

SCHOOLS: Oak Knoll students rise to the challenges at Science Olympiad. Page 32

The Almanac

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READERS' CHOICE 2007



JUNE 20, 2007

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| VOL. 42 NO. 42

ALL ABOARD ?

Menlo Park residents say plans for commuter trains through their backyards are off track, but proponents insist they're good for the environment and regional transit.

— Page 14



Dreams Happen

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Catch the dragons at Hillview

Artist Peri Wong, Hillview Middle School seventh-grader, adds finishing touches to this year's brilliant mural, featuring all kinds of dragons. Watching her work is the green dragon created by eighth-grader Michael Farzi. Students in Terry McMahon's mural classes designed and painted the mural, which greets visitors at the entrance to the school library and wraps around the side of the large building that faces the courtyard of the Menlo Park school at 1100 Elder Ave.

Menlo Park

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On the cover

If the Dumbarton Rail project is approved, commuter trains could run along the Dumbarton rail line through Menlo Park as soon as 2012. Neighbors don't want diesel trains running near their homes, but proponents say the project provides much-needed public transportation. Photo by Veronica Weber. Story on **Page 14**.

THE ALMANAC (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Wednesday by Embarcadero Publishing Co., 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-4455. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County, the Almanac is delivered free to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. Voluntary subscriptions for \$30 per year or \$50 per 2 years are welcome from residents of the above circulation area. Subscription rates for businesses and for residents of other communities is \$50 per year and \$80 for two years. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, P.O. Box 7008, Menlo Park, CA 94026-7008. Copyright ©2006 by Embarcadero Publishing Co., All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION SALE

See inside for more details on page 10!

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Wines to drink with Asian Cuisines

If you eat Asian cuisine on a regular basis, you know that it can be difficult to find a wine that properly complements the powerful flavors that one usually finds in these dishes. Ingredients such as chili, garlic, lemongrass, lime, soy sauce, and fish sauce do not go well with oaky Chardonnays or Cabernet Sauvignons with high tannin content. Instead, it is better to go with bolder, more aromatic wines that can stand up to strong flavors. With this in mind, try reaching for a food-friendly Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Muscat, or Viognier. The characteristics that each of these wines have in common are floral aromas and fruit flavors that blend so well with Asian dishes.

At ROBERTS MARKET, we pride ourselves on our ability to help you find the perfect wine for any meal, including Asian cuisine. We feature a full selection of wines that will go perfectly with an Asian style meal, including Rieslings and Viogniers. We invite you to come in and discuss your next meal with us. We offer a wide variety of foods from all over the world. We are your source for specialty foods, including Indian, Asian, European, and other specialties.



HINT: Champagne (or any sparkling wine) pairs well with Asian cuisine.

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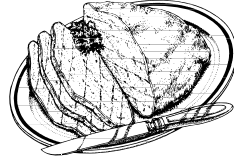
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 and candied walnuts tossed with Raspberry vinaigrette dressing 



WINE

Wine for Asian Cuisine


For the often spicy, peppery, or sweet character of Asian cuisine, think A.B.C., Anything But Chardonnay. Wines that are bright, fresh and devoid of oak work well with the complex flavors in Asian foods. Here are a few fun ideas:

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Director's departure prompts party

Ladera Community Church Preschool is bidding a fond farewell to longtime director Pam Krug with a community reception on Thursday, June 28, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Ms. Krug has led the preschool for 17 years, shepherding it through accreditation and expansion. She is retiring to Texas to be closer to her family. The party will be held at the church's Peabody Hall at 3300 Alpine Road.

Heartfelt response

Maybe the excitement was just too much to take. As young adults celebrated at Woodside High School's graduation on June 8, an elderly relative's life was saved, thanks to the quick actions of four people.

When a grandmother in the audience apparently experienced cardiac arrest, her daughter and campus aide Sekope Tagilala immediately began chest compression and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, according to Stephani Scott, chief executive of the Sequoia Healthcare District.

San Mateo County Sheriff's Deputy Owen Yoch and school health aide Diana Phillips took over the CPR efforts while lead custodian Jerome Clarke brought over the school's portable defibrillator, Ms. Scott said.

The shock restarted the woman's heart and she began breathing again. Along with the defibrillator, the presence of trained first responders was crucial to the woman's recovery, said Pamela Kurtzman, also with the health-care district.

Dinner and a show

A local theater group has put out a call for actors to portray James Folger II and architect Arthur Brown Jr. at a September fundraiser in Woodside. If you've never heard of either man, you probably haven't been paying attention to the campaign to restore the historic Folger Stable at Wunderlich Park.

The actors, who will be dressed in period costumes circa 1915, are to mingle with guests, expound upon the stable's history and perform a skit between dinner courses.

Power outages plague Sharon Heights

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff

Pacific Gas & Electric crews from around the Bay Area are converging on a failed section of power line at Sand Hill Circle in Menlo Park that's to blame for several blackouts in the Sharon Heights area and parts of the venture capital district of Sand Hill Road.

The latest outage started around 8 p.m. on a blisteringly hot Thursday, June 14, and lasted an hour.

It was the fourth power outage in a month, and the situation

has Sharon Heights residents hot under the collar.

"We've identified the problem, and it's totally unacceptable, so we've put all available crews on it," said PG&E spokeswoman Melissa Mooney, including crews from San Jose, San Francisco and Santa Cruz.

Repair work could take as long as 30 days, she said. As crews work on the power line, the electrical load is being shifted from other circuits and temporary overhead power lines have been set up. It's not a quick fix because crews want to get to the root of the problem,

she said.

"Our priority is to get safe, reliable power to customers when there are outages, but it has to be safe and reliable," Ms. Mooney said.

Exactly why the underground line failed is still unclear, but it is not due to nearby construction work on Stanford University's hotel project on Sand Hill Road at Interstate 280, Ms. Mooney said. "We'd be the first to say it if it was due to a third-party dig-in, but it's not," she pointed out.

People are frustrated, said Terry DeSelice, who lives in Sharon

Heights. Elderly residents of the community's many condominium complexes are forced to use the stairs every time the power goes out, she said.

And it's not just residents who are steamed. Sand Hill Road's venture capital firms are feeling the pain. Drew Lanza, a general partner at Morganthaler Ventures, told the Los Angeles Times that when the power goes out, VCs head into the parking lots with their handheld devices to do "the BlackBerry dance," twirling around as they search for a signal. ■

Former M-A principal to take over at Las Lomas Elementary district

■ Eric Hartwig starts as new superintendent on July 1

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Eric Hartwig, a former principal at Menlo-Atherton High School, is coming to the Las Lomas Elementary School District as the new superintendent.

Mr. Hartwig, who will take over July 1, has 33 years of education experience, including the past three years as director of student services for the Sequoia Union High School District and nine years as principal at M-A.

"His work at the Sequoia Union High School District was varied enough to give him what we felt was a solid grounding in administration," said Lee Anderson, Las Lomas district board president, who told the Almanac of Mr. Hartwig's appointment on June 12.

The full five-member school

board approved Mr. Hartwig's appointment in a unanimous vote Tuesday evening, June 12.

Mr. Hartwig will take over from Mary Ann Somerville, who headed the district from 1996 to 2006 and has been acting superintendent since April. Ms. Somerville returned after Shirley Martin, appointed in July 2006, resigned after 10 months to return to the Millbrae School District as superintendent.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Hartwig was an assistant principal in the San Mateo Union High School District and taught in the Newark Unified School District and at the University of California at Berkeley, Mr. Anderson said.

His M-A years may be a plus for Las Lomas students. "He already knows what their education future looks like," Mr. Anderson said. "He understands our community and shares our commitment to world-class education."

"While at Menlo-Atherton,

students from the Las Lomas District were always a source of pride for me as they distinguished themselves in academics, sports, community involvement and the creative arts," Mr. Hartwig said in a statement.

"I have also developed a deep admiration for the commitment and energy Las Lomas District parents bring to education. Their involvement and eagerness to roll up their sleeves has been a huge contribution to Menlo-Atherton and the Sequoia District, and I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working together as the Las Lomas superintendent."

Mr. Hartwig's salary at Las



File photo by Carol Ivie

Eric Hartwig, former principal at Menlo-Atherton High School, has accepted a job as superintendent of the Las Lomas Elementary School District.

Lomas will be \$160,000, Mr. Anderson said. "It's a salary that we felt comfortable with for the position and that we feel comfortable paying to Eric," Mr. Anderson said. ■

Council denies dog-walkers access to rural trails

■ Proposed new loop for dog-walkers is located away from easy access.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Representative government is certain to be a pain to some of the people some of the time, and perhaps most predictably when the issue is the exercising of dogs.

That issue was taken up —

again — last week by the Portola Valley Town Council, and the council's decision not to reconsider the nature-preserve-like rules that ban dogs from Coalmine Ridge hiking trails has undoubtedly caused some pain in the town's dog-walking community.

The Coalmine Ridge trails are a rural 6-mile stretch of the town's

36-mile trail system, most of which allows leashed dogs.

At the same meeting, on June 13, the council also approved a new loop trail for dog walkers, but it is high up in a remote part of the ridge.

Dogs were formally banned from Ridge trails in 2000 and informally since the 1970s. But a persistent

dog-walking community tried to establish facts on the ground by walking dogs there anyway. They claim they're continuing a practice begun before preservation-minded homeowners took over common ownership of the heavily wooded 450-acre parcel now known as the

See **DOG-WALKERS**, page 8

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Charlotte Anderson: Noted gardener and community leader

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

Charlotte Anderson, noted gardener, community leader and volunteer in Portola Valley for more than 50 years, died unexpectedly Sunday evening, June 10, at The Sequoias in Portola Valley. She was 82.

All last week, the shock of her death rippled through Portola Valley, where she and her husband Bob, who died just last January, helped found the town and grow the community.

While Mr. Anderson helped found Christ Church and served in town government for 40 years, Mrs. Anderson also cultivated many fields in the community: church, school, Filoli, the Stanford Art Museum, and — above all — gardening and flower arranging.

“Charlotte touched so many people’s lives,” said Sandy Patterson, her former next-door neighbor on Stonegate Road. “She had a sense of inclusion; she always wanted people to join in.”

Charlotte Anderson — she was an Anderson, too — was born in San Francisco, but her family soon moved to Yuba City, where her father had a business selling agricultural machinery. They spent happy summers at the family cabin at Lake Tahoe.

Charlotte attended local schools “and was always valedictorian,” said her sister, Judy Falconer, also of Portola Valley. Later she attended Stanford, graduating in 1946 with a degree in social sciences and history.

At Stanford she met a dashing Navy pilot named Bob Anderson. They were married right after he graduated in 1947.

57 years in Portola Valley

By 1949, the young couple moved to Portola Valley, bought the first lot on Stonegate Road for \$3,000, and started building their house. In 1951 they moved into the house, where they lived for 45 years. They moved to The Sequoias retirement complex in 1996.

Both Bob and Charlotte Anderson remained engaged in the community for the rest of their lives. They were among the families founding Christ Church. Mr. Anderson was ordained deacon in 1960; Mrs. Anderson ran the rummage sale and sang in the choir.

“She loved the church; it was a huge part of her life,” said longtime friend Ellie Gardner.

