

SCHOOLS: Bold plan to rebuild Hillview Middle School. Page 5

The Almanac

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

FEBRUARY 7, 2007

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SECOND LIFE

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IN MATERIAL REUSE

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Reading at Kepler's

Willian Poy Lee will read from his memoir, "The Eighth Promise: An American Son's Tribute to His Toisanese Mother," at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 8, at Kepler's bookstore in Menlo Park. Mr. Lee grew up in the housing projects of San Francisco's Chinatown, and writes from the perspective of his mother, as well as his own — giving readers a view of the Asian-American experience from the vantage point of two generations. The event is free. Kepler's is at 1010 El Camino Real. For information, call 324-4321, or log on at keplers.com.

Schools

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Menlo Park

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On the cover

This wood, being loaded by fork-lift operator George Solorio, spent its non-tree years under the roof of what was Portola Valley School. In dismantling the school, workers recovered 14,000 linear feet of wood, much of which will start a new career as paneling on ceilings and walls of a new Town Center complex. Photo by Marjan Sadoughi. Story starts on **Page 14**.

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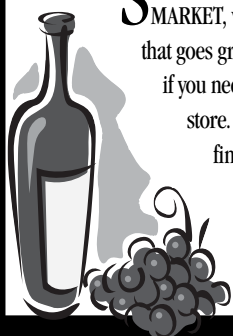
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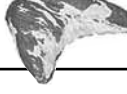
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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Bold plan to rebuild Hillview Middle School

■ Board favors rebuilding campus from scratch.

By Marjorie Mader
Almanac Staff Writer

The school board of the Menlo Park City School District favors a radical approach to building a new Hillview Middle School campus that accommodates an expected 40 percent increase in enrollment over the next six years.

The plan: build all-new facilities — including three wings of two-story classroom buildings — on what is now the playing field, and then tear down all of the existing facilities, except the multi-use building. The space where classrooms are located now would become a four-acre playing field and hard-court area.

“The community will get the most value for the money spent on new construction rather than additional modernization of the 50-year-old buildings,” said board president Terry Thygesen.

“The analysis of options showed us that building a new two-story facility would be the best approach to addressing all the issues such as field and open space, traffic and parking,” Ms. Thygesen said.

The result will be more efficient use of land, a bigger field area, and more parking spaces, board members said.

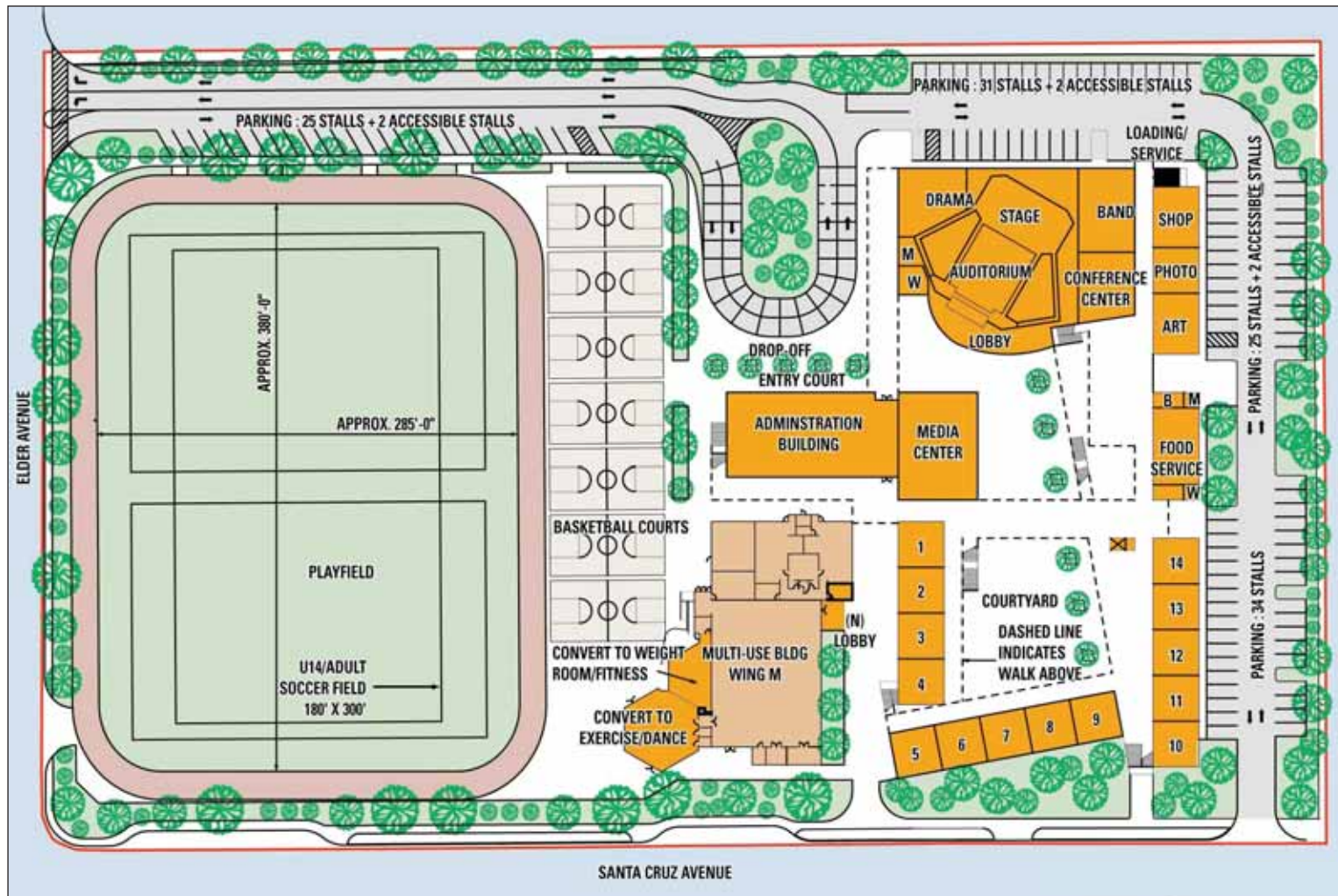
This option, however, means tearing down facilities that were built or modernized with money from a \$22 million bond measure, approved by voters in 1995 to update the district’s four campuses. Taxpayers will continue to pay off the bonds long after the facilities are gone.

However, only about \$6.2 million of that bond revenue was spent on modernizing Hillview structures and building two science classrooms and the multi-use building, which will remain.

Rebuilding the Hillview campus on its 9.5-acre site is expected to cost around \$40 million, and will be paid for from the \$91 million bond measure approved by 70 percent of the voters last June.

Key meeting

Building a new school on the current playing field emerged as the favored option of the school



Conceptual plan/Deems Lewis McKinley, Architects

This shows how the new Hillview Middle School would be designed if the school board goes with its current favorite option. School buildings, including two-story classrooms, are on the right, where the playfield is now. The new playfield, on the left, is substantially larger. The drop-off and pick-up area moves to the rear of the campus. To see the layout of the existing campus, see **Page 8**.

board after a four-hour community meeting Jan. 30 in the Hillview multi-use building.

About 200 parents, neighbors and others attended the meeting. A petition signed by 80 neighbors of the school was presented to the board. It raised concerns about “serious consequences” from increased traffic and parking tied to sharply higher enrollment. Enrollment projections show a growth from 659 students now to 913 in seven years.

The board directed the district’s design team to do additional work on the favored option — including more study of traffic congestion, parking and safety issues — before the board’s March 6 meeting, when trustees may make a decision about the design of the new campus.

The proposed two-story campus would maximize available space and provide higher-quality

Neighbors fear ‘serious consequences’

A petition signed by 80 neighbors of Hillview Middle School raises concerns about the proposed expansion plans at the school. The petition was presented to the board of the Menlo Park City School District on Jan. 30.

“We believe that these plans, which call for an increase in the number of students at Hillview from the present 670 to approximately 912 over several years, will have very serious consequences for our neighborhood,” the petition states.

The petitioners asked the district to prepare a full environmental impact report detailing the effects that the proposed expansion will have on the neighbors. “The filing of a Negative Declaration [stating that a full EIR is not

required] would not take into account our concerns and would be legally insufficient,” the petition says.

Among the key concerns of the neighbors:

■ Traffic congestion and related safety issues for students — as well as motorists and pedestrians in the vicinity — particularly at the beginning and end of the school day, and during evening school functions.

■ Parking on surrounding streets, including Elder Avenue and Politzer and Hillview drives.

■ Transportation of students to and from school.

■ The plan to eliminate the Tinker Park tot lot and the adjacent tennis courts at Hillview, which were used by the public.

■ Environmental issues relating to demolition and construction.

“We want the best for our schools, too,” said neighbor Mike Armstrong, who presented the petition to the board. “We want our concerns as neighbors to be considered.”

Board President Terry Thygesen told the Almanac: “Clearly, once a general approach has been selected for Hillview, the district will begin an environmental analysis of the project. Based on the environmental analysis, the district will determine what type of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) analysis is most appropriate.”

“The district has every intention of being a good neighbor and working in a constructive way to address neighborhood concerns,” she said.

See **HILLVIEW**, page 8

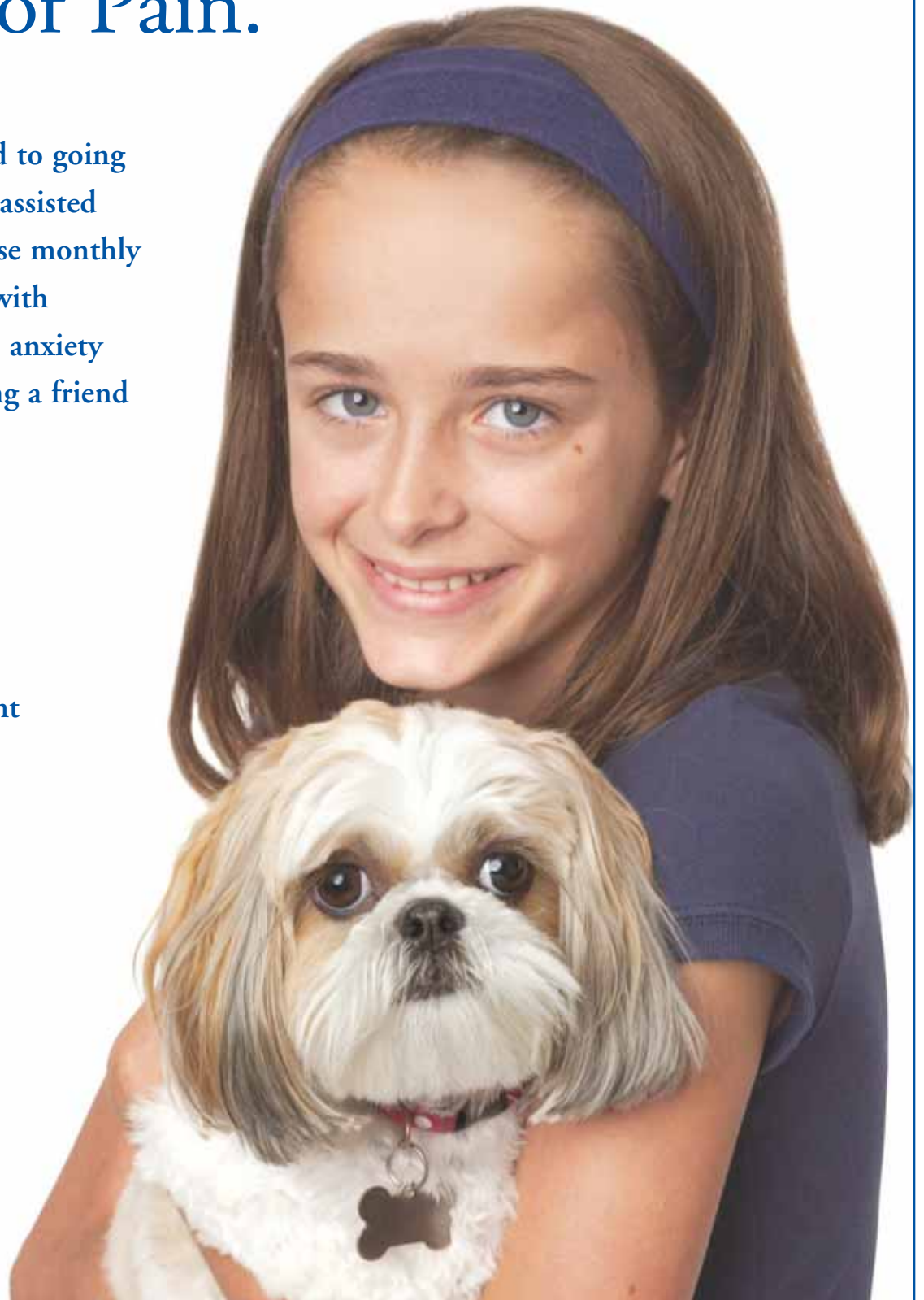


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Atherton names new chief of building department

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton has chosen its senior building inspector, Mike Wasmann, to head the town's building department, City Manager Jim Robinson told the Almanac.

