

STANFORD PROPOSES dumping 300,000 cubic yards of fill
on former Christmas tree farm in San Mateo County. Page 17

The Almanac

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

NOVEMBER 7, 2007

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Happy trails again

Jose Lainez, left, and Manuel Valdez load halters, blankets and other horse supplies donated by local equestrians into a trailer destined for horse owners in Southern California who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. Woodside resident Rebekah Witter's house served as a drop-off point, and Suzi Moore of Portola Valley drove the trailer to San Diego on Thursday, Nov. 1. An e-mail asking for help went out on Oct. 29, and by Halloween, the donations were overflowing from the garage, says Ms. Witter.

Atherton

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On the cover

Kyleanne Hunter of Atherton shocked her family when she signed up with the U.S. Marine Corps in 2002 and became a helicopter pilot. Just back from an eight-month tour of duty in Iraq, she talks about flying, coming under fire and why coming home can sometimes feel like a letdown. Photo courtesy of Capt. Kyleanne Hunter. Story begins on **Page 12**.

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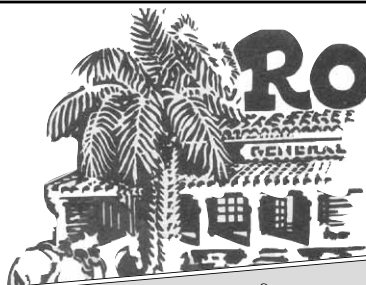


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WINE

Burgundy Wine Event

Roberts is hosting a wine tasting at 7:00pm, on Thursday, November 8th, at the Parkside Grill in Portola Valley. The event will feature '04 and '05 reds from Domaine Castagnier and whites from Fontaine-Gagnard. The price is \$25/person and includes hors d'oeuvres prepared by the restaurant. Space is limited, so please reserve yours today. Please contact John Akeley at 650.851.2640 or at john@robertsmarket.com to reserve a space.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Park Theater plan rejected by council members

■ Plan involved city buying the theater for \$2.2 million, and lessee restoring its movie theater appearance.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

A plan by Menlo Park resident Andy Duncan to have the city buy the Park Theatre building on El Camino Real and lease it back to him for a private dance studio has been rejected by the two councilmen appointed to negotiate with Mr. Duncan.

The plan now lacks support

from at least four of the five council members.

Under Mr. Duncan proposal, he would have restored the exterior and the lobby to reflect the building's former appearance as a movie theater. In 2002, owner Howard Crittenden evicted the former tenant, Landmark Theatres, and the building has been vacant since.

The cost of the Duncan plan to the city was too great, and

the public benefit too small, said Councilman Richard Cline, who along with Councilman Heyward Robinson was named to a subcommittee to negotiate with Mr. Duncan.

On Monday morning, in a brief interview, the lead supporter of the plan on the council, Mayor Kelly Fergusson, blamed the Almanac's coverage of the story for defeating the proposal.

Councilmen Cline and Robinson shot down the plan on Saturday, following a meeting with Atherton resident Jim Koch, who was helping Mr. Duncan

negotiate the deal.

Under Mr. Duncan's plan, the city would have bought the 60-year-old theater building for \$2.2 million and leased it for 55 years to a development entity owned by Mr. Duncan.

Under his proposal, his development entity would have paid the city \$800,000 upfront to lease the theater for the first 25 years for use by the Menlo Park Academy of Dance, co-owned by his mother, Sylvia Duncan. For the next 30 years of the 55-year lease, the development entity would pay the city \$70,000 a

■ Council members cut off criticism of Park Theatre plan. **Page 9**

year — unless the city bought out the lease.

"The problem was, we wanted more money upfront, and in return [Mr. Duncan] wanted a longer amount of time until the city could buy him out," Mr. Cline said. "We couldn't come up with a deal to allow the city to get public use of the theater anytime short of 15 to 20 years."

See **THEATRE**, page 8

Green light for school site plans

■ Architect moves toward design development, submission to the state for approval.

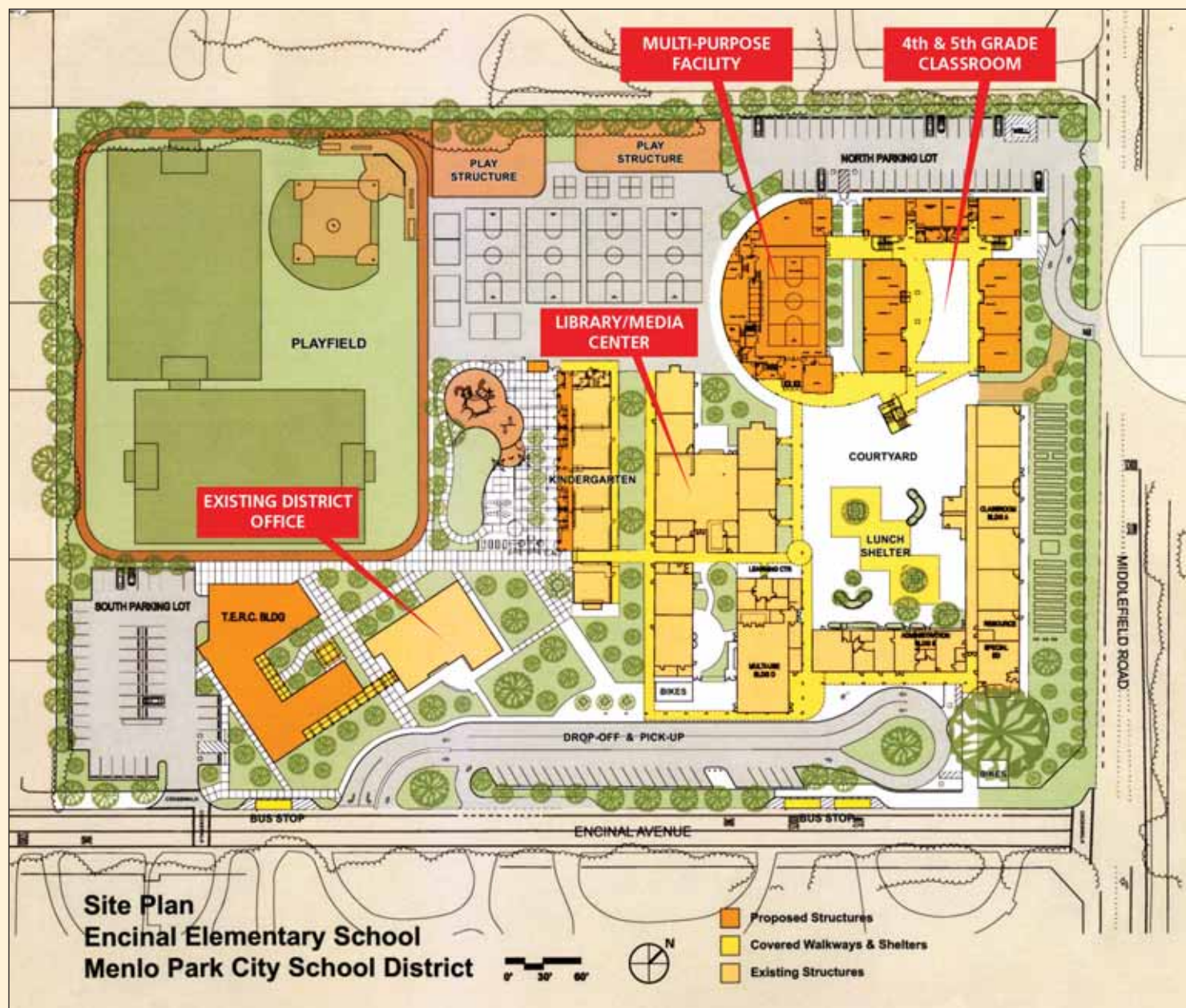
By **Marjorie Mader**
Almanac Staff Writer

Refined site plans for expanding facilities at both Laurel and Encinal elementary schools in Atherton were approved unanimously by trustees of the Menlo Park City School District at a special meeting Nov. 1.

They gave the go-ahead to architect Erwin Lee of Deems Lewis McKinley to proceed with design development and then submittal of the plans to the Division of the State Architect (DSA) for review and approval.

Ahmad Sheikholeslami, the district's facility manager, said the district also is completing its environmental review and traffic study at Encinal. The draft initial study will be published later this year for public review and comment.

"Based on existing conditions, a stoplight is needed



Menlo Park City School District/Deems Lewis McKinley

The Encinal School site plan includes a two-story classroom building for fourth and fifth grades (top right), close to Middlefield Road, and adjacent to a new multi-purpose facility. Work begins soon on a playground improvement project, which includes a running/jogging path around the playfield (left). A kindergarten play area will be ready next fall when Encinal welcomes kindergartens to the former F Wing, now being renovated.

See **ENCINAL**, page 8

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Fired finance director seeks to block investigation report

■ Johns says report on him is flawed; he denies allegations.

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

The murky details surrounding the unceremonious firing of Atherton Finance Director John Johns on Oct. 29 might be revealed to the public. Then again, they might not.

Town officials were poised to release this week a private investigator's report on allegations that Mr. Johns created a hostile work environment.

Mr. Johns is seeking a temporary restraining order preventing the release of a redacted version of the report to reporters who filed a public records act request for the document. A hearing is set in San Mateo County Superior Court on Tuesday afternoon, Nov. 6.

"I'm greatly concerned about material misstatements of fact and omissions within the report," Mr. Johns told the Almanac on Friday, Nov. 2. "That's why I retained legal counsel. I'd very much like to depart the town on amicable terms, but I have to look after my family's financial interests and my professional reputation."

Interim City Manager Wende Protzman said she could not comment, other than to say that Mr. Johns no longer works for the town.

Mr. Johns, the town's finance director since 2001, was put on paid administrative leave Aug. 29 after the town received complaints against him, including one from the Atherton Police Department.

Last week, he said he received a letter on Oct. 29 saying that he had been "released" from his employment with the town. The letter did not tell him why he had been fired, Mr. Johns told the Almanac.

He denied the allegations that he created a hostile work environment, and said he himself has been the victim of retaliation over his work to uncover improprieties in the building department and with employee expense accounts, including in the police department.

Sam Goodman, chair of the Atherton Audit Committee, continues to be a staunch supporter of Mr. Johns, calling Mr. John's treatment by the town "a travesty," and pointing to the improvement in Atherton's finances and annual audits during Mr. Johns' tenure as proof.

"The audit committee took a unanimous stand in praise of Mr. Johns' performance over the last six years, and that appraisal

hasn't changed," Mr. Goodman told the Almanac.

Mr. Goodman said he believes investigator Mary Topliff was charged with digging up dirt on Mr. Johns, rather than impartially investigating the hostile work environment charges. He said he knew of several members of the audit committee, both past and present, who are willing to contribute to a legal defense fund if Mr. Johns decides to sue the town for violating its whistleblower protection law.

Building department

Mr. Johns conducted a three-phase audit of the Atherton Building Department last year, resulting in a restructuring of that department after the retirement of Building Official Mike Hood. The scrutiny and resulting upheaval generated a great deal of outrage among frequent users of the building department, including Atherton residents, developers and contractors. As a result of Mr. Johns' audits, the City Council implemented a number of reforms and increased the building department's staff.

"I know that there were some hard feelings amongst a number of people who are connected with the town as a result of my Phases I, II and III audits of the building department," Mr. Johns said. "However, I am reluctant to speculate as to the extent that such feelings contributed to my departure."

Police ticket Johns

Besides the situation in the building department, it's clear that there is no love lost between Mr. Johns and the town's police chief, Bob Brennan. The two men have differing versions of an incident at town hall that occurred two days after Mr. Johns was suspended.

Mr. Johns says on Aug. 29 he returned the second of two laptops he had access to, after learning that it had been reported stolen in the police blotter.

"In an elevated voice (Chief Brennan) told me that I did not belong on the premises and that I was to leave immediately," Mr. Johns told the Almanac.

Mr. Johns said that Chief Brennan, in the company of three other police officers, instructed him to get into his car, start the engine, stop the engine, and produce his driver's license. Mr. Johns said he was surprised to learn that his license had expired a month before, a slipup he blames on having forgotten to notify the Department of Motor Vehicles of his change of address.

Chief Brennan said that Mr. Johns had been told in writing that one of the conditions of his suspension was that he was not allowed to return to the town administrative offices. He said he knew Mr. Johns' license had expired due to a routine background check he conducted when Mr. Johns was suspended.

When he reappeared on town property, Chief Brennan said he instructed Sgt. Eric Grimm to give Mr. Johns a citation when he got back into his car. He said he did not instruct Mr. Johns to start his engine.

"He did it of his own free will," Chief Brennan said. "He made the decision to drive here in a car without a license, and to get into that car."

The police also wrote up charges against Mr. Johns for trespassing, and sent them to the county District Attorney's Office, Chief Brennan said.

"The lesson here is, if you don't have a license, don't drive a car," he said.

The citation is a fix-it ticket, and Mr. Johns said he renewed his license that same day. However, he said the incident was an unnecessary show of force by police, and that being told to start his car was either entrapment or unlawful search and seizure.

Investigation reports

The report on Mr. Johns by Ms. Topliff, a San Francisco-based attorney who has done previous work for the town, isn't the only investigation that Atherton officials decided to release. Recent judicial decisions have cleared the way for a 2006 investigator's report on former Building Official Mike Hood to be released, said City Attorney Marc Hynes.

Another 2006 report into alleged misconduct by lower-level building department staff will not be released, Mr. Hynes said.

George Camerlengo, Mr. Johns' attorney, is set to appear in court to argue against the release of the report on Mr. Johns.

"We strongly disagree that disclosure of the investigative report is either mandated or permitted under the (public records) act. We believe that any such disclosure will result in irreparable harm to Mr. Johns and impermissibly violate his right to privacy," said Mr. Camerlengo in an e-mail to Atherton officials.

If the report on Mr. Johns is blocked, Mr. Hynes has said he'll seek the judge's guidance on whether to release the report on Mr. Hood. ■

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Is This an Awful Time to Sell?

Q: Dear Gloria, My husband and I would like to put our house on the market with the goal of selling and moving to be closer to our family in Michigan. We have found a house there we really like but the market is so depressed with all the bad news. Would this be a ridiculous time to make a move like this?

— Caroline W.

A: Dear Caroline, Your question brings up an excellent point, especially in regards to the state of our real estate market relative to other parts of the U.S. There continues to be a disconnect between what we read about, what the "talking heads" are saying and what really transpires here in our little area on the peninsula. We

are continuing to experience multiple offers on properties that are well-priced and show well. We had a listing in Atherton last week that actually had 7 offers, many from developers and went substantially over asking. The fact that developers are still active in the market shows confidence in the continuing resilience of our housing market. So, in fact, this situation could be most favorable for you with a house to sell in what continues to be a "hot market" and buying in to an area which is undoubtedly one of the hardest hit areas in the country.

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Green light for school site plans

ENCINAL

continued from page 5

today at the intersection of Encinal Avenue and Middlefield Road,” according to a study conducted by Atherton and Menlo Park, said board President Terry Thygesen. “It will be needed even more,” she said, when Encinal grows in the next three years from a grade 3-5 school with 400 students into a K-5 school with some 700 students.

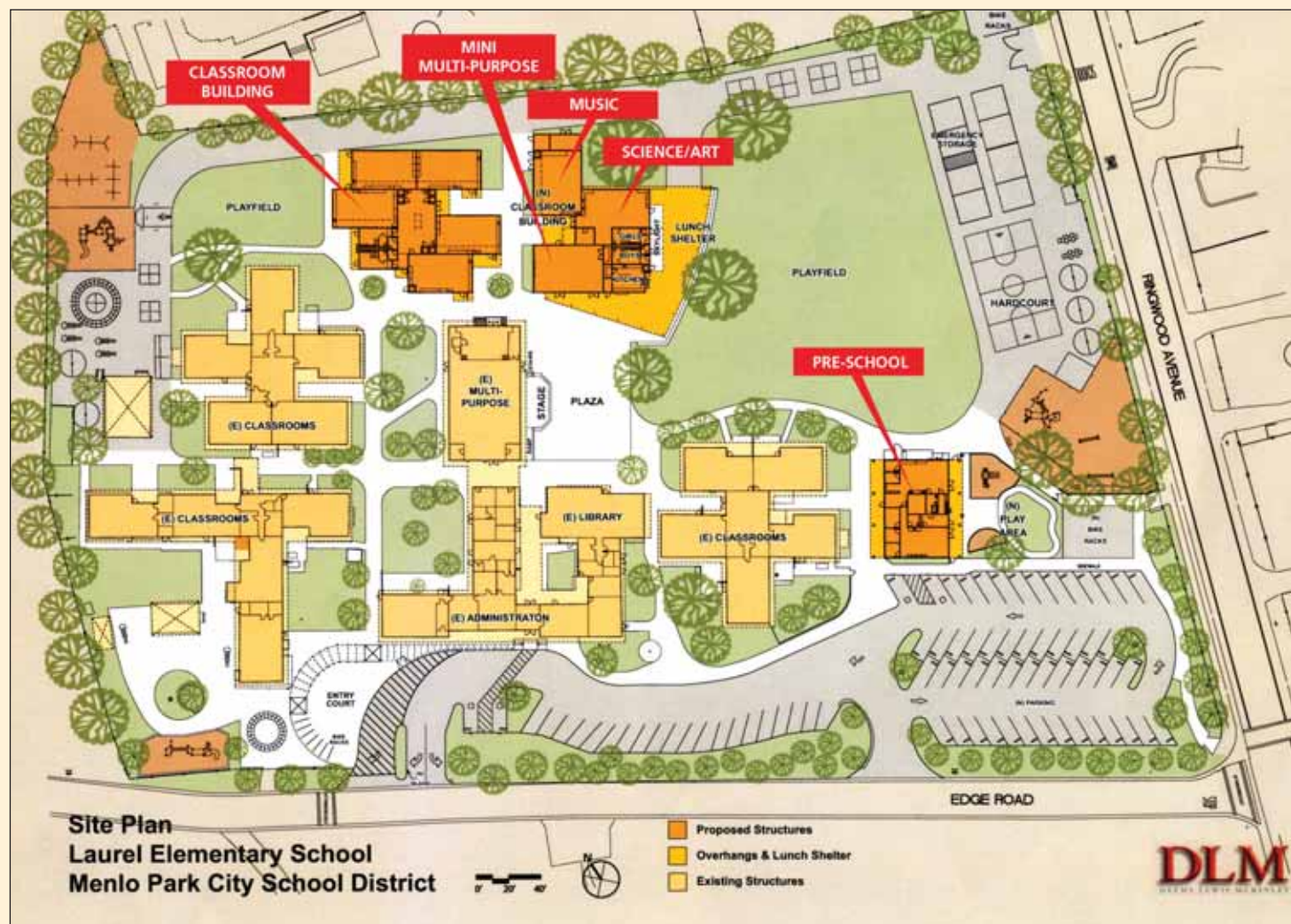
The refined site plans for both schools reflect more detail and an integrated approach to the overall design by incorporating courtyards, playgrounds, landscaping, and improved parking.

Drop-off and pickup areas for students and buses are being redesigned at Encinal to improve traffic flow and safety, and to reduce congestion. Bus stops for SamTrans and school buses will be located along Encinal Avenue. The former staff parking lot at Encinal will be improved with access from Middlefield Road and be gated for use only by district personnel during school hours.

Improvements to the drop-off and pickup areas and parking at Laurel were completed this summer as part of a project to construct a new modular building to house the district’s preschool program for young children with special needs, and for occupational therapy.

Encinal details

The grass playfield at Encinal is designed as a multi-use addition that can accommodate two U-10 (under-10) soccer fields, or one U-12 or a U-14 soccer field; a Little League baseball diamond; and open space for field activities. An 8-foot wide running and jogging track encircles the 260-



New buildings (in orange) at Laurel School will be two, one-story classroom pods between two playfields. A new modular building (on the right) houses a preschool facility for students with special needs. Paved concrete paths will connect existing buildings, which will be modernized.

Menlo Park City School District/Deems Lewis McKinley

by-330-foot playfield. There’s also a buffer of approximately 15 feet between the track and Felton Gables neighbors.

Trustees approved a playfield improvement bid of \$898,550, submitted by McGuire Hester of Oakland. A lower bidder asked to be released from its bid due to a \$200,000 clerical error.

“If they (the lowest bidder) can’t do the math, we don’t want them to do the work,” quipped Trustee Laura Rich.

The most dramatic change at Encinal is a two-story classroom addition for fourth- and fifth-graders and a multi-purpose facility. The classroom building will house eight classrooms on the ground floor and eight upstairs, and will have

restrooms, a science room and a teacher workroom.

A curved exterior wall links the multi-purpose facility to the classroom building via an elevator and exterior stair corridors. The facility’s auditorium, when the seats are stored, can be used as basketball and volleyball courts. The interior also has a kitchen, toilets, and storage and custodial space. There is access to the building from the outdoor courts and nearby playfield.

The high reflecting metal roofs of these two buildings have the potential for future solar panels, said the architect.

Laurel plan

The plan for Laurel is similar

to the conceptual one approved by trustees last spring. There will be a new front entry area along with improved parking. Changes are ahead for improving the large playfield near Ringwood Avenue and adding hard courts.

