draw down the town's general fund balance by \$300,000, Mr. Johns said. He said town staff was not concerned because Atherton's reserves are well above minimum levels. Mr. Johns said that Atherton had an exceptional year for revenues in 2005-06, and he cautioned the council

that he's making very conservative revenue projections for the coming budget year.

Council members directed staff to create a separate budget category for emergency preparedness and allocated \$120,000 to it, although no specific uses for that money have been approved yet. Other emergency preparedness items in the budget are an emergency trailer that holds supplies and can serve as a communications and command center, and construction of a well in the Holbrook-Palmer Park to supply residents with an emergency water supply, said City Manager Jim Robinson.

JULY 3 2006 CELEBRATION WITH THE PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND AND FIREWORKS



Monday, July 3, 2006
7:30 pm
Gates open at 5:30 pm
Frost Amphitheater,
Stanford University

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Join us on July 3rd as we welcome back the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. The lively and spirited music will be followed by a spectacular fireworks display. Bring the whole family and come early to picnic.

(The concert will be performed, rain or shine; fireworks dependent upon weather conditions.)

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■ POLICE CALLS

This information is from the Atherton and Menlo Park police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

ATHERTON

- **Grand theft report:** Bicycle stolen from shed, Hawthorn Drive, June 11.
- **Burglary reports:**
 - Two saws and an air hammer stolen from residence, Sutherland Drive, June 12.
 - Bucket of tools stolen from residence, Callado Way, June 13.
 - Construction tools stolen, 200 block of Atherton Avenue, June 15.
- **Assault reports:**
 - Domestic abuse, Stockbridge Avenue, June 12.
 - Woman walking dog was struck and knocked down by water balloon thrown from light green vehicle, 5:20 p.m. on 200 block of Polhemus Avenue, June 13.

MENLO PARK

- **Robbery report:** Attempted robbery of pedestrian, about 2:15 a.m. near intersection of Hamilton and Plumas avenues, June 9.
- **Assault report:** Ronnie Betts, 49, of Menlo Park arrested on charges of assault with a deadly weapon in connection with male victim cut on hand by knife, 1200 block of Hollyburne Avenue, June 9.
- **Sexual assault report:** Victim grabbed by bicyclist, 9 p.m. on 1000 block of Ringwood Avenue, June 9.
- **Spousal abuse reports:**
 - First block of Coleman Place, June 11.
 - 1100 block of Hollyburne Avenue, June 11.
- **Child protective services report:** 200

- block of Van Buren Road, June 14.
- **Burglary reports:**
 - Melissa Small, 35, of San Francisco arrested on burglary and robbery charges for theft of flower box and miscellaneous items from residence, and toiletries and blanket from vehicle, Ravenswood Avenue, June 12.
 - Pressure washer, nail gun, power saw and tiller stolen from garage, 100 block of Walnut Street, June 12.
 - Cash and video game player stolen from residence, 600 block of Bay Road, June 14.
- **Auto burglary reports:**
 - Two vehicles with windows smashed but nothing stolen, 700 block of El Camino Real, June 14.
 - Stereo and speakers stolen, 1200 block of El Camino Real, June 15.
- **Grand theft reports:**
 - Musical equipment stolen, 1100 block of Willow Road, June 14.
 - ATM damaged, 1300 block of Crane Street, June 15.
 - Air compressor stolen, 600 block of Central Avenue, June 15.
- **Theft report:** Mats stolen, 1300 block of Henderson Avenue, June 9.
- **Fraud reports:**
 - Identity theft, 1300 block of Hill Avenue, June 13.
 - Identity theft, 1100 block of Pine Street, June 14.
 - Identity theft, 800 block of Sharon Park Drive, June 14.
- **PORTOLA VALLEY**
 - **Collision report:** Vehicle collided with curb and knocked down power pole resulting in live power lines across Westridge Drive east of Bolivar Lane.

OBITUARY

Florence H. Gottdiener

Retired physician

Florence H. Gottdiener, a 27-year resident of Menlo Park, died at home on June 16. She was 95. A graduate of Cornell University, Dr. Gottdiener was one of the first women admitted to the University of Maryland School of Medicine. A native of Poughkeepsie, New York, she practiced obstetrics-gynecology there from

1939 until she retired in 1979. She was active in the Dutchess County Maternal Welfare League, a forerunner of Planned Parenthood. In 1952, she resigned in protest from the local hospital after being refused permission to run a family planning clinic; she returned the following year when the hospital reversed its decision. After retiring, Dr. Gottdiener moved to Menlo Park to join her daughters. She enjoyed gardening, reading, cooking, travel and the company of her children, grandchildren and neighbors,

her family said. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dr. Elvin E. Gottdiener, and her daughter, Dr. Donna G. Oakes. Dr. Gottdiener is survived by two daughters, Dr. Dale G. Sickles of San Francisco and Mari L. Gottdiener, of Northampton, Massachusetts; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. At her request, there will be no services. Memorial donations may be sent to Pathways Hospice Foundation, 585 North Mary Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085-2905.