It's been a tumultuous year for the department, and the top post has been open since former building official Mike Hood departed in June.

Mr. Wasmann, 57, started the new job Feb. 5 at a salary of \$115,200 a year plus a monthly auto allowance.

"I felt he was well-qualified and well-respected in the community, and has an excellent reputation with those who have done business with the Building Department," Mr. Robinson said.

Following Mr. Hood's retirement June 30, the building department's practices have been scrutinized in three internal audits, a longtime staffer has been reassigned, and it was revealed that a confidential private investigator's report was commissioned by the city manager.

Recently, members of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury have been making inquiries into the department, and the town is facing potential litigation over a short-lived excavation surcharge on construction.

As a result, it's been an anxious time for the residents, architects, contractors and others who frequent the town's building department. They formed a group, Atherton Residents for Responsible Governance, and worried they would lose an efficient department run by staff that they described as tough, but responsive and cooperative.

By tapping Mr. Wasmann, town officials appear to have put those fears to rest, and signaled that continuity and customer service are still a priority.

Mr. Wasmann was interviewed along with a number of other qualified candidates, Mr. Robinson said. He accepted the offer of the building department's top job Wednesday evening, Jan. 31, Mr. Robinson said.

Mr. Wasmann has been with Atherton's small but busy building department for almost 11 years, and also serves as a plan-checker. Before joining Atherton's staff, the San Mateo native said he was a general building contractor in the Midpeninsula.

Mike Culley, a consultant who has been serving as the interim building official, will now take



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

Mike Wasmann, the town's senior building inspector, has been with the busy building department for nearly 11 years.

over Mr. Wasmann's job on an interim basis while a search is conducted for a new senior building inspector, Mr. Robinson said.

Although Mr. Wasmann was hired from within, his leadership signals a new era for the building department. In recent months, a number of procedural reforms have been instituted and sophisticated permit-tracking software is slated to replace the building department's inadequate and antiquated system. Last month, the Atherton City Council authorized a review of the town's zoning codes to clean up confusing or outdated regulations.

"We're going to be addressing a lot of the issues that came up through the audit; hopefully, that will start to smooth out some of the bumps in the road," Mr. Wasmann said.

Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen, who has been a passionate advocate for reforming the building department's procedures, said she strongly supported Mr. Wasmann's candidacy for the job, and that she expects him to lead the department through a "healthy transition."

"He has the respect and sup-

port of the developers and staff and citizens alike," she said. "I think he knows the people of the town, he knows the problems, he knows the politics and he knows the rules. The knowledge of those four aspects is going to make him invaluable."

Outspoken developers who work in the town strongly supported Mr. Wasmann, which initially caused her some trepidation, Ms. McKeithen said.

"I thought we should have someone new, to clean it all up. But the more I heard, the more I believe (the choice of Mr. Wasmann) is a fundamental part of the healing," she said. "And I do believe in hiring from within."

Councilman Charles Marsala said three Atherton residents with homes under construction contacted him right away to express their approval of the town's choice for a new building official.

"I'm very happy to see Mike get the position," Mr. Marsala said.

The town's small building department does a huge amount of business — it brings in about \$2 million annually in fees — as the pace of additions, remodels and rebuilds remains brisk. ▀

Grand jury report on department

Atherton officials are reviewing the results of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury's investigation of the town's beleaguered building department.

Town officials received copies of the grand jury's report Monday, Feb. 5, but the penal code prohibits them from disclosing anything until it is released to the public on Wednesday, Feb. 7, Atherton

City Manager Jim Robinson told the Almanac.

The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury is a watchdog organization created by the California constitution. Information and reports can be found at sanmateocourt.org/grandjury/.

Check AlmanacNews.com throughout the week for breaking news about this and other stories.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Changes to Landlord Tenant Law

Q: I own rental properties where most of the leases are month-to-month and want to know what the notice provisions are if I want to evict a tenant.

A: Effective January 1, 2007, the California Legislature has reinstated the requirement that a landlord give a tenant 60 days' advance written notice to end a month-to-month tenancy if the tenant has lived in the rental unit for a year or more. However, the landlord can give the tenant 30 days' advance written notice if any tenant or resident (e.g. where there are roommates sharing a rental) has lived in the rental unit less than one year.

A tenant, on the other hand, who wants to end a month-to-month tenan-

cy, must give the landlord 30-day notice, even if the landlord would be required to give the same tenant 60 days notice.

If you live in a city that has a rent control ordinance that is stricter than the state rules, you must comply with the city's law. Some jurisdictions in the Bay Area, e.g., San Francisco and Berkeley, have rent control laws. Most towns and cities in this area, however, do not have such laws.

If you are planning to sell your property and want it to be vacant, these notice provisions can impact the date you can market the property.

Whatever your specific plans are, remember that the laws can change so it is best to keep apprised of any changes.

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This shows the current layout of the campus, with classroom buildings on the left and the playfield on the right. The drop-off, pickup area is on the left off Elder Avenue. The portable classrooms are at the back of the campus, on top.

Conceptual plan/
Deems Lewis McKinley, Architects



Bold plan for Hillview

HILLVIEW

continued from page 5

ity facilities for the education of middle-school children well into the 21st century, said board member Bruce Ives.

The drop-off, pick-up area would be moved from Elder Avenue to the back of the campus, lessening the impact of cars lining up along Santa Cruz Avenue. The number of parking spaces would increase from 55 to 121.

The playfield and hard-court area — for physical education classes, sports and recreation — would expand from 2.7 acres to 4.0 acres.

This option also provides 80-foot buffers from the building to the property lines. “Tinker Park,” the tot lot along Santa

■ INFORMATION

To send comments, suggestions and/or questions about facility development at Hillview Middle School, send an e-mail to: board@mpcsd.org. Your e-mail will go to all five board members and the superintendent. Trustees also welcome phone calls. For more information, go to the district’s Web site — www.mpcsd.org — and click on “Facility Development.” Hillview will be the focus of the board’s meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 6, at Hillview School, 1100 Elder Ave. in Menlo Park.

Cruz Avenue, and the tennis courts are not part of the current plan, but the district will try to find space on the campus to relocate Tinker Park.

Hillview, because it’s limited to a 9.5-acre site and is close to a residential neighborhood and busy Santa Cruz Avenue, is the biggest challenge facing board members as they develop a master plan for expanding the district’s four schools to cope with projected enrollment growth.

The board decided that building the new Hillview on the playfield — and continuing to house students on the existing campus during construction — is more desirable and cost-effective than adding facilities to existing buildings. This option avoids the estimated \$4 million cost of bringing 57 portable buildings on campus to provide interim classrooms and offices

Community speaks up about new Hillview

About 200 parents, neighbors and others came to the Hillview Middle School multi-use building Jan. 30 to hear about options for expanding and upgrading the Hillview campus. About 30 raised questions and offered comments.

Among them:

Jim Stone asked if the board had considered sinking the first floor of the proposed two-story classroom buildings to reduce the height impact on neighbors.

“How can you decide on a plan until you work out traffic (issues)?” asked a neighbor living on Politzer Drive.

Dan Finley suggested the board consider staggering the starting time for students to decrease traffic congestion.

“It’s very clear, the new campus is the only solution,” said parent Michael Stoner, urging the board to move forward. The plan maximizes the open space and has the least impact on the 14 homes that abut Hillview school and the seven homes next to the field.

“Kids may not need a new building — classrooms are classrooms,” said Scott Kirkman, whose preference is to make additions to the existing buildings.

Ted Schlein, co-president of the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation, applauded the efforts of the board and previous boards to

“get us to this point.” He cited the community’s passage of the \$90.1 million bond measure last June as a commitment to high-quality schools. “Let’s not waste this opportunity.”

Carol Orton, former district trustee, reminded the audience that the first choice was finding a larger site for a new middle school, but none is available. “That’s not an option,” she said, urging the community to pick the best schematic design and work together to make it happen.

Parent Nancy Kessler was among the parents who spoke to the importance of keeping Hillview as the district’s only middle school. “It’s a well-oiled machine,” she said, thanks to Principal Mike Moore, Vice Principal Joy Shmueli, and the staff.

Many asked the board how confident it is in the enrollment projections.

Trustee Laura Rich said the enrollment consultant’s projections are being updated, but noted that some of the longer-term projections include numbers for kids whose parents haven’t met yet.

Superintendent Ken Ranella pointed out that many new families move into the district because of the schools, and many have young children. Also, he noted, more students now remain in the district until they graduate from eighth grade. The district’s “retention rate,” he said, is now 99 percent.

during construction.

Trustee Laura Rich, also a member of the district’s facility committee, said the favored option “makes the most sense” because it has the least impact on students and maximizes the open space, providing a clustering of buildings with courtyards where students can gather, and more field area.

Superintendent Ken Ranella

said he will meet with Principal Mike Moore and the Hillview staff to discuss the favored option. He also asked district architect Erwin Lee to address some of the issues such as traffic congestion and safety concerns brought up at the community meeting.

The superintendent said he would look further at the option of demolishing the existing Hillview buildings and then develop-

ing a new Hillview on the razed site — the option that involves moving portable buildings on the existing playfield and developing an interim campus to be used during construction.

Architectural renderings of the favored option and information about projected costs, phasing construction and timelines will be presented at the community meeting on March 6. ■

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Online

Despite budget surplus, MP needs new utility tax, says city manager

■ Long-term deficit still looms, staff says.

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

If Menlo Park voters knew that the city ran a \$3.7 million surplus in the fiscal year that ended last June 30, would they have voted for the new utility tax in the November election?

The tax, which is slated to hit residents and businesses April 1 at the full rates, passed by just 65 votes, and the recent budget surplus announcement has some residents—including some who voted for the tax—questioning if it's even necessary.

The City Council plans to discuss the budget and the tax at its meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 6, in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets. The meeting starts at 7 p.m.

