

**LAWYER, COACH, ATHLETE** Brad Blocker of  
Portola Valley dies in skiing accident. Page 21

# The Almanac

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

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FEBRUARY 27, 2008

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| VOL. 43 NO. 26



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— Page 12 —



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\* Source: DataQuick 1997-2007

\*\* Source: Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation 30-year Fixed Conventional Rates

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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

### You had to be there

Baba Shibambo, center, and his son Manqhoba rocked the Onetta Harris Community Center in Menlo Park with the rhythms of their African djembe drums. The Black History Month celebration on Feb. 21 included soul-line dancing, poetry, spoken word and song.

## Atherton

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## Menlo Park

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## On the cover

The California High Speed Rail Project would separate the Caltrain tracks from local roadways, and bring high-speed trains zooming through Menlo Park and Atherton. Transportation officials say high-speed rail is a must to accommodate California's growing population, but many local residents and officials aren't so sure. Rendering of train courtesy NC3D. Story on **Page 12**.

## CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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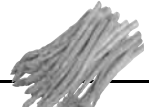
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### *Good Wines to Have on Hand*

When guests show up unexpectedly, it is good to have a few bottles of wine on hand to serve. Because there may not be sufficient time to chill a bottle of white wine, keep a good red wine available. Because its popularity is currently very high, Pinot Noir is a very good choice. Its soft, silky texture is bound to be appreciated by just about everyone. In addition, have an Australian Shiraz around. While Shiraz possesses complexity and spiciness that go well with hors d' oeuvres, it is a good value wine that enables you to pour copiously. Finally, for the purpose of toasting, keep a bottle or two of California sparkling wine on hand.



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HINT: Keep a journal of the wines you drink with notes on how you liked them for future reference.

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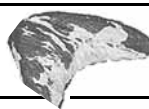
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# Local News

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## College housing issue returns to Woodside council

■ Cañada College wants to build a two-building hilltop apartment complex.

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

A way forward is taking shape in what seemed an impasse between the town of Woodside and Cañada College over the design and scale of a proposed two-building hilltop apartment complex that would provide 56 to 60 residences for college faculty and staff.

The matter is set for discussion at the Tuesday, Feb. 26, Town Council meeting, where council members will consider the idea of a subcommittee to “pursue design issues with the college and Redwood City,” according to the agenda.

The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. in Independence Hall; the college housing discussion is the last item

on the agenda.

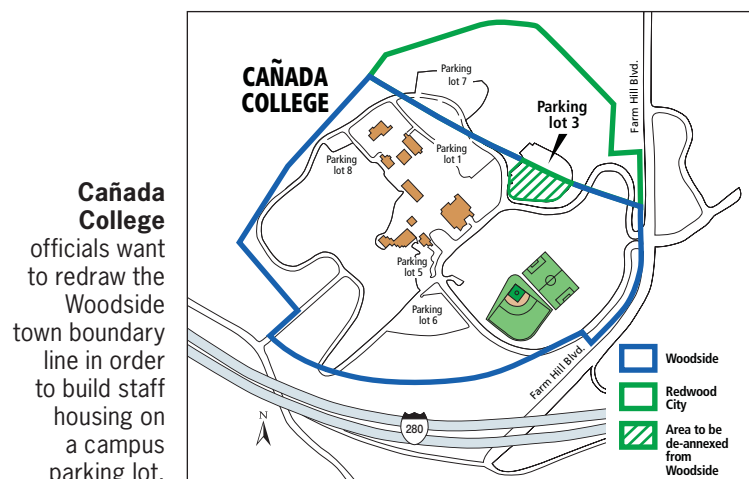
The community college’s 131-acre, 6,000-student campus straddles Redwood City and Woodside, with most of it located in Woodside, including the 3.8-acre site proposed for the apartments.

The college cannot proceed with construction until the Woodside council agrees to de-annex the 3.8 acres and redraw the town boundary to put those acres in Redwood City, where zoning laws allow multi-family buildings. The de-annexation must also be approved by the Local Agency Formation Commission, a San Mateo County agency whose oversight includes changes in jurisdictional boundaries.

### WOODSIDE

The council could have approved the de-annexation on Feb. 12, but a council majority of Peter Mason, Dave Tanner, Dave Burow and Carroll Ann Hodges criticized the scale of the proposed two- and three-story apartment buildings. Councilwomen Deborah Gordon and Sue Boynton spoke in support of redrawing the boundary line.

The disagreements led Ms. Gordon to propose putting off a de-annexation decision “to a date uncertain,” and a unanimous council agreed. In May 2007, the council had endorsed the concept of on-campus housing in a county where rents are often too high for middle- and low-income wage earners. Mr. Mason and Mr. Burow were not on the council at that time.



Cañada College officials want to redraw the Woodside town boundary line in order to build staff housing on a campus parking lot.

“I’m reeling at the decision you have made,” Barbara Christiansen, the college’s director of community relations, told the council after the vote. Relying on the council’s 10-month-old expression of sup-

port, the college spent “hundreds of thousands of dollars” on plans for the apartments, she said.

“This is the first we have heard

See CAÑADA, page 8

## Appeals court upholds open space district’s coastal annexation

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Opponents of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s 2004 annexation of about 220 square miles of land along the San Mateo County coast were dealt what is likely to be their final blow with the rejection of their legal challenge of the annexation by the state Court of Appeals.

The three-judge panel rejected all claims of the appellants — Citizens for Responsible Open Space and Californians for Property Rights — in a Jan. 31 decision. The decision becomes final next week.

The appellants had challenged the long public process that led to the annexation of coastal land from the southern boundary of Pacifica to the Santa Cruz County line. That complicated process provided registered voters of the affected area a chance to register protests of the planned annexation; if 25 percent of voters had filed protests, the question would have gone to the ballot.

In their lawsuit, the plaintiffs contended that the annexation should be invalidated, claim-

ing, among other things, that there was inadequate public notice of the hearing, and that county agencies improperly excluded legal protests filed by registered voters.