Over the years, Mrs. Anderson’s passion for gardening and flowers enriched the community. She started a special garden at Christ Church; later the cutting garden at



Courtesy, The Sequoias

Charlotte Anderson worked and shared Charlotte’s Garden at The Sequoias for more than 10 years.

OBITUARY

The Sequoias became Charlotte’s Garden.

She was a permanent horticultural judge for the Garden Club of America, and traveled around the country. She also led a flower-arranging group, and was one of the original docents in the gardens at Filoli.

Her passion for flowers spilled over into Town Hall briefly when she asked the town to allow her to build an 8-foot-high fence to stop the deer from munching her flowers. No go; she was turned down.

Besides flowers, Mrs. Anderson spread her efforts throughout the community. Her daughter, Sally Anderson of Sebastopol, noted she started the first school library at Portola Valley School, and cataloged the books for the library. At one time she was president of the PTA.

Mrs. Anderson loved history and antiquities. “She loved Greece and Egypt; she traveled and studied,” said Mrs. Patterson. “She led

docent tours at the Stanford Art Museum long before it became the Cantor; she gave wonderful tours of Memorial Chapel and the Rodin Sculpture Garden.”

Mrs. Gardner remembers Mrs. Anderson as being vibrant, busy, down-to-earth, and no-nonsense. “She was a genuine person,” she said.

Mrs. Anderson is survived by her sister, Judy Falconer of Portola Valley; son Douglas Anderson and his wife Maggie of Auckland, New Zealand; daughter Sally Anderson of Sebastopol; son Bruce Anderson of San Luis Obispo; and one grandchild.

A memorial service for Mrs. Anderson is planned for Tuesday, July 31, at 3 p.m., at Christ Church, 815 Portola Road in Portola Valley. A reception will follow at Charlotte’s Garden.

The family suggests donations to the League to Save Lake Tahoe, 955 Emerald Bay Road, S. Lake Tahoe, CA 96150; or Christ Church Peace Garden; 815 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028. ■

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



How to choose a realtor

Q: We are undecided about which agent and real estate company to hire to sell our house. Do you have any suggestions that will help us make the right decision?

A: If home sellers don’t already have an agent they prefer doing business with, they will invite several real estate agents to make their “listing presentations”. You need someone who is familiar with your neighborhood and knowledgeable of the properties sold, the schools together with their test scores and rankings, building in process, etc.

Pay attention, because you will get varying opinions from the different agents. This is particularly true when

it comes to getting advice on the best asking price for your home. Realtors usually give a “comparative market analysis” (CMA) of the property based on past sales history of similar properties in your neighborhood. But, pricing real estate is not a science. It’s more of an art based on experience.

A CMA is an excellent starting point. Even a paid appraisal is still an opinion of value.

Therefore, the real estate question is, whose opinion do you trust? Be aware of someone who is attempting to “buy” your listing by suggesting an unrealistic price. Do your homework and thoroughly check references.

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



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The Almanac

Free trail work spurs increase in horse fee

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

WOODSIDE

An opportunity to get \$50,000-worth of labor to improve horse trails in town — for free — is behind a plan to increase Woodside's annual fee on horse owners by 43 percent, town officials said.

It appears likely that later this month the Woodside Town Council will adopt a \$50 per horse annual "trail user fee," up \$15 from the current charge of \$35.

Trail user fees are matched by town funds and go toward maintenance and improvement projects on Woodside's system of horse trails.

If Woodside can come up with \$50,000 to spend on its trails, the East Bay Conservation Corps will match it by donating \$50,000 worth of labor for trail projects, said Town Manager Susan George.

The higher fee would raise an estimated \$37,500 in the coming fiscal year, about \$11,000 more than last year. Including a matching contribution from the town's general fund, it would be enough to accept the Conservation Corps' offer.

"We think it's a great deal,"

Ms. George told the Woodside Town Council at its June 12 meeting.

As part of the deal, the town would also have to provide \$20,000 in materials, she said.

"It's a wonderful value, the money is being put to good use. Fifty dollars per year is low compared to the other costs associated with horse ownership," said Fentress Hall, the chair of the Woodside Trail Committee. "Fifteen dollars is not the cost of one bale of hay."

When a divided Trail Committee recently voted 5-4 to recommend the \$50 fee, they were unaware that the East Bay Conservation Corps' offer might be in jeopardy if they didn't approve it, said Ms. Hall. Most of the controversy was over how often trail user fees should be increased, and by how much, she said.

Council members indicated they would approve the higher horse fee at the June 26 meeting, when they are set to vote on the proposed two-year budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. ■

Whaler's Cove reopens to public thanks to POST

A cove south of Half Moon Bay that has been closed to the public for more than a decade is being reopened for the enjoyment of nature lovers and beachgoers.

Peninsula Open Space Trust purchased Whaler's Cove in May 2000 after the owner decided to build a nine-unit motel on the property and also erected a chain link fence blocking access to the beach, according to a statement from POST.

POST built recycled redwood stairs from the scenic bluff near California Coastal Trail down to the rocky beach making it accessible for the first time in 13 years.

Whaler's Cove has a unique past. Portuguese fishermen used the beach to haul catch, and timber was loaded and shipped to other parts of the world. Some historical remains can still be seen.

"It's hard to believe that access to the cove, where tide pools team with sea life and whales make their graceful migration, was nearly closed forever when

the previous owner posted 'No Trespassing' signs and put up a fence obstructing the way to the beach," POST President Audrey Rust said. "Thanks to POST supporters, the motel and fence are gone and the beach at Whaler's Cove is now accessible to all who wish to enjoy it."

Located 20 miles south of Half Moon Bay on state Highway 1, Whaler's Cove is part of Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park and is owned and operated by California State Parks.

"A visit to Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park is inspiring. We hope visitors will enjoy the magnificent natural beauty of Whaler's Cove while exploring California's rich maritime history," Paul Keel, supervising ranger for California Coastal State Parks, said. "It's no surprise this park is home to many of the most frequently photographed scenic views on the San Mateo Coast. We are pleased that with POST's help we are able to reopen the beach at Whaler's Cove to the public."

— Bay City News Service



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

A "No Dogs" sign is posted at the beginning of Toyon Trail in Portola Valley.

Council denies dog-walkers trail access

DOG-WALKERS

continued from page 5

Portola Valley Ranch subdivision.

Councilman Steve Toben proposed putting the ban to a town-wide, up-or-down vote in a November referendum, but the five-member council rejected the proposal on 3 to 2 vote at last week's meeting.

The vote would have been advisory. An easement confers authority on the council to set trail rules.

Opposing the referendum were Mayor Ted Driscoll and Councilman Ed Davis — both of whom live on the Ranch — and Councilman Richard Merk. Councilwoman Maryann Moise Derwin joined Mr. Toben in supporting a referendum.

In a related action, the council unanimously approved a new loop trail allowing leashed dogs in the upper reaches of Coalmine Ridge. This uneasy compromise came out of a recent community discussion on the issue mediated by Mr. Toben and documented by Ms. Moise Derwin.

The new loop is remote and is expected to have limited parking, qualities that reflect a common desire to avoid creating a popular venue that could draw dog-walkers from out of town.

To enforce existing no-dogs rules on other Ridge trails, the council discussed adding several thousand dollars to the next budget to pay for periodic patrols by sheriff's deputies.

If past is prologue

Portola Valley has a recent history of contentious November elections notable for narrow margins of victory and advertis-

ing campaigns critics have called manipulative.

■ In 2003, voters overturned a council adjustment to zoning laws that would have allowed 15 to 20 new homes near the corner of Alpine and Portola roads. A late campaign mailer by the victors depicted monks' quarters on the private campus of Woodside Priory School as an ominous sign of the new zoning's impact in a town where one house per acre is the norm.

Ridge. "We are going to have every dog walker between Belmont and Santa Clara walking on our trails."

Mr. Toben told the Almanac he was not surprised by the defeat, but said he would like to have known the public's mind on the issue.

Pro and con

Residents Gene and Sue Chaput, long-time advocates of walking dogs on Coalmine Ridge trails, were disappointed in the council's decisions.

"I'm so sorry that we couldn't come to a creative compromise," Ms. Chaput told the council. "We still could work on this and make it work."

Her husband took a less diplomatic tack. "They had an agenda," he said of those supporting the no-dogs rules. "They did a George Bush: 'Stay the course, stay the course.' ... We'll have to do the right thing and have an initiative."

That course may not work out. The town attorney told the council that initiatives cannot be used to overturn enacted policies such as a trail use rule.

Resident Majda Jones urged the council to uphold Portola Valley's environmental reputation.

"I can't think of anything greener than to preserve 250 acres up there that are close to pristine," she said. "What we're trying to do is preserve the natural environment on this planet and that's what we're trying to do locally." ■



'I'm afraid I don't believe in legislation by ballot box.'

MAYOR TED DRISCOLL

■ In 2005, the town's utility users tax narrowly won reauthorization. Opponents had co-opted the issue to express anger at the council's refusal to seek voter-approved public funding for a new \$20 million public-building complex. With an active earthquake fault under the old Town Hall and liability insurance in jeopardy, the matter was too complex to involve the electorate, council members said.

A campaign to raise the money privately is still about \$3 million short, but Mayor Driscoll says he is confident of success.

Accuracy is sacrificed in yes-or-no elections, he added. "I'm afraid I don't believe in legislation by ballot box."

Mr. Merk predicted that a referendum would draw unwelcome attention to Coalmine

PV man killed by runaway car

A Portola Valley man killed Sunday after being crushed by a vehicle he was restoring has been identified as 64-year-old Rudolph Sefcik, the San Mateo County coroner's officer reported.

The incident occurred at

around 1:10 p.m. Sunday when a 1967 Pontiac GTO that was parked in the driveway of Mr. Sefcik's home, located in the 1000 block of Los Trancos Road in Portola Valley, became dislodged from its position and began to roll toward the road-

way, a CHP officer reported.

Mr. Sefcik was dragged down the steep driveway and then trapped beneath the car, according to the officer.

It remains unclear what caused the car to begin to roll down the driveway.

Menlo sets mega-meeting for June 19

■ Comment sought on El Camino, Bohannon project.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Anyone planning to watch the entirety of the Menlo Park City Council's June 19 meeting should be ready for a long night.

Meetings often stretch more than four hours, but the June 19 meeting is likely to last much longer, as council members tackle a long list of controversial topics and ask for public comment on several key issues.

Among the topics on the June 19 agenda:

- Figuring out how to go about revitalizing El Camino Real.
 - Setting the city's utility tax rate.
 - Balancing the 2007-08 fiscal year budget.
 - Discussing David Bohannon's proposal to build a hotel and office complex near the intersection of Marsh Road and U.S. 101.
- The meeting is scheduled to start

at 5 p.m. — not the usual 7 p.m. start time — in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

The meeting's early start will allow the council to hold a two-hour study session dedicated to El Camino Real before the regular session. The council is seeking input on what types of development should be considered for abandoned auto lots, and how the council can revitalize the look and feel of downtown Menlo Park.