What's happening to polar bears?

From food supplies for polar bears in the Arctic to coral reefs in the tropics, global warming appears to be affecting wildlife around the world. Dr. Lara Hansen, chief scientist for the World Wildlife Fund, will review the effects of climate change on wildlife in a slide-show Monday, June 26, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper St. in Palo Alto.

Sponsors are Acterra, the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund. Tickets at \$5 each may be purchased at the door. For information, call Ellen Wilkinson at 962-9876, ext. 306; or go to acterra.org.

COHEN
continued from page 8

council when setting the city's budget — no cuts to Belle Haven programs. "I thought this council agreed to leave Belle Haven programs as they were," Mr. Cohen said. Mayor Nicholas Jellins asked Mr. Cohen to "show respect" to staff, but Mr. Cohen turned his criticism toward the mayor, calling him "impolite, abusive, manipulative and Machiavellian." After the discussion, Mr. Cohen walked out of the council chambers, delaying consideration of a proposal by Stanford University to build a hotel and

office complex off Sand Hill Road. Mr. Cohen needed to be present for a quorum of council members, and returned to the meeting after being contacted by City Attorney Bill McClure. After the meeting, Mr. Cohen said he was frustrated with staff before the meeting even started. "The council said no change in Belle Haven, and now they're whitewashing it. It just irritated me," he said. He added that he is "fed up" with Mayor Jellins. Mayor Jellins said he's talked to Mr. Cohen since the meeting, and they've reached "a mutual understanding." ■

Las Lomitas district reviews budget

Welcoming the new superintendent for Las Lomitas Elementary School District, considering a parcel tax, reviewing the district budget, and studying enrollment projections are just some of the agenda items for the Wednesday, June 21, meeting of the district's Board of Trustees. The meeting begins at 4 p.m.

in the La Entrada Middle School library at 2200 Sharon Road. The meeting will immediately go to closed session for labor negotiations, mostly, but return to public session in time for a 4:30 recess to welcome Shirley Martin, the new superintendent. For more information, call the district office at 854-2880.

Let Us Hear From You...

Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome. *Mail your comments to:* Editor at the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025. *Or email:* editor@AlmanacNews.com (Please indicate if it is a letter to be published.)



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CALL the Viewpoint desk at 854-2626, ext. 222.

Jellins' announcement offers hope

We hope the decision by Mayor Nicholas Jellins to take himself out of the Menlo Park City Council race this November will have a positive impact on what has become a bickering and bitter exercise in local government.

For the last three and a half years, Mr. Jellins has voted in lock-step with Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc, forming a block that rarely misses a beat or a victory. The majority seldom pays attention to council members Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen; they simply pass their seemingly pre-arranged agenda on 3-2 votes.

This dynamic has led to bitter exchanges between the two sides, including an incident last week during which Mr. Cohen stalked out of the meeting during a discussion with Mr. Jellins about the Belle Haven summer school program. Ultimately, Mr. Cohen returned and the council approved an important measure to authorize a Stanford-backed hotel project at Sand Hill Road and Interstate 280.

But the brouhaha and other ugly moments between council members and the public point out the need for new blood on the council. No matter whether the so-called business-friendly candidates, like the Jellins-Winkler-Duboc trio, or the more environmental-oriented residentialists like Ms. Fergusson and Mr. Cohen, have a majority, we hope a new cooperative spirit will take over the council.

A big part of the problem is the current majority's tendency to move forward quickly with major changes in city policy without adequate public hearings or study. A decision was made in four short weeks to hand over the new Burgess pool complex to a private operator, rather than operate it as a city enterprise. The majority pointed to a perceived budget deficit as the reason to move rapidly on privatization, but never sought another bidder to make sure the deal was a good one.

A similar rush job is under way now as the city seeks bids from private operators to oversee the Menlo Children's Center. This could be a good idea — even Mr. Cohen supported an earlier, slower plan to seek bids. But then the majority decided to speed up the process, which some parents sitting on a task force study-

ing the idea say will not be good for the program.

Perhaps what Menlo Park needs are more voices on the City Council. Palo Alto has a nine-member council, and Mountain View has seven. With two additional members, more points of view in the community could be represented and heard when the city's tough issues are debated.

Over the next four years, Menlo Park will face several critical decisions that could dramatically change the look and feel of the city. Probably the biggest question at the moment is whether to approve major housing projects on the vacant auto dealer sites on El Camino Real.

The council may also assess whether to approve grade separations where the Caltrain tracks cross Ravenswood and Oak Grove avenues. This decision has been put off for years, and may be delayed yet again.