The plaintiffs named San Mateo County and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as defendants. LAFCO, which is responsible for approving formation and annexation of governments, such as cities and special districts, was the agency in charge of public notification. The agency approved the coastal annexation to the open space district after determining that, with the exclusion of invalid protests, fewer than 25 percent of voters filed protests, and no election was needed.

The two groups filed their appeal to the state court after losing a drawn-out fight in San Mateo County Superior Court that included two recounts of the protests, ordered by two different judges and inspected by a third judge.

The Superior Court decision upheld LAFCO’s approval of the annexation, but found that LAFCO improperly excluded

See OPEN SPACE, page 8



A new Kelly Field, as seen in this drawing, could provide local sports groups with two artificial-turf, adult-sized fields — one for baseball, and one for soccer. This is one of three options for reconfiguring the park.

## Changes in store for Kelly Field?

■ Parks commissioners to take first look at building full-sized fields at park at Feb. 27 meeting.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

The ongoing campaign to increase Menlo Park’s sports fields inventory will pick back up this week, as the Parks and Recreation Commission will discuss reconfiguring

Kelly Field and building lighted, artificial-turf fields at the 8.3-acre park.

Parks commissioners, at their Feb. 27 meeting, are expected to evaluate three options for fitting a baseball field and soccer field at the park, which is located behind the Onetta Harris Community

Center in the city’s Belle Haven neighborhood.

The meeting is set to start at 6 p.m., and will be held at the center at 100 Terminal Ave.

### ‘Increasing utilization’

Kelly Park is a relatively new city facility, built in 2002 for about \$1 million.

See KELLY FIELD, page 8

# Simitian loses education finance seat Atherton ends lawsuit over M-A High School performing arts center

By Jay Thorwaldson

Palo Alto Weekly

State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, will keep his chairmanship of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee but will lose his seat on the Budget Subcommittee on Educational Finance under an exercise of party discipline for taking an independent stance on massive school budget cuts.

Sen. Simitian's position is that state officials should avoid suspending Prop. 98, the 1988 voter-approved minimum-funding guarantee for education, by using \$1.5 billion in funds in unspent accounts to reduce this year's general fund expenditures on education — the basis for next

year's Prop. 98 guarantee.

But when he proposed an amendment to allow flexibility in how funds were spent at a Senate committee meeting, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata stripped Simitian of his committee chairmanship. Sen. Perata apparently reconsidered following discussions with Sen. Simitian within the last week. The change had not yet been ratified by the Senate Rules Committee, although the vacancy was listed briefly on a daily journal for the Senate.

"It was my choice to speak my mind," Sen. Simitian said late Friday about his position at the meeting. "Choices have consequences. I understand that. I said what I said because I'm trying to avoid a Proposition 98 suspension. It's just that simple," he said.

Sen. Perata's office has said that he never comments on committee assignments. But a longstanding tradition in both parties in Sacramento is to use committee assignments, office allocations and even staff budgets of legislators to enforce party discipline on legislative matters.

School districts statewide face more than \$4 billion in budget

cuts as part of a budget deficit that has grown to \$16 billion, adjusted upward last week from an earlier estimate of \$14.5 billion. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed suspending Proposition 98 guarantees in order to achieve the \$4 billion-plus cuts in education.

But Sen. Simitian has warned school officials and parents that suspending Proposition 98 twice in four years would create a dangerous precedent and leave the guarantee vulnerable to future suspension, even though doing so takes two-thirds approval in the Senate.

By using unspent or reserve funds from various accounts to cut the general fund expenditure (and next year's level of guaranteed funding), Sen. Simitian said he believes suspending Proposition 98 could be avoided.

But many school-district officials and education leaders are concerned that reducing the guarantee in that way would lower future funding levels. ■

— Jay Thorwaldson is editor of the Palo Alto Weekly.

## Atherton ends lawsuit over M-A High School performing arts center

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

This time, it's really settled. Both parties have signed off on a settlement ending the lawsuit filed by the town of Atherton against the Sequoia Union High School District over potential impacts from the new performing arts center being constructed on the campus of Menlo-Atherton High School.

Atherton and the school district nearly closed the books on the lawsuit last summer, but additional concerns raised by the Atherton City Council sent the lawyers back to the bargaining table.

Town officials had a number of concerns regarding the likely increases in traffic, parking problems, noise and drainage problems resulting from the new 483-seat theater. Lighting and hours of operation were also concerns.

The \$32 million performing arts center is partially funded by the city of Menlo Park, and will serve as a venue for some Menlo Park city events when it's not needed for high school uses.

In November 2006, Atherton officials filed a lawsuit alleging that the district dodged an environmental impact report when it approved construction of the theater, but the town has been in talks with district and Menlo Park officials since the suit was filed.

The district has agreed to "pursue remedial measures" to address town officials' concerns over environmental impacts, as well as come to agreement on Atherton police officers providing security services for some events. For its part, Atherton officials will consider revising the town's zoning ordinances governing building height limitations. ■

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## Russ says rain totals 15.5 inches

The weekend rains broke a 15-day dry spell and added 1.85 inches to Cotton Street resident Bill Russ' rain gauge, bringing the season total for central Menlo Park to 15.45 inches as of Monday, Feb. 25, 2007.

The rain season runs from July 1 through June 30. The normal seasonal total for the area is 16 to 18 inches, Mr. Russ said. The current total is 10 inches ahead of where it was last year at this time.

## Probation for motorcyclist after crash in Portola Valley

A sentence that included probation and participation in a drug rehabilitation program was handed down to a San Jose motorcyclist who led the California Highway Patrol on a high-speed chase that ended in a crash near the Village Square shopping center in Portola Valley on May 30, 2007.

Brandon Hester, 21 at the time of his arrest, pleaded "no contest" on July 16, 2007, to charges that included felony possession of a banned substance and misdemeanor driving under the influence, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe. He was sentenced Feb. 21 by San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Mark Forcum.