The council is expected to continue discussion of revitalizing El Camino Real during the regular meeting, which starts at 7 p.m.; the topic is the first regular business item on the agenda. Council members are expected to decide how to use a combination of consultant work, public meetings and city staff hours to create a process that will eventually lead to a specific plan to revamp El Camino Real and the city's downtown area.

Council discussion on Mr. Bohannon's proposal to build an eight-story, 235-room hotel and 695,000 square feet of office space in east Menlo Park is scheduled as the night's last major topic.

The council will hold a scoping session on the proposal, asking for public input regarding what should be included in environmental studies of the project.

The project is proposed for two sites totaling 15 acres in Bohannon Industrial Park.

A Marriott hotel and associated athletic club, one office building and a five-story parking garage are planned for 110-190 Independence Drive. The hotel could be up and running by 2009.

Two more office buildings, two smaller parking garages and a 400-space parking lot are proposed for a site two blocks away, at 101-155 Constitution Drive. ■

Correction

A story in the June 13 issue of the Almanac about the Portola Valley School District reducing classroom minutes to allow teachers more time for planning had an error in it.

Under a pilot program that started in January, the net reduction in instructional time for grades 6-8 was reported as 1,109 minutes for "the entire school year." Actually, that was the reduction for half of the school year.

At its June 6 meeting, the school board voted to continue this program for the entire 2007-08 school year. For the entire year, the net reduction in instructional minutes (from the level prior to the adoption of the pilot program) will be 2,218 minutes (or 37 hours), school official said.

The school board is expected to discuss a revised proposal on classroom time during its meeting on Tuesday, June 19. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in Room 1001 at Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

Rebuilding Together group raises \$700,000 at auction

More than \$700,000 was raised at the Dreams Happen Playhouse Gala and Auction, held at the Stanford Shopping Center on June 2.

The money will help fund Rebuilding Together Peninsula, formerly Christmas in April, for up to two years, according to Greta Smoke, spokeswoman for the event.

The event included a catered evening gala that culminated in the live auction of 14 custom-designed playhouses and garden structures. In one single hour of the auction, \$439,500 was raised, Ms. Smoke said.

The highest bid came in for a design by Nibbi Brothers Associates, entitled, "Woodside Adventure." It drew \$56,000.

Guests were allowed to investigate and enjoy the play structures before bidding on them, which made it "a truly fun evening for all," said Seana O'Shaughnessy, Rebuilding Together Peninsula's executive director.

"The ultimate goal of Rebuilding Together Peninsula is to revitalize low-income homes and communities one project at a time," Ms. Smoke said.

The nonprofit organization does this by building volunteer partnerships to rehabilitate homes and community facilities of low-income, elderly, and disabled people "so they can live in warmth, safety, and independence," according to the group's Web site, rebuildingtogetherpeninsula.org.

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Menlo Park council to set utility tax rates on Tuesday

■ Interim city manager says city needs the tax for at least another year, but rates should be lowered to 2 percent.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

Four of five Menlo Park City Council members say they favor lowering the city's utility tax, and now the council is set to decide on the new rates.

At its meeting on Tuesday, June 19, the council plans to set the rates and adopt a budget for the 2007-08 fiscal year, which begins July 1. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the council chambers.

An increasing number of residents, including council members John Boyle and Richard Cline, say that with city's revenues rising, the council doesn't need the utility tax to balance the budget.

Councilmen Boyle and Cline said

the council should lower the two-tiered tax from the maximum rates — 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) — to zero.

The tax is projected to add about \$600,000 to the city's coffers from April 1, when it was enacted, to June 30, the end of the current fiscal year.

Interim City Manager Kent Steffens said the city can afford to lower the tax from the maximum rates, but it still needs the tax to pay for long-term, unbudgeted projects supported by the council. Those projects include studies of how to revitalize properties along El Camino Real; improving the

city's streets, sidewalks, and other infrastructure; and taking on green initiatives to curb global warming at the local level.

In a staff report, Mr. Steffens has recommended that the council lower the tax rates to 2 percent — a proposal supported by council members Kelly Fergusson and Heyward Robinson at the council's June 5 budget discussions.

Whatever adjustments are made to the tax rates, Mr. Steffens said, changes can't be implemented until Oct. 1, meaning businesses and residents will continue to pay the full tax rates through Sept. 30 — a timeline supported by Councilman Andy Cohen, who said the council should keep the tax at the maximum rates to ensure the city's financial projections are accurate.

Financial projections

Since the tax was approved by

voters in November, the city's financial projections have wavered, prompting some residents to question whether the tax was needed in the first place.

Fliers mailed to Menlo Park residents in support of the tax last fall said the city was facing long-term annual budget deficits of \$2.2 million a year — a financial shortfall that would prompt service reductions and fee increases.

But thanks to improving property- and sales-tax revenues, coupled with staff vacancies and just three months of revenue from the utility tax, the city is actually expected to have a surplus of \$250,000 in the 2006-07 fiscal year, which ends June 30.

Although the city's fiscal situation has drastically improved, Mr. Steffens said lowering the tax rates to 2 percent would provide the city a much-needed \$1.82 million for

the 2007-08 fiscal year — funds that could go toward hiring new employees.

Mr. Steffens has recommended the council approve funding to add six employees to the city's payroll.

The new positions — which include two police officers, a transportation planner, a community engagement specialist, and administrative support for the business development manager — would cost the city about \$665,000 a year.

If the council lowers the tax rate to 2 percent for utilities and communications, and approves hiring the new employees, the city is projected to fall about \$279,000 short of covering its costs for the 2007-08 fiscal year, Mr. Steffens said. If revenues do fall short, the city could make up the shortfall from its unallocated reserves. ■

NOTES

St. Raymond says goodbye to pastor

The parishioners of St. Raymond Catholic Church are invited to attend a barbecue after the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday, July 1, to say goodbye to pastor Father Patrick Michaels.

To make a reservation for the event, go to the church's Web site at www.straymondmp.org or call Patrick Havel at 322-3035.

DAR names board members

Louise Dederda of Menlo Park officiated at the June 18 installation of new executive board members of the Palo Alto chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Among the new board members are Shirley Stokes and Norma Irwin of Menlo Park, and Gina Stephenson of Woodside.

GOP group hosts science, tech adviser

George M. Scalise, a member

of President Bush's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, will give an after-dinner talk about "U.S. Innovation Challenges in a Global Economy" at Ming's Restaurant, 1700 Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 28.

Mr. Scalise is president of the Semiconductor Industry Association and formerly served as executive vice president of operations at Apple Computer.

The South Peninsula Area Republican Coalition and Lead 21 are sponsoring the event.

Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m., and the program at 7:30. The cost is \$25 for members and \$30 for others. For information or to make a reservation, call 917-9125 or e-mail reserve@sparcgo.org.

Kiwanis car show, faire in Redwood City

Great cars, plus arts, crafts, food and entertainment will be on hand

at the Kiwanis Car Show and Arts and Crafts Faire on Sunday, June 24, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Sequoia High School, Broadway and El Camino Real, in Redwood City.

People who want to show off their

cars can show up at 7 a.m. The first 200 car entrants will receive a dash plaque, goodie bag, and T-shirt. The fee is \$100.

The event, sponsored by the Woodside Terrace AM Kiwanis

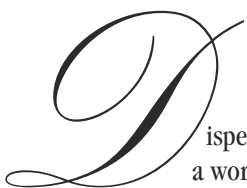
Club, will raise funds to support Kiwanis school and community projects. Entry is free to the public.

For information, call Loretta and Larry at 368-8212; or go to wtam-kiwanis.org.

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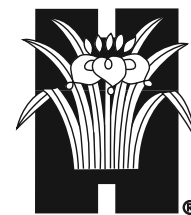
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For more information or to register for the workshop, call (650) 230-2900. No credit cards accepted.

Class fee is \$20.00 for pre-registration, or \$25.00 at the door. Refreshments will be provided.



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POLICE CALLS

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

ATHERTON

Fraud report: Fictitious use of bank account, 100 block of Victoria Drive, June 13.

Theft report: Wallet and cell phone stolen from guidance counselor at her office, Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, June 13.

MENLO PARK

Assault report: Victor Marin, 31, of Menlo Park, arrested on charges of assault with deadly weapon, 300 block of Market Place, June 9.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Satellite radio and golf clubs stolen from locked car overnight, 200 block of

Oakhurst Place, June 13.

■ Briefcase stolen from unlocked car, 1800 block of Oak Avenue, June 13.

■ Car window smashed and property stolen, Bayfront Park, June 13.

Fraud reports:

■ Unauthorized charges on credit card account, 1100 block of Castle Way, June 12.

■ Identity theft, 400 block of Laurel Street, June 12.

■ Identity theft, 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, June 13.

Robbery report: Two money pouches containing \$40 stolen from ice cream cart, Holbyrne Avenue and Ivy Drive, June 11.

WOODSIDE

Burglary report: Someone tried to pry open side door, 3000 block of Woodside Road, June 6.



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Apple moths are here; parts of local towns are quarantined

By Marion Softky
Almanac Staff Writer

Residents of large parts of South San Mateo County are being asked not to move greenery off their property — except for curbside yard-waste pickup — to help stop the spread of the light brown apple moth.

The voracious pest, which originates in Australia, threatens plants and crops wherever it is found. Its caterpillars dine on more than 250 plants, ranging from oak and redwood trees to agricultural crops to nursery stock and home gardens.

The moth has now turned up in nine Bay Area counties including San Mateo, where the first moth was discovered April 13 in Belmont. Since then 11 more moths have been trapped in Woodside, North San Mateo County, and Half Moon Bay, according to the county agriculture department.

To help stem the spread of the moth, the California Department of Food and Agriculture on June 6 established four quaran-

tine zones in San Mateo County surrounding moths that have been trapped. The zones range between 11 and 23 square miles.

The zone in South San Mateo County extends into Palo Alto and Santa Clara County where two more moths have been found.

The zone follows lines approximately a mile in radius from the location of each moth. "They are set along main transportation routes so that people can understand them," said Agricultural Commissioner Gail Raabe.

In South County, the quarantine boundaries follow sections of Alpine Road north from Arastradero Road, Westridge Drive, Portola Road, Old La Honda Road, Skyline Boulevard, Kings Mountain Road, Jefferson Avenue, Alameda de las Pulgas, Valparaiso Avenue, and El Camino Real into Palo Alto.

What to do

Under the quarantine, residents are asked not to remove plants, flowers, nuts or vegetables from their property or out of the quar-

antine zone. Green waste, such as plant clippings and leaves, should be placed in recycling containers or composted on site.

"Let's not have residents be part of the problem," Ms. Raabe said.

Meanwhile, the county is regularly inspecting nurseries, fruit stands, and the growers who sell at the county's 14 farmers markets. "The Webb Ranch is OK," Ms. Raabe said.

Ms. Raabe had this message for residents: "Our biggest fear is that someone will share backyard plums — or cuttings or cut flowers — with a cousin from Stockton. And maybe the plums carry eggs," she said. "Leave stuff on the property." ■

■ INFORMATION

For more information, call the county Agriculture Department at 363-4700. To see a map of the quarantine area enter these words in Google: apple moth quarantine map San Mateo County

Gunfire penetrates occupied MP home

■ No one injured; police search for suspect

Multiple gunshots struck and "traveled all the way through" an occupied residence in the Belle Haven area of Menlo Park at around 3 a.m. Thursday, June

14, Menlo Park Patrol Sgt. Ron Prickett has reported.