And then there is the future of Bayfront Park, a former 160-acre landfill adjacent to a national wildlife refuge, which the current council majority is considering as a site for playing fields. The council majority plans to put a straw poll on the November ballot to see how residents feel about the plan.

These and other ideas advanced by the council majority are likely to produce one of the most contentious elections the city has seen in years, with business supporters backing privatization and developing Bayfront Park and the residentialists pushing in the opposite direction. A wildcard in the election will be the participation of the Service Employees International Union, which represents most city employees. Its leaders have vowed to work hard to defeat any council candidate who supports privatizing city services, which could eliminate jobs for union members.

So far, former mayor and council member Steve Schmidt, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Richard Cline and environmentalist Elizabeth Lasensky have indicated they will run for council, but there are many more possibilities. We hope candidates from both sides will respect the diversity of views in the city, and pledge to work with the other side, whoever is elected. Otherwise, we will be in for four more years of bickering and insults, which simply create dissension and detract from good governance.

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS
Our readers write

A lot of money to prevent education

Editor:

I have been haunted by the news that \$750,000 was donated by two people from venture capital firms in Menlo Park to defeat Proposition 82.

That is an extraordinary amount of money to help prevent the education and development of our most precious community resource — our children.

Lorri Holzberg
Sharon Road, Menlo Park

Keep the rural spirit in Woodside

Editor:

At the June 12 Woodside Town Council meeting, Mayor Deborah Gordon joined council

See **LETTERS**, next page



Atherton Heritage Association

Our Regional Heritage

Houses can't walk, but they can move, as illustrated by this 1981 photo of an Atherton house that was moved to make room for an additional home on its large lot. The Fair Oaks Lane home was landscaped and featured as a decorator show house the next year.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

member Pete Sinclair in pleading for approval of additional bike rallies in Woodside.

Mayor Gordon argued that Woodside may not have the authority to limit outside bike rallies and chastised citizens for not seeing Woodside as part of the region. Reacting to complaints of congestion, Mayor Gordon observed that the May Day Parade is a huge inconvenience and traffic disruption for cyclists and motorists who want to use Highway 84 to go to the coast that morning.

Outside bike rallies, however, are much different than the May Day Parade. Whatever intangible spirit creates the magic of Woodside certainly has at its core the 84-year-old May Day Parade. As the Almanac expressed in its May 10 cover story, “at not time does Woodside seem more like a small town than May Day, when it seems as though every single resident is gathered at the parade.”

As we encourage more and more outside recreational use of our town, we lose more and more of the character that has made Woodside so special. Fifty years ago Woodside was incorporated by its residents to preserve a quiet and rural community with family values.

We do not think it is appropriate for our mayor to chastise us for wanting to save the rural character of Woodside. Kudos to the five council members who maintained their resolve to preserve our town. We can only hope that Mayor Gordon and council member Sinclair soon join the majority in taking affirmative steps to relieve congestion in Woodside, rather than encourage it.

C.G. Dowd
Portola Road, Woodside

Affordable housing story hit home

Editor:

I'm writing to thank the Almanac for Marion Softky's piece about Affordable Housing Week 2006 in the May 18 edition.

The week was a big success, with nearly 800 people attending 10 events throughout the week. Events included first-time homebuyer seminars, an affordable housing fair, a tour of transit-oriented developments, and a kickoff luncheon. Thanks to everyone in the community who participated.

Finally, Citibank deserves special mention as lead sponsor for the week, as does additional sponsor Wells Fargo. In particular, Citibank's Greg Meyer deserves recognition for his hard work to increase housing choices for our local residents

and workforce.

**Chris Mohr, exec. director
Housing Leadership Council
of San Mateo County**

A timely story on suicide

Editor:

After 34 years, it is still difficult to talk about my 21-year old brother's suicide and its aftermath of family destruction.

The shame, guilt and remorse were more than my parents could bear. Unwilling and unable to seek therapy for themselves and their remaining children, they collapsed over a period of years, my father trying to save my mother who fell into dementia.

Sadly, my brother would have loved all of the computer technology that has developed over these many years and would have enjoyed his nieces and nephew. All the 'would have, could have beens' that weren't.

So I thank the Almanac and the people and groups who are bringing this painful issue to light.

**Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street, Menlo Park**

Puzzled by children's center story

Editor:

After reading last week's article, "Design flaws in children's center," I found myself puzzled by the reasoning and perspective of the writer and Mr. Gardner.

It probably needs to be pointed out to some readers that every project in the built environment will have compromises, and the conversion of existing buildings, like the Children's Center, will probably have more compromises than in those built from scratch.

Is a compromise a design flaw? You could design the perfect surgical suite at a major hospital and by the time it is built, some doctors would find design flaws. This isn't a perfect world.

What needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that by the hard work of city staff and perseverance of council members Lee Duboc and Mickie Winkler,

this facility was built for \$3.4 million, and if it were built from scratch the much grander alternative would have cost \$6.2 million or much more. At a minimum, that's a savings of \$2.8 million, and in these budget wrenching times, the availability of these funds for more pressing community needs is incredibly important.

Given that the nuances in configuration of a toddler room has all the importance of a hiccup in the local scene, is it a misuse of journalistic discretion when the writer sensationalizes it, then rolls the reader's attention to other issues? Both the Almanac and Mr. Gardner need to step back, take a deep breath, and put this into historic and cost perspective.

And, after reading Bernard Goldberg's "Bias," a bestseller on bias in the media, maybe the bigger question is what kind of bias promotes this to front-page news and/or does the writer have a hidden agenda?

**Michael Lambert
San Mateo Drive, Menlo Park**

Leaf blowers and health hazards

Editor:

A recent Palo Alto Daily News article titled "Noise ordinance battle brewing," regarding the ban on gas-powered leaf blowers raises my concern about health issues associated with leaf blowers. I believe that health issues should be more important to us than issues of noise or inconvenience or financial cost.

I personally employ a gardener to do yard work from time to time, and I appreciate his work. I have asked him not to use a leaf blower on our property for any purpose (cleaning the gutters or the driveway or the lawns), and he knows that I am willing to pay for whatever time it takes to complete these tasks with a rake or other manual tools.

Leaf blowers stir up dust and debris, including funguses and pollens, and circulate these materials in the air we breathe. Breathing such materials, or getting them in one's eyes, can cause

Correction

Longtime Menlo Park resident David Fraser was astounded when he saw this photo last week, accompanied by a caption saying the Bank of America office was located on Santa Cruz Avenue in 1951. "Not so," said Mr. Fraser, who ought to know since he has lived in Menlo Park all his life. In fact, this iteration of the bank was located on the west side of El Camino Real, between Menlo and Santa Cruz avenues. And Mr. Fraser believes the photo was taken in the late 1940s, not 1951. The building at right is Derry's Feed and Seed. Our thanks to Mr. Fraser, and everyone else who spotted this error.

Bank of America



serious problems, especially for elderly people, or people with allergies, respiratory sensitivities, or immune systems that are compromised due to treatments such as chemotherapy.

And certainly breathing such materials can affect anyone — even the healthiest among us — who is exposed to them.

A few years ago, I was riding my bicycle through Palo Alto on the way home from work. I passed several leaf blowers along the way, and although I tried to cover my nose and mouth with a kerchief, I ended up going to a doctor and taking medications for a week because of the respiratory problems that resulted from that exposure.

"Valley Fever" is an emerging and sometimes deadly infection caused by "Coccidioides immitis" fungus. This fungus lives in soil and is spread through the air in areas where the soil has been disturbed. It produces spores that can be inhaled when they get into the air. In California alone, 35,000 new cases of "Valley Fever" are reported annually, and these numbers are on the rise.

I believe we need to give serious consideration to the possibility that we are being exposed to health hazards in areas where leaf blowers are used.

**Anne Kanerva
Santa Margarita Avenue,
Menlo Park**

Family enjoys visit to Burgess Pool

Editor:

Over the past few weekends my wife and I have visited the new Burgess Pool on Sunday afternoon to swim some laps and experience the new facility.

I swim on a Masters team at Stanford but my wife is a recre-

ational swimmer. We found at Burgess a welcoming swim environment that was terrific for both of us and ideal for young children, older kids, adults, and families.

During the open swim times young children could swim in the 85-degree instruction pool where they could easily stand on the bottom while they played. Older kids played in the 80-degree competition pool at the end reserved for them where they too could stand easily. And adults had lanes set up that were strictly for lap swimming. At all times the pool felt safe, protected by life guards and staff, who were professional, helpful, responsive, and friendly. The Web site at www.menloswim.com is extremely well done and informative and reflects the consistent professional image Menlo Swim projects in all areas.

Tim Sheeper and Menlo Swim have created a swimming environment that is by far the most inclusive for all levels of swimming enthusiasts and in the best city pool facility in the area. Looking back, the letters to the editor in the Almanac the past months from a few individuals and the city employees' union that criticized Tim Sheeper before he even opened the pool were an embarrassment.

In contrast, Tim Sheeper has always projected a positive, supportive, and confident attitude and the swim program he developed for the city of Menlo Park and the staff he has hired to lifeguard, man the front desk, and run the swimming instruction program is first rate. Menlo Park residents should feel proud, and very fortunate, that the Burgess Swim facility is being operated by Tim Sheeper and Menlo Swim.

**Rolf Thorson
Cotton Street, Menlo Park**

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The Almanac

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