In addition to three years of supervised probation, Mr. Hester is also forbidden to possess weapons, must register as a drug offender, and must pay about \$1,600 in fines plus a \$75 monthly probation fee, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

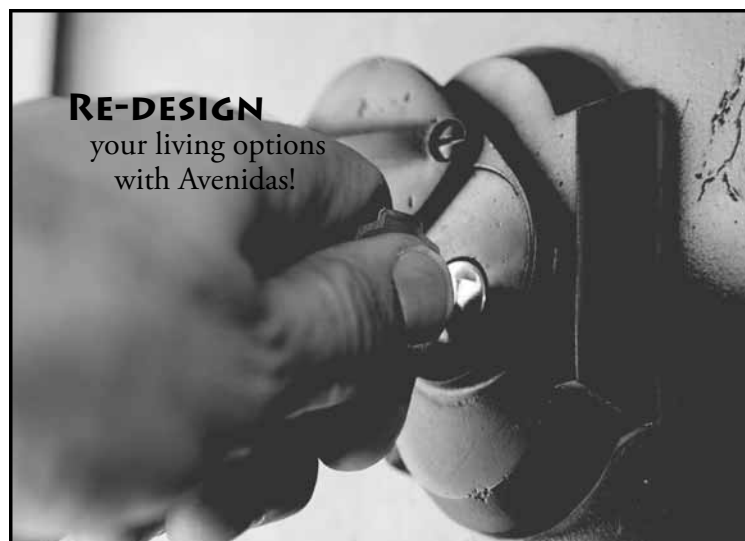
The chase had begun at 9:20 p.m. on Interstate 280 just south of its intersection with Highway 92, when the motorcyclist sped away from the CHP, Officer Parsons said. They kept him in sight and followed him into Portola Valley.

After he crashed, Mr. Hester ran and hid, the CHP said. With help from deputies of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, the officers established a perimeter and discovered Mr. Hester among the buildings.

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PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that immediately following a public hearing on the matter, a resolution will be considered by the Board of Trustees of the Menlo Park City School District at its regular meeting on March 11, 2008 at 7:00 p.m., which, if adopted by the Board, will increase development fees established by the District against residential construction and reconstruction to \$2.97 per square foot and against new commercial or industrial construction to \$0.47 per square foot. The proposed fees are authorized by Education Code Section 17620 and Government Code Section 65995. Data pertaining to the cost of school facilities is available for inspection during regular business hours at the District's administrative offices at 181 Encinal Avenue in Atherton. The increased fees, if approved by the Board of Trustees, will become effective on May 10, 2008 which is 60 days after the proposed adoption by the Board of the resolution levying such fee.

Published in The Almanac on February 27, March 5, 2008.




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# Author tells history of SF Ballet

Atherton resident Janice Ross tells the story of "how the San Francisco Ballet forged a fresh identity for American dance and is now pioneering a new model of internationalism in the dance world" in her new book, the "San Francisco Ballet at 75," said ballet spokeswoman Victoria I. Andujar.

Ms. Ross, an associate professor of dance history in the drama department at Stanford University, will talk about her new book



Janice Ross

at Kepler's bookstore in Menlo Park at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27. The event is free.

"We recently arranged for several principal dancers from the company to be present to answer questions and sign books," said Ms. Andujar.

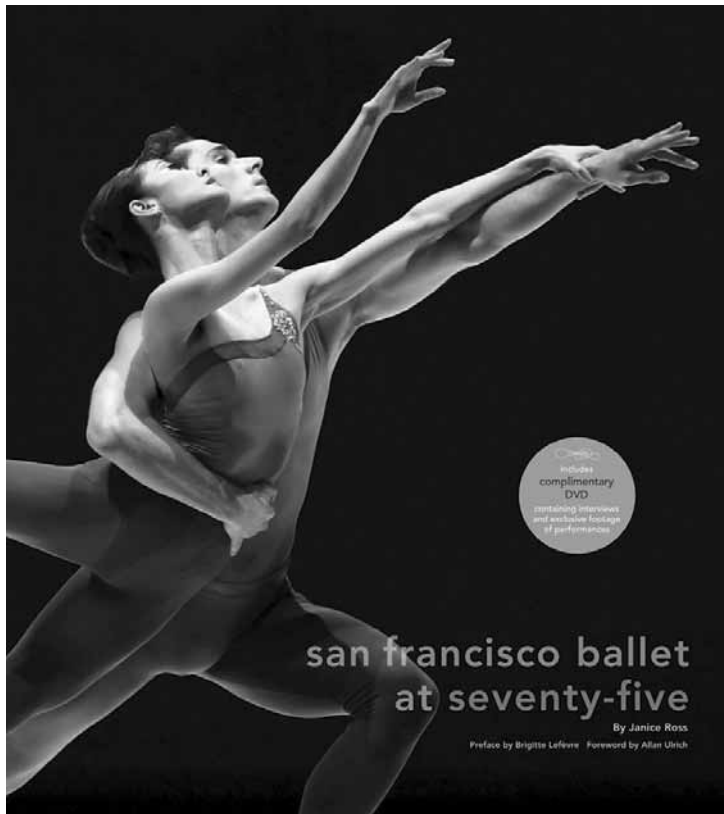
In the book, Ms. Ross, a dance scholar and historian, "explores the San Francisco Ballet's ascent from its humble beginnings in 1933 to its current status as an internationally acclaimed cultural institution," said Ms. Andujar.

The illustrated volume, with more than 100 color and archival photographs, includes a DVD with insight into the company's history, including interviews with insiders and footage of rehearsals and performances, said Ms. Andujar.

Ms. Ross was staff dance critic for the Oakland Tribune and San Francisco correspondent for Dance Magazine for 20 years.

She is the author of "Moving Lessons: Margaret H'Doubler and the Beginning of Dance in American Education" and "Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance" (for which she received a Guggenheim Fellowship).

Her essays on dance have appeared in numerous publications. A past president of the



The cover of the book on the "San Francisco Ballet at 75" by Atherton author Janice Ross.



Tina LeBlanc in Tomasson's Swan Lake. She is one of the dancers who plans to be at Kepler's bookstore on Wednesday, Feb. 27.

Dance Critics Association, she is currently president-elect of the Society of Dance History Scholars.

Chronicle Books is the publisher. Kepler's is at 1010 El Camino Real in Menlo Park.