No one was injured in the shooting in the 700 block of Ivy Drive, he said, although the occupants of the residents and neighbors were awakened by the shots, which also struck a vehicle.

Police interviewed the occupants and neighbors and are searching for the suspect and a vehicle, Sgt. Prickett said.

Police ask that anyone with information about this shooting call Sgt. Prickett at 330-6300 or an anonymous tip hotline at 330-6395.

Car's U-turn starts Woodside wildfire

A botched attempt at a U-turn sparked a one-alarm grass fire in Woodside on Thursday afternoon, June 14.

No one was injured in the blaze that started when the vehicle went off the side of Mountain Home Road, said Battalion Chief Rick Lombardo of the Woodside Fire Protection District.

The accidental fire is being blamed on the car's catalytic converter sparking dry grass along the side of the road. The only casualties were the car and a patch of wildland approximately 100 feet by 100 feet in area, Mr. Lombardo said.

"We are lucky we got a good jump on it, although we did lose the vehicle," he said. "It's just a lesson learned — keep your vehicle out of wildland areas. Catalytic converters can get awfully hot."

Three fire engines, a water tender and 14 firefighters responded to the blaze, which was under control in about half an hour, Mr. Lombardo said.

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All aboard?



The **Dumbarton rail line** in Redwood City, but plans are moving forward connecting Menlo Park and Redwood City.

Menlo Park residents say plans for commuter trains through their backyards are off track, but proponents insist they're good for the environment and regional transit

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'We're not saying no to transit in this corridor, we're just saying it needs to be done right. ... We're in favor of public transit, even if it's behind our neighborhoods, but it has to make sense.'

SUSAN ROBINSON, RESIDENT

SUBURBAN PARK
NEIGHBORHOOD

For Bay Area transit proponents, a new commuter train running across the Bay would be a dream come true.

That dream is moving closer to reality with Dumbarton Rail, a train service in the making since the 1980s that would transport several thousand East Bay residents across the old Dumbarton swing bridge. By late 2012, commuters could board trains that would dash over the Bay through East Palo Alto and Menlo Park before connecting to the Caltrain line in Redwood City and shooting up and down the Peninsula.

The old Dumbarton tracks, which run between Bay Road at U.S. 101 through Menlo Park, would be refurbished, and the swing bridge — unused since 1982 and damaged by a fire in 1998 — would be rebuilt.

The system would run 12 trains — six in the morning from the East Bay to the Peninsula, and six back to the East Bay at night.

Once the trains hit the Caltrain tracks, six would head north to San Francisco, and six would head south to San Jose.

The price tag is an estimated \$595 million, but transit proponents say it's worth it: The project would lead to a decrease in local traffic, ease auto congestion on the Dumbarton Bridge, and cut Bay Area greenhouse gas emissions.

Backyard impacts

But even though Menlo Park is waist-deep in a fervent push to address global warming at the local level and get people out of their cars, the city isn't on board Dumbarton Rail — not yet, at least.

The project triggers moans and groans from residents who live in the Lorelei Manor, Suburban Park and Belle Haven neighborhoods, many of whom have homes ranging from 40 feet to several hundred feet from the tracks.

Neighbors say the potential noise, vibration and air pollution generated by diesel trains rumbling some 40 feet from their bedroom windows would gravely

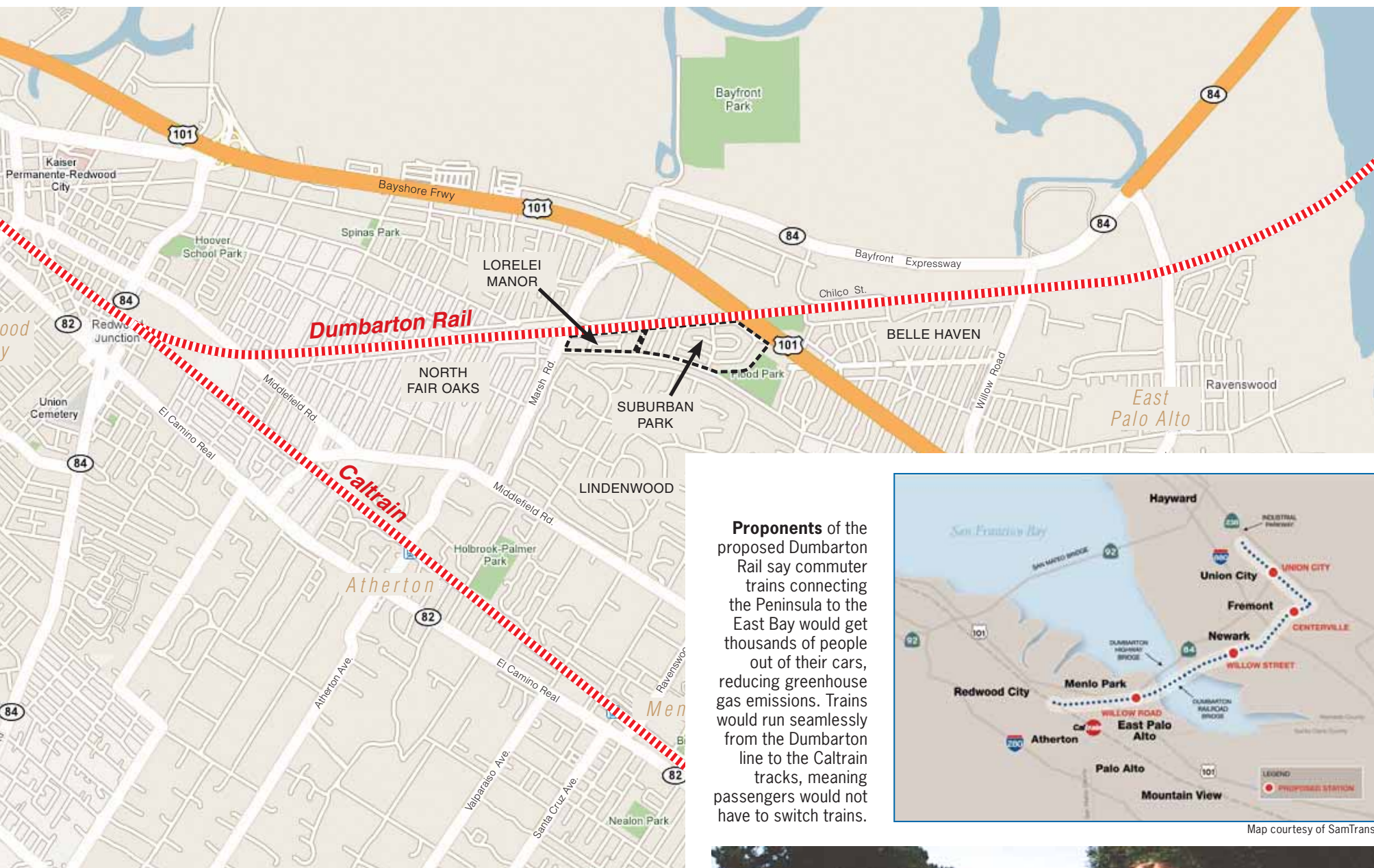
impact their property values and overall quality of life.

Neighbors have publicly called for light rail, electric trains, or even a bus system in place of heavy rail trains rumbling through Menlo Park, and have ticked off regional transportation advocates with their demands.

"Every time we have questions or concerns, we get labeled NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) residents that are trying to stop this project," said Susan Robinson, who lives in Suburban Park. "We're not saying no to transit in this corridor, we're just saying it needs to be done right. ... We're in favor of public transit, even if it's behind our neighborhoods, but it has to make sense."

Ms. Robinson represents the city on the Dumbarton Citizens Advisory Committee, a group of area residents studying the project, and longtime Dumbarton Rail supporters aren't thrilled with the critique Ms. Robinson and others have given the project.

"I think Menlo Park's residents' concerns aren't all that serious," said Art Lloyd of Portola Valley, a member of the Caltrain



Proponents of the proposed Dumbarton Rail say commuter trains connecting the Peninsula to the East Bay would get thousands of people out of their cars, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Trains would run seamlessly from the Dumbarton line to the Caltrain tracks, meaning passengers would not have to switch trains.



Map courtesy of SamTrans

Menlo Park is occasionally used by freight trains, but to have 12 commuter trains a day use the tracks, Redwood City to the East Bay.

Story by RORY BROWN
Almanac Staff Writer

• • • • •

Photos by VERONICA WEBER
Almanac Staff Photographer



Opponents of the project, such as Henry Riggs and Susan Robinson, say money should be put aside to address the impacts of diesel trains running near Menlo Park homes.

trains running along the tracks — something he said is a possibility, although Union Pacific Railroad has shown no interest in using the tracks to transport freight across the Bay.

Councilman John Boyle said all potential impacts on residents need to be looked at closely, especially if longer, louder, freight trains could be cutting through Menlo Park at all hours of the night.

“Anything we can do to get people out of their cars and onto public transit is a good thing, but without at least some minimal mitigations, we should do what we can to

block this,” Mr. Boyle said.

He noted that a Dumbarton station planned for Willow Road may draw businesses to Menlo Park.

Other council members have questioned whether the project would provide much in the way of benefits to Menlo Park.

“Menlo Park will take very large impacts, but look at the train configuration — Menlo Park isn’t going to benefit that much at all,” said Councilman Heyward Robinson. “Unless you’re working nights in Fremont,

Continued on next page

Joint Powers Board, one of two deciding bodies on the project. “The amount of pollutants is negligible compared to what cars will produce, and the impacts that should be addressed, will be addressed.”

Local impacts

But Menlo Park residents aren’t satisfied with the promise that state transit groups will address the impacts of trains on local neighborhoods — they want to see money put aside for mitigations such as sound walls, double-paned windows, quiet zones, or even grade separations.

Projected costs for the project have nearly doubled since 2004 from \$300 million to \$595 million due to ballooning construction and materials costs, leaving the state (which is funding the project through various transportation agencies) \$295 million short of paying for the project. The bulk of the funding that has been collected is from Regional Measure 2, a toll increase for Bay Area bridges passed in 2004.

Menlo Park neighbors are concerned that mitigating the impacts of the train on

surrounding neighborhoods won’t happen if the state doesn’t have the money.

“I don’t think they have a budget for a set of earplugs, (let alone) double-paned windows or sound walls,” said Jon Hazard, a Suburban Park resident. His concerns are shared by council members.

“There is a deficiency in getting people from the East Bay to the Peninsula,” said Councilman Richard Cline. “But if you’re not going to tell us where the money’s going to come from, then you’re off to a really bad start. It’s not going to get my support.”

Steve Minden, the project manager for Caltrain, said the potential impacts on Menlo Park homes will be analyzed in an environmental impact report that is under way.

“Neighbors have valid concerns, and those will be addressed,” Mr. Minden said. “If I had a house that was 40 feet from the tracks, I’m sure I’d be concerned too, but we will be doing noise and vibration studies that are tried and true.”