In a letter posted on the city's Web site, City Manager David Boesch says the tax is still needed to deal with an anticipated long-term budget deficit—not the short-term, one-time events reflected in

■ MENLO PARK

Post comments in Town Square at www.AlmanacNews.com

last year's surplus.

"The city's financial forecast, while predicting future revenue enhancements, identifies a gap remaining between annual revenues and the increasing costs with providing city services," Mr. Boesch said in the letter.

Finance Director Carol Augustine's mid-year budget report points out the differences between short-term projections and long-term financial trends.

Last fiscal year's surplus is largely attributed to short-term factors, such as vacancies in key positions, such as the police chief and community services director, she said. Those positions are now filled.

Also, the \$3.7 million surplus doesn't take into account the city's need to set aside about \$2 million a year for infrastructure costs (maintaining streets, sidewalks, parks and storm drains)

or cover an estimated \$13.2 million in unfunded liabilities for retiree health benefits.

The mid-year report forecasts the city is about \$363,000 short of covering its costs for the current fiscal year (July 2006 to June 2007)—a significant difference from the \$1.85 million shortfall city staff projected in June.

But that updated projection includes the assumption the city will levy the utility tax at the maximum rates starting April 1. Levying the tax at the full rates will add about \$600,000 to the city's coffers in the current fiscal year and upwards of \$2.4 million each year thereafter.

Council members are expected to discuss the tax rate when reviewing the budget in the spring of each year, and can vote to lower or eliminate the tax at any time.

At the maximum rates, businesses and residences will be taxed 3.5 percent on utilities (water, gas and electric bills), and 2.5 percent on communications (landline telephone, cell phone, cable TV and Internet bills). ■

Council looks at future of downtown area

The Menlo Park City Council will discuss how to go about rejuvenating El Camino Real properties abandoned by auto dealerships and adding foot traffic to Santa Cruz Avenue at a special meeting on Monday, Feb. 12.

The meeting is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Although improving the city's downtown corridor has been a council priority for several years—some development proposals are already in the works—some residents, including current council members, have been

adamant about creating a comprehensive plan before approving new projects.

"This is an opportunity for [council members] to refine our goal of revitalization," said Mayor Kelly Fergusson.

She said the meeting will be an opportunity for members of the public to tell the council their "visions" regarding El Camino Real and the downtown area, and the council can "deliberate and discuss" the next steps to take in improving the area.

—Rory Brown

Private school wants campus in east Menlo Park

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

The head of a Palo Alto-based private school will plead his case to the Menlo Park City Council on Feb. 6 for the right to set up a school in east Menlo Park.

Carlos Balzaretto, head of Casa dei Bambini school, is proposing a 72-child school for children ages 2 to 6 at 1215 O'Brien Drive, in the industrial area of Menlo Park.

Mr. Balzaretto currently operates a school in Palo Alto for 65 children.

In order for Mr. Balzaretto to operate the school in what is labeled the city's "industrial zone," he must acquire a use permit.

The council will consider the use-permit request at its Feb. 6 meeting, which starts at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Mr. Balzaretto's permit request was supported by city staff, but

rejected by the Planning Commission. Commissioners voted 6-0 to deny the project at their Nov. 28 meeting, deciding children could be at risk because of hazardous materials in the largely industrial area. They also were concerned that safety precautions and regulations tied to the school could discourage future industrial uses in the area.

Since the commission hearing, numerous e-mails have been sent to the council in support of the proposal. ■

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Menlo Park police patrol streets of East Palo Alto

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park's police department is sending officers to East Palo Alto to help the neighboring city deal with a recent surge in violence.

Two full-time Menlo Park officers have joined "Operation Safe Neighborhoods," a regional effort to bolster law enforcement in East Palo Alto, said Menlo Park Commander Lacey Burt.

The regional project started Jan. 31, she said.

In January, three homicides and 16 non-fatal shootings took

place inside East Palo Alto city limits. Police have tied several of the shootings to gang violence.

The Menlo Park officers, along with officers from the Palo Alto Police Department and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, are helping patrol streets and investigate recent shootings, Cmdr. Burt said.

"This is a short-term process that we'll look at on a week-to-week basis," Cmdr. Burt said. She noted that sending officers to East Palo Alto will not impact Menlo Park's staffing levels, and residents can be assured that there will be no holes in the city's local police presence.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson said it's important for cities to address the increasing violence as a regional issue.

"We want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of East Palo Alto in illuminating this violence and restoring peace to the neighborhood," she said. ■

Steffens named interim city manager

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

When Menlo Park City Manager David Boesch leaves his post in mid-February, it will be Public Works Director Kent Steffens, not Assistant City Manager Audrey Seymour, who will take on the interim city manager role.

The City Council initially selected Ms. Seymour to be the interim city manager once Mr. Boesch leaves to become assistant county manager of San Mateo County, but that plan has changed because Ms. Seymour will soon be adopting a child, said Mayor Kelly Fergusson in a press release issued Thursday.

"The council was aware when we appointed [Ms. Seymour] to the position that she was actively pur-

■ INFORMATION

The council is scheduled to hold a special meeting on Feb. 8, at 5:30 p.m., to solicit public input regarding what council members should look for in a new city manager. The meeting will be held in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets. Comments can be e-mailed to the council at City.Council@menlopark.org

suing adoption and that we needed to be prepared with a contingency plan," Mayor Fergusson said.

She told the Almanac that Ms. Seymour will take maternity leave for an amount of time yet to be determined.

Mr. Steffens was previously appointed to fill the interim

assistant city manager position after Mr. Boesch steps down, but now he'll fill the city's top post.

The search for a new city manager is expected to take about six months.

Mr. Steffens has been the head of public works since 2002. Before coming to Menlo Park, he was Palo Alto's assistant public works director.

"I am excited by this challenging opportunity," Mr. Steffens said in the press release. "I appreciate the confidence that the council has shown in my abilities and look forward with great anticipation and enthusiasm."

Mr. Steffens has appointed Community Development Director Arlinda Heineck to serve as the city's interim assistant city manager. ■

Rep. Anna Eshoo bill would bar certain Internet taxes

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, has introduced legislation to permanently block "discriminatory or duplicative state or local taxes on Internet access and e-commerce."

Congress put a moratorium on these taxes in 1998 and extended it in 2004 for an additional three

years.

The bill, introduced Jan. 31, would make permanent the prohibitions on:

- The collection of state or local taxes on charges to access the Internet, such as through Internet service providers.

- Discriminatory tax treat-

ment of goods and services purchased over the Internet. Thus, a state can't impose a 7 percent sales tax on a book bought at Amazon.com, for example, if the state only imposes a 4 percent sales tax on the same book bought down at the corner bookstore.

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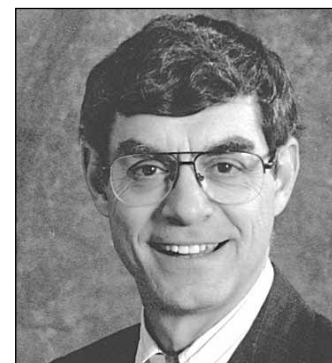
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Belle Haven community: 'Don't take Vanessa'

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Members of Menlo Park's Belle Haven community packed the City Council's Jan. 30 meeting to demand that the council stop the transfer of neighborhood child care worker Vanessa Carlisle to the other side of town.

Although the verdict is still out on whether the community's pleas were fully successful, immediate plans to move Ms. Carlisle have been put on hold.

More than 120 people packed the meeting, about half of whom were there to support Ms. Carlisle, a program assistant at the Belle Haven child care center, who was set to be transferred by city staff — against her will — to the Burgess child care program on Feb. 5.

Twenty-seven people, including parents, former students, and prominent community figures, asked the council during the public comment period to step in and stop the transfer, arguing that removing Ms. Carlisle would pull the "heart and soul" out of the neighborhood's child care services.

The meeting was held at the Menlo Park Senior Center, in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

"I ask you City Council members: What are you going to do?" said parent Marcia Dore-



File photo by Kainaz Amaria

Vanessa Carlisle has provided child care services to the largely low-income community for 23 years.


Perez, an East Palo Alto resident leading the charge. "This has become ridiculous to Belle Haven parents. ... Hands off our community."

Ms. Carlisle has provided child care services to the largely low-income community for 23 years.

After hearing the community's demands, City Manager David Boesch said plans to move Ms. Carlisle will be put on hold, and city staff may rethink the transfer and ask the council to weigh in on the matter at a future meeting.

The issue was not on the agenda, so council members could not discuss the matter at length without violating the Brown Act — the state's open meeting law.

Ms. Carlisle addressed the crowd: "I appreciate the outpour of love and support. No matter what happens, I feel your love," she said. ■



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Morrow murder case: Defense loses appeal

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Will 2007 be the year of the Joseph Morrow murder trial?

The California Court of Appeal removed the stay it placed on the much-delayed trial of a Menlo Park man accused of killing his wife and hiding her body. On Jan. 30, the San Francisco-based appellate court ruled against the defense attorneys' request to have a San Mateo County judge

removed from the trial.

However, Mr. Morrow is unlikely to have his day in court anytime soon. Defense attorney Robert Courshon said he plans to ask the state Supreme Court to overrule the appellate court's decision.

"That's the remedy we have, so that's what we have to do," Mr. Courshon told the Almanac. "We'll see if they'll take it."

Mr. Morrow's attorneys are seeking the removal of presiding

Superior Court Judge Craig Parsons because the case's former prosecutor, Jack Grandsaert, may be called to testify about his handling of evidence. Mr. Grandsaert is now a county Superior Court judge himself, and defense attorneys have argued that asking Judge Parsons to rule on a colleague is a conflict of interest.

This is the second time the appellate court has denied the defense appeal.

First, the request to remove Judge Parsons was denied by an out-of-county judge, and then denied in a one-line decision by the appellate court, prosecutor Steve Wagstaffe said. The state Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal, and instead asked the appellate court to set aside its denial and craft a written response.

In the Jan. 30 decision, the panel of appellate court judges agreed that in some cases, a number of factors could cause a person to doubt a judge's neutrality. They did not agree that this was the case with Judge Parsons.

"Not only are the individual facts insufficient to require disqualification, but when taken together, they still do not rise to a level that would lead a fully informed, reasonable member of the public fairly to entertain doubts about Judge Parsons' impartiality," according to the unpublished opinion authored by Judge William McGuinness.

Mr. Wagstaffe, San Mateo County's chief deputy district attorney, said the Supreme Court agrees to hear only a small percentage of cases.

A status conference on the case is set for Feb. 9, but Mr. Wagstaffe said he doubts that the trial will go forward until there's a response from the state Supreme Court.

"Technically, we're not stayed, we could go forward, but there have been so many starts and stops that Judge Parsons wants to let the full appeal process go through (first)," Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Morrow is accused of killing his wife Donna in the College Avenue home they shared with their four children. Mr. Morrow subsequently disappeared, and was found living under an assumed name in the Philippines in January 2003. Then in September, Ms. Morrow's remains were discovered buried in a secluded location on undeveloped property the couple owned in Los Gatos. ■

Joe Simitian to hold 'education update'

State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, will host his semi-annual "Education Update" meeting on Saturday, Feb. 10, in Palo Alto for local school board members, superintendents, teachers, parents, and the public.

The meeting will be held from 10 a.m. to noon at the Palo Alto Unified School District board room at 25 Churchill Ave. in Palo Alto.

He said he will provide an in-depth update on K-12 education funding and legislation pending in Sacramento. He will then open the

floor to questions.

He timed the meeting with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's release of his January budget proposal.

Sen. Simitian is a member of the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education, and is chair of the Senate Select Committee on California's Master Plan for Education.

The meetings are open to the public. To RSVP or request more information, call Sen. Simitian's Palo Alto office at 688-6384.

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Above: The rafters once spanning these gaps in the roof of the multi-use room at Portola Valley Town Center will have a second and more visible career in the interiors of a new Town Hall, library and community hall. **Left:** Jim Steinmetz tightens the band around a stack of tongue-and-groove boards from the roof of the former Portola Valley School. Mr. Steinmetz led the dismantling of the school buildings.

Second life

Portola
a trend

By David

Look through the Yellow Pages and you won't find a heading for the word "deconstruction." Enter it in Google and you'll see pages of links explaining how a critical reading of the canon of Western literature can expose its hidden assumptions and subtexts.

But mention the word to anyone in Portola Valley's public works department or Town Council and you're likely to hear a description of what just happened to the complex of one-story 1950s-era school buildings at Town Center.

The buildings were deconstructed — taken down in pieces over five weeks in order to extract trusses, rafters and beams. With a little refinishing, the wood will be put to use again in a new \$20 million com-

plex that includes a new Town Hall, library, community hall and activity rooms.

Each old rafter should yield three or four boards for paneling and ceilings in the new buildings, said Woodside resident Jim Steinmetz, the owner of Reusable Lumber Co. and the contractor who led the deconstruction. Other pieces of the recovered lumber will go into benches and picnic tables.

In all, the town recovered about 14,000 linear feet, about a third of it old-growth Douglas fir, Mr. Steinmetz said, adding: "That lumber was around when Christ walked the Earth."

The recycling did not end with the wood. The concrete in the old foundations won't be going anywhere either. It will be ground up — noisily — and reused as base

rock for the new complex.

To accomplish all this, the town spent \$200,000 on deconstruction and another \$105,000 to demolish what was left and grind the concrete, said Assistant Town Administrator Steve Willis. The town, he said, saved about \$250,000 in not taking the traditional route — spending \$500,000 to \$600,000 to turn whole buildings into rubble and bring in virgin wood and base rock.

The trade-off was time. The new complex is about two and one-half months behind the original schedule, said Mayor Ted Driscoll. Town staff say they have

adjusted the schedule to accommodate the unforeseen delay, but Mayor Driscoll was not displeased in any case.

"We're very happy to be two and a half months behind schedule because we'll be under budget," he said. "I'm very interested in getting the town well-informed on what's happening here and how frugal we're trying to be."

A desire for frugality is understandable, given the vigorous three-year debate among the project's supporters and opponents over how to pay for a new complex and whether it was really necessary. The critics may have given up in the face of serious seismic and liability risks at the old site.

The donors have not been frugal. A major fundraising effort to raise \$17 million stands, as of December, at \$13 million,

cover story

Photos by Marjan Sadoughi
ALMANAC STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Left: Reusing this wood in the new Town Center complex lowers by 90 percent the environmental impacts of lumber transportation. Woodside resident Jim Steinmetz, owner of the Reusable Lumber Co., organized the recovery, transport and re-milling of 14,000 linear feet of lumber from the former Portola Valley School.
Below: A recycling notice may be up until late in 2008 as Portola Valley rebuilds its Town Center.



Valley's bid to set in material reuse

By Boyce ALMANAC STAFF WRITER

including \$3 million in public money and \$10 million in gifts and pledges. If the remaining \$4 million is not raised, the Town Council has said, it might consider a general obligation bond.

If Portola Valley manages to be frugal, that is but one objective. The new complex — expected to receive a gold or possibly a platinum rating from the U.S. Green Building Council — is also meant to showcase green building practices and advertise the town's environmental awareness.

"We're trying to be sustainable and to be an example to other people and towns on how to do it right: 'If you do it green, it's efficient and cheaper,'" Mayor Driscoll said. "This is an opportunity to show some leadership."

San Mateo County may be right behind Portola Valley. Mr. Steinmetz said he's been

talking with the county about deconstructing the old 130,000-square-foot juvenile hall, which was recently rebuilt on another site.

Deconstructing deconstruction

"The average stick of (new) lumber, from its source in the forest to its end user, travels 1,500 miles," said Mr. Steinmetz.

At Town Center, the amount of fossil fuel used for lumber transport is significantly lower. Most of it traveled about 140 miles — back and forth to Richmond — where the wood was scanned for nails with a metal detector, trimmed to remove paint and rough edges, run through a milling machine to create new smooth surfaces, and cut to the dimensions specified by the Town Center project architects.

Local reuse should be happening much

more often, Mr. Steinmetz said. Old wood tends to be quality wood, and while quality wood is rare in forests, it is not hard to find in buildings being demolished every day, he said. "The highest grades of lumber are being tossed and you can't get them back."

"I want to blow Portola Valley's horn for doing (deconstruction)," he said. "They haven't slapped themselves on the back enough."

"(Local reuse) is the best reuse there is. It's the greenest thing you can do," said Bob Falk, a research engineer at the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, and the co-author of the forthcoming book, "Unbuilding: Salvaging Architectural Treasures from Unwanted Houses."

Deconstruction, Mr. Falk said, could be

done on 90 percent of U.S. housing and many commercial buildings, but it's still rare because of labor costs when compared to demolition, and because it still has an image of "hippies in pickup trucks" doing the work.

Mr. Steinmetz drives a pickup and was for seven years a co-director of the environmental group Bay Area Action, now Palo Alto-based Acterra, before starting his business in 1998.

He said he wants mainstream attention for deconstruction and has no scruples about becoming a wealthy capitalist: "I would love to be and I intend to be, but not by sacrificing my values." People, he said, need to raise a ruckus about the greenness

See **REUSE**, next page

REUSE

continued from previous page

of deconstruction.

Activists “need to be making a big stink every time they see someone smash a building,” he said. “They’re basically turning a blind eye to the negative implications (such as global warming) of that kind of industry. ... When speed overtakes quality, I think that society loses over all. Do it slow and do it right.”

Smashing buildings is bread and butter for demolition practitioner Ken Vickers, the owner/operator of KVT Services of Redwood City. The labor costs over the weeks of a deconstruction project are too high for how much wood is recovered, he said. Demolition is a “necessary evil” until those economics change, he added.

It’s a time-sensitive business, said Debbie Mendelson, a spokeswoman for Mountain View-based demolition company Ferma Corp., which transformed the old Stanford stadium to a mere hole in the ground in nine days. An operator with an excavator can scrape a 3,000-square-foot home in a day, she said, and many homes that Ferma demolishes are termite- or mold-ridden and not eligible for reuse.

Such wood is turned to rubble by demolition, and much of it is processed at the Zanker Road Landfill in San Jose, where it may become fuel for furnaces or sawdust or ground cover for weed control along freeways, said Michael Gross, the landfill’s marketing manager.

Maybe the landfill should not be processing so much wood: “There’s so much wood out there that can be reused,” he said.

All of those processes generate carbon dioxide, but it may be a while before it turns around, Mr. Steinmetz noted. Deconstruction, he said, will need another 10 years before there is a large used-lumber market and plenty of workers



Long years show in the checks and cracks on these boards from the roof of the former Portola Valley School, but their useful life is hardly over. They’ll be cleaned up, resized and used to panel walls and ceilings in the new Town Hall, library and community hall.

trained to take down buildings.

If time is not pressing, it can be economical today, as was apparent in the Portola Valley example. A homeowner can donate the used wood and can get a tax deduction worth \$30 to \$60 per square foot, said Marcan Enterprises owner Dave Marcan, who deconstructs houses in the Peninsula and South Bay.

cover story

He said he and his crew deconstructed a 4,000-square-foot home in Monte Sereno for \$50,000. The homeowner, after having the wood appraised, received a deduction of \$160,000 — in a 30 percent tax bracket, a cash value of \$48,000.

What can be done with that lumber? Seasoned wood is unpopular for construction, said engineer and Woodside resident Tim Hilleary. Nails from nail guns, which are driven by gunpowder, can ricochet bullet-like off such wood, he said. “It makes people feel good to be using it, but it’s really dangerous to the workers.”

Ted Reiff, president of nonprofit The ReUse People of America Inc. in Oakland, will take it off your hands. Seasoned wood is popular with homeowners who do their

own remodeling and people who want the wooden elements of their homes to show the fine grains of old wood, Mr. Reiff said.

An aged piece of Douglas fir has about the same hardness as a piece of oak, he said. Most of the used wood he sees — and his company is chronically short of it — is milled down for non-construction uses such as furniture, cabinets, moldings and fireplaces, he said.

“It’s great to be able to see this stuff go someplace where there is a market for it,” said Mr. Marcan, who contracts with Mr. Reiff.

The future

Will deconstruction lead to wood-frame homes being built to be taken apart to make it easier to reuse the wood?

A lot more effort needs to be made in that direction, Mr. Steinmetz said. In a typical home built today, given the proliferation of glue, nail guns and green wood that can warp as it dries, “the idea is to make it bulletproof, and you can’t tear it apart if you tried,” he said.

Mr. Falk of the U.S. Forest Products Lab used the word “academic” to describe the current state of affairs in designing homes for deconstruction. ■



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Learning more about deconstruction

Deconstruction — the careful dismantling of homes and other buildings — can yield large tax deductions, interior fixtures and decorations that may be dated but still useful, and lots of fine old wood from behind ceilings and under floors.

Deconstruction is also considered benign to the environment since it opens up opportunities to reuse materials in ways that reduce greenhouse gas outputs when compared with using virgin and even recycled materials.

For more information, contact:

- **Jim Steinmetz at Reusable Lumber Co.** in Woodside: 529-9122 or info@reusablelumber.com.
- **Lillian Clark at RecycleWorks**, the resource conservation programs manager for San Mateo County: 599-1447 or lclark@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

- **Dave Marcan at Marcan Enterprises** in Moss Beach: 580-2922 or dave@marcanenterprise.com.
- **Ted Reiff at The ReUse People of America Inc.** in Oakland: 510-383-1983 or tedreiff@TheReusePeople.org.
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- **Deconstruction Institute** in Sarasota, Florida: deconstructioninstitute.com.
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Armed sidewalk robber sentenced and out of jail after time served

A 26-year-old Menlo Park man accused of armed robbery — taking money and wallets from four pedestrians in Menlo Park and Redwood City in May — is out and about after having served about eight months of a sentence of one year in San Mateo County jail.

Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said that, given the serious nature of the crime, he preferred prison for Kimani Goodwin rather than a plea bargain that kept him out of prison.

Judge Stephen Hall of San Mateo County Superior Court saw it differently and agreed to a proposal by Mr. Goodwin's defense attorney that, in exchange for a "no contest" plea to one count of armed robbery, Mr. Goodwin would

not go to prison.

Mr. Goodwin's good behavior earned him an early release from jail, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

His sentence includes a probation fee of \$75 a month, counseling, DNA testing, fines totaling about \$240, and restitution to the victims in an amount yet to be determined. He is not allowed to possess a weapon.

Asked why he thought Judge Hall accepted the plea bargain, Mr. Wagstaffe noted Mr. Goodwin's favorable probation report, his sense of remorse, and the fact that he had no prior convictions. Mr. Wagstaffe conceded that the judge's decision was "not unreasonable" and gives Mr. Goodwin another chance.