### Different path

While other little girls in her dance class nurtured dreams of becoming ballerinas, Janice Ross pointed her toes toward a different path, wrote Janet Silver Ghent in a Dec. 28 cover story in the Palo Alto Weekly.

"I really wanted to become a dance critic, strangely enough," Ms. Ross said in an interview with Ms. Ghent. "I loved dancing. I never had the right body to be a professional dancer, but my passion was in conveying the experience of what a performance was about."

Ms. Ross said she wanted to bring the kind of analysis to the field that other critics brought to visual arts, theater and music.

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



### Are Inspections Necessary?

Q: Dear Gloria,

We are preparing to put our house on the market, hoping that the spring will be a good time to sell. Our agent has advised us to get several different inspections and reports. We have added up the cost of all of these and it is close to one thousand dollars. Why is this necessary? I thought buyers were always supposed to get their own inspections. We think that is a lot of money to spend when we have so many other places for it in painting, landscaping, etc.

- Carol H.

A: Dear Carol, That is a legitimate question. However, any real estate professional who has been through the many real estate cycles would advise you to get the reports prior to putting the house on the market. It is an excellent recommendation. The reasons are many but the two main ones are; First, you can see what a property inspector finds as problems with your house. If they are minor ones, such as leaky faucets, GFI's, water run-off too close to the house,

etc. you can get a handyman to fix these and then note that on the report. If there are any major problems such as foundation or roof at least you and your potential buyer are aware. You can also then price accordingly. Second, in spite of the fact that the media love bad news and report several times a day on the housing crisis, our area continues to thrive and experience multiple offers on well-priced properties. If you have all of the inspections and reports up-front so that the buyer and realtor can go through them, call the inspector with any questions or even have him back to the property, you may be able to get an offer without contingencies. While you may hear about buyers being advised to have their own inspections, the reality of our market is if there is an offer with a five or seven day inspection contingency and one with no contingencies, there is no question which offer will prevail. A thousand dollars is a small price to pay for a solid offer. You have been given good advice.

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



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# Menlo Park to test system for emergency notification

Menlo Park plans to test its new emergency notification system on Thursday, Feb. 28. Residents and businesses should expect a pre-recorded phone call at approximately 10 a.m.

The system has a database of home and business phone numbers, but if people want to register a specific number, such as a cell phone or direct office line, they can do so by going to MenloPark.org, clicking on "Emergencies" and signing up. The system can also send text messages to cell phones.

## Have name for new park?

Menlo Park has a new park, and now that park needs a name.

The city's Parks and Recreation Commission is asking residents to come up with ideas to name a one-acre park off Hamilton Avenue in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood. The park is part of the new 47-home project recently finished by Palo Alto-based Clarum Homes at 507-555 Hamilton Ave., near Chilco Street.

Parks commissioners have asked residents to e-mail names to the City Council e-mail log at City.Council@MenloPark.org, or

## ■ MENLO WATCH

to attend the commission's meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 27. The meeting is set to start at 6 p.m. in the Onetta Harris Community Center at 100 Terminal Ave.

## Meet the mayor

Menlo Park Mayor Andy Cohen is holding open office hours on Saturday, March 1, to hear residents' views, ideas and concerns about city-related issues.

Mr. Cohen will be at the Burgess Recreation Center from 10 a.m. to noon.

## Groundbreaking

The Menlo Park Police Department will hold a ground breaking ceremony on Thursday, Feb. 28, to celebrate the start of construction of a new police substation at the intersection of Willow Road and Ivy Drive.

The ceremony will start at 1:30 p.m., according to a police news release. Construction of the two-story, 3,800-square-foot substation is expected to be finished in October.

## Almanac phone system down

Due to a power outage, the Almanac phone system was not operating properly on Monday, Feb. 25, and many callers were not able to get through.

The Almanac apologizes for the inconvenience.

As of press time Monday, we were working to correct the problem and we hope the phone system will be back in full operation by Tuesday.

Meanwhile, you can e-mail information to editor@AlmanacNews.com.

## KELLY FIELD

continued from page 5

But poor planning and design restrictions led to a triangular-shaped baseball field that is too shallow for sports groups to use, and an undersized soccer field that is significantly slanted.

At the direction of the City Council, parks commissioners and San Francisco-based consultant Callander Associates have spent the past several months working with local sports groups and neighbors to figure out how to squeeze more field space out of the park and make other improvements.

"The goal is that we want to increase the utilization of the fields at the park," said Andy Kirkpatrick, a parks commissioner. Mr. Kirkpatrick said neighbors and sports groups favored installing artificial turf and lights at the park so the fields could be used year-round, and at night.

Callander Associates will present three design options to the parks commissioners, and the commission is expected to choose one design to recommend to the council.

All three designs call for adult-sized, lighted, artificial-turf fields, keeping the existing basketball court, and adding a tennis court and outdoor exercise equipment at the park. Two of the designs also incorporate a 100-meter running track and long-jump pit.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said the total costs of reconfiguring the park are unknown, but said the artificial turf and lights alone would cost about \$1.8 million.

Councilman Heyward Robinson, who pushed the city to rework Kelly Park two years ago as a parks commissioner, said he's looking forward to learning more about the designs.

"This is what [the council] wanted—some creative ideas to expand our fields, and to see how those ideas might work out," he said. ■



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

## Work in progress

With all the exterior siding not yet on and the ground surface still plain dirt, the area around Portola Valley's new community hall remains a hard-hat area with neon orange here and there. The tall windows and up-angled roof should help the level of natural light in the interior.

## CAÑADA

continued from page 5

that Woodside is going back on its word," she said. "I think you're holding this project hostage."

"We are not going back on our word," Mayor Ron Romines replied evenly. The council has been attending to other business, he said. "I don't think it's our fault. It's the way things work."

In an interview, Mr. Romines said the council's 2007 endorsement had been for a concept, not a design.

"What I would have liked to see happen is for (the college) to come back to the council earlier in the design process," he said. "I can't fault them for not doing that. It's kind of the way these things come about. ... I think we did the best that we could, given the situation that we found ourselves in."