He noted that the environmental studies will include potential impacts of freight

Jensen Hauser

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**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON
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FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007/2008**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley will hold a public hearing on the Proposed Town Budget for Fiscal Year 2007/2008, Wednesday, June 27, 2007 at 8:00 pm, Historic Schoolhouse, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California.

Comments may be submitted in writing prior to the Town Council meeting or presented at the meeting. All interested persons are invited to appear before the Town Council at the time and place herein above mentioned.

The Proposed Town Budget for fiscal year 2007/2008 is available for viewing on the Town website at: www.portolavalley.net, as well as copies are available between 8:30 am – 1:00 pm; 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm at Portola Valley Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California and via mail by contacting Sharon Hanlon, Assistant Town Clerk at 650-851-1700 ext. 10.

Sharon Hanlon
Assistant Town Clerk
June 14, 2007

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING EVENT

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2007

For Menlo Park and Atherton Residents
Free Drop-off from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



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Sue Lempert: 'This project will get built'

Continued from previous page

Menlo Park residents won't be riding these trains."

Councilman Andy Cohen took Mr. Robinson's point a step further: He said he wouldn't support the project "under any circumstances" because the impacts outweigh the benefits.

Thinking regionally

But transit proponents say Menlo Park residents aren't considering the regional transit and environmental benefits when it comes to Dumbarton Rail, and if council members are serious about curbing global warming, they need to support the project.

"Here you have Menlo Park council members on a so-called progressive, environmentalist council, opposed to this project," said Sue Lempert, a former San Mateo councilwoman, and a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. "Part of being a City Council member is putting on your regional hat, and thinking about what's best for the broader community. ... I just hope they don't try and sabotage the project."

In the coming weeks, Menlo Park council members are expected to sign off on a list of concerns about the project that will be sent to Ms. Lempert and other members of the Dumbarton Policy Committee — a group of public officials assisting Caltrain in planning the project.

Mr. Robinson represents San Mateo County on the committee, and said it's clear that the bulk of the members are more concerned with getting the project built than how it will impact Menlo Park.

"I don't agree you have to support this hell or high water," he said. "If someone has questions about this project, it doesn't mean they don't care about transit or the environment. We have precious transit dollars that are available, and we have to use them wisely. We have to ask ourselves if this is really a good use of \$600 million."

But former Menlo Park councilman Steve Schmidt said residents and council members are "nit-picking" the project apart when they should be endorsing it since it meets the city's goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The city, he said, "should be actively supporting actual projects that give commuters an alternative to driving their cars to and through every day."

"Let's not study and split hairs in the hopes that Menlo Park will drive the visionaries away.



Train service could be up and running by 2012 if Dumbarton Rail is approved. A station would be built in Menlo Park near the intersection of the Dumbarton rail line and Willow Road.

'Here you have Menlo Park council members on a so-called progressive, environmentalist council, opposed to this project. Part of being a City Council member is putting on your regional hat, and thinking about what's best for the broader community. ... I just hope they don't try and sabotage the project.'

SUE LEMPERT, MEMBER

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

... You have to respect your constituents' views, but you can't go down impractical paths to satisfy them."

Ms. Lempert said she is sympathetic to Menlo Park residents' concerns, but they should trust the state to build a transit system that is good for Menlo Park and the greater Bay Area.

"When it comes to transportation projects, you always have objections, and you always have money problems, but eventually they always get done because they're important," she said. "Necessary projects get built and this will get built."

A greener train?

But amid all of the global warming talk, Menlo Park residents and council members have questioned why a "greener" system isn't proposed for Dumbarton Rail.

Caltrain is expected to start using electric trains by 2014, and residents said quieter, more

environmentally friendly electric trains should be considered for the Dumbarton line as well — a notion pushed by Mayor Kelly Fergusson.

"We deserve the best, ecological project possible," said Henry Riggs, a resident of the Lorelei Manor neighborhood. "I think we can get Dumbarton to be a lighter, more effective system."

Mr. Minden said any form of public transit has a significantly smaller environmental impact than forcing commuters to drive across the Dumbarton Bridge.

"The most-antiquated technology is still way better as far as impacts on the environment," he said. "It gets people out of their cars, and reduces air pollution and congestion."

Jonah Weinberg, a spokesman for Caltrain, said electrification isn't on the table due to high costs, but said it is being considered for farther down the road. He was unsure how much more electrification would cost, but noted diesel trains would still be compatible with the Caltrain tracks when electric trains start running up and down the Peninsula.

Residents have also questioned whether ridership projections prove the project is worth the \$600 million price tag.

A right-of-way dispute in the East Bay, coupled with high costs may restrict the project, when initially built, to reaching only as far Newark, rather than also running through Fremont and Union City.

If the train doesn't connect to Union City, there will be no direct connection to BART, lowering short- and long-term ridership projections.

Mr. Minden said under the Newark to Redwood City plan, 2,100 people are expected to take round trips on Dumbarton Rail each day if it opens by 2012, and that number would increase to 3,650 riders by 2030.

Under the full-length plan to connect to Union City, ridership would be 3,150 and 6,400 riders a day in 2012 and 2030, respectively, he said.

Mr. Weinberg said if the 25 percent ridership increase in Caltrain's service along the Peninsula over the past four years is any indication of things to come, ridership on Dumbarton Rail should also increase dramatically over time.

The fluctuating ridership numbers have Mr. Robinson concerned.

"If there aren't going to be as many people riding these trains as they thought, and they're still predicting with this that the Dumbarton Bridge will be congested, that would be a failure," he said. ▀



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Delgado convicted of misdemeanor, not felony, in triple fatality

Despite a verdict last week that he had argued against, a San Mateo County prosecutor was steadfast that 19-year-old Edith

Delgado has been held responsible for the triple-fatal crash she caused on U.S. 101 in Menlo Park. Ms. Delgado of Redwood

City was found not guilty of three counts of felony vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence, but guilty of misde-

meanor vehicular manslaughter, in causing the deaths of three people, including two members of the Tongan royal family.

"I'm not disappointed whatsoever," Deputy District Attorney Aaron Fitzgerald said stolidly.

"We alleged she was engaged in a speed contest with another vehicle," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "The jury listened to all the evidence and made a decision based on the evidence."

"They found Ms. Delgado criminally responsible for killing three people," he added. "That's what shouldn't be overlooked in this case. It wasn't merely an accident ... crimes took place."

The July 5 nighttime crash occurred when Ms. Delgado's white Mustang changed lanes and sideswiped a Ford Explorer carrying Tonga's Prince Tu'ipelehake, 54; Princess Kaimana Tu'ipelehake, 45; and their driver, Vinisia Hefa, 36. All three were killed when the Explorer lost control and flipped over on the highway.

Mr. Fitzgerald had alleged Ms. Delgado was speeding in excess of 80 mph and dangerously weaving in and out of traffic as she raced another vehicle, thought to have been a black Cadillac Escalade, before the crash.

During the nearly three-week trial, jurors heard from four independent eyewitnesses to the crash and a renowned accident reconstruction expert, all of whom seemed to validate the prosecution's account of events.

But after three days of intense, sometimes contentious deliberations, according to jury foreman Frank Johnson III, the 12 jurors ultimately were only able to agree that Ms. Delgado's behavior constituted a misdemeanor.

"Gross negligence calls for a person to have disregard for human life," Mr. Johnson said, adding that evidence Ms. Delgado slowed down before changing lanes helped convince them otherwise.

That the Escalade and its driver were never found also played into the jury's decision, Mr. Johnson said.

Defense attorney Randy Moore had argued that Ms. Delgado used poor judgment in her lane change, but was not grossly negligent.

A gross negligence conviction would have carried a sentence up to eight years in prison, but Ms. Delgado still faces the possibility of up to one year in county jail for each misdemeanor count. At the judge's discretion, they can be added together consecutively to total three years, according to Mr. Fitzgerald.

Sentencing is scheduled to take place Aug. 24 in Redwood City.

After the decision, Judge John Runde agreed to reduce Ms. Delgado's bail to \$40,000, to which Mr. Fitzgerald had no objection.

"We're getting her out (of jail) ... right now," Mr. Moore stated outside the courtroom as he rushed off.

— Bay City News Service

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Budget surpluses ahead for Portola Valley

■ Hearing set for June 27 on budget that reflects green priorities.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A new budget is ahead for Portola Valley and with it, the annual look at the town's spending priorities. Headaches are fewer with an expected surplus of \$900,000.

The expense side reflects the town's goal to lower greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing, among other things, a new electric car.

The Town Council paged through and commented on a draft \$14.7 million general-fund budget at its June 13 meeting. A new fiscal year begins July 1 and a public hearing and possible approval of a final budget by the council is scheduled for the June 27 council meeting.

The total budget — for both capital and operating expenses — is much higher than usual because of construction spending on a new library, Town Hall and community hall at Town Center, most of which is being funded by private donations.

Capital project donations and

spending aside, the town anticipates revenues of \$4.2 million in the year starting July 1 and spending of \$3.3 million on operations.

The \$900,000 difference reflects a projected \$420,000 increase in new property tax revenues — an annual boost due to a settlement with the county — and \$245,000 in interest on the millions of dollars in donations for the Town Center project.

"We're going to start running some significant surpluses in the near future," Mayor Ted Driscoll said, adding that the rate of the utility users tax may need to be looked at again "in the next year or two."

Green priorities

To carry things back and forth on the 11.2-acre Town Center site, the town has budgeted \$13,000 for an electric cart — a natural fit if the new Town Center complex includes parking spaces with outlets for plug-in vehicles.

In the planning stage — for this year or maybe next — is a plug-in hybrid or electric car for the building inspector at a tentative cost of \$30,000.

"The intent is really to support the green aspects of the Mayors proclamation," Town Administrator Angela Howard said, refer-

ring to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement that the council signed last September.

The agreement commits town officials to work with residents to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

Office supplies are an opportunity to go green, and the town's budget reflects that with a 20 percent increase, to \$24,000 from \$20,000, for the supplies. "Green goods cost more," Ms. Howard noted.

Another \$30,000 would be

set aside for tree maintenance. With heavy construction vehicles operating near heritage trees as the new Town Center complex is being built, "these trees are all going to be very stressed," Ms. Howard said.

Bikes, trails

Portola Valley roads are popular in the bicycling community. With a spate of serious accidents involving bicyclists in or near town recently, the council discussed adding \$5,000 to the

street striping and sign budget. The money would likely go to improving bike lanes.

The council also discussed setting aside \$5,000 for periodic Sheriff's Office patrols of Coalmine Ridge trails to discourage dog-walking where it is banned.

The cost to the town would be a minimum of \$600 a day for two deputies for four hours. "I think it will only take one or two people getting caught," Councilman Richard Merk said.

Councilman Ed Davis advised treading carefully and Mayor Ted Driscoll agreed. "It's like gasoline on flames," he said. ▀

NOTES

Lobbying law OK'd by supervisors

An ordinance aimed at making lobbying more transparent to the public was approved by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

The legislation, authored by Supervisor Rich Gordon, would require those who lobby county supervisors and their aides to register with the office of the County Counsel and file reports of their lobbying activities every six months, accord-

ing to Gordon's office.

The County Counsel's office is reviewing options on how to make lobbying records public, including possibly posting them online, said Andrew Berthelsen, a legislative aide to Gordon.