Uncertainty about the identity of the weapon in the robbery also worked in Mr. Goodwin's

favor, Mr. Wagstaffe said. The robbery victims said they could not be sure that Mr. Goodwin was carrying a gun, and no weapon was found, Mr. Wagstaffe said. A verifiable gun would have tilted the odds in favor of prison, he said.

The unarmed Menlo Park man accompanying Mr. Goodwin that night, 19-year-old Ezell Banks, received the same sentence after pleading "no contest" to petty theft, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Goodwin, Mr. Banks and a third unnamed person who is still at large were accused of taking money and wallets from four pedestrians, including three in Redwood City and one in Menlo Park. Police later found and arrested Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Banks in The Hanky Panky, a strip club in Redwood City.

Parents seek transfer to MP school district

Two public hearing are scheduled within a week on a petition by parents living in a portion of the Ravenswood City School District to transfer their property into the adjacent Menlo Park City School District.

Hearings are set for Tuesday, Feb. 6, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the board room of the Ravenswood district office at 2120 Euclid Ave. in East Palo Alto; and Tuesday,

Feb. 13, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the board room of the Menlo Park district office at 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.

At these hearing before the San Mateo County Committee on School District Reorganization, statements will be made by the petitioners and the Ravenswood and Menlo Park school districts. These statements were not made public by the county committee staff by the Almanac's deadline.

The petitioners are parents living in the Pacific Parc townhouse complex at 600 Willow Road in Menlo Park, which is within the Ravenswood district but encircled by the Menlo Park district.

Before the condominiums were built, the site was owned by the Ravenswood district. The district sold the land to a developer to raise funds for

Ravenswood schools, but the site remains in the Ravenswood district.

Petitioners say only five children from the 25 units in the condominium would attend Menlo Park schools if the petition is granted. The children are making friends with children in their neighborhood who will be going to Menlo Park schools, and the parents would like the children to attend school with their friends, the petitioners say.

Both districts have indicated they will oppose granting the petition. Ravenswood would lose state-funded revenue if its enrollment declines. Menlo Park says it's planning a major expansion in facilities to accommodate enrollment growth, and would not receive any more funds if students from the proposed transfer area attend Menlo Park schools.

Intuit leases space from Bohannon

Mountain View-based Intuit, the software company behind products such as TurboTax and Quicken, is leasing 140,000 square feet of office space in Menlo Park, worth about \$15 million, from the Bohannon Development Co., said Howie Dallmar, a broker with Cornish & Carey who helped broker the deal.

Intuit is leasing two three-story, 70,000-square-foot buildings with an option on a third building, Mr. Dallmar said. The deal was announced last week.

The three-building campus is off Jefferson Drive in east Menlo Park, near the Dumbarton railroad tracks. The buildings were previously occupied by Sun Microsystems, but have been empty since the late 1990s, Mr. Dallmar said.

He said Intuit had been looking for more than 100,000 square feet of space, and such space is hard to come by near the company's current offices in Mountain View's Shoreline Park — an area dominated by Google.

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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION

(Prepared Pursuant to Section 15162(b) of the California Public Resources Code)

A notice, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code 21,000 et seq.) that the following project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Title: Westridge Drive Gravity Sewer Installation and Annexation Project

Contact Person: Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager Phone Number: 650-851-1700, Ext. 12

Project Location: Westridge Drive street right-of-way between 107 and 348 Westridge Drive and assessors parcels 077-261-250, 077-261-260 & 077-261-270

Project Description:

The project is the installation of 2,743 lineal feet of 8-inch, PVC C900 sanitary sewer pipe within the subject Westridge Drive public street right-of-way. The pipe would be a gravity sanitary sewer main and connect to the exiting sewer main in Alpine Road, i.e., at the intersection of Alpine Road and Westridge Drive. The project is sponsored by the *Westridge Sewer Project LLC*, i.e., composed of the three private property owners located at 300, 332 and 348 Westridge Drive, at the western end of the installation, and includes three lateral gravity sewer line extensions from the proposed new main line to service 300, 332 and 348 Westridge Drive. All three parcel owners have applied to the San Mateo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) for annexation to the West Bay Sanitary District (WBSD). After project construction, and acceptance, the WBSD would own and operate the new main line and oversee any future connections to it.

Since the project would take place within the public road right-of-way, an encroachment permit must be issued by the Town of Portola Valley (Town) to allow for the construction. The sponsor proposes to restore the roadway to its preconstruction condition at the end of project work and otherwise manage project work to ensure minimum potential for impacts on the roadway, traffic, and access, including access to adjoining properties. The proposals for construction and project management are set forth on the following project plans dated December 7, 2006, and prepared by Freyer & Laureta, Inc.:

Sheet 1, Title Sheet (including project data, specifications and contractor requirements)
Sheets 2 through 7, Improvement Plans (and profiles by street section)
Sheet 8, Detail Sheet

Copies of the plans are available for reference at Portola Valley Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, and at the offices of the WBSD, 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California.

The proposed work requires trenching within the street for the length of proposed new sewer main. The work would take place during the summer season of 2007, and be limited by the town's construction noise ordinance to five days a week, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am. to 5:30p.m. The town ordinance also prohibits construction work on Holidays or weekends.

The trenching would take place roughly along the centerline of the street pavement section. The trench depth varies from five to eight feet and the width would be approximately 18 inches. Because of the location of existing utility lines in the street, including gas and water lines, the new trenching is limited to the center portion of the pavement.

Details of the proposed construction process are set forth on the Title sheet of the project plans. The specifications generally address construction staging, management, traffic control, street repair, etc. Further details of the process would be set forth in a final construction management and street repair plan to the satisfaction of town of Portola Valley planning and public works staff prior to issuance of the required encroachment permit. It is understood, however, that the Ford Field parking lot area, immediately east of the project site, would be used for construction staging, including worker parking. The use of this area would be pursuant to detailed encroachment permit plans that ensure minimum potential for conflict with use of the Ford Field during the Spring and early Summer Little League baseball use. Further, construction staging and parking details would need to be defined to ensure conformity with storm water pollution control requirements as the parking area is immediately adjacent to Los Trancos Creek.

In addition to the above, it is noted that the project would conform to the provisions of the town's general plan and planning ordinances as they encourage, overtime, the conversion of septic system sewage disposal to sewage disposal by sanitary sewer.

Purpose of Notice:

The purpose of this notice is to inform you that a negative declaration has been recommended for this project. Approval of a Negative Declaration does not constitute approval of the project under consideration. The decision to approve or deny the project is a separate action. The subsequent negative declaration was prepared pursuant to Section 15162.(b) of the public resources code of California.

Address where document may be reviewed: Planning Department, Portola Valley Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California

Public Review Period: Begins: January 26, 2007 Ends: February 26, 2007

Please submit any written comments on the Draft Negative Declaration to the Town of Portola Valley by 5:00 p.m., Monday February 26, 2007.

Scheduled Public Hearings (date, time, place) if known:

A public hearing on the proposed project will be held by the town council, and is scheduled for 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 28, 2007. The public hearing will take place at the Portola Valley Town Hall Council Chambers Located in the Historic School House, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on February 7, 2007.

Open space district annexation is appealed by Coastsiders

By **Marion Softky**

Almanac Staff Writer

More than two years after the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) expanded to include the San Mateo County Coastside, opponents are still trying to undo the annexation in court.

Citizens for Responsible Open Space (CROS) and Californians for Property Rights (CPR), which lost a lawsuit in San Mateo County Superior Court last October, have appealed the decision to the state appeals court in San Francisco.

The Coastside suit challenges the long public and legal process that led to the annexation of 220 square miles of coastal land, from the southern boundary of Pacifica to the Santa Cruz County line, to MROSD on Sept. 7, 2004.

The 2004 annexation allows the district, which was formed in 1972 to preserve open space in the hills and Bayside of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, to buy and manage land along the coast for open space and agriculture.

The formal decision was made by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) following an environmental impact report and numerous heated public hearings. LAFCo is responsible for approving formation and annexation of governments, such as cities and special districts.

The suit claims numerous errors by LAFCo in notifying the public and rejecting signa-

tures on a protest petition to put the matter to a vote.

CPR president Terry Gosset charged LAFCo with "blatant disregard of the constitutional rights of the citizens of San Mateo County." He said two of "our most basic fundamental rights are at stake here: private property rights and the right to vote. LAFCo has denied us both."

Sue Schectman, attorney for MROSD, noted that Superior Court Judge Beth Labson Freeman had ruled in favor of LAFCo and the district on all issues. "We're very confident we will prevail on appeal," she said.

Ms. Schectman said the protest petition did not get enough valid signatures to force a vote on the annexation. In checking signatures, the county election department

rejected numerous signatures on grounds such as duplication, wrong addresses, signers not registered to vote, or signatures that did not match the registration.

Meanwhile, since the annexation, the district has been buying land and building relationships on the Coastside. It has redistricted, extending Wards 6 and 7 to the Coast, and it has acquired 4,794 acres on the Coastside, according to public information officer Rudy Jurgenson.

The district has also forged a Good Neighbor Policy, which the board plans to adopt at a meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at the Half Moon Bay fire station.

Ms. Schectman anticipates that the appeal will take about a year to resolve. ■

'Our most basic rights are at stake: private property and the right to vote.'

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Eagle Scout down under

Clay Austin Ripma, left, who lives in New Zealand, has been awarded Eagle Scout rank from the Boy Scouts of America. Clay, 16, joined Boy Scout Troop 109 in Menlo Park in 2001. He moved to New Zealand with his parents, Mark and Mary Ripma, in 2004. Clay's project was landscaping and building a bench in front of the Warkworth Methodist Center, with the help of the Warkworth Boys Brigade.



Nature photographer Frans Lanting kicks off Stegner lecture series

Nature photographer Frans Lanting will lead off this year's Wallace Stegner Lecture Series for the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) on Thursday, Feb. 15, at 8 p.m., at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St.

Mr. Lanting's photographs have appeared in publications around the world, including "National Geographic," where he has served as photographer-in residence. His awards include British Broadcasting Company's BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year, and the Sierra Club's Ansel Adams Award.

For the 14th year, Bill and Jean Lane of Portola Valley are sponsoring the lecture series dedicated to the memory of writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner. Proceeds benefit POST, the nonprofit land conservancy based in Menlo Park that has preserved more than 50,000 acres on the Peninsula and Coastsides.

Other lectures in the series will feature:

■ Author and columnist Richard Louv, who has written about saving children from "Nature Deficit Disorder," will speak Thursday, March 22.

■ Adventure writer Tim Cahill, founding editor of "Outside" magazine, will tell nature adventures Thursday, May 24.

■ For upper-level subscribers, local restaurant owner and sustainable food advocate Jesse Cool will speak Tuesday, April 24.

Tickets for the three-lecture series are \$60. The Jesse Cool lecture comes with Patron tickets at \$175, and Stegner Circle tickets at \$325.

For series tickets, contact POST, 3000 Sand Hill Road 1-155, Menlo Park, CA 94025; call 854-7696; or go to <http://www.openspacetrust.org>

Single tickets at \$22 each can be ordered from the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts at 903-6000.



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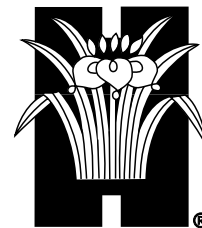
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eye infection, easier handling due to increased rigidity of material, and significantly lower incidence of complications with extended wear use. According to some researchers, silicone hydrogel contact lenses will account for more than two-thirds of U.S. soft-contact sales by 2009.

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Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California. He can be easily reached at Menlo Optical, 1166 University Drive, Menlo Park. 650-322-3900.

Woodland names head of school

John P. Ora, an administrator at Princeton Day School in Princeton, New Jersey, has been named the new head of school for Woodland School in Portola Valley, a co-educational, independent private school for about 230 students in preschool through eighth grade.

Mr. Ora, who has nearly 20 years of experience as a school administrator and teacher, will take the new post July 1, said David Spreng, chairperson of the Woodland Board of Trustees.

He has been a physics and chemistry teacher and science department chair at the Community School in Sun Valley, Idaho, and an assistant head of school, dean of students, and science department chair at Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is currently head of the fifth through eighth grade

Middle Division of Princeton Day School.

Mr. Ora holds a bachelor of science degree from Seattle University and a master's of arts in educational administration, policy and analysis from Stanford University. He is an active participant in Princeton University's Teachers as Scholars Program.



John P. Ora

"Woodland is uniquely positioned among Bay Area private schools," said Mr. Ora. "The combination of a challenging academic curriculum, diverse student body, and values-based environment prepares Woodland students to excel in every aspect of life."

Founded in 1981, Woodland School leases the former Ladera School on La Cuesta Drive from the Las Lomas School District. For more information, go to woodland-school.org

Parcel tax election begins for absentee voters

SCHOOLS

The election to decide whether to increase the parcel tax in the Las Lomas Elementary School District starts officially on Monday, Feb. 5, when permanent absentee voters can either mail their ballots or drop them off at selected locations in the district.

If a two-thirds majority of voters approve Measure P, the current annual tax of \$196 would rise

to \$311 — a \$115 increase — for homes and businesses in the district, which includes western Menlo Park, Ladera and parts of Atherton. The election is Tuesday, March 6.

Absentee ballots may be dropped off during business hours at Menlo Park City Hall, Atherton Town Hall, the main elections office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo, or the satellite elections office on the first floor at 555 County Center in Redwood City.

There are 7,707 eligible voters living in the district, said county elections officer Warren Slocum. Any homeowner 65 or older whose home is in the district and is the owner's principal residence may apply for an exemption to the tax.

The Las Lomas school board initially recommended an increase of about \$200, but a survey of the community revealed that any increase above \$98 a year would not win a two-thirds majority. Trustees said they decided to ask for a \$115 increase after "very careful" analysis of the survey data.

The district needs the money, according to a resolution passed unanimously by the trustees in December, to maintain "the highest possible quality of education" and provide "the best qualified staff available" in a state in which education funding is described as "precarious."

Among the more specific priorities, the money would help to maintain the district's elective offerings such as foreign languages, music and art, and the science, math and technology classes.

To read the ballot measure or for more information, go to shapethefuture.org.

Free e-waste collection event

Universal Waste Management Inc. is sponsoring a free electronic waste collection event at the Redwood City Public Works Department parking lot, at 1400 Broadway, on Saturday and Sunday, Feb.

24 and 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Flamenco dance

Flamenco dancer Yaelisa will give a dance performance at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 16, in Hanson Hall at The Sequoias, 501 Portola Road in Portola Valley. Appearing with her will be guitarist Jason McGuire, singer Felix de Lola, and dancer Melissa Cruz. Yaelisa has received an Emmy Award for choreography for a Public Broadcasting System program. The Feb. 16 performance is free and open to the public. For information, call 851-1501.



Women's recovery group awarded challenge grant

By **Stephanie Cadora**
Special to the Almanac

The Women's Recovery Association has received a \$75,000 challenge grant from Sally and Michael Mayer of Hillsborough, according to the association's executive director, Linda Carlson.

If the association, which helps women recover from chemical dependency, is able to raise \$75,000 between now and June 30, the Mayers will match that amount, Ms. Carlson said.

In 2007, the association must raise more funds to maintain two of its key services — its children's program, which provides a stable environment for children while their mothers are participating in treatment programs; and New Directions, which helps newly sober women become self-sufficient after leaving treatment.

Although the association is

based in Burlingame, about 80 percent of its board members and donors live in Menlo Park, Palo Alto or Redwood City, she said.

With a staff of 45, the association serves some 500 clients annually. It specializes in treatment and therapy for women who are dually diagnosed with mental illness and a substance-abuse problem. Among the services: individual and group therapy, case management, art therapy and 12-step meetings.

Depending on the severity of the problem, women choose between a residential and an intensive outpatient program. The association has five residential treatment homes in the city of San Mateo.

For more information, contact Women's Recovery Association at 1450 Chapin Ave., First Floor, Burlingame, CA 94010; call 348-6603; or go to womensrecovery.org. ■

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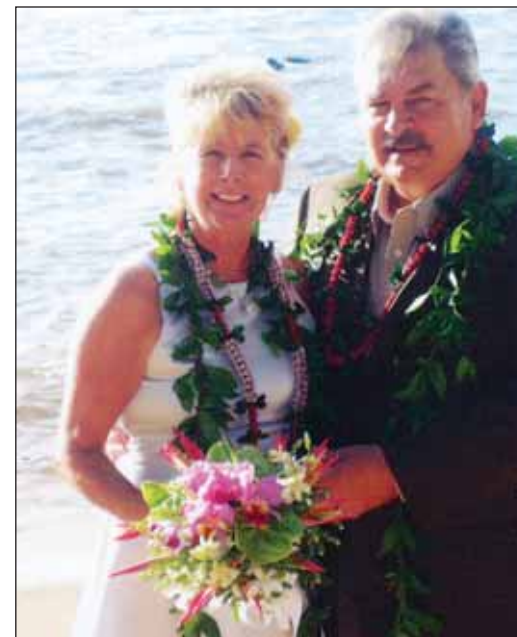


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Amy Adams and Peter Harding



Carol Bastelier and Gary Dunbar

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WEDDINGS

Adams-Harding

Amy Adams and Peter Harding were married May 27 of last year on the beach at the Crowne Playa Los Cabos Beach Resort in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico. A reception followed at the hotel.

The bride is the daughter of Judith and Douglas Adams of Menlo Park. She is a graduate of Menlo School and Duke University. She is vice president of strategic initiatives at Double Click Inc. of New York and San Francisco.

The bridegroom is the son of Janet and Samuel Harding of Los Altos. He is a graduate of Los Altos High School, Pomona College, and is in his second year as an MBA candidate at Stanford University Business School.

Wendy Adams was her sister's matron of honor. Ellie Reidy was the flower girl. Daniel Harding was best man for his brother. Ushers were Devin and Greg Rattray and Thomas Reidy.

On their honeymoon, the couple spent two weeks in Italy, followed by two weeks sailing in Croatia and visiting Montenegro and Bosnia. They spent the rest of the summer living in London, where the bridegroom had a summer internship.

They are now living on the Stanford campus.

Bastelier-Dunbar

Carol Forbes Bastelier and Gary J. Dunbar were married in a traditional Hawaiian ceremony Nov. 2 at Hanalai Bay, Princeville, on the island of Kauai.

The bride had resided in Portola Valley since 1971. She is a retired teacher of the Portola Valley and Palo Alto Unified school systems. In Portola Valley she was primarily a reading specialist. A graduate of the University of Michigan, she was formerly employed at the Linus Pauling Institute of Science and Medicine in Menlo Park.

She has three grown children, Christine, Peter and Michelle Bastelier.

The bridegroom is a semi-retired businessman from Fremont. He attended UC Berkeley and taught tennis in the Bay Area for many years before moving to Penn Valley in the Sierra foothills.

He has two daughters, Barbara Gibson and Debra Talwalkar.

Christine Bastelier was the matron of honor. The bride was also attended by two teacher colleagues, Julie Wallace and Elizabeth Scammahorn, who taught on the island of Kauai with her for several summers.

The newlyweds left for a golf vacation at Mauna Kean on the Island of Hawaii. They are now living at Lake Wildwood in Northern California.

Informational Meetings

Feb. 15 - Thu.

Mar. 7 - Wed.

4:45PM; RSVP

Feb. 21 - Wed.

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BIRTHS

MENLO PARK

- Jennifer and Christopher Scully, a son, Jan. 22, 2007, at Sequoia Hospital.
- Leslie Anglada and Nigel Ray, a son, Jan. 24, 2007, at Sequoia Hospital.

Post news and views on

town
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Laurel School wins award for composting

By Marion Softky
Almanac Staff Writer

After lunch, the trash cans at Laurel School in Atherton used to overflow with plates, cups, bags, boxes, utensils and uneaten food, says parent Alice Valentine of Menlo Park.

Now, cans are a quarter full. Kids drop their lunch leftovers in containers to be hauled off by Allied Waste to turn into compost. In nine weeks the crumbly earth comes back to enrich soil and gardens.

Laurel School's Zero Waste Lunch Program will be honored with an honorable mention at Sustainable San Mateo County's annual awards dinner at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 15, at the Clarion Hotel San Francisco Airport at 401E Millbrae Ave. in Millbrae. "The kids took to it," says Ms. Valentine, who helped start the



Jessyca Pulido disposes of her lunch leftovers in the compost can at Laurel.

recycle-your-lunch program at the Atherton school in 2005. "It's so simple. They are amazed that they can throw something away, and in nine weeks it's usable dirt."

The program is contagious. Ms. Valentine is getting calls about the program from other schools. And the pilot program at Laurel, a K-2 school, is graduating to Encinal, the grade 3-5 school in the Menlo Park City School District — along with third-grader Grace Wainscott and her mother Kimberly, also of Menlo Park.

"This week we begin at Encinal," says Ms. Wainscott. "By next year the whole district will have a zero-waste hot lunch program."

To make the program work, says Ms. Wainscott, the school needs to buy bio-degradable supplies — paper plates and cups, and utensils made not of plastic but of corn. "The cost is the same," she says. "And we encourage children to pack zero-waste lunches at home."

Ms. Wainscott is enthusiastic about the gardens where chil-

dren use their compost to help grow food and flowers. "From food, to compost, to herbs and flowers, it just completes the whole cycle for them," she says.

Other awards

Among other winners of awards from Sustainable San Mateo County are:

- Eleanor Williams-Curry of San Carlos has given much of her life to helping young girls and women succeed through a grant program, a radio program, and other civic activities.

- Rotary Floritas provides housing for low-income seniors through the San Mateo Rotary Club.

- Samaritan House in San Mateo provides food, shelter and a range of services to more than 12,000 low-income people each year.

- The city of Millbrae operates two programs: an energy co-generation facility that uses kitchen grease from local res-

taurants to help power its wastewater treatment plant; and a recycling and waste-prevention program.

A Green Building Award will be presented to the city of San Mateo for its new public library.

At the dinner, Sustainable San Mateo County will recognize the county manager and city managers. Managers from Menlo Park and Portola Valley have accepted so far. ■

INFORMATION

The eighth annual awards celebration for Sustainable San Mateo County will start at 6 p.m. with a no-host bar, silent auction and raffle preview, followed by the dinner program at 7. Former state senator Jackie Speier will be guest emcee. Single tickets start at \$75. For information and reservations, call 638-2323 by Feb. 9; or go to sustainablesanmateo.org.

Hearing set on Summit petition

A public hearing on a petition by Summit Preparatory Charter High School to obtain a five-year charter from the Sequoia Union High School District is set for Wednesday afternoon, Feb. 7, at Carlmont High School.

The meeting begins at 3:30 p.m. in the student union building at 1400 Alameda de las Pulgas in Belmont. The hearing is the last item on the agenda before a closed session at 5:30 p.m.

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Woodside Priory on verge of winning league title

The Woodside Priory boys' basketball team is two wins away from winning the school's first Private Schools Athletic League boys' basketball championship.

The Panthers (12-0, 19-3) stretched their winning streak to 13 games with a 57-50 win over Harker School on Feb. 3.

If Priory beats Fremont Christian on Tuesday, Feb. 6, the Panthers will clinch a share of the league title, and can win the crown outright with a win over Redwood Christian on Feb. 8.

Priory won a pair of league titles in the North Coast Section

— the last in 1992 — but never since joining the Central Coast Section.

Against visiting Harker, Hungarian exchange students George and Greg Somogyi led the Panthers with 15 and 13 points, respectively.

Guard Reggie Willhite added 11 points.

The win came two days after Priory easily beat Valley-Christian-Dublin 49-32 on Feb. 1.

Sacred Heart

The Panthers also won their anticipated rematch against Sacred Heart Prep, beating the

visiting Gators 62-47 on Jan. 30.

Earlier this season, the Panthers raised eyebrows after snapping the Gators' 78 league-game winning streak on Sacred Heart's home court.

Both sides were looking forward to the rematch, and with the win, Priory put itself in the driver's seat to win the league championship.

"A league title was one of our

goals," said Priory's second-year coach Al Klein. "Sacred Heart Prep has a great tradition, so any success we have has to come through Sacred Heart."

Against the Gators, Willhite tallied a game-high 28 points, had four steals and recorded two blocks in front of a noisy sell-out crowd.

"We really wanted this win to prove our first win against

Sacred Heart wasn't a fluke," said Willhite. "It was a great crowd. We won it for them."

The 7-foot-1 junior Greg Somogyi added 11 points, six rebounds and six blocked shots. Sophomore guard Nate Feldman added 13 points, including three first-half three-pointers.

— Palo Alto Weekly staff

Twins win gold, silver in ski orienting

This story was posted by Manfred Kopisch in the Sports category of Town Square at AlmanacNews.com. Check the posting for a picture of the twins.

Twelve-year-old twins Philipp and Daniel Kopisch finished first and second, respectively, in the U.S. Ski Orienteering Championship on Feb. 4.

The twins, who attend Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park, have shown an early interest in ori-

enteering and started as early as 4 years old to go into the forest with a map. Over the last four years, they have become more serious and won several titles in Bay Area orienteering championships.

In orienteering, "the thinking sport," you use a map and compass to navigate a course through unfamiliar terrain. For ski orienteering cross country, skis are used to move through the terrain and find all controls

on the specialized topo map.

Congratulations to the new U.S. champion in ski orienteering, Philipp Kopisch, and the silver medal winner, Daniel Kopisch.

M-A footballer wins scholarship

It's varsity football and a four-year scholarship to Oregon State University for Menlo-Atherton High School senior Jesse Fifita.

Jesse, who is expected to play defensive end at Oregon, plans to sign a letter of intent at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7, at M-A's Coach Parks field, said M-A Principal Denise Plante.

"Jesse is a good student, team leader, inspiration to M-A's team and school, an outstanding athlete and certainly deserves this great opportunity," Ms. Plante said.

With an average 7.5 tackles and 1.5 sacks per game in 2006-07, Jesse was also a student member of the group that interviewed M-A's new football coach, Robert Sykes. Mr. Sykes led the team to an 8 and 3 season and into the playoffs in the Central Coast league last year.

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To apply, e-mail cover letter and resume to: rbatti@AlmanacNews.com, or fax this information to Renee Batti at (650) 854-0677.

OBITUARIES

Dana Clark Peterson*International lawyer*

Memorial services for Dana Clark Peterson will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 10, at Christ Church, 815 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

Mr. Peterson, a 44-year resident of Portola Valley, died Dec. 31 at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Palo Alto. He was 73.

Mr. Peterson was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. At age 16 he entered Harvard University. After graduating in 1953, he became one of the youngest officer candidates in the U.S. Navy at that time. In 1954 he married Mary Levering Cornthwaite and began active duty as a communications officer in Naples, Italy, during the Korean War.

After five years of active duty he returned to the United States and attended law school at Stanford University. He became part of the legal team at Ampex Electronics in Redwood City. He traveled extensively during his business career and, while working for Ampex, lived with his family in Great Britain for six years.

He continued service in the Naval Reserves at Moffet Field, attaining the rank of captain. He served a total of 33 years.

Mr. Peterson was a member of the Peninsula Harvard Club. He was also active in the Republican party, getting out the vote in Portola Valley. He loved sailing and playing the clarinet and piano, and was an avid skier, say family members.

He is survived by his three sons, Kirtland Peterson of Catonsville, Maryland, Talbot Peterson of Palo Alto, and Travis Peterson of Tahoe City.

Donations in Mr. Peterson's

name may be made to Breast Cancer Research, Research at Stanford University Medical Center, 2700 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Charles Purnell*Retired attorney*

Family and friends are invited to a private memorial reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Monday, Feb. 19, at the Classic Residence by Hyatt, 620 Sand Hill Road in Palo Alto, for Charles Rea Purnell.

Mr. Purnell, a retired attorney from the firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Putnam LLP, died Jan. 18. He lived in Woodside for 42 years before moving to Palo Alto in 2005.

Mr. Purnell was born in Wellington, Kansas, and grew up in Wichita. He attended Wichita State University for three years. In 1943, he entered the U.S. Army through the ROTC program. After completing officers' school, he was assigned to the 86th Infantry Division and served with it until the end of World War II, ending with the rank of captain. He served in Europe as a rifle company platoon leader and in the Philippines as a company commander. He was married to his wife, Jane, in 1945.

After the war he graduated from Stanford University and Stanford Law School, where he was editor of the Stanford Law Review and a member of the Order of the Coif.

Upon graduation, he joined the San Francisco law firm of Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro (now Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Putnam LLP), where he worked until his retirement. During his first 20 years at Pillsbury, he practiced business and real estate law. In the early 1970s, he founded Pillsbury Environmental Law Group. Under his leadership, the group represented a number of the nation's largest companies, many in the petroleum industry. Today the group consists of 50 attorneys and practices throughout the

United States.

The Purnells traveled extensively and lived in Japan during the 1950s when Mr. Purnell was recalled during the Korean War. He was an accomplished bridge player and student of genealogy, tracing his ancestors back to Maryland in the early 1600s, say family members.

Mr. Purnell is survived by his wife of 62 years, Jane; sons Charles Christy Purnell of Lakeland, Florida, Bradley Mills Purnell of Acampo, California, and Whitney George Purnell of Redwood City; a brother, George Purnell of Garden City, Kansas; a sister, Jacqueline Burks of Greenwood Village, Colorado; and two grandchildren.

In deference to Mr. Purnell's wishes, no funeral is planned. Memorials may be made to the Pulmonary Rehabilitation Fund, c/o Sequoia Hospital Foundation, 170 Alameda de las Pulgas, Redwood City, CA 94062.

Richard Whitehead*PG & E automotive engineer*

A memorial service for Warren Richard Whitehead of Menlo Park will be held at 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 9, at Portola Valley Presbyterian Church, 945 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

Mr. Whitehead, a longtime resident of Menlo Park, died peacefully at home on Jan. 18. He was 85.

Mr. Whitehead was born in San Pedro. He served in World War II as a radio technician aboard the Henry A. Wiley destroyer. On his return, he attended UC Berkeley, where he lettered in several sports including cross country, tennis and crew. He graduated from UC Berkeley with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering.

In 1953 he married Mary Samhoff, and they settled in Menlo Park. He began working for Pacific Gas & Electric in 1954 and continued working for the company for the next 50 years.

POLICE CALLS

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

ATHERTON**Grand theft reports:**

- Air compressor stolen from construction site, 100 block of Selby Lane, Jan. 29.
- Wedding ring stolen from purse, first block of Valparaiso Avenue, Jan. 31.
- Antique table worth between \$10,000 and \$20,000 stolen sometime over last 18 months, 200 block of Park Lane, Feb. 1.

MENLO PARK**Stolen vehicle report:**

- White 1997 Landrover Discovery, 200 block of Haight Street, Jan. 19.

Burglary reports:

- Computer equipment stolen from residence, Regal Court, Jan. 31.
- Cell phone stolen from residence, Iris Lane, Feb. 1.

Auto burglary report: Wiring damaged under dash of vehicle, 800 block

of Coleman Avenue, Jan. 27.

Grand theft reports:

- iPod, \$70 in cash and camera stolen from backpack, 1300 block of Willow Road, Jan. 29.
 - Embezzlement of \$400 in used materials, Brilliant Homes on Jefferson Drive, Feb. 1.
- Fraud Reports:**
- Unauthorized use of checks, 1300 block of Hill Avenue, Jan. 26.
 - Checks stolen and used, 1300 block of Madera Avenue, Jan. 30.
 - False invoice received, 600 block of Hobart Street, Jan. 30.
 - Identity theft, 900 block of Siskiyou Drive, Jan. 31.
 - Unauthorized charges to account, 800 block of Coleman Avenue, Feb. 1.

WOODSIDE

Theft report: Credit card statement and three credit card checks in someone else's name, including one with forged signature, found in glove box of vehicle occupied by two youths, Woodside High School at 199 Churchill Ave., Jan. 24.

Burglary report: Fifty-inch flat-screen TV stolen from house under construction, 100 block of Hardwick Road, Jan. 26.

He served as an automotive engineer and, later, as an independent consultant, certifying large cranes and training PG&E personnel for the California state crane operators' examination.

An engineer, Mr. Whitehead could fix anything, say family members. He enjoyed woodworking, building clocks, bak-

ing bread, making jam, working on cars and vacationing with his family on Bass Lake.

He is survived by his three daughters, Mary Christina Owen, Sarah Tamsen McGinley, and Tracy Ann Whitehead Craig; and nine grandchildren. His wife, Mary, preceded him in death in 1997.



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JEAN L. GOITIA

Passed away peacefully in Menlo Park on Thursday, January 25, 2007 surrounded by her family. Dearly beloved wife of Anthony Goitia. Loving mother of Bruce Goitia. Cherished grandmother of Isabelle Alessandra Goitia Jensen. Also survived by daughter-in-law Kathleen Jensen.

A native of Westpoint, Iowa, Jean was a resident of San Mateo and Menlo Park for many years. She worked for the City of San Mateo and the Town of Hillsborough until her retirement. Her family wishes to thank her caregiver, Siosi Tonga, for her loving care during her long illness. Prayer services will be private. Donations in lieu of flowers may be made in her memory to The Alzheimer's Foundation of America on-line or at 322 Eighth Avenue, Sixth Floor, New York, NY, 10001.

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Voluntary subscriptions are available for delivery to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside at \$30 per year or \$50 for 2 years. Subscriptions by businesses or residents outside the area are \$50 for one year and \$80 for two years.



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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One-time surplus no free lunch

A mini-war of words over whether Menlo Park should impose the highest possible level of its new utility tax despite a \$3.7 million budget surplus last fiscal year should come to a head Tuesday, Feb. 6, when the council actually discusses the latest budget projections.

Advance copies of a report detailing those numbers show that despite the \$3.7 million surplus in the 2005-06 fiscal year, the city will incur a small deficit this year, and then show surpluses in the \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million range for the next eight years.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

Those estimates include paying in advance for retiree health care obligations beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, when the city will have to follow a new accounting law. Amortizing this obligation over a 20-year period will cost about \$655,000 a year, city finance officials predict.