Councilman Mason, an architect and former member of Woodside's Architecture and Site Review Board, told the Almanac that he didn't see the project being derailed. He recommended a design similar to Stanford University's graduate housing on Sand Hill Road near El Camino Real. The three-story

complex has design elements that lend it a two-story appearance, he said.

"By working your site a little bit differently, that tends to have less impact on the neighbors," he said. "A lot of Woodside does look at (this site). That's kind of the point. It's a very prominent project."

*'By working your site a little bit differently, that tends to have less impact on the neighbors. A lot of Woodside does look at (this site). That's kind of the point. It's a very prominent project.'*

COUNCILMAN PETER MASON

"I do not want to see this project not happen," Mayor Romines told the Almanac. "One of the toughest problems (Bay Area colleges) face is attracting good teachers. It's a very difficult problem because of the incredible cost of housing in this area."

That the matter got on to the council's agenda is a consequence of complaints from college neighbors who live in Woodhill Estates, a Redwood City subdivision of single-family homes that looks up at the proposed apartment site.

The Woodside Planning Commission had endorsed a property line adjustment relevant to the

project last Dec. 5, and Woodhill residents appealed that decision to the council. The residents cited the visual impact of the apartments and the potential they had to lower their own property values.

## Staffing problems

In a 2002 survey, 18 percent of the San Mateo County Community College District's 1,700 employees said they planned to leave in three years, including 58 percent who cited "the inability to find or afford affordable housing," Ms. Christiansen said in an interview. A 2007 update yielded about the same result, she said.

The campus apartments would include garages, wood floors at the entrances and washer/dryer sets. Residents could walk to work, saving 167,000 commuter miles annually, she said. The Greenbelt Alliance and the Committee for Green Foothills support the project.

California requires cities and towns to build specific numbers of homes for people of middle to low incomes, a tricky issue for some well-to-do communities. Woodside would receive credit for 40 percent of the homes, Ms. Christiansen said. ■

## OPEN SPACE

continued from page 5

protests by registered voters who didn't include their residential address on the protest form.

LAFCO filed a cross-appeal with the state court. In the same published opinion that upheld the annexation, the Court of Appeals ruled in LAFCO's favor in the cross-

appeal, stating that the Superior Court opinion was in error.

## Open space matters

The annexation allows the open space district, founded in 1972 to preserve land in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, to buy and manage land on the coast for open space and agriculture.

"This (appeals court) decision

allows us to continue to protect precious coastal open space, to protect farmland through agricultural leases and easements, to enhance environmental, educational, and recreational programs, and to provide wildlife protection and critical emergency services to the coast-side," said Craig Britton, the district's general manager, in a prepared statement. ■

# Abhors to head open-space district

■ Biologist and naturalist chosen to succeed retiring General Manager Craig Britton.

By Jay Thorwaldson  
Palo Alto Weekly

Stephen Abbors, a trained biologist and naturalist who currently manages 28,000 acres of watershed and recreational lands for the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD), has been named the new general manager of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD).

Mr. Abbors, an East Bay native, will become the third general manager of the district since it was created by voters in 1972. The district extends from south of Los Gatos to San Carlos and from the San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean in San Mateo County. It has acquired nearly 60,000 acres of dedicated open-space lands.

Mr. Abbors will succeed Craig Britton, who has served as general manager of MROSD since 1994 after serving as land-acquisitions manager since 1977. Mr. Britton succeeded Herb Grench, who was named manager in 1973.

Mr. Abbors will be the first trained naturalist to head the district; Mr. Britton started

as a land-acquisitions specialist and Mr. Grench was a Lockheed engineer/manager before joining the district.

Mr. Abbors will receive \$165,000 in annual salary plus benefits, and is to officially begin work April 14.

He resides with his wife in Walnut Creek but is reportedly familiar with the Santa Cruz Mountains. They have two grown daughters.

With bachelor's and master's degrees in biological sciences from California State University, East Bay, he began his professional career as a naturalist with the East Bay Regional Park District, but later joined EBMUD.

He was project manager for the 1996 East Bay Watershed Master Plan, which emphasized the interdependence between biological diversity and water quality. The plan still guides decisions on land management, restoration, acquisition and recreational use.

He also chaired the subcom-



Steve Abbors

mittee of the Alameda-Contra Costa Biodiversity Working Group that developed the management plan for the Caldecott Wildlife Corridor. He has been actively involved in the Diablo Fire Safe Council, Contra Costa Fish and Wildlife Committee and the Hills Emergency Forum — a multi-agency organization formed in response to the 1991 Oakland Tunnel Fire.

He is a fervent hiker, having walked more than 1,300 miles in the last year. He is an amateur nature photographer, and grows grapes to make his own wine.

Mr. Abbors is currently on vacation in Costa Rica and could not be reached for comment. But in a prepared statement he said he was "deeply honored" to have the opportunity "to carry forward the vitally important mission of preserving, protecting and enjoying our environment" through the MROSD position.

"As the impacts of climate become more apparent, protection and restoration of the land that supports all life by providing air, water, food and other vital ecosystem services will become increasingly important to all of us," he said. ■

Jay Thorwaldson is editor of the Palo Alto Weekly.

## Atherton seeks help on historic artifact rules

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

Can an outside facilitator end the battle over the fate of historic objects in Atherton's Lindenwood neighborhood?

The Atherton City Council is willing to give it a try, to the tune of \$25,000.

At its Feb. 20 meeting, the council authorized the consulting firm PMC of Rancho Cordova to run a public outreach campaign in an attempt to find a compromise version of the town's contentious historic preservation ordinance.

PMC consultants plan to hold private meetings with small groups of people on both sides of the historic preservation issue in an attempt to build consensus, before bringing a proposal for the whole town to consider.

Atherton's historic preservation ordinance is intended to preserve a variety of artifacts believed to date back to the estate of silver magnate James Flood. The Lindenwood neighborhood that resulted from the estate's subdivision is dotted with walls, benches, urns and street lamps.