Supervisors also approved a \$100 registration fee for lobbyists.

— Bay City News Service

Workshop: How to use oral histories

A workshop on how to use oral histories for research and

documentation will be conducted Thursday, June 28, at the San Mateo County History Museum by Anne Grenn Saldinger, director of the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project.

The workshop will run from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Wells Fargo Learning Center at the museum, located at 2200 Broadway in downtown Redwood City. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$2 students and seniors. Advance reservations are required: Call Katrina Donovan at 299-0104, ext. 31.

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July 9: CHOCOLAT (1989) Cameroon/France, directed by Claire Denis	August 6: SOMETIMES IN APRIL (2005) Rwanda, directed by Raoul Peck
July 16: LUMUMBA (2000) Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo, directed by Raoul Peck	August 13: TSOTSI (2006) South Africa, directed by Gavin Hood

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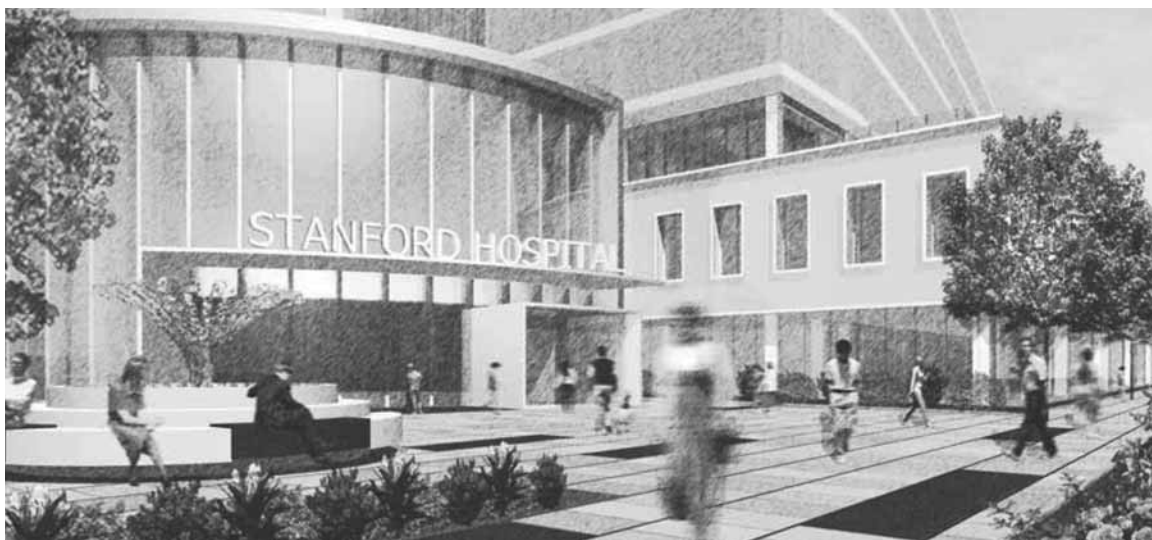
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Vice President, Planning, Design and Construction, Stanford Hospital & Clinics and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital



Las Lomitas district reserve fund returning to normal

■ Budget projection shows reserves at 10 percent.

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The Las Lomitas Elementary School District is apparently heading out of the danger zone in terms of its general fund reserve, the district's unallocated money set aside to deal with unanticipated funding cuts or other priorities that may arise.

The district's goal is a 10 percent reserve; the budget for the 12 month period beginning July 1 — which the Board of Trustees unanimously approved at its June 12 meeting — shows that goal being met: a \$1.5 million reserve for spending of \$15 million.

Last year at this time, the projected reserve was just 2 percent, in part due to a \$1.9 million expense in special-education funding and plans to hire six more teachers.

The reserve has dropped below 10 percent only once before in the last five years, to 7 percent in 2003-04. The return to double digits is a result of a projected income of \$15.6 million, an increase of 6.5 percent over last year.

The new \$311 parcel tax is expected to bring in about \$400,000 more than last year, said Business Manager De Modderman. The annual gift from the Las Lomitas Education Foundation is expected to rise 13 percent to \$1.2 million, and the district anticipates a 6.5 percent growth in property tax revenues, she said.

The foundation gift, as it is every year, is intended to help the district maintain small class sizes and offer a broad curriculum.

The only major new expense for the coming year is the hiring of two new teachers to meet a growth in enrollment of about 40 students at the K-3 Las Lomitas School. This growth rate is in line with the enrollment forecast the district commissioned in 2006, Ms. Modderman said.

\$13,000 per student

With a projected enrollment of about 1,130 in the two-school district for 2007-08, the Las Lomitas district will spend \$13,000 per student compared with \$8,500 statewide this year, according to the Department of Education.

Most districts, because their property tax revenues are insuf-

ficient, need assistance to reach the state-defined per-pupil spending level. To remedy that, the state provides supplemental funding that rises or falls as enrollment changes.

Because the Las Lomitas district receives property tax revenues that exceed the state's per-pupil spending, the district is automatically excluded from the enrollment-based supplemental funding program and instead gets to keep all of its revenues.

Las Lomitas and similar districts like to maintain sizable reserves because they don't receive the supplemental aid and are also vulnerable to drops in property tax revenues.

The state requires Las Lomitas to keep at least a 4 percent reserve, but a 2006 study by the consulting firm School Services

of California Corp. said that is not enough. The report recommends that districts that opt out of state assistance keep a 20 percent to 30 percent reserve — \$6 million to \$9 million in the case of the Las Lomitas district.

Such a large reserve "may be a reasonable long-term goal," Ms. Modderman said in a June 12 memo to the trustees, but the district's current reserves are at "a minimum prudent level." ■

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Fancy outhouse could hold up park's completion

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

At the gala grand opening of Barkley Fields and Park this fall, you can go to the park but you might not be able to go at the park.

Construction is proceeding apace on Woodside's first municipal park, located opposite the entrance to Canada College on Farm Hill Boulevard, with one exception: the \$300,000 restroom facility.

Town Manager Susan George has proposed offering a \$30,000 bonus to the contractor if the custom bathroom could be completed seven days early, to make sure it will be done in time for the community celebration at the park on Sept. 30.

However, Woodside Town Council members blanched at the thought of adding \$30,000 to the cost of the \$4.5 million park. Construction of the park, built on land donated by Noel Perry and family, is funded largely by community donations, but there is some town money in the mix.

"I can't in good conscience spend \$30,000 on a restroom," said Councilman Pete Sinclair, who argued vehemently against the bonus at the June 12 meeting. "If we have the opening ceremony and we have to put in porta-potties, that's OK."

According to Ms. George, the park was originally slated to get a prefab potty costing around \$200,000, but in September, town

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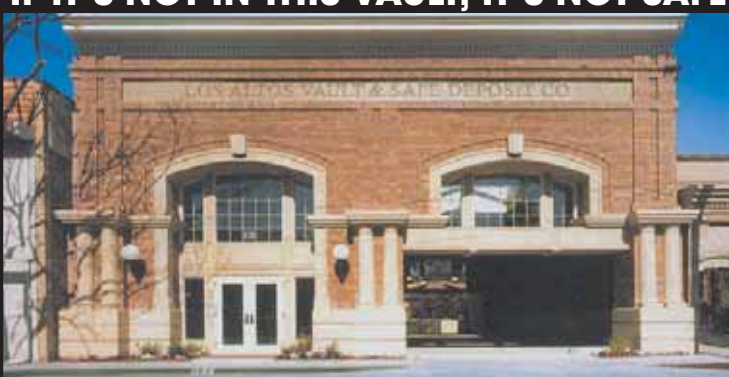
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See **OUTHOUSE**, page 22

Painted Portraits

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Woodside council balks at bathroom bonus

OUTHOUSE

continued from page 21

officials and donors opted to go with a more attractive, custom-designed john designed by a local architect working pro bono. However, the construction drawings were a long time coming, and as a result, there's a good chance the bathroom won't be done in time for the grand opening, she said.

The town expects to award the contract for the bathroom's construction this week, and building

it will be a 90-day project, she said. Cutting seven days from the project would ensure that the facilities would be in working order by Sept. 30, she said.

"Bathrooms are needed for the celebration, and I don't want construction going on while hundreds of people are crawling all over," explained Ms. George.

But council members just couldn't stomach the extra expense, so Ms. George vowed, "We will get it done by hook or by crook," without offer-

ing the bonus.

The council did agree to authorize an advance order of prefabricated steel needed to install the bathroom. Ms. George and Town Engineer Kent Dewell said the world-wide shortage of steel made it too risky to wait until the bathroom contract is awarded.

On a 6-0 vote, with Paul Goeld absent, the council authorized the \$72,000 steel contract, which will come out of the overall cost of the bathroom. ■

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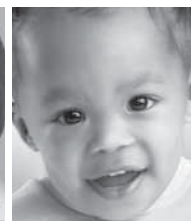
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Ever the adventurer, Chris captained his own sailboat crewed by his wife Barbara and brother-in-law Steve from Half Moon Bay to Kona in 1991. Chris was fortunate

enough to live out his dream and retire to the Big Island of Hawaii two years ago.

A loving father and husband, Chris passed away peacefully in the early morning hours of Tuesday June 12th after a brave battle with Pancreatic Cancer. He is survived by his soul mate & wife of 17 years Barbara, his three children Mya, Finn & Kit, brother Tom, sister Tarja, and mother-in-law Laura. Chris will also be missed by his pet boar Curly.

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Sports

NEWS OF LOCAL ATHLETES AND TEAM SPORTS

Tori raises vault record again

By Keith Peters
Palo Alto Weekly Staff

Castilleja graduate Tori Anthony of Woodside has raised the bar once again in the girls' pole vault, breaking her own national record during the Golden

West Invitational on June 10 at Folsom High near Sacramento.

Anthony's winning vault of 14-1 1/4 eclipsed her own national federation mark of 14-1 set at the CIF State Track and Field Championships a week earlier at Sacramento City College.

Anthony took 10 vaults in the competition, which annually attracts the top high school athletes from around the nation. She passed the first two heights before missing her opener at 12-5 1/2.

After clearing that height on her second attempt, Anthony passed at 12-9 1/2 and cleared 13-1 1/2 on her first attempt to

win the competition. She passed at 13-5 1/4 and made 13-9 1/4 on her first attempt.

After missing twice at 14-1 1/4, Anthony made a successful clearance for the national mark. She then took three attempts at 14-3 1/4, coming close on all three.

Anthony now has the top six performances in the nation this outdoor season.

Anthony, who is headed for UCLA on a scholarship this fall, next will compete at the USA Junior National Championships (June 21-14) and the U.S. National Championships (June 22-25), both in Indianapolis, Ind. ■

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Homefield tops Little League

Homefield Advantage won the Alpine/West Menlo Little League Majors Championship on Sunday, June 10, at Ford Field.

Homefield defeated Professional Insurance 3-2 in a tight, well played game by both teams, where Homefield's Nick Lange and Mikey Diekroeger battled Pros' Will Cabral and Adam Greenstein in a pitching duel.

Homefield finished 16-2 in the regular season and 3-0 in the post season Majors tournament. Homefield will go on to represent the Alpine/West Menlo Little League

in the Tournament of Champions this weekend and the July Fourth game against the Menlo-Atherton Little League Majors Champion.