Unfortunately for the anti-tax crowd, all the budget assumptions include the full utility tax assessment, and the additional tax income from the Rosewood Hotel, which is expected to open in September 2008. It also assumes that a new system to catch and fine drivers who run red lights will produce \$500,000 in 2007-08, and then back off to about \$300,000 a year until 2015-16.

Bottom line: Unless the city wants to live dangerously close to running a deficit, it will need the full utility tax throughout the period.

None of the projections included income from a new General Motors auto mall at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road,

which could be up and running — and producing sales tax revenue — as early as fiscal year 2008-09. Bringing back the tax benefit from auto sales, plus growing property tax revenues, could sway future councils to ease off on the utility tax, which could be scaled back at any time by a simple vote of the council.

The tax, which passed by a slim, 65-vote majority, is controversial, and certainly the council should reduce it if the city continues to accrue large budget surpluses.

But that day is not here yet, and we expect the council will follow the advice of staff, and impose the tax at the full level, beginning this April.

New hope for Park Theatre

The recent news that a Menlo Park resident wants to restore the Park Theatre on El Camino Real is very encouraging, as was the City Council's warm reception of the idea last week.

If Menlo Park resident Andy Duncan's plans are approved and a sale of the property from Howard Crittenden is consummated, the old movie house could have a new life as the new home of the Menlo Park Academy of Dance, which is partially owned by Mr. Duncan's mother.

Lack of parking and competition from multiplex theaters like the Century 20 in Redwood City are likely to rule out showing movies at the Park, at least for now. But the building, including its concession stands, ticket booth and neon sign, would be restored, and maybe sometime in the future could be a home for films again.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Delay startup of new utility tax

Editor:

Many neighbors and I urge the Menlo Park City Council to exercise its right and halt imposition of the utility user tax passed in November.

Delaying imposition of any new tax is the right decision because:

■ The justification for the tax, the budget deficit that threatens essential city services, no longer exists because the projected 2006 \$2 million deficit turned into an actual \$3.7 million surplus.

■ Even if the 2006 surplus may be due in part to some nonrecurring items and to some areas which were under-funded relative to long-term needs, it is not reason enough to impose a new tax when residents were asked to vote in favor of the tax only in order to prevent immediate cuts to essential services, which is now not an issue.

■ This tax was passed by a mere 65 votes, which is not a strong mandate to impose a new tax, particularly when you consider that neither the Measure K Committee nor the League of Women Voters informed residents of the good news from city staff that there would indeed be a surplus (not a deficit) this past year when they called residents before the



Stanford Archives

Our Regional Heritage

Jane and Leland Stanford are surrounded by well-wishers as they set the cornerstone for Stanford University in the late 1880s in this classic photo by San Jose photographer A.P. Hill.

elections in support of the tax.

Menlo Park residents should e-mail City Council members at city.council@menlopark.org if they want to prevent the imposition of the utility tax in April that will cost the average homeowner hundreds of dollars per year.

Nicole Lance
Laurel Avenue, Menlo Park

Park fund shouldn't pay for Measure J

Editor:

The \$8,000 cost of putting Measure J on the ballot last November will be charged to the Bayfront Park sinking fund, set up in 1987 by the members of the South County Garbage

District, which includes Menlo Park, Atherton, Belmont, East Palo Alto, Redwood City, San Carlos, Woodside and several unincorporated areas.

I believe Measure J was the stalking horse for the council campaigns of Mickie Winkler,

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Lee Duboc and John Boyle and not a genuine test of the residents' opinions about the development of Bayfront Park.

It was a stretch to believe that the previous council majority would, with a straight face, ask the voters to approve a plan for sports fields that would cost at a minimum \$17 million at a time when residents were told the city was suffering from a \$1.9 million budget deficit. If Measure K (the utility tax) costs are to be paid from the general fund, why is the Bayfront Park sinking fund being charged for Measure J?

My suggestion is that the bill from San Mateo County for \$8,000 be sent to the Winkler/Duboc/Boyle Political Action Committee for payment. The sinking fund, which was set up for the park's maintenance, has already been charged for the feasibility report about play fields at Bayfront Park.

Did the candidates believe that Measure J would pull together large numbers of parents and the election would be theirs? If so, they gambled and they lost. While Menlo Park residents do understand the value of children playing soccer, baseball and football, they also understand that a hilly passive recreation park overlooking the bay is Menlo Park's treasure that deserves to be protected, just as it is and just as the 1976 council designed.

Brielle Johnck
Central Avenue, Menlo Park

Auxiliary had long history at Allied Arts

Editor:

The Palo Alto Auxiliary to the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford is moving out of its longtime home at the Allied Arts Guild. Among the seven auxiliaries that contribute to the hospital (Charter is the first), ours ties for second oldest, founded over 75 years ago the same year as the San Francisco Auxiliary.

We have a long history of finding creative ways to support the hospital. We had a tiny beginning, selling fruit and flowers and making Della Robbia wreaths before we began serving luncheons and teas at the guild, where we also hosted weddings and sponsored fashion shows. We were involved at the hospital as well, serving as docents, making tote bags at Christmas for the children, and participating in Scouting. Many of you may remember our children singing in choirs to our Allied Arts Guild guests at Christmas.

One of the outstanding characteristics of this auxiliary has been

its dependability. To come week after week on time and work as a volunteer in a restaurant on all its tasks of cooking, arrangement, and serving demands a special kind of devotion. The depth of that devotion is revealed by some statistics: Between 1984 and 1995, we volunteered 50,000 hours per year, served 175 meals a day, and gave over \$100,000 every year to the hospital.

The Palo Alto Auxiliary has been dedicated to helping the children at the hospital for better than three-quarters of a century, and we look forward to continuing that tradition.

Sally Bush
Historian, Palo Alto Auxiliary

Who elects the citizen committees?

Editor:

Mr. Engel, in reference to your Guest Opinion last week, could you please tell us who the "we" are who are advocating for the "citizen" committees of Menlo Park that aren't appointed or elected, don't report to and aren't accountable to anyone?

This smacks of vigilantes running amok for their own personal agendas. I agree, the budget advisory committee was exemplary and one that could/should have some permanent status. But that committee was authorized by the City Council and reported to them.

Your statement, "Unlike the commissions, one purpose is to keep our council and administration honest and working on behalf of us, the voters," is accusatory without facts. In what way are council members and commissioners, who are also residents and voters, not working on behalf of the voters? And what is the specific complaint about our city staff?

If commissioners or council members don't agree with you or your agenda or don't appoint you to a commission, does that make them dishonest? Sorry, Mr. Engel, without specifics, your guest piece sounds like sour grapes for not being appointed to a commission in this last cycle.

Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street, Menlo Park

Looking for a return to good neighbors

Editor:

Neighborliness has long made living in Menlo Park desirable.

Neighbors cared about and respected each other. Residents

Valley near goal to pay for Town Center

Editor:

The community of Portola Valley is in the midst of its most important project in decades: the creation of a new Town Center.

When completed, it will be home to our library, community hall, activity rooms, playground, soccer and baseball/softball fields, tennis and all-sport courts and various trails. More importantly, it will be a special place for residents to enjoy for many generations to come.

This project is now at a critical juncture in its development. For the last two years, a private fundraising campaign has been undertaken by the Portola Valley Community Fund (PVCF). The PVCF has raised \$10.2 million to date from generous donations. With the town's \$3 million contribution, this means that a total of \$13.2 million is in place. So, almost 70 percent of the needed \$20 million is now secured.

Since the project is scheduled to start construction this spring, the balance of the funds needs to be raised quickly. Portola Valley's Town Council will vote March 28 on whether to build the entire

project as one phase, or to delay certain aspects, like the community hall, activity rooms, and some sporting facilities. Building in one phase is by far the most economical course of action, and will offer the speediest access to the new facilities, expected to be the latter months of 2008.

We are asking all residents to make a donation to our community project right now. Our goal is to raise an additional \$1.8 million by the time the Town Council makes its decision in March.

An additional benefit of making gifts before the end of March is that donations will be doubled due to a generous matching gift challenge from the TOSA Foundation.

Send your tax deductible donation to: Silicon Valley Community Foundation for the Portola Valley Community Fund, 1700 South El Camino Real, Suite 300, San Mateo 94402. For more information, visit our Web site at www.pvtowncenter.com.

Sally Ann Reiss, Jocelyn Swisher and Beth Rabuczewski, co-chairs, Portola Valley Community Fund



who proposed to remodel or rebuild sought to do so without impacting the property or privacy of their neighbors.

Neighborliness was ignored by the City Council majority preceding last November's election. Instead, the prevailing ethos was to allow homeowners to do anything they could get away with. This encouraged homeowners to adopt the attitude toward their neighbors of "I've got mine; get yours if you can."

Here's hoping a fresh council majority will act to revive neighborliness. Overlays are not enough. Over the long run we need ordinances that require residents to be sensitive to neighbors when they undertake rebuilding or remodeling projects. What the council can and should do more readily is to adopt a practice of denying variance applications when a proposed project fails to show respect for neighbors.

James R. Madison
Holly Avenue, Menlo Park

Reconsider the Jackling House issue

Editor:

A small group has used the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to make a "we" out of Woodside's many individuals.

The Jackling House is not a life-and-death issue, yet it has muddied the rights of the individual terribly. A Floridian who lived in the Jackling House many years ago and a few Woodside residents who are members of the

town's History Committee feel that their will must prevail. They feel the rights of a landowner must submit to their will. Why? Because, it's their wish.

Why the Jackling House? It's by an unimaginative architect, who parodied the old Spanish style. This building is not adobe, it has hollow walls, and it is an expansive sloppy work. The architect's better work, if you can call it that, is in Santa Barbara, where it should remain. Forcing a landowner to preserve a building because Nixon once used the toilet, or because it is considered distinct in an area outside of Santa Barbara, or that a silver baron built it, is an arbitrary designation.

The whole process has been an abuse of the CEQA act, and has been a waste of time and money for Woodside, the court and the landowner. In short, the Jackling House represents the arbitrary use of a law to force the landowner to do the bidding of authoritarians who think they have a right to force their will on others. It is shameful.

I don't know or work for the landowner. I don't have investments in the landowner's company, but I know when the law is being misused. I disagree strongly with the Almanac's editorial, the Woodside Historical Committee and that lady from Florida. Since I think, rather than feel, it seems obvious that no landowner should be forced to the whims of a few, who have no compunction in stretching the law to fit their arbitrary agenda.

I hope the readers of the Almanac and the editorial staff will reconsider their opinions in light of these considerations.

Christina A. Romano Puckett
Rocky Way, Woodside

Steve Jobs wealth not an issue

Editor:

I find it offensive and entirely out of line that in your editorials and the letters you publish regarding the Jackling House in Woodside, Steve Jobs' wealth is referred to so much in the arguments against demolition.

Regardless of one's opinion on the future of this property, there should be far better reasons to insist that the property be preserved than the fact that he can afford it.

John Clark
Woodside

Litigant's appointment to commission questioned

Editor:

The city of Menlo Park named Don Brawner "housing commissioner." The same Don Brawner (who) is suing the city to stop a housing project. Shouldn't he be the "non-housing commissioner"? Certainly the mayor and the majority council have forgotten their pledge promising less divisive government.

Pat White
Santa Cruz Avenue
Menlo Park



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