There've been a number of contentious City Council meetings, and while most residents have told the council that they value Atherton's unique heritage, opinions are sharply divided over whether the town's ordinance is an intolerable infringement on private property rights or a necessity to preserve the few historic objects that survive.

The Lindenwood Homes Association sup-

ports the law, but not all Lindenwood residents agree.

Last year, residents Randy and Lisa Lamb sued Atherton after the council denied their request to move two large urns to their new home in another part of town after they sold their home in Lindenwood. A San Mateo County Superior Court judge sided with the Lambs, forcing Atherton to revisit its ordinance.

Until the council revises — or throws out — the ordinance, the Lambs' urns are sitting in the backyard of their former house, now occupied by its new owner.

Councilman Jerry Carlson estimates that the town has spent at least \$200,000 on the ordinance, a combination of legal fees, hiring a historical preservation consultant, and town staff time.

PMC originally estimated that the consulting work could cost as much as \$35,000, but that proved too steep for the council. On a 2-1 vote, with Charles Marsala opposed and Kathy McKeithen absent, the council authorized the work, as long as it doesn't exceed \$25,000.

Mr. Marsala said he would rather have a town-wide vote to decide whether to have a historic preservation ordinance at all. He said the money to pay PMC would be better spent if the city put it into a preservation fund to buy artifacts from private owners.

Mayor Jim Janz said he was surprised by the high price tag for PMC, but added, "If this (gets us) something we can agree on, then it's worth every penny." ■

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Pictured: A massive pair of blue and white jars and covers, Kangxi Period. Sold for \$226,000, December 2007

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# KEPLER'S FEATURED AUTHORS

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni  
*The Palace of Illusions*

Tuesday, March 4, 7:30 p.m.

A reimagining of the world-famous Indian epic, the Mahabharat -- told from the point of view of the wife -- an amazing woman. Divakaruni is the author of the bestselling novels *Queen of Dreams*, *Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, and *The Vine of Desire*, and two prizewinning story collections.



Mike Lupica  
*The Big Field*

Monday, March 10, 7:00 p.m.

Make it a night of baseball fun with mom and dad when we welcome acclaimed sports writer Mike Lupica. It will be just like a night at the ball park with popcorn and root beer for all. Come early to watch a classic baseball game on the big screen and join us in rallying around our very own Kepler's Klobberers as they get ready to take to the field for the new T-ball season.



## Don't miss these other exciting author events!

Manil Suri  
*The Age of Shiva*

Monday, March 3, 7:30 p.m.

Following his spectacular debut, *The Death of Vishnu*, Manil Suri returns with a mesmerizing story of modern India, richly layered with themes from Hindu mythology.



Dee Dee Myers

*Why Women Should Rule the World*  
Wednesday, March 5, 11:30 a.m.

Location: Mayer Theatre, Santa Clara University, 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara. For reservations, call 800-847-7730 or visit [www.commonwealthclub.org/sv](http://www.commonwealthclub.org/sv).



GO-GREEN: Wendy Johnson

*Gardening at the Dragon's Gate: At Work in the Wild and Cultivated World*  
Thursday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.

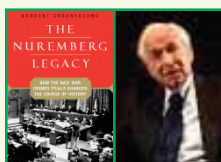
For more than 30 years, Johnson has been meditating and gardening at the Green Gulch Farm Zen Center in Marin, renowned for its pioneering role in California's food revolution.



Norbert Ehrenfreund

*The Nuremberg Legacy: How the Nazi War Crimes Trials Changed the Course of History*  
Tuesday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.

Norbert Ehrenfreund has served as a judge for thirty years in the Superior Court of California. He served as a correspondent for *The Stars and Stripes* during the Nuremberg trials.



Laura M. Flynn

*Swallow the Ocean: A Memoir*  
Thursday, March 13, 7:30 p.m.

Debut author Flynn is a native of San Francisco and currently teaches writing at the University of Minnesota



POETRY: Beverly Bie Brahic and Lauren Rusk

Tuesday, March 18, 7:30 p.m.

Enjoy an evening of poetry with two Stanford authors.



Sam Wang and Sandra Aamodt

*WELCOME TO YOUR BRAIN:*

*Why You Lose Your Car Keys But Never Forget How to Drive and Other Puzzles of Everyday Life*  
Wednesday, March 26, 7:30 p.m.



A fun and enlightening guided tour of your brain filled with truths to widely-held myths, practical tips to help use your brain better, and plenty of "did you know's?"

GO-GREEN: Congressman Jay Inslee

*Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy*  
Thursday, March 27, 7:30 p.m.

Introduction by Menlo Park Mayor Kelly Fergusson.

Inslee is a recognized leader in Congress on energy issues and is the prime sponsor of the New Apollo Energy Act, a comprehensive plan to build a clean energy economy in America.



## Kepler's Story Time every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.

March 2nd Story Time with Barbara Joose:

*Grandma Calls Me Beautiful* We have so much to learn from our global family and that is what Barbara Joose's delightful new book helps us to learn. With its Hawaiian theme, brilliant watercolor illustrations, and heart warming message, Barbara proves that it's easy and fun to learn about traditional cultures and special family bonds.



March 9th Story Time with Cynthia Chin-Lee:

*Amelia to Zora: 26 Women Who Changed the World* March is Women's History Month and we are celebrating it Story Time Style. Local author Cynthia Chin-Lee will teach us a thing or two about history's most fascinating and fearless females.



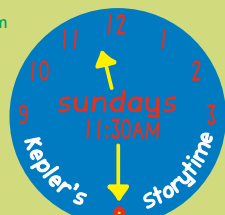
March 16th Cats Story Time We'll read favorites featuring cats exhibiting some VERY cat-like behavior. Then we'll top it off with an energetic adventure with the rambunctious, imaginative, and precocious Skippyjon Jones. Free Skippyjon Jones masks for everyone who attends!

All events are at Kepler's unless otherwise noted.

March 23rd Easter and Spring Story Time Time to shake off those winter blues and get ready for Spring! An Easter-themed craft and stories about everyone's favorite time of year will have you practically "blooming" in anticipation for warmer weather, sunnier skies, and the colorful abundance of spring.