Homefield players are Nick Lange, Colin Lockareff, Domenic Andrighetto, Zach Jones, Mikey Diekroeger, Bradley Knox, Ryan Galvin, Alex Andrighetto, Brennan Chess, Macklan Badger, Travis Jones and Matthew Hennefarth.

Coaches are Mark Lockareff, Domenic Andrighetto Sr., and Cameron Jones.

— Report by Mark Lockareff, a coach of Homefield Advantage.

Pirates edge Mariners in title game

The Menlo Atherton Little League's Pitching Machine Division held its championship game Sunday, June 3, at Burgess Park in Menlo Park.

The game was the result of a two-week, double-elimination tournament with the Mariners winning the American League and the Pirates, the National League.

The Mariners, coached by Geoff Ralston and Michael Fekete, started off fast with a 9-1 lead, but the Pirates, coached by Frank Stanbach and Alan Bogomilsky, came back in the bottom of the 6th inning to win 18-17.

— Report by Alan Bogomilsky, a Pirates coach.

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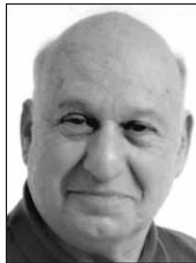
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■ OBITUARY

George F. Hexter, M.D.

Professor and child psychiatrist



George Hexter

A celebration of Dr. George Franklin Hexter's life will be held on Saturday, June 23, at Christ Episcopal Church, 815 Portola Road in Portola Valley, at 3 p.m. Dr. Hexter died of cancer at the Hospice Care Center of the VA Hospital in Palo Alto on May 23, his 79th birthday.

Born in Chicago, Dr. Hexter grew up in Southern California. He attended UCLA and, in his junior year, transferred to Lewis and Clark College in Portland, where he received a bachelor's degree.

He graduated from Stanford University School of Medicine in 1956 and completed residencies in adult and child psychiatry.

He served as a lieutenant and a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy from 1959 to 1962 and afterward was a fellow at the Child Study Center at Yale University.

In 1963 Dr. Hexter and his family returned to the area, living in Palo Alto and, later, Portola Valley. He taught in the Department of Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine while maintaining a private practice on the Peninsula.

In 1997, as clinical professor, emeritus, Dr. Hexter received an award for excellence in teaching from the graduating fellows in the school's Division of Child Psychiatry and Child Development.

An active member of both the California and Northern California psychiatric societies, Dr. Hexter was elected a Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association in 1992. At his bedside in April of this year, he received the President's Award for Meritorious Service from the California Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and the Northern California Regional Organization of Child Psychiatry.

Dr. Hexter was a respected colleague and a gifted teacher and mentor, friends said. They added that he played an important role in helping child psychiatry in California argue for public policy decisions regarding spending in the field of mental health.

Family members said he was known for his gentle humor and wit, especially the doggerel verses he composed for annual holidays.

He loved to travel and play poker, and spent his retirement years making ceramics and wood sculptures, a hobby he had enjoyed since adolescence.

He is survived by his wife, Priscilla Romans Hexter; daughters Madeleine Hexter of San Francisco and Melissa Hexter of San Carlos; a brother, Richard J. Hexter of Houston and two grandchildren.

Donations in his memory may be made to Pediatric-Psychiatry Services, Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, 400 Hamilton Ave., #340, Palo Alto, CA 94301.

■ BIRTHS

Emerald Hills

■ Lisa and Johan Lyssand, a daughter, May 30, at Sequoia Hospital.

Woodside

■ Dawn and Valery Axelrad, a daughter, May 31, at Sequoia Hospital.

Menlo Park

■ Christina and Edwin Zschau, a son. June 1, at Sequoia Hospital.

Menlo Park

■ Annabelle and Matthew Thomas, a son, June 5, at Sequoia Hospital.

LETTERS

Continued from page 27

stations (Union City BART and Fremont Centerville) may not connect to the Dumbarton rail bridge because required rights-of-way may not be acquired from Union Pacific. As I understand the situation, negotiations between the project leaders and Union Pacific have stopped for the time being. Funding for future phases is also not identified.

There is a very real possibility that the first phase will be the only implemented phase. Perhaps a few more East Bay commuters would drive to the Newark station if it is the only East Bay option but there will be no Menlo Park linkage to BART, Capital Corridor or ACE. Does this remove enough cars from the Dumbarton Bridge to have any substantial effect on traffic congestion? How does this help regional connectivity?

Frankly, as currently proposed, Menlo Park residents will bear the bulk of the negative impacts of this project and not receive much benefit. If this project is truly for the "regional good," then maybe it is appropriate to ask Menlo Park to suck it up (literally, unfortunately, in terms of diesel exhaust for the closest railroad neighbors). However, Menlo Park

should withhold its support until all impacts are understood, alternatives are fairly considered, mitigations are proposed and funded, and regional connectivity benefits are more clearly demonstrated.

Rich Ferrick
Bay Road, Menlo Park

A good decision about dogs on trails

Editor:

Last week the Town Council of Portola Valley made a green decision on trail use for Coalmine Ridge.

In the early 1970s, when energy and land conservation first became priorities, Portola Valley town planner George Mader suggested a revolutionary concept for the development of the 450 acres of the Bovet Land zoned for two acres per residence. By clustering the 200 homes on 1/2-acre lots and preserving over 300 acres in undisturbed open space on Coalmine Ridge, the natural scene has been largely preserved.

And, because Portola Valley Ranch has no lawns or fences, and allows only drought-resistant native California plants, habitat is preserved for wildlife. The council's decision to continue the ban on dogs entering

Coalmine Ridge preserves the green image our town represents. Thank you, council.

Marilyn J. Walter
Coyote Hill, Portola Valley



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Stanford University's COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & SAFETY

WILL HOLD A
PUBLIC MEETING ON
Wednesday, June 27, 2007
from 5:00 - 6:30 pm
Stanford Faculty Club -
Red Lounge

Professor Richard Luthy, Committee Chair, will describe the Committee's Charge and briefly review some of the activities of the Committee over the past year. Following reports on the status of health, safety, and environmental programs at Stanford and SLAC, there will be an opportunity for questions and comments from the public regarding health, safety, and environmental management concerns at the University or at SLAC.

The Committee welcomes oral and written comments. Written comments may be sent to the University Committee on Health and Safety, c/o EH&S, 480 Oak Road, Stanford, CA 94305-8007 or by email to lgibbs@stanford.edu



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to review the following item:

Public Hearing is set for July 10, 2007 on the Adoption of a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Menlo Park Authorizing Collection of a Regulatory Fee at Existing Rates to Implement the Local City of Menlo Park Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) for the Fiscal Year 2007-08.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California, will hold a Public Hearing on the Adoption of a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Menlo Park Authorizing Collection of a Regulatory Fee at Existing Rates to Implement the Local City of Menlo Park Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) for the Fiscal Year 2007-08.

The Public Hearing on this matter will be held in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park at 7:00 p.m., or as near as possible thereafter, on Tuesday, the 10th day of July, 2007, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon.

If you challenge this matter in court, you may be limited to raise only those issues you or someone else raised at the Public Hearing conducted for this project, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the Public Hearing.

DATED: June 14, 2007

SILVIA M. VONDERLINDEN
City Clerk

PUBLISHED: JUNE 20, 2007
JUNE 27, 2007

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to review the following item:

Public Hearing is set for July 10, 2007 on the Adoption of a Resolution Overruling Protests, Ordering the Improvements, Confirming the Diagram and Ordering the Levy and Collection of Assessments at the Existing Fee Rates for the Sidewalk Assessment and at a Two Percent Increase for the Tree Assessment for the City of Menlo Park Landscaping Assessment District for Fiscal Year 2007-2008.

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Published every Wednesday at
3525 Alameda de las Pulgas,
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 854-2626
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The Almanac, established in September, 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued November 9, 1969. 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.



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Council should hang on to tax

Anyone who studies municipal budget-making will come away wondering how any California city makes important financial decisions in June, long before knowing whether there was a surplus (profit) or deficit (loss) in the prior year.

For example, in Menlo Park it is difficult to know whether the City Council can afford to roll back what some residents believe

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

is an unnecessary utility tax, which passed by a slim margin in last November's election, unless it is known how much money is left over from fis-

cal year 2006-07. (A fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.) Unfortunately, the city's finance department won't have those numbers ready for months, so the council will have to make its important budget decision using only the first six months of the fiscal year and projections for the rest of the year.

The new utility tax was imposed April 1, and costs residents 3.5 percent of their water, gas and electricity bills and 2.5 percent of their landline phone, cell phone, cable TV and Internet service. When the tax was put on the ballot last year, voters were told that the city faced serious budget problems. But just before the election, on Oct. 26, then Mayor Nicholas Jellins issued a press release announcing that the city found an additional \$1.3 million in revenues that was not in the mix when the tax was proposed.

Coming when it did, the "found-money" disclosure probably changed some minds, but it was too late to inform the absentee voters who had already sent in their ballots. At the time, the city's finance director attributed the surplus to some one-time gains from unfilled staff positions, but the announcement quickly became a political football that is still bouncing today, in part due to the thin 65-vote margin of victory for the tax.

But whatever is said about the utility tax, the October disclosure of a surplus by a top official underlines how long it can take for a

city's finance department to know where its budget stands.

That's why it is important for the City Council to keep its options open on the utility tax at its meeting this Tuesday, June 19. Until council members know the bottom line for 2006-07, they should not preclude using the utility tax to help out in 2007-08. However, that does not rule out setting the tax rate at zero or 1 percent, if they see a fat surplus coming.

But discussion of what to do with the utility tax should not distract the council from more important decisions, like how many new employees will be hired next year and what new programs, if any, will be implemented, and how the city expects to pay for them. The council will also need to evaluate whether the city can expect any major revenue increases. At an earlier meeting, the council was looking at proposals to add several positions, including two police officers for traffic patrol, a transportation planner, a new staff member for the business development office and a community engagement specialist to improve public participation in council decisions and revamp the city's Web site.

Looking beyond this budget year, the city anticipates gaining \$600,000 from sales and hotel occupancy taxes from the new Rosewood Hotel on Sand Hill Road in 2008-09, \$1.2 million in 2009-10 and \$1.6 million in subsequent years when the hotel is in full operation. When the General Motors auto mall opens, estimated to be 2009-10, the deal GM struck with the city will bring in at least \$800,000 a year and more if other dealerships lease space at the mall, as anticipated.

If these and other new businesses materialize, including those likely to locate in the Derry project on Oak Grove Avenue and at the retail-office development on the site of the Cadillac dealership on El Camino Real, sales tax revenues should rise, and possibly alleviate the need for the utility tax. But unless the council is absolutely certain that it is looking at an ongoing surplus, the utility tax is a good tool to have on the shelf.