Two one-story classroom buildings will be constructed at the rear of the site. They are patterned after the classroom pod arrangement with a shared activity area that was designed and built as part of the 1995 bond measure. One of the proposed buildings includes classrooms for music, science and art; a mini multi-purpose room; bathrooms; a kitchen; and a new, covered outdoor lunch shelter.

Paths that link the various buildings at Laurel will be made of concrete because it is more durable than asphalt. They also will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Bike racks will be installed near the three access points to the campus.

“The biggest deterrent to biking to Laurel is the lack of safe bike routes,” said Trustee Bruce Ives.

Trustees said they are looking for opportunities for flexible space and storage.

For more information, go to the district’s Web site: mpcsd.org and click on “Facility Development.” ■

THEATRE

continued from page 5

Councilman Robinson said he wanted Mr. Duncan’s development entity to pay \$70,000 a year starting the first year of the lease, but the dance studio wouldn’t have generated the income to make that possible.

Last month, the council voted 3-2, to move into negotiations with Mr. Duncan, a decision that sparked outrage from many residents who said the city should not use public funds to help a private business.

Mr. Cline said he “paid a political price” for voting with Councilman Robinson and Mayor Fergusson to try to negotiate a deal with Mr. Duncan, but said the decision was the right move.

“Negotiating a deal may have come off as a bold decision, but you can’t just take a proposal and reject it because you have some ideology,” he said. “This city is too aligned to a yes or no type of agenda.”

What’s next?

With Mr. Duncan’s proposal

off the table, it’s unclear what’s in store for the deteriorating theater. Menlo Park resident and Realtor Tom Hilligoss is the only other party to express interest in fixing up the theater.

Mr. Hilligoss had expressed a desire to turn the building back into a movie theater, as well as a space for live performances — all without the use of public funds.

Although Mr. Crittenden would not comment on his future plans for the theater,

he said Mr. Hilligoss’ plan has some “fatal faults” in it, including the high costs of fixing the theater and a lack of parking on the property to accommodate large crowds.

Mr. Crittenden has previously submitted plans to the city to convert the project into a retail and/or office building, but that project would require a costly environmental review to determine if the building has historical significance.

“This is the end of a chapter,

but not the end of the Park Theatre story,” said Councilman Robinson, who said the council could still have a role in fixing up the theater. He noted the city is unlikely to consider using public funds for such a project “anytime soon.”

Councilman John Boyle, a critic of Mr. Duncan’s proposal, said he’s “optimistic” that other developers could come forward with creative proposals to restore the theater. ■

City child care program cited with safety violations by state

■ Parents blame problems on transfer of longtime employee.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park Belle Haven school-age child care program has been hit with five safety violations, prompting more anger from parents already bitter about the controversial transfer of the program's most experienced employee earlier this year.

The bulk of the citations stem from an incident this summer, when a child threatened another child with a knife and teachers didn't notice, according to the papers filed with the regional office of the Community Care Licensing Division, a branch of the state Department of Social Services.

No one was hurt, but after hearing from children what happened, parents informed social services. When officials came to the center, they documented additional violations, including:

■ Not enough teachers were on duty for a portion of the day, creating an inadequate teacher-to-child ratio.

■ Two employees lacked proper fingerprint clearance to work in the program.

■ One employee who lacked

fingerprint clearance was under the age of 18, and is not supposed to supervise children.

Program staff was also cited for lack of supervision because of the knife incident.

City Manager Glen Rojas and Community Services Director Barbara Santos George labeled the citations "serious matters," and said staff is undergoing extra training to prevent similar problems from occurring in the future.

Missing Vanessa

Parents say the recent problems in the Belle Haven program, which provides care for about 50 children ages 5 to 12 years old, stem from the city's decision to transfer longtime employee Vanessa Carlisle to the Burgess child care program in March.

The move was explained by staff as a personnel decision, but was vastly unpopular in the Belle Haven community.

Leading the latest round of criticism of the city is East Palo Alto resident Marcia Dore-Perez, who has headed previous efforts to prevent cuts to the Belle Haven program and prevent the transfer of Ms. Carlisle.

"The people entrusted to direct the after-school programs safely simply do not know the state regulations," Ms. Dore-Perez

said. "Is there a connection with these violations and Vanessa not being there? Of course there is."

Ms. Dore-Perez noted that she was the person to notify Mr. Rojas of the safety violations in the first place, as they occurred the same week he began his tenure as city manager.

'Looking for issues'

Ms. Santos George said the citations are less a reflection of the program, and more a result of parents being overly critical in an effort to get Ms. Carlisle back to Belle Haven.

"There are all kinds of things that occur in child care programs all the time," Ms. Santos George said. "If you start looking for issues, you're going to find issues. ... We do run a very safe, well-supervised program in Belle Haven, and we're going to keep doing so."

She said the employee without fingerprint clearance has the clearance to work at the Burgess child care center, and staff was unaware additional authorization was needed. She also noted the employee under the age of 18 is allowed to work in the child care program, but was mistakenly counted toward the teacher-to-child ratio because the program was understaffed. ■

Menlo council members cut off criticism of Andy Duncan's Park Theatre plan

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

The current Menlo Park City Council members have repeatedly pledged to listen to what city commissioners and the general public have to say about issues confronting the city.

But that mindset flew out the window at last week's council meeting, as Mayor Kelly Fergusson and Councilman Heyward Robinson denied the chairperson of the city's Parks and Recreation Commission the chance to criticize the council's interest in negotiating to buy the Park Theatre.

Council members Fergusson and Robinson have since e-mailed their apologies to the parks commissioners, saying commission chair Paula Maurano should have been able to address the council without interruption.

Ms. Maurano, on behalf of a unanimous parks commission, went before the council on Oct. 30 to urge council members

See related story on Page 5.

to halt all efforts to buy the 60-year-old El Camino Real theater for \$2.2 million and lease it to a development entity owned by resident Andy Duncan.

A council subcommittee of Mr. Robinson and Richard Cline has since rejected Mr. Duncan's proposal, which included plans to restore the theater and turn it into a dance studio for the Menlo Park Academy of Dance.

Ms. Maurano said the commission saw "no public benefit" in moving forward with Mr. Duncan's plan, and commissioners decided the city has more important projects to focus its efforts on — primarily the construction of a new gym and a new recreation center.

But once Ms. Maurano started to say why the city should drop Mr. Duncan's plan, Mayor Fergusson interrupted, and said the commission didn't have enough information to make such a recommendation.

"I think your commission is making judgments without the full set of facts," Mayor Fergusson said.

Councilman Robinson, a former parks commissioner, also chimed in. "It's entirely inappropriate for the Parks and Recreation Commission to be telling us how we should be voting on the Park Theatre," he said.

A wide-eyed Ms. Maurano said she simply wanted to state the commission's recommendations (discussed and voted on at a special meeting earlier that evening) for the public record, but Ms. Fergusson and Mr. Robinson never gave her the chance.

"I was very taken aback by the reaction, and I'm still sort of flabbergasted," said Ms. Maurano the day after the meeting. "To go spend this kind of money would be completely inappropriate, given that we have more important priorities that need funding."

Councilman John Boyle said it was "disappointing" that Ms.

See CRITICISM, page 20



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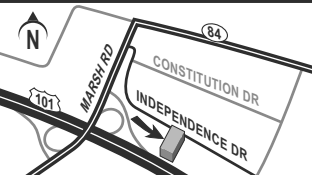
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF NOVEMBER 19, 2007

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Menlo Park, California, is scheduled to review the following items:

The following items require a Notice of Public Meeting or Public Hearing:

Use Permit/Pham BichhuyenThi and Hoang Nguyen/308 Sheridan Drive: Request for a use permit to construct a second story addition to an existing single-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot in the R-1-U (Single Family Urban) zoning district. The proposed remodeling and expansion is considered to be equivalent to a new structure.

Use Permit/Carmel Planning & Design, Inc./317 Princeton Road: Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-1-U (Single Family Urban) zoning district.

Use Permit and Variance/Pamela Culp/748 Partridge Avenue: Request for a use permit to demolish one single-family dwelling unit and associated accessory buildings and to construct two single-family dwelling units and associated site improvements on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-2 (Low Density Apartment) zoning district. Request for a variance to build an accessory structure in the front half of the property, 69 feet from the front property line where 93.75 feet would be required.

Tentative Parcel Subdivision/Wanda Barnes/1427 Garwood Way and 1428 San Antonio Street: Request for a tentative parcel map to convert two residential dwelling units into two condominium units on one parcel in the R-3 (Apartment) zoning district.

Use Permit/Lion Cells/1555 Adams Drive: Request for a use permit for outside storage and screening of regenerative thermal oxidizer equipment and for the indoor use and storage of hazardous materials for the research and development of next generation battery technologies and initial electrode manufacturing in the M-2 (General Industrial) zoning district.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on this item in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on Monday, November 19, 2007, 7:00 p.m. or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge this item in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Documents related to these items may be inspected by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Department of Community Development, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please note that the items listed are only the agenda items that require a public hearing. Please call the Planning Division if there are any questions and/or for complete agenda information (650) 330-6702.

DATED: November 1, 2007

Deanna Chow, Senior Planner, Menlo Park Planning Commission
Visit our Web site for Planning Commission public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: www.menlopark.org

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Linda Common era to end at Woodside High School

■ AP English teacher David Reilly to return as principal.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer



Linda Common has been principal at Woodside High for 12 years.

An era will end soon at Woodside High School. After 12 years at the helm, Principal Linda Common is leaving in January for the high school district office in Redwood City where she'll be the chief administrator of special education.

"Although this is a wonderful personal opportunity for me, I regret the necessity and timing of this decision," Ms. Common said in a statement. "Woodside High School is and will continue to be a wonderful school, and I will miss the staff, students and parents. ... I feel that the current staff at Woodside High School is so competent that this change will not result in any disruption of program or services."

David Reilly, a former journalism and advanced-placement English teacher who left Woodside High in 2005 to become administrative vice principal at Sequoia High School, will be stepping in to take her place, said Sequoia Union High School District Superintendent Pat Gemma.

Mr. Reilly, who spent seven years at Woodside before taking the job at Sequoia High, starts Jan. 7. Mr. Gemma described him as "as a true leader who works well with staff, parents and students. He is calm and patient, yet driven to get the job done."

Mr. Reilly holds a bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of California, Los Angeles; a 1997 teaching credential from San Francisco State University; and administrative credentials.

Ms. Common praised her replacement. "While I am sad to leave Woodside High School, I am comforted in the knowledge that I will leave the school in the strong and very capable hands of David Reilly," she said in the statement. "I have great faith in his ability to assume the principal's responsibilities."

Among the credentials earned at Woodside during his teaching tenure, Mr. Reilly helped lead the school's successful bid for re-accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, participated in

the school's shared decision-making and site councils, and bargained with management as a member of the teachers' union, Mr. Gemma said.

In taking over the special-education reins for the district, Ms. Common comes to the job with a resource-specialist credential, a learning-handicapped credential, two master's degrees and a doctorate, Mr. Gemma said.

Ms. Common, a former teacher in mainstream classes, worked for a time as a resource specialist and chaired the special education department in the Santa Clara Unified School District.

"Linda Common has the educational background and professional leadership skills necessary to step into the complicated arena of special education and keeps the Sequoia district special education department moving forward," Mr. Gemma said. ■



David Reilly, who becomes the new principal at Woodside High in January, is administrative vice principal at Sequoia High School.

Voters to elect two new PV school board trustees

■ Board will appoint a third board member.

By Marjorie Mader
Almanac Staff Writer

The Portola Valley School District's election Nov. 6 took an unexpected turn when Trustee Donna Carano unexpectedly resigned Oct. 17, less than three weeks before the election.

Between the contested election and Trustee Carano's resignation, there's been a lot of "chatter" the past week. Much of it, apparently, has taken place via e-mails, phone calls, and friend-to-friend conversations.

There was one public candidates' night Oct. 18, sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the district's PTO leadership. About 40 people attended, submitted written questions and heard similar responses with slight variations to a wide range of questions from the three candidates.

The candidates — Brad Turner, Steve Humphreys and Judith Ann Mendelsohn — are running for the two seats and four-year terms on the school board. A third board member will be appointed next month, creating a majority change on the five-person board.

While Ms. Carano's resignation appeared to be a sudden decision, she said she has been considering not completing the remaining two years of her term since early summer. She has served six years on the board and given many years of service to district schools on the site council and as a parent volunteer. Her three children are now in high school.

Ms. Carano said earlier the board has become "more political," but did not return phone calls requesting further clarification. Her name was listed on a mailer last week as a former PVSD board member supporting candidate Judith Mendelsohn.

Superintendent comments

Superintendent Anne Campbell, wrote in last week's "Tuesday Post" — the district's newsletter for parents and staff:

"I must confess to feeling troubled

by the tenor of some of the rhetoric I've heard or read over the past several weeks not from the candidates themselves but rather from individuals who are actively supporting one candidate or another.

"Don't get me wrong, I enjoy rousing political debates as much as the next person because they help us focus on the issues and refine our individual positions. However, if the debate becomes overly personal or heated, it can ultimately be counter-productive for our schools as they move forward.

"At the end of the day as adults, parents and staff, we all need to work together to help our students receive a great education."

Appointed member

It might seem logical to assume that since there are three candidates and now there are three openings, then all three would become members of the board. That's not necessarily the case.

The state Education Code sets the procedure for filling a board vacancy. Within 60 days of a resignation, the governing board may either call for an election (to be held at least 130 days after the resignation) or make a "provisional" appointment.

It's called provisional because voters have 30 days from the date of the appointment to petition the county superintendent for a special election, which would cost the district approximately \$7,500.

The board decision Oct. 25 was to go the provisional appointment route, invite registered voters in the district to apply for the opening, and conduct public interviews of the qualified candidates.

The board decided that current board members (Teresa Godfrey, Ray Villareal and Don Collat) and the newly elected trustees can participate in the interviews and discussion. (Trustee Karen Jordan, who did not seek re-election, recused herself from the discussion of board options because, she said, she might have an interest in the two-year appointment.)

The appointment decision will be made by the newly elected board members and the two whose terms continue after the election. ■

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■ **Navy Ensign David G. Merrill**, son of Roger and Joanne Merrill of Menlo Park, was recently commissioned upon graduation from the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Program with the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps Unit at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. Ensign Merrill is a graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School.

■ BIRTHS

Menlo Park
■ Molly and Jon Kossow, a daughter, Oct. 25, at Sequoia Hospital.

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Grace **UNDER FIRE**

Atherton woman trades 9-5 job for dust
and danger as a helicopter pilot in Iraq

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Iraq photos courtesy of Capt. Kyleanne Hunter

Kyleanne Hunter just can't seem to get used to life in the slow lane.

She's visiting her family in the Lindenwood neighborhood of Atherton while on leave from the U.S. Marine Corps, fresh from an eight-month tour of duty in Iraq. On a chilly fall day, with rain pelting the roof of the sprawling, elegant house, it's hard to imagine a location more different from the dust storms and oppressive heat of the forward operating base near the Syrian border where she was stationed from January until September.

In Iraq, Capt. Hunter, 28, piloted a Cobra helicopter, a rocket- and missile-equipped gunship used as aerial backup for infantry troops, Iraqi police officers and medical evacuations. She's one of only three women in the entire Marine Corps to pilot a Cobra, she says.

The exhaustion and the danger of life on a small base in Anbar Province took a backseat to the sense of purpose she got from being a vital part of her squadron's missions.

"That's one of the hardest things about coming home. When you're out there, there's always a purpose. Every day, when you had to do something, it's because somebody needs you there," she says. "When you get home it's a little bit of a letdown. It really doesn't matter if I don't fly today."

A graduate of Sacred Heart Preparatory in Atherton and Georgetown University, she joined the Marines in 2002 when she realized she was not cut out for life as a computer programmer working for a defense contractor in Washington, D.C. She intended to sign up with the Army Reserves, but when she couldn't find the recruiter, she got into a conversation with a woman from the Marines — who was a recruiter.

No one else in her family is in the military, but they've been very supportive of her decision, she says. Her father, Richard, is an anesthesiologist with the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, and her mother, Dorothy, is a teacher.

"It came as a bit of a shock," Capt. Hunter admits.

In Iraq, she was the only woman on her base, one of eight pilots flying two Cobras, she says. Cobras hold two pilots, and can be flown from either the front seat or the back seat, she says.

"To be able to go on a mission to directly support the guys on the ground, it's a good feeling," she says. "One of the greatest things we ever heard is, when some 18- or 19-year-old



kid comes up and says, 'Thanks, I could sleep better at night because we could hear you.' No one really thinks that hearing a helicopter helps you sleep, but it did for them."

Initially, she says she was concerned that the all-male infantry that she was stationed with wouldn't accept

her, but most of the time, it wasn't a problem.

"I built very good relationships with our infantry guys who were there, and that led to the other pilots accepting (me)," she says. "Being a pilot, everyone knows who you are, and being a girl, there's really no way to hide. I stuck out, but because of that I had to act more responsible and professional all the time. Everybody would know if I'd screwed something up."

She chose to pursue flying because it was a way to prove herself among her mostly male counterparts in the Marines, despite the fact that pilots can be something of a "good ol' boys club," she says.

"If you can fly, you can fly," Capt. Hunter says. "Most people don't know if a man or woman is flying until you get on the ground. It's purely based on your skill."

Acceptance has been a challenge at times, she says. Ironically, she says, she notices it more in the United States than she did when she was the only woman on her base in Iraq. She'd go to a briefing and people would wait for the representative from her squadron to arrive, not realizing that she was the representative, she says.

"When I'm over there, everybody is just very focused on what they're doing, and you're removed from any sort of social element," she says. "But when you're back in the states, and they've got functions, everybody's bringing their wives. Well, I'm not a wife so I don't fit in with them. And those are the times that are little more awkward. When it comes to work, we're all just professional peers."

In Iraq, she says, she usually got three hours of sleep a day, flying missions at night and attending briefings during the day. Being close to Syria, her squadron got busy quickly trying to deal with the flow of arms and drugs across the border, she says.

"When the weather heated up, people started lobbing potshots at us and our guys," Capt. Hunter says.

Continued on next page

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COVER STORY



At home in Atherton, Capt. Kyleanne Hunter gives some attention to the family dog, TJ. **At right**, photos taken in Iraq show Capt. Hunter and the Cobra helicopter she pilots.

‘Getting fired at wasn’t even the hardest part’

Continued from previous page

The helicopters came in handy when ground troops and Iraqi police were negotiating to disarm rabble-raising groups, she says.

“We were a nice presence, and a threat. People were more apt to cooperate with us if there were Cobras overhead,” she says.

The Marines spent a lot of time chasing arms dealers and did a lot of “cordon and knock” operations to disarm people in a particular neighborhood or town — cordoning off an area and knocking on doors.

“That’s where we had most of our problems. People obviously didn’t want to give up their arms,” Capt. Hunter says.

They also spent a great deal of time searching white pickup trucks. Iraqi police drive white pickups equipped with machine guns, and it didn’t take long for insurgent groups to start posing as police officers by driving around in white trucks with machine guns, she says.

“Getting fired at wasn’t even the hardest part,” she says. “You are in such a reactionary mode by that point in time, your focus is to get the job done. You really fall back on your training.”

Flying under poor conditions, when dust and darkness hampered visibility, was far more stressful, she says. And the worst stress came from not being able to fly at all.

“There’s nothing worse than trying to go to bed knowing that your guys are outside the wire, potentially in harm’s way, and there’s nothing we can do about it,” she says. “It was impossible to go to sleep until they came home.”

Despite the stress and fatigue, she found time to go

running daily. On call 24 hours a day, and living in such close quarters, it was the only time she had to herself, she says.

“It’s funny, because when you’re over there, you just want to be alone, but when you get home, you kind of miss everybody,” she says.

Being in Iraq reinforced her sense of patriotism, she says. When she joined the Marines in 2002, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 factored into her decision, she says.

“I think 9/11 is an event that caused everybody to reflect a little bit more on what the ideals of this country really are,” she says. “We have the freedom to celebrate our government and protest it. You go to someplace like (Iraq) and there just isn’t that option.”

Soldiers and Marines understand that they have the public’s good will, even from the people who are protesting the war, she says.

“Regardless of people’s views on the war, their support for the individual men and women that are over there is great,” Capt. Hunter says. “They can separate the fact that individuals who are there aren’t the ones making the decisions. They’re the ones who are just doing a job. The support I’ve gotten has been overwhelming and amazing.”

She says she doesn’t agree with people who believe that the best way to support the troops is to bring them home.

“It would be nice if it were that easy,” Capt. Hunter says. “The reality is that that’s where we are right now, and everyone is willing to do their jobs and stay as long as it takes. Of course everyone wants to come home. It’s a lot nicer here.” ■

Iraq photos courtesy of Capt. Kyleanne Hunter

High school district puts \$165 million bond measure on ballot

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The suspense is over on whether there will be a fourth bond measure proposed for new construction at local public high schools: a \$165 million measure is scheduled for the Feb. 5 ballot.

The Board of Trustees of the Sequoia Union High School District voted unanimously Oct. 31 to put the measure on the ballot. The measure would add to the total of \$203 million approved by strong voter majorities in elections in 1996, 2001 and 2004.

In addition to spending \$10 million on a new charter high school in East Palo Alto for students from the Ravenswood City School District, the new money would pay for classroom technology updates for 10 years, new classrooms for career and technical education, and energy efficiency improvements, Superintendent Pat Gemma said in a statement.

The measure would add \$9.73 per \$100,000 of assessed value to the annual tax paid by residential and commercial properties in the district, Mr. Gemma said. Voters are already paying about \$20 per \$100,000 for the three previous bond measures, said Ed LaVigne, the assistant superintendent for administrative services.

The district's bond indebtedness is about \$199 million, excluding interest, and is down from \$204 million in 2005, Mr. LaVigne said. The total assessed value of property in the district is \$51 billion, the district has a favorable AAA bond rating, and is using about one third of its borrowing capacity, he said.

Most tax increases in California require approval by two-thirds of the voters, but school bond measures such as this one need only a 55 percent approval. In exchange for that lower threshold, voters are entitled to see a list of projects for which the money is intended, and a citizens committee is named to oversee the spending.

A 21st century program

The charter high school in East Palo Alto would serve 300 to 500 Ravenswood district students. About 1,050 teens from that district now attend Sequoia district high schools, including 400 at Menlo-Atherton, 190 at Woodside High, and 450 who commute to Carlmont High in Belmont.

The career and technical education element could include such improvements as biotechnology clean rooms, robotics labs and engineering classrooms, board President Olivia Martinez said in an interview.

The distribution of such facilities among the four comprehensive high schools has yet to be decided and a new career pro-

gram could include community colleges and county participation. "I think we want to maximize the use of the money that we get by

not duplicating expensive programs," Ms. Martinez said.

"We have heard a consistent message from our community that

career and technical education is as important as curriculum designed for college entrance," Mr. Gemma said. "This bond will allow our

district to build and redesign classrooms as needed to ensure all students are engaged and prepared to excel in the world of work." ■



7-year-old Joseph loves to play ball, but suffers from juvenile arthritis. Only a year ago, he was so sore and lethargic that he could barely walk. Today, under the care of pediatric immunologists at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, Joseph is back to playing second base on his little league team.

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Election day: Polls open until 8 p.m. Tuesday

Tuesday, Nov. 6, is election day, when local voters will decide the composition of the governing boards of the Portola Valley School District, the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, and the Los Trancos County Water District.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. You can find your polling place on the sample voter information ballot mailed by San Mateo County to all registered voters or by calling the Elections Office at 312-5222.

Those who vote by mail can confirm

their ballots have been received by going on the county Elections Office Web site (www.shapethefuture.org) and paging down to the "Track & Confirm" module.

Election results will be posted on the Almanac's Web site (AlmanacNews.com) starting shortly after 8 p.m. Tuesday.

There are three candidates running for two seats in each of the three local elections: the Portola Valley School District, the Menlo Park fire district, and the Los Trancos water district. For more information about these

elections, check the voter guide starting on Page 16 of the Oct. 24 issue of the Almanac.

Voters in the Menlo Park fire district, which includes Menlo Park, Atherton, East Palo Alto and nearby unincorporated neighborhoods, will also decide whether to increase the district's annual spending limit to \$40 million from the current \$25 million starting in 2011.

In Woodside, there is a Town Council election, but with four candidates running for the four open seats the result is foregone conclusion.

Election day also 'Donation Day'

When voters in the Menlo Park City School District go to the polls on Tuesday, they also will be able to vote their support of the schools in the district.

They can drop off their annual donations to the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation in the red school-house boxes at each of the schools. The foundation's "Donation Day" is designed to make giving a gift to support the schools easy, said Lois Giovacchini, foundation executive director.

Parent volunteers, wearing red shirts, will be at each of the schools — Laurel, Encinal, Oak Knoll and Hillview — at student drop-off and pick-up times to answer questions and assist in the collection.

Look for the hoopla, balloons and red-shirted volunteers. For more information, go to www.mpaef.org.

Correction

In an obituary on Dr. Robert Cathcart III in the Oct. 31 issue of the Almanac, an incorrect e-mail address was provided for those who want to be notified about plans for a celebration of his life. The correct address is alice@docc.com. Dr. Cathcart was a pioneer in high-dose vitamin C therapy.

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Stanford proposes dumping fill on former Christmas tree farm

By Marion Softky
Almanac Staff Writer

As Stanford pursues its massive campus expansion, it will dig up a lot of dirt that needs to be disposed of somewhere — up to 300,000 cubic yards of it.

The university is proposing to place the fill from new basements and underground parking on its former Christmas tree farm located southwest of Sand Hill Road and in the State Scenic Corridor west of I-280 in unincorporated San Mateo County. The 143-acre site is across Sand Hill Road from the Horse Park, adjacent to the Stanford Linear Accelerator, and uphill from San Francisquito Creek and Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.

The vacant land has not been used as a Christmas tree farm for several years.

The county Planning Department is working on the environmental review of Stanford's application for a grading permit to place up to 300,000 cubic yards of imported soil on the site over a period of 10 years. The application has been collecting comments from the public and government agencies for an environmental document called a "negative declaration" (when the county declares that a full environmental report is not required).

Planner Camille Leung declined to estimate when the grading permit will be ready for hearing before the county Planning Commission. "It won't be this year," she said.

Mark Bonino, Stanford's man-

ager for special projects, sees the project as a good match to meet two Stanford needs: a place to put the fill from intensified building on campus; and restoration of the land used for years for growing Christmas trees, which left stumps and furrows. "The land is not in such great shape," he said.

The building surge on campus stems from the general use permit granted by Santa Clara County in 2000, which allows Stanford to add almost 5 million square feet of new building.

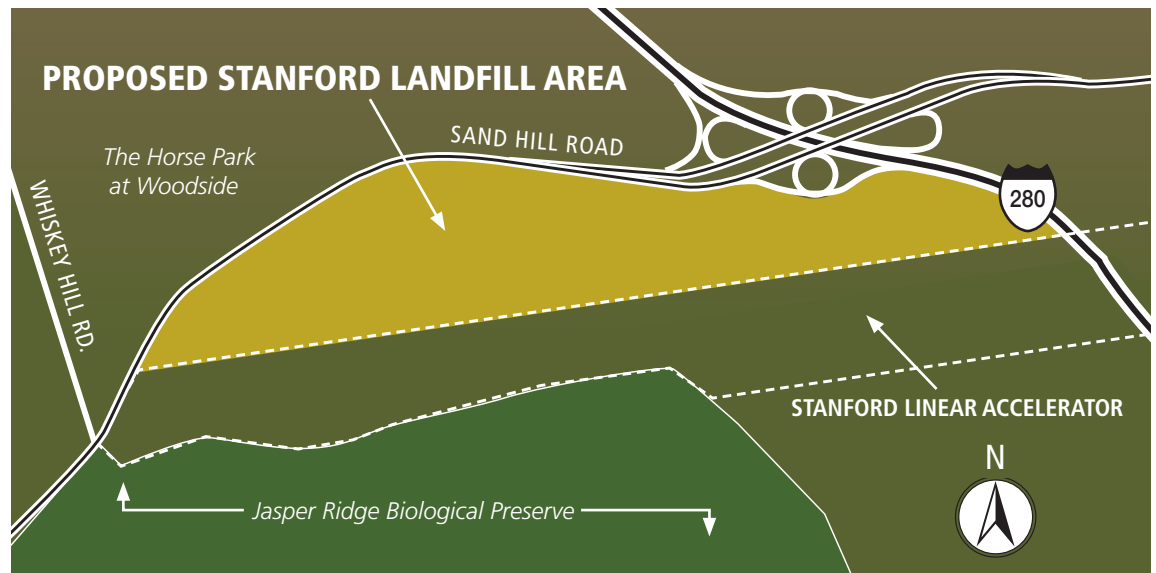
As a result, Mr. Bonino said, "Stanford is becoming more dense, with more subsurface construction."

Stanford's application proposes placing the fill in six zones, with about two to five feet added in each. In a limited area, the fill would be seven-feet deep. Six big, unhealthy trees would be removed, and many more trees planted. "At the end of the day, the site will be restored and revegetated," Mr. Bonino said.

Issues

Many neighbors are worried about 10 years of major grading, traffic and disturbance as the open land is re-sculpted and restored. The Portola Valley Planning Commission and the Committee for Green Foothills, among others, have submitted detailed critiques of the massive project.

"The proposed location has the advantage of helping minimize the length of truck trips and the resulting emission of air pollutants," wrote Portola Valley Town Planner George Mader. "At the



The 143-acre former Christmas tree farm where Stanford wants to dump 300,000 cubic yards of fill over 10 years.

same time, it is incumbent on the county and Stanford University to run a model project."

The Portola Valley letter questioned a 10-year permit for such a major project; it suggested separate permits for each stockpile area. It also asked for strict controls on truck traffic, which could generate 15,000 to 30,000 round trips by large trucks over 10 years, particularly since the Portola Valley loop is so popular

with bicyclists.

Portola Valley also highlighted issues of erosion, protection of wetlands and streams, dust control, views, and invasive, non-native plants.

On behalf of the Committee for Green Foothills, Lennie Roberts questioned the purpose, need and scale of the project. She asked whether alternatives had been evaluated, such as sites in Santa Clara County or a smaller

project that would avoid the most prominent hills. "We believe that further review of visual impacts is needed," she wrote.

The county's draft negative declaration addresses many of the concerns. It proposes 29 measures to mitigate the impacts of grading the site, ranging from control of erosion and protection of wetlands, to haul routes, revegetation, dust control, and protection of archeological deposits. ■

Atherton council delays action on historic urns

The fate of Randy and Lisa Lamb's vintage urns — along with all the other artifacts dotting the Lindenwood neighborhood — probably won't be resolved this year. The City Council postponed discussion of its historic artifacts ordinance after residents pro-

tested the lack of public notice for a hastily called special meeting Monday night, Oct. 29.

In January, the Lambs were prevented from moving two massive urns from their home in Lindenwood to a new home in another Atherton neighbor-

hood. After taking the town to court, a San Mateo County judge ruled in July that Atherton's ordinance needs to be reworked in order to be enforceable. A draft of the ordinance with staff-recommended changes is online at www.ci.Atherton.ca.us.

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Jennifer Tremmel, MD, SM, is the Clinical Director of Women's Heart Health at Stanford and the Director of Stanford's Secondary Prevention Program. She is an interventional cardiologist who

is also trained in preventive cardiology and specializes in the care of women with coronary artery disease (CAD) or who are at high risk for CAD.

Seeing a cardiologist specifically trained in women's cardiovascular disease can make a difference. For more information on **Women's Heart Health at Stanford**, or to make an appointment, call (650) 736-0516.

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Tuesday, November 13, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Christine Thorburn, M.D., PAMF Rheumatology

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus is an autoimmune disease that can affect any organ system in the body. The disease most commonly causes fatigue, arthritis and skin rash, but it can also cause inflammation and damage in organs such as kidneys and blood vessels. Join us to hear a review of this challenging chronic illness and its treatment.

Hearst Center for Health Education, Level 3, Jamplis Building, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. RSVP to (650) 853-4873.

Classes

"What You Need to Know About Warfarin," Wednesday, November 14, 6 – 8 p.m.

A PAMF pharmacist will discuss what warfarin is, why you are taking it and how you can help yourself.

"Learning About Heart Failure," Friday, November 16, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

This class, taught by a cardiology nurse practitioner, discusses medications used in treatment, dietary requirements, weight monitoring, self-care, activity guidelines, and symptom recognition and reporting, and more.

"Managing Your High Blood Pressure," Tuesday, November 27, 3 – 5 p.m.

This class provides information on causes, risks and treatment of high blood pressure, and approaches to successful reduction, such as exercise and medication.

"Supermarket Wise," Thursday, November 29, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Learn techniques for making healthier food choices in a local supermarket with dietitian Karen Ross, M.S., R.D.

"Advance Health Care Directives," Call for available dates and times.

PAMF's specially trained volunteers will provide advice and answer questions about the advance health care directive form. No cost.

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For information on class fees and to register, call the Education Division at (650) 853-2960.

Supes urge three-month moratorium on foreclosures

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

With the number of foreclosures soaring in San Mateo County — and across the country — the Board of Supervisors hopes to buy time for families threatened by the loss of their homes.

On Oct. 30, the board unanimously adopted a resolution urging subprime mortgage lenders, and businesses that service the loans, to voluntarily suspend for three months foreclosures on owner-occupied homes.

During that time, the resolution calls on lenders and agencies that service loans to reach out and help their customers remain in their homes. It suggests they modify loans by reducing the interest rate and/or the principle to achieve affordable payments. It also asks them to work with the county and community-based organizations to reach homeowners who are out of communication, for whatever reason.

"Subprime loans have turned dreams of home ownership into nightmares," said Board President Rose Jacobs Gibson. She urged people on the brink — who are often seniors, or people of color, or people who speak another language — to use the three-month window to talk to lenders and housing agencies "without the clock ticking on foreclosures."

Defaults and foreclosures are drastically up throughout California, according to third-quarter reports by DataQuick Informa-

tion Systems. In San Mateo County, notices of default doubled, from 290 to 581, during the July-through-September quarter, compared with the same period a year ago.

Actual foreclosures more than quadrupled during that same third quarter, from 37 in 2006 to 155 in 2007, according to an Oct. 26 press release.

"The foreclosure epidemic has significantly and negatively impacted home ownership in San Mateo County," said Ms. Jacobs Gibson. "It will continue to do so unless lenders work with homeowners to refinance loans, or work out reasonable payment plans that will keep families in their homes."

Subprime mess

The county resolution spells out the devastating effects of high-risk "subprime" mortgages aggressively peddled to buyers who couldn't qualify for regular loans. Many of these loans have interest rates that start increasing after two years and carry penalties for pre-payment. Many rely on misstated income. Some were negotiated in another language but issued in English, the resolution says.

"The targets of these loans were often our most vulnerable residents, such as working families in minority communities, and the elderly," the resolution states.

A dozen members of the community group ACORN, sporting

See **MORTGAGE**, page 19



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Driver arrested after striking pedestrian

Sheriff's deputies arrested a Redwood City woman on drunken driving charges after her westbound car struck a Portola Valley woman crossing Alpine Road in a crosswalk near the intersection with Portola Road at around 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 30.

Medics took the driver, Cheryl Kemptonnekkowitz, 52, and the victim, Portola Valley resident Nusy Uridel, 62, to Stanford Hospital, said Sgt. Craig Denton of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Ms. Uridel's injuries were "moderate," Sgt. Denton said. Deputies issued a citation to Ms. Kemptonnekkowitz at the hospital and released her to the care of the hospital, Sgt. Denton said, adding that she had failed a field sobriety test.

The initial accident report gave no information on the speed of the vehicle, a tan 2001 Mercedes 500. The subsequent report will have more details, including witness statements, if any, Sgt. Denton said.

MORTGAGE

continued from page 18

red T-shirts, attended the hearing in support of the resolution. Estela Baldovinos, a South San Francisco mother of nine, told the board her mortgage payment started at \$2,700 a month at 6.5 percent; after two years, she's supposed to pay \$8,200 at 12.2 percent. "They lied to me," she said.

"We should get past blame," said Supervisor Marvin Church. "It's destroying lives. It's destroying families, and we need to encourage lenders to reach out to these people who are affected."

For help

A flier from Supervisor Jacobs Gibson's office offers suggestions for people facing foreclosure:

■ Contact your lender as soon as you have a problem. Maybe you can work out a solution.

■ Beware of foreclosure recovery scams. If a firm contacts you to help negotiate, it could be a legitimate business, or it could be a scam—especially if the caller charges a hefty fee. The information should be free.

■ Speak with a housing counselor. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides funding for free or low-cost housing counselors, who can explain options and represent people with lenders. ■

■ INFORMATION

For information or help call HUD at 800-569-4287. Or contact Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson's office at 363-4570 or by e-mail: RoseJG@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

Zonta play raises funds for young women

This story was posted in the online Town Square forum on AlmanacNews.com by Catherine Parlanti of Menlo Park, vice president of the Zonta Club of Silicon Valley.

The Zonta Club of Silicon Valley is presenting a second annual fundraiser at Dragon Theater in Palo Alto at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 10.

The play is "The Smell of the Kill" by Michele Lowe and the tickets are \$50. Proceeds benefit scholarships for young women who attend Tech Trek, a math/science camp designed to develop

interest and self confidence in young women who are entering the eighth grade.

Zonta International is a worldwide service organization of business and professional executives dedicated to advancing the status of women worldwide.

The Zonta Club of Silicon Valley selects, funds, and participates in community services. The members are from Menlo Park, Woodside, Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Mountain View. For more information on Zonta, go to www.zonta.org.



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

Mona Lisa lives

A motley collection of costumed characters march in a Halloween parade at Las Lomitas Elementary School on Oct. 31. Among them a walking, talking, living, breathing Mona Lisa.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD

Mid-Term Review of Las Pulgas Community
Development (Redevelopment) Project Area
Five-Year Implementation Plan

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Community Development Agency Board (Redevelopment Agency Board) of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the following item:

Mid-Term Review of the Redevelopment Implementation Plan for the Las Pulgas Community Development Project Area (Redevelopment Project Area).

The hearing will be held in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California on **Tuesday, December 11, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.** or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place any persons wishing to comment may appear at the hearing and will be afforded an opportunity to be heard. The hearing may be continued from time to time until completed.

The hearing is being conducted to receive testimony of all interested parties for the purpose of: (1) Reviewing the Redevelopment Plan and the corresponding Five-Year Implementation Plan (fiscal years 2004-05 through 2008-09) for the Redevelopment Project Area; and (2) Evaluating the progress of the Redevelopment Project Area.

The Redevelopment Plan was originally adopted in 1981, as amended. The Redevelopment Agency's current Five-Year Implementation Plan for the Redevelopment Project Area was adopted in December 2004.

The Agency's current Five-year Implementation Plan sets forth for the five year planning period the specific goals and objectives of the Redevelopment Agency for the Redevelopment Project Area, potential programs and projects, estimated expenditures proposed to be made during the planning period, and an explanation of how the goals and objectives, programs and expenditures will eliminate blight in the Redevelopment Project Area, and implement the affordable housing requirements of the California Community Redevelopment Law (Health & safety Code Section 33000et seq.).

This hearing is being conducted pursuant to Health and Safety Code 33490 (a) and (c) and presents an opportunity for a mid-term review of the current Five-Year Implementation plan, and a progress evaluation of the Redevelopment Project Area.

Copies of the Redevelopment Plan and the current Five-Year Implementation Plan will be available prior to the public hearing for public inspection and copying at a cost not to exceed the cost of duplication at the offices of the Redevelopment Agency, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed. To obtain a copy of these documents, or for further information regarding this hearing, please call **Dr. Douglas Frederick, Housing Manager**, at 650-330-6724 or email at dfrederick@menlopark.org.

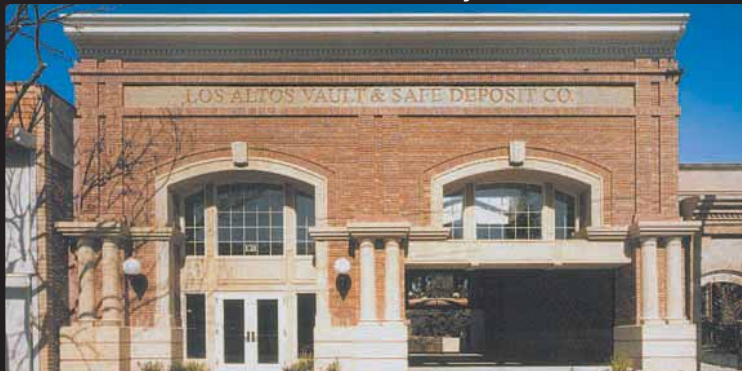
DATED: November 1, 2007

Silvia M. Vonderlinden, City Clerk

Visit our Web site for public hearing, agenda, and staff report information:
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Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on November 7, 14, 21, 2007.

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FOR THE RECORD

Vikings advance in post-season playoffs

SPORTS

Pop Warner Football Pee Wees (sixth- and seventh-graders) from the Menlo-Atherton Vikings advanced to this week-end's Bay Area playoff finals with a convincing 22-0 win over the Gilroy Browns on November 3.

The Vikings Midgets (eighth- and ninth-graders), however, dropped a season-ending 26-10 decision to the Tri-Cities Titans of Newark.

Below are the details of the Nov. 3 contests, held at the new Morgan Hill Sports Complex.

Pee Wees

Three long-distance scoring strikes, combined with a swarming, smothering defense, spelled

victory for the Vikings against a potent Gilroy team.

Khalil (Lil) James ran 58 and 45 yards for M-A touchdowns, and Landon Baty scored on a 40-yard run to clinch the win.

Talaisi Teu kicked a pair of two-point conversions. Defenders Joseph Mahoni, Sefita Tatuua, Colton Wisecarver, Will King and Campbell Roellig stifled the Gilroy offense.

The Vikings play Delta Bay at 3 p.m. Sunday at Yerba Buena High School in San Jose for the right to challenge Redwood Empire's

champions on the road to the Pop Warner Nationals in Florida.

Midgets

Josiah Paye's scoring strike to Edward Norton staked the Vikings to an 8-6 halftime lead against Tri-Cities, but the Titans unleashed their stable of swift and muscular running backs to overwhelm the locals in the second half.

Coaching plaudits went to Joe Veal and David Mapa for continued consistent play, and Ben Hadrovic was commended for effective blocking.

— Report by Jim Gallagher,
Vikings Boosters

Miss America in Menlo Park

Miss America 2007, Lauren Nelson, plants her crown on the head of Taylor Armstrong Brown, a recent graduate of Trinity School in Menlo Park. Taylor is the daughter of Kari Nevil, right, owner of Junebug Films Inc., which recently filmed a public service announcement with Miss America in the Jack W. Lyle Park at Middle Avenue and Fremont Street in Menlo Park. Taylor is also in the 30-second spot about online safety, written, directed and produced by Ms. Nevil. The spot is scheduled to appear on network and cable TV, Ms. Nevil said.



CRITICISM

continued from page 9

Maurano didn't get to speak.

Councilman Andy Cohen remained silent during the meeting, and told the Almanac he "didn't want to get into a cat-fight" with Mayor Fergusson and Mr. Robinson, but he didn't approve of the exchange. "I think it's a mistake to invite people to come address the council, and then shoot them down," he said.

Councilman Cline, also a former parks commissioner, said Ms. Maurano "probably should have been able" to speak, although he didn't make that point during the meeting. Instead, he said the community has turned the theater debate into "political gamesmanship."

Deja vu?

Ms. Maurano said part of the reason she went before the

council was to say that parks commissioners felt ignored in the Park Theater debate.

She said any staff time and public funds that go toward the theater could be spent on other recreation projects, and the commission should weigh in on a proposal that uses public dollars to help a business that competes with city dance programs. Arts issues have fallen under the parks commission's purview since the Arts Commission dissolved in 2004.

Ms. Maurano isn't the first commissioner to feel left out of the loop — Councilmen Robinson and Cline, when parks commissioners, said the commission should have been consulted more frequently regarding efforts to build a golf course and playing fields at Bayfront Park, and to privatize the city's aquatics center.

Both council members' election campaigns emphasized a commitment to further involve commissioners in key issues.

Different funds

Mayor Fergusson and Mr. Robinson said the parks commission doesn't have a say in the Park Theatre debate because any funds put toward the theater would be taken from the city's reserves, and would not have impacted funding for other city services, including recreation facilities.

"Like a lot of members of the community, [Ms. Maurano] doesn't understand the difference between the capital we might spend on the Park Theatre in a public/private partnership, and the operating funds ... [for] other things we subsidize," Mr. Robinson said at the meeting. ■

Local scouts calls World Jamboree best experience of his young life

By Tim Benton

This past summer I attended the 21st World Scout Jamboree in the United Kingdom, where 40,000 scouts (boys and girls, ages 14-17) from 150 countries commemorated the 100th anniversary of scouting worldwide.

Of the three million scouts in the U.S., a select group of 3,000 participated.

I and Takumi Nakagawa, a freshman at Sacred Heart who was also at the jamboree, started as Cub Scouts together in first grade and are still enthusiastic

■ FIRST PERSON

Tim Benton is a freshman at Menlo School in Atherton. His Boy Scout troop meets at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.

about the American Boy Scouting program.

The World Scout Jamboree is the largest international event in scouting. It takes place every four years in a different country. It's a time to celebrate what scouting has done for the youth of the world.

This year's Jamboree, held from

July 27 through Aug. 8 in Hylands Park, England, had the theme: "One World, One Promise."

Activities included learning about the world and what we can do to make it better. We explored other countries' cultures and religions.

One day was largely committed to community service projects. Our group fixed up a disabled children's home.

There were physical endurance action centers, where you could swim, canoe, run, play sports and more. We learned new things we could do with trash and how to keep the envi-

ronment healthier.

Our scoutmaster, Art Bernstein, had given us a goal to strive for at the Jamboree: win the Friendship Award. To earn it, we had to do a number of things: make 10 new friends and get their contact information, participate in five activities in both Aqua and Terra Ville, visit five global development boulevard booths, have a meal with a troop from a different country, and make a commitment to do something involving scouting when you get home.

Surprisingly, many scouts earned this award, including me and Takumi.

We traveled in groups of 36 scouts with four adults and camped for 10 days in a area surrounded by troops from other countries. Living in a tent city for 10 days doesn't sound like fun until you throw in the emotional impact scouting has brought for everyone in atten-

dance. You could walk a mile in a circle and probably meet people from 70 countries.

The opening and closing ceremonies were experiences I will never forget, with 40,000 scouts celebrating 100 years of service. I could feel the enthusiasm all around me. There were concerts with international music and many performers.

It was very hard to leave the night after the closing ceremony because most of us felt like we were already home.

Being there was the best experience of my young life.

Together, we can save a life



Your contributions to the Palo Alto Area American Red Cross can help people in your community.

We still need your help. Call 650-688-0415 to support your local chapter. www.paarc.org

This space is donated as a community service by the Palo Alto Weekly.

■ WEDDING

Enstam-Jaffe

Karin Lee Enstam and David Elliott Jaffe were married June 16 at the Valley Presbyterian Church in Portola Valley. Performing the inter-faith ceremony were the Rev. Bruce Coleman and Rabbi Yeshua Charles Familant.

The bride is the daughter of Sandra and Dennis Enstam of Portola Valley. She received a bachelor's degree in anthropology from U.C. San Diego in 1994 and a master's degree and doctorate in anthropology from U.C. Davis. She is an assistant professor of anthropology at Sonoma State University.

The bridegroom is the son of Helga Olsen of Westlake Village

and the late Syd Jaffe. He earned an associate of science degree in exotic animal training and management from Moorpark College in 1990. He received two bachelor's degrees with majors in philosophy and religious studies from San Diego State University in 1999. He is an animal keeper in charge of hoof stock at the African savanna exhibit at the San Francisco Zoo.

Tami Schiern was matron of honor. The bridesmaids were Meri Storino, Amy Schilling and Cindi Sturtz-Sreetharan, who traveled from Japan, and Gwendolyn Enstam, who traveled from Scotland.

Sean Ferguson was best man.

The groomsmen were Mychael McNeeley, Eric Kuniholm, John Goodman and Mitch Weingel.



Karin Enstam and David Jaffe

Christian Enstam and Charlie Marks were ushers. Mr. Marks and Wendy Rovira were readers.

Following a honeymoon in Spain, the couple is living in Mill Valley.

FERN BACHLER

Fern Bachler passed away on Monday, October 29 at 107 years old in Redwood City. She was born in Dow City, Iowa, on September 23, 1900. She is survived by her son Robert and wife Dorothy Bachler. Also survived by grandchildren:

Mr./Mrs. Karl Smerecnik – Novato, CA

Mr./Mrs. Phil Bachler – Atherton, CA

Mr./Mrs. Craig Bachler – Atherton, CA

and 9 great grandchildren

Fern lived in Menlo Park since 1966 and was an active member of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. Private services have been held. The family requests that memorials be made to the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church or charity of choice.

PAID OBITUARY



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COLETTE KYLE

Colette Kyle, beloved wife and mother, grandmother and great grandmother, died at Hyatt Classic residence in Palo Alto on October 27 where she had moved from the Remington Club in San Diego early in the year. She was 99 years old.

Colette was born in Cleveland, Ohio where she worked at an advertising agency early in her life. She met her husband Robert there, left her job, and lived with her family in Cleveland, New York, Boston and San Diego. She was married 59 years before her husband Robert died in 1998. An elegant lady she dressed in highest fashion and maintained an impeccable home that welcomed four generations of her family. She was an avid bridge player, reader, and Chargers football fan.

She is survived by her loving son Robert, a long time resident of Portola Valley and now Menlo Park, and granddaughter Suzanne and great granddaughter Bobbi living in Cupertino.

PAID OBITUARY

IRENE F. BACHMANN

Irene Frances Bachmann, a resident of Charlottesville, Virginia for ten years, died at Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge on October 24, 2007. She was 92. She grew up in the in the midst of her loving parents, Rose Smith and Charles Bachmann and her brother, Harry, as well as many aunts, uncles and cousins on both sides of the family. Auntie loved and was devoted to family and friends above all else throughout her long life. Peels of laughter, wisdom with a flair, uncommon warmth and generosity, steadfast love were among the many gifts she shared over a lifetime with her family and friends. Miss Bachmann was born on July 31, 1915 in Long Island City, New York and grew up in Flushing, New York. She was graduated from Flushing High School and The Katherine Gibbs School. She worked for American Bleach Goods as a secretary from 1937-1946 and The Sanforized Company of Cluett, Peabody Company as an Executive Secretary to four Presidents from 1946-1980 in New York City. During their lifetimes, Auntie remained friends with all of them as well as their families.

Before moving to Charlottesville, Miss Bachmann lived in Flushing, New York and in 1979 moved to Palo

Alto, California to be near her brother and sister-in-law, Alice, her niece, Barbara, and her family. She lived there for almost twenty years, enjoying the company of her grand nieces and grandnephew.

Miss Bachmann is survived by her two nieces, Patricia Alice Bachmann of New York City and Barbara Anne Glynn of Atherton, California and Charlottesville, Virginia; three grand nieces, Jacqueline Glynn Brandin, Alexandra Glynn Rowe, Elizabeth Charles Glynn, one grand nephew, David Scott Glynn and three great-grand nieces, Kate Margaret and Emily. She is also survived by her very dear friend, Ruth McCann, of New York City and most recently, Pittsford, New York.

A Mass of Christian Burial was observed at 11 :00 am on Wednesday, October 31 at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, 401 Alderman Road, Charlottesville. The family received visitors there from 6:30 until 8:30 pm on Tuesday, October 30 at the Hill and Wood Funeral Home at First and Market Street, Charlottesville.

The family prefers memorial contributions to charity.

Friends may sign the guest book at www.hillandwood.com

PAID OBITUARY

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■ WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the web site, www.TheAlmanacOnline.com, and occasionally on the Town Square forum.

TOWN SQUARE FORUM

POST your views on the Town Square forum at www.TheAlmanacOnline.com

EMAIL your views to: letters@AlmanacNews.com. Indicate if it is a letter to be published.

MAIL or deliver to: Editor at the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

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

Muzzling city commissioners

Has the Park Theatre argument brought an end to civility and the commitment to open public discourse in the Menlo Park council chamber?

At least for a brief period last week, the answer was yes, when Mayor Kelly Fergusson took the extraordinary step of cutting off Parks and Recreation Commission chairperson Paula Maurano in mid-report as she tried to explain why she and her colleagues oppose the mayor's plan to purchase the Park Theatre with city funds.

Delivery of the PRC report — during the period designated on the agenda for commission reports — seemed to take

Ms. Fergusson by surprise, and she immediately reacted: She ordered Ms. Maurano to stop, then denied her the chance to explain to the public why all five

members of the commission voted to tell the council that buying the 60-year-old theater and then leasing it to local resident Andy Duncan for a dance studio is a bad idea. (The proposal includes the restoration of the building by Mr. Duncan.)

Although there was some grumbling from Councilman John Boyle, no one forcefully came to Ms. Maurano's rescue, letting Mayor Fergusson's terrible decision stand. No one mentioned the First Amendment, freedom of speech, or even the freedom for any of the city's hard-working commission chairpersons to stand up and give a report at a City Council meeting.

Obviously, as one of the three council proponents of the city's

purchasing the Park Theater, Ms. Fergusson was taken aback by Ms. Maurano's report, and perhaps reflexively acted to squelch it. But like most efforts to censor unwelcome news, this one failed

miserably and brought even more attention to the reasons behind the commission's 5-0 vote against a theater deal.

For example, commission members "saw no public benefit" in pursuing purchase of the theater, when there are more important projects to focus on, including construction of a new gym and

a new recreation center. Later Ms. Maurano said she believes the commission should comment on a project that uses public dollars to help a business that will compete with city dance programs.

Ms. Fergusson was supported in her off-the-cuff action by Heyward Robinson. Rich Cline, the third vote in favor of the city's moving ahead with the theater purchase, didn't encourage the mayor to let Ms. Maurano speak, although later he said she "probably should have been able to speak." Members Andy Cohen and John Boyle, who oppose the purchase, also say Ms. Maurano should have been allowed to speak, although Mr. Cohen remained silent during the unfortunate episode. On Friday afternoon, Mr. Robinson sent out a public statement apologizing for his part in silencing Mr. Maurano.

We urge Ms. Fergusson and her colleagues who support the theater purchase to reconsider their vote and bring the proposal back soon for a full public debate. It was unconscionable for Ms. Fergusson to muzzle the Parks and Recreation Commission report. By gaveling down the commission chairperson, Ms. Fergusson has done herself and her community a serious disservice.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Petition signer torn over deal on Derry project

Editor:

After watching last week's Menlo Park Planning Commission meeting, I'm torn.

On one hand, I am grateful that Menlo Park Tomorrow (MPT) has effected much needed changes in the Derry project — three stories instead of four, greater setbacks, larger public plazas, more retail space, plus a \$2 million public benefit contribution to the city — while saving the city the cost of an election, a lawsuit and further development delays.

This has taken time, patience, negotiating skill and money on the part of MPT's backers. I thank them for their efforts.

On the other hand, I am upset that six self-appointed "deciders" co-opted my signature (along with those of 3,000 other Menlo Park residents) and parlayed it without my approval for their own development priorities. And to further complicate things, a portion of the settlement agreement between Menlo Park Tomorrow and the Derry project developers

See **LETTERS**, next page



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

Duff & Doyle's general store opened in Menlo Park in 1874, and was soon the hub of the town's activity. It was located on the corner of Santa Cruz Avenue and Old County Road (now El Camino Real). The business lasted until the 1920s, and the building was liquidated in 1942.

LETTERS

Our readers write

LETTERS

continued from previous page

is secret — from me, from you other petition signers, and from our Planning Commission and City Council, both of which are answerable to the public.

As a private group, MPT is answerable to no one. There is something presumptuous and undemocratic about this whole thing. What do others who signed the petition think?

Nancy Borgeson
Laurel Street, Menlo Park

Judy Mendelsohn best for PV school board

Editor:

Judy Mendelsohn would be a great asset to the Portola Valley School District board.

I've known Judy for eight years and participated in many committees with her over that time. Judy has a masters degree in education and a California teaching credential in mathematics.

She served on the Ormondale Site Council for six years, including two years as chair; on the Corte Madera middle school math review team; and on the Corte Madera site council. She was directly involved in the development of the district's strategic plan, a tool that the school board uses to determine which programs to implement. Judy has experience in many areas of the budgeting process.

She also has a parent's perspective, because her three children all attended or are attending Portola Valley schools. She is a tremendous volunteer, parent, teacher and leader. Judy has put more time into the schools than all of us combined. She is the most knowledgeable candidate for the position.

Theater owner offers his view on projects

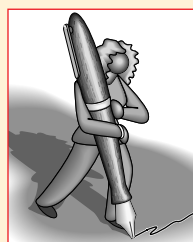
By Howard Crittenden

As the owner of the Park Theater property, I think it is important to share my thoughts about the current proposals to reuse this building.

The Andy Duncan proposal to convert the building into a dance studio for his mother's California Academy of Dance has proved to be more expensive than expected. Mr. Duncan's current plan would make the city the final owner of the property. He would restore the building at his expense, and lease it back from the city, making a one-time up-front rent payment to cover a number of years.

The City Council thought this was a workable solution and agreed to have the city staff and two council members work with Mr. Duncan to negotiate an agreement.

The other proposal came from Menlo Park real estate broker Tom Hilligoss. I met with Mr. Hilligoss several times to learn more about his idea. He explained his interest in restoring the building and making it a movie house again, along with a live theater and meeting hall. What he plans to spend to buy and restore the



GUEST
OPINION

building will require that he earn \$30,000 per month just to pay the financing cost, not including utilities, insurance, staff, maintenance, advertising and more.

This financial burden will require heavy use of the facilities.

He mentioned that he would need to get several variances and a conditional use permit. He will need a parking variance for the 600 seats he intends to have, and then the required beer and wine license. He wants to remove the trees along El Camino Real that are blocking the sign and replace them with newer, shorter trees. Also, he plans to enlarge the lobby of the theater and remove and rebuild the existing restrooms to make them ADA compliant.

There will be traffic and parking concerns when 600 people regularly attend an event at the theater. Where does one put all these cars? How does someone drive through Menlo Park when the streets are

jammed with people arriving or leaving the theater? These are roadblocks that have the potential to ultimately kill his proposal.

Mr. Duncan's plan is the most worthy of support. He has run through the thorn patch of the city's Planning Department and emerged intact. His plan is workable and has benefits for all parties concerned. With the city being the owner, future councils will be in control of the property and do with it what they want after a short ten-year lease. In a decade, the cost to the city today will seem like a bargain.

I think that Mr. Duncan's plan is the best we will see. Over the past years there has been no White Knight to save the theater. I should know, and I don't think one will come along anytime soon, if ever. Mr. Duncan's plan makes the most sense.

We all should agree that the Duncan plan is not perfect but the best we will see. If not, we should be prepared to have this vacant boarded-up building greet those coming into Menlo Park for years to come.

Howard Crittenden owns the Park Theater in Menlo Park and lives in Atherton.

I've seen Judy present and involved in dozens of board meetings over the years; her familiarity with the proceedings and issues will give her a running start when she is elected.

Judy knows our local issues and history, and she will vote fairly. Our community would be lucky to have Judy Mendelsohn on the board of the Portola Valley school district.

Kristi Corley
Golden Oak Drive,
Portola Valley

Shoshone Court, Shawnee Pass, and Iroquois for joining together and closing their streets to car traffic on Halloween night.

Although an inconvenience to them, it was wonderful to trick-or-treat on this very busy Halloween street without worry of little goblins and princesses meeting up with a car. It made for a very safe and festive holiday in the neighborhood. Thank you.

Kelly Villareal
Meadowood Drive,
Portola Valley

ing as a movie theater, I oppose the city funding the theater or its restoration.

Our city budget needs to be spent on public use, not public-private or private businesses. The need for a balanced city budget and healthy reserves is made evident by our recent passage of the utility use tax.

Let's use our tax money as intended, only on public programs and projects.

Anne Perlman
Cathy Place, Menlo Park

Ghosts, goblins were out of harm's way

Editor:

I would like to thank the residents of Portola Valley who live on

Spend taxes on public projects

Editor:

As much as I hope to see the Park Theater marquee restored and wish that it were still operat-

The reasons behind Measure G

Editor:

When California voters approved Proposition 13 the ability of units of government to

raise their tax rates was severely limited. In addition, limits were placed on how much a unit of government could spend in any tax year — subject to change by the voters of each unit of government.

Measure G, up for approval Nov. 6 by residents of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, does **not** increase the taxes or the tax rate for the residents of the district, but would allow the district to spend funds that it receives from the existing tax rate.

If the district's current taxes and reserves (prudently saved from prior years) exceeded the currently allowed expenditure limit of \$25 million, then under the current law the district would not be allowed to use any of the excess funds for any of its current operating expenses. And those funds in excess of \$25 million could well be diverted by the state to other uses having nothing to do with the district or its residents or any of the cities served by the district.

If we had an extensive local disaster Measure G would ensure that the fire district would be able to use its available funds to respond even if doing so would exceed the current \$25 million expenditure limit.

Measure G simply ensures that the taxes we pay stay in our community and are used for our benefit.

Peter F. Carpenter
Larch Drive, Atherton

(Editor's Note: Mr. Carpenter is a member of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District board.)

No shortage of opinion on Park Theater proposal

Here's what people are saying in Town Square:

Posted by Due Dilettante, a resident of the Menlo Park Menlo Oaks neighborhood.

Where's the beef? When's the last time you tried to get bank financing on an El Camino Real property (like the Park Theater) with adjacent historical sources of soil contamination such as plumbing, auto repair, car dealer/repair, dry cleaners? Better yet, why don't you put up your own money to buy this dump.

City Council member Rich Cline voted with the other two (Mayor Kelly Fergusson and Hayward Robinson) to continue negotiations, all the while justifying his vote by stating that he wanted to save the "theater."

This is taxpayer money we're talking about, which demands double diligence and commercial property experts. Why aren't

there experts involved in the negotiation, instead of amateur politicians?

Posted by Heyward Robinson, a resident of the Central Menlo Park neighborhood.

(I have sent this message to all of the Parks and Recreation Commissioners.)

I want to take this opportunity to explain my comments during commission reports at last Tuesday's council meeting.

First, I want to apologize to Chairperson Paula Maurano, members of the commission, and the residents of Menlo Park for my comments during her presentation. I served with Paula on the Parks Commission and have the utmost respect for her and the other commissioners. I should have allowed her to

TownSquare

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complete her presentation without interruption. I will attempt to exercise more restraint in the future.

I also apologize for any disrespect shown by me for the legitimate concern of these citizens of Menlo Park about the potential Park Theater agreement.

The council was obviously caught off-guard by the commission's report. In the future, I suggest that you provide the city manager and/or mayor with notice that the commission intends to make a presentation. Knowing ahead of time that reports are coming enhances our absorption of the information and assists the mayor in managing the agenda. Distributing advance copies of your remarks will also help in communicating the commission's views.

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