March 30th Brother and Sister Story Time Brothers and sisters of all ages are welcome to attend this special Story Time that celebrates the significant, albeit sometimes bumpy, relationship between siblings. These stories will show that even though it isn't always easy having them around, having a sister or brother can be the best thing in the whole world.

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park  
650-324-4321 [www.keplers.com](http://www.keplers.com)



## Atherton to meet Tuesday on upgrading town facilities

A community meeting on upgrading Atherton's town hall and other facilities is set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27, at the Jennings Pavilion in Holbrook-Palmer Park, located at 150 Watkins Ave.

Councilman Charles Marsala is hosting the meeting to gather public input on the town's need for bigger, updated facilities for town administration, the police station, the branch library and the Pavilion.

The town already has an analysis of its space needs, but hasn't gotten much farther than that. There has been talk for years about eliminating the "temporary" trailers that house the building and public works departments, expanding the police station to eliminate its trailers, and creating a seismically safe emergency communications center, Mr. Marsala said.

"I want to get residents

involved early in the process," Mr. Marsala said.

He said that Atherton residents have a long history of generous donations to the town, and that community fundraising would be key to financing any new facilities.

The meeting will feature a panel discussion of local people with some expertise in such matters. The panel will include the chairwomen of Portola Valley's new town center fundraising campaign, and council members from Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto.

Besides investigating the possibility of upgrading town hall facilities, Mr. Marsala said he would like to explore improving the library, using \$2.5 million set aside in dedicated library funds, as well as upgrading the Pavilion in an effort to increase the rental income it generates.

## Project Read tutor training begins March 11

Registration is under way for Project Read-Menlo Park's tutor training sessions. The program trains volunteers to help local adults learn to read or improve their reading.

Training sessions are held at the Menlo Park Library at 800 Alma St. on March 11, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., and March 15, from

10 a.m. to 3 p.m. A final session on Tuesday, April 22, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., is a follow-up meeting for tutors who have started meeting with students.

Those who can't attend can receive videotaped or DVD training and resource material. For more information or to register for sessions, call 330-2525.

### FREE EVENT!

## "Creating Resilient Children"

Guest Speaker

**Gloria Moskowitz-Sweet, LCSW**

Coordinator, Parents Place Express

**Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Bethany Lutheran Church**

1095 Cloud Avenue, Menlo Park

**Target Audience: Parents**

Something about raising children has changed in today's fast-paced world. Many parenting experts feel that parents are under continuous pressure to plan, enrich, and do this important parenting job precisely the right way. The pressure and stress on today's families can be overwhelming. In this workshop we will focus on the challenges of raising children in today's "hurry up" world. We will discuss strategies for raising resilient and healthy children, and how parents can establish healthy family schedules and find the right balance for their families.

**Adults only, please.**

**Reservations required. Call 650-854-5897**

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## Artificial or natural grass on town fields?

Should Portola Valley's four playing fields be covered with conventional grass, native grass or artificial turf? The Town Council may act Wednesday to get help answering that question.

This is one of three water and water conservation related matters on the agenda of the council, which meets at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 27, in the Historic Schoolhouse.

The town's Parks & Recreation

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Committee is asking the council to issue a request for proposals from consultants who can analyze the relative merits of natural and artificial surfaces on the town's playing fields. The parks committee has \$15,000 set aside for the analysis.

Also, the council will consider a resolution to apply for federal funds to help pay for the "day-

lighting" (opening to the air) of a buried section of Sausal Creek as part of the new Town Center project.

Further, the council may sign a resolution opposing a controversial plan by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to annually divert some 25 million gallons of water from the Tuolumne River into the Bay Area's drinking water supply. The diversion is opposed by environmental groups.

## Former MP recreation leader sentenced to 26 years in prison

A sentence of 26 years in state prison has been handed down to Tyrone Darnell Williams, a former recreation leader for the city of Menlo Park who pleaded "no contest" to charges of sexually molesting his young female cousins when he shared a Menlo Park house with them and their grandmother in the 1990s.

Mr. Williams, 29, did not contest 10 counts of lewd behavior with a child under the age of 14 that included substantial sexual conduct. The plea bargain, agreed to on Jan. 16, guaranteed no more than 26 years, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

Judge Clifford Cretan imposed the sentence on Feb. 6 in San Mateo County Superior Court in Redwood City.

Mr. Williams would have faced the possibility of a life sentence if the case had gone to trial, Mr. Wagstaffe said. He will not be eligible for parole until having served at least 85 percent of his sentence (about 22 years), Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Williams once worked at the Onetta Harris Community Center in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park, but none of the crimes he was accused of occurred in the context of his work at the community center, said Deputy District Attorney Melissa McKowan.

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Informative, humorous and lively discussions between parents and their pre-teens on puberty, the opposite sex and growing up. Girls attend these two-part sessions with their moms and boys attend with their dads.

  - For Boys: Thursday, March 13 & Tuesday, March 18
  - For Girls: Saturdays, April 5 & 12
- ✱ **NEWBORN CARE 101**

Often touted as our "most fun" class, this interactive program teaches the specifics of newborn care, including bathing, temperature-taking, changing diapers, swaddling, soothing techniques and more. Infant doll models are used to allow for hands-on practice.

  - Saturday, March 15
- ✱ **SIBLING PREPARATION**




Designed for children two years of age and older, this class prepares siblings for the emotional and physical realities of the arrival of a newborn.

  - Saturday, April 5
- ✱ **THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS: BULLYING AND THE SOCIAL LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN**


Know how to help children communicate effectively and build healthy relationships. Learn about how boys and girls react differently in socially stressful situations and strategies that will help your child when they need to stand up for themselves or others.

  - Tuesday, April 15

Call (650) 723-4600 or visit [www.lpch.org](http://www.lpch.org) to register or obtain more information on the times, locations and fees for these and other courses.

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# On the right track?

## HIGH-SPEED TRAINS AND GRADE SEPARATIONS COULD BE H

### ARE YOU ON BOARD?

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

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No flight delays, no turbulence, no lost baggage, no traffic jams, and no gas station bathrooms to worry about - just a one-way ticket that costs about \$55.

These are some of the promises of the California High-Speed Rail project, a proposed network of electric trains that would reach speeds up to 220 miles per hour, and connect San Francisco and Sacramento in the north to Los Angeles and San Diego in the south. The project would cost an estimated \$42 billion.

The first phase of the plan, estimated to cost about \$30 billion, would connect Anaheim to San Francisco. Trains would link to Gilroy from the Central Valley, and zip up the Caltrain corridor to stops in San Jose, Milbrae (SFO) and a new Transbay Terminal Center in downtown San Francisco, before heading back to Southern California. Later phases of the project would extend service to Sacramento and San Diego.

A stop is also being considered for either Palo Alto or Redwood City.

If California voters pass a \$10 billion bond measure this November, the San Francisco to Anaheim system could be up and running in as soon as 10 years, according to the California High Speed Rail Authority, the state agency leading the project. The remainder of the funds would come from the federal government and private investment, according to the authority.

"We're a Third World country when it comes to transportation and high-speed rail," said Art Lloyd, a Caltrain board member and local train buff. "High-speed rail beats air travel, and it beats automobiles as far as getting from downtown to downtown. It is the answer to our transportation problems."

But what may be a dream come true for transit officials and travelers hoping to spend less time in airport security lines or driving on Interstate 5, many residents of Menlo Park and Atherton — including most City Council members — say high-speed rail is a nightmare.

The rail authority wants to build two additional tracks along the Caltrain line to accommodate the faster trains, which would reach speeds up to 125 miles per hour through cities on the Peninsula.

But a four-track system, under state regulations, would require grade separations — building overpasses or underpasses to separate the tracks from the roadway at intersections.

That means years-long construction would be needed

to separate the tracks from six local streets: Ravenswood, Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal avenues in Menlo Park, and Watkins Avenue and Fair Oaks Lane in Atherton.

Although high-speed rail funding would cover the estimated \$50 million to \$250 million for engineering and building each grade separation, the idea of tearing up six intersections has not gone over well with many residents of Menlo Park and Atherton.

"Grade separations would be a disaster for Menlo Park," said resident Michael Brady, who lives near the Caltrain tracks. "We'll end up with a bare, ugly, earthen wall right down the middle of the city so these trains that don't even serve our community can come crashing through."

Mr. Brady isn't the only critic, as City Council members from both towns have slammed plans for high-speed rail, arguing that the effects of constructing grade separations on property values, traffic, and overall quality of life would spell disaster for both cities.

"It's hard for me to see any benefits of high-speed rail to our town," said Atherton Councilman Jerry Carlson.

Mr. Carlson and other council members have argued that funding should go toward making it easier for people to ride existing regional public transportation.

Menlo Park Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson said the Bay Area needs "better connectivity" among its many modes of transportation, and Mayor Andy Cohen took that notion a step further.

"A lot of our transportation problems are not up and down the length of the state — they're more regional," said Mr. Cohen, who also lives near the Caltrain tracks. "I think that's where the money needs to go, and if [Gov.] Schwarzenegger is serious about fiscal responsibility, he would take [high-speed rail] off the ballot."

#### 'Big benefit'

Not unlike the response to Menlo Park residents' outspoken opposition to high-density housing and the Dumbarton Rail project, regional transportation leaders say opponents are misguided in their uncompromising stance toward grade separations and high-speed rail, and are quick to label opposing views as evidence of a "NIMBY" — not in my backyard — attitude.

"I'm mystified," said Judge Quentin Kopp, chair of the high-speed rail authority board, and former San Mateo County Superior Court judge and San Fran-

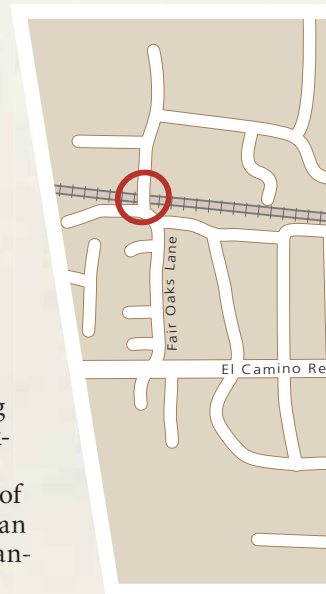
cisco supervisor. "Up and down the state grade separations without having to pay for them are considered a big benefit."

Supporters of grade separations point to improvements in safety and traffic flow from separating the rail from the road. With grade separations such as those constructed in Redwood City, San Carlos, pedestrians, cyclists and traffic can move unimpeded over or under the tracks as trains are approaching.

"Grade separations have tremendous benefits for Peninsula communities," said Dan L. L. L., director for the high-speed rail authority. "With grade separations, you allow a greater level of safety. He noted that trains would not need to honk horns if tracks were separated from the road."

But building grade separations would have significant impacts on nearby homes and businesses. The state may need to obtain land outside the Caltrain right of way for construction of temporary "shoofly" tracks so Caltrain can continue service during construction. That would place trains even closer to the road, and construction would force road closures.

"If high-speed rail comes t



# HEADED THIS WAY.



Graphic courtesy NC3D  
**High-speed trains** could be headed up the Peninsula if a \$10 billion bond measure passes in November.

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said Milton Borg, who owns the commercial property that houses a 7-11 store and restaurant off Oak Grove Avenue near the tracks. "With road closures and rerouting traffic, the tenants would be gone because they'd have no clients. ... Sure it's my ox that's being gored, and that's why I'm concerned. But this train wouldn't serve Menlo Park - it would pretty much destroy it."

### Good for the state

But high-speed rail supporters say opponents in Menlo Park and Atherton are being shortsighted, and are ignoring the environmental benefits of the new train network, and the impact it would have on accommodating California's growing population.

"The great thing about free speech is you're free to be shortsighted," Judge Kopp said. "Or, you can sit back and think about what this project is going to do for your children and grandchildren. If you care about your state, you'll think about it."

The rail authority is projecting that a whopping 86 million to 117 million riders will board California high-speed rail trains annually by 2030, including trips between Northern and Southern