LETTERS
Our readers write

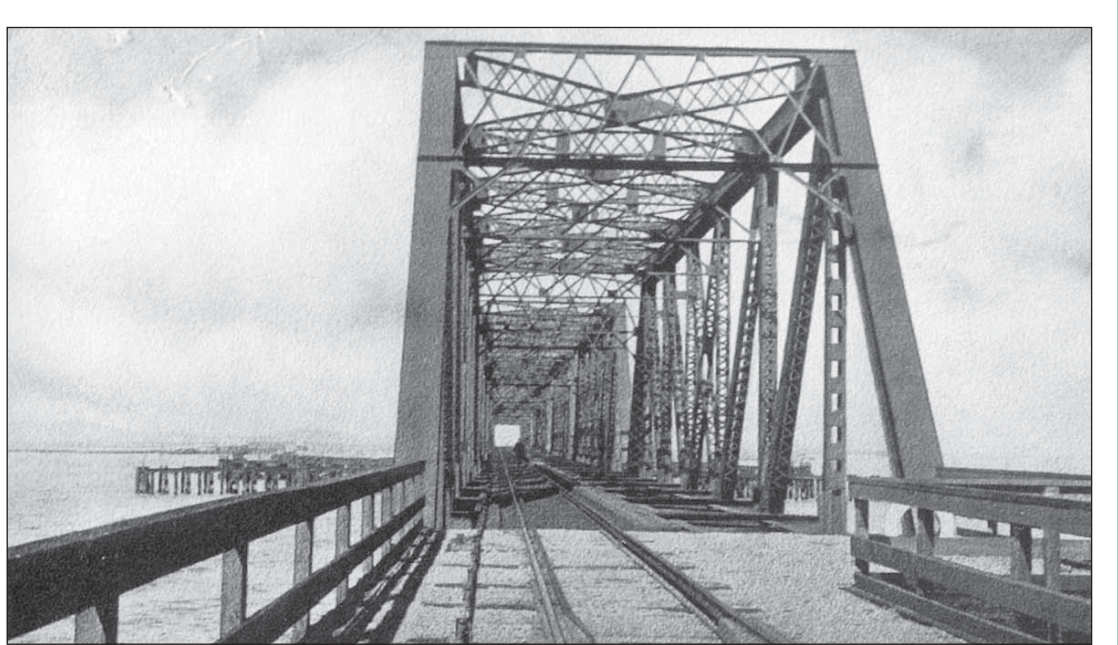
Sequoias residents support ambulance

(The following letter was addressed to the Board of Supervisors)

I am writing on behalf of the 320 residents of the Sequoias-Portola Valley to request your support in maintaining the Woodside Fire Protection District ambulance service at its current level.

We understand that the fire district receives \$177,000 annually from the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to support ambulance services provided by the district. This amount was set in 1988 when the JPA was established. Since that time the annual costs of maintaining that service have risen to some \$750,000. The district feels it can no longer afford this amount

See **LETTERS**, next page



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

This rail bridge, from Dumbarton Point in Fremont to Menlo Park, was completed in 1910 for \$3.5 million. The bridge cut the rail distance between San Francisco and Oakland by 26 miles. The total length of the structure was 1,390 feet, including a 310-foot center lift span. When open, clearance was 70 feet at high tide. The last train used the bridge in 1982, although an effort is under way to rebuild the bridge, at a cost of more than \$600 million.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

and is considering discontinuing this service.

As you may know the Sequoias-Portola Valley is a continuing care retirement community located on Portola Road in Portola Valley. We provide three levels of care — independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing. Most of our residents are over 80 years old and about 25 percent are over 90. They are susceptible to attacks that are often dependent upon rapid medical response to prevent life-threatening damage to their systems. This past year over 40 of our residents were transferred by ambulance to the emergency service at Stanford Medical Center. We are very concerned that the discontinuance of ambulance service by the district would result in inadequate response times to meet the needs of our residents, since the service would be provided from locations in the urban areas of the county.

We ask that you request the JPA to work cooperatively with the district to arrive at a more equitable distribution of its revenues so this vital service can be continued at current levels.

Robert Augsberger
President, Sequoias
Residents' Association

Why riding facing traffic won't work

Editor:

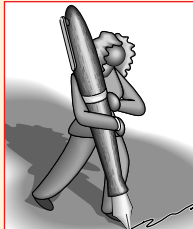
Reduce speed limit on Sand Hill Road

By Bud Hoffacker

I have been a resident of Woodside for more than 40 years and use Sand Hill Road almost daily.

In recent years the road has become a commute route for residents who live along Highway 84, and there is also more commercial traffic in the area. Bicyclists and runners are common and large horse trailers entering and leaving the Woodside horse park cause occasional congestion.

Sand Hill Road has a varied speed limit of 40 mph approaching the hill from either side that changes to 55 over the crest of the hill (about 0.75 mile), the only part of the road that has limited visibility due to the curve that it makes at the crest. A 55 mph limit on this three-quarter-mile stretch of road between Interstate 280 and Whiskey Hill Road has led to excessive speeds. A recent study showed an average speed of 58 mph, even though the approaches have a 40 mph limit.



GUEST
OPINION

I was the third person to arrive at the scene of the incident that ended cyclist Rodney Smith's life on the morning of May 25. He was struck from behind at the top of the hill in the curve of Sand Hill Road. He was brightly dressed and wearing a helmet. Upon careful inspection of the road, I found no brake track, faint or solid, at the scene. The 87-year-old driver of the car brought his car to a stop 150 yards farther down the road. The impact pushed in the right front of his car and knocked out the windshield.

There have been too many cycling fatalities in Woodside and Portola Valley in the past two years. The Almanac has already reported on the death of Thomas Maddox on Skyline Drive in Woodside in July 2005 and the light sentence meted out to the driver.

In 2005, Michelle Mazzei, a popular teacher at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park was struck and killed while bicycling on Woodside Road. The sentence in this case

was 90 days. In neither incident was the cyclist at fault. The vehicle code states that cars and drivers must share the road, something many drivers fail to observe as they pass cyclists and other slow-moving traffic with unsafe clearance and speed.

The Almanac's June 6 editorial discussed safety issues for cars and bicycles, but for Sand Hill Road, speed is the major issue. If this section of the road were in Woodside, Portola Valley or Menlo Park, the speed limit would be 40 mph, but according to the county map, this part of the road is under the jurisdiction of San Mateo County or Stanford University. I ask residents of all the surrounding towns to come together and request that the speed limit be reduced to 40 mph on this section of road. This does not require another study because the dangers are known.

My deepest sympathies go to Rodney Smith's family for their tragic loss. Our community has lost a caring citizen and neighbor.

Bud Hoffacker lives on La Honda Road in Woodside.

In last week's Almanac, Ron Wilson suggests that bicyclists would be safer if they rode facing traffic so they can bail out if they see trouble coming.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wilson misunderstands the nature of the problem. The problem is not to get the bicyclists to see the cars. It is to get the drivers to see the bicyclists. Run-over-from-behind crashes are a small percentage of the total,

according to the Federal Highway Administration, and often involve a severely impaired driver.

Most crashes occur at intersections, and at intersections drivers are looking for cars on the correct side of the road. Right-turning drivers always look to the left but rarely look to the right, and will generally not see wrong-way bicyclists. That is why wrong-way riding is the number-one cause of car-bike crashes,

and is the reason it is illegal in all states.

Richard Swent
Palo Alto, League of American
Bicyclists Certified Instructor

Now is not the time for Dumbarton Rail

Editor:

Having spent the last two years

looking closely at the Dumbarton Rail project, I would add two small words to the title of the recent guest editorial on Dumbarton Rail: it is "Not Yet" time to support Dumbarton Rail.

Neighbors of the rail extension are not expressing their concerns at the "11th hour." Some have attended advisory meetings and technical meetings over the last several years and many attended the November 2006 environmental scoping meetings. In fact, project leaders have just now formed a citizens' advisory panel that met for the first time late last month.

It is true that these officials have acknowledged the concerns voiced by former mayor Mary Jo Borak in 2000 as well as more recent comments from the neighborhood. However, mitigations have not yet been proposed by the project leaders to address valid concerns related to noise, vibration, diesel exhaust and possible freight use. To a neighbor of the track, this is not "nitpicking." If reasonable mitigations become "budget-busters," is it really a legitimate project?

In addition, the current proposal recommends a phased implementation. The first phase requires \$300 million to provide one station at Newark in the East Bay. Based on the most recent ridership estimates, this station is projected to have 235 morning entries and 235 evening exits. The estimated cost of \$300 million to provide transportation for 235 East Bay commuters does seem excessive (over \$1 million per daily rider).

The other two projected East Bay

Nothing to fear from Dumbarton rail

by Arthur L. Lloyd

The proposal to operate six trains in each direction on weekdays between Union City (or Newark) over the Dumbarton rail bridge is a practical plan whose time has come.

Three trains would operate to San Francisco and three to San Jose, westbound in the morning peak period; eastbound in the afternoon. It is practical, at the outset, to utilize Caltrain-type locomotives and cars and allow the trains to also supplement present service between Redwood Junction and San Francisco and San Jose.

When electrification comes to Caltrain, the line to Union City could be brought up to the electric motive power standard. The idea of using light rail (read street car) is not practical at this time. Light rail, though electrified, would require transfer at Redwood City and, in the transportation business, any time you ask passengers to change it is a loss of up to 50 percent of your potential ridership.

Light rail is more geared for all-day; seven-day operations with frequent headways. The potential ridership on the Dumbarton line is not there at present. Light rail also cannot carry the high numbers that a conventional commuter train can handle and

■ PANEL OF CONTRIBUTORS



Arthur L. Lloyd is a member of the Caltrain and SamTrans boards. He lives in Portola Valley and is also a member of the Almanac's Panel of Contributors.

is not as efficient, per passenger mile, from a labor standpoint. Also, there would be far more daily instances of crossing roadways with light rail than with the 12 times per day in the proposal. The crossing arms and red blinkers would be down every 15 or 20 minutes rather than 12 times per day under the proposal.

Another factor brought up by those who are fearful of this new proposal is whether or not freight service would be offered. The property is owned by San Mateo County. There is no real freight traffic at the present time. Union Pacific operates, over Caltrain track, two freight trains each way between South San Francisco and San Jose at night. One of these does perform some limited switching at Redwood Junction about 2 miles on the present line.

Since the line was built in 1914 there has

never been heavy freight traffic on the route. Southern Pacific operated up to two freight trains per day from the Bayshore Yard in San Francisco to West Oakland. These trains were called TBX or Trans Bay Extras, and hauled mainly freight to and from the Port of San Francisco. This traffic dried up as the Port of Oakland became the busy port for containers, so there was no more need for the TBX. That is why Southern Pacific gave up on the Dumbarton line in 1985.

A couple of additional freights have used the route over the years, making a total of four in each direction. One hauled gravel to and from Pleasanton and the other made an occasional run to and from Tracy. Passenger service was limited to one round-trip between Redwood City and Newark, and this was given up in 1917 during World War I. Extra passenger trains have been run on the route for special occasions, such as the every-other-year Big Game Special from Berkeley to Palo Alto, until the bridge was taken out of service. Your author also helped arrange several special trains during the 1950s for railroad buffs to and from San Joaquin Valley points.

The sensible and practical answer is to start the Dumbarton Rail service, as proposed. It is the most economical way to improve public transportation in the area.

Continued on page 25



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Remodeled 4-bedroom, two-story home with lots of high-tech features; highly regarded Las Lomas schools

**TOM
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Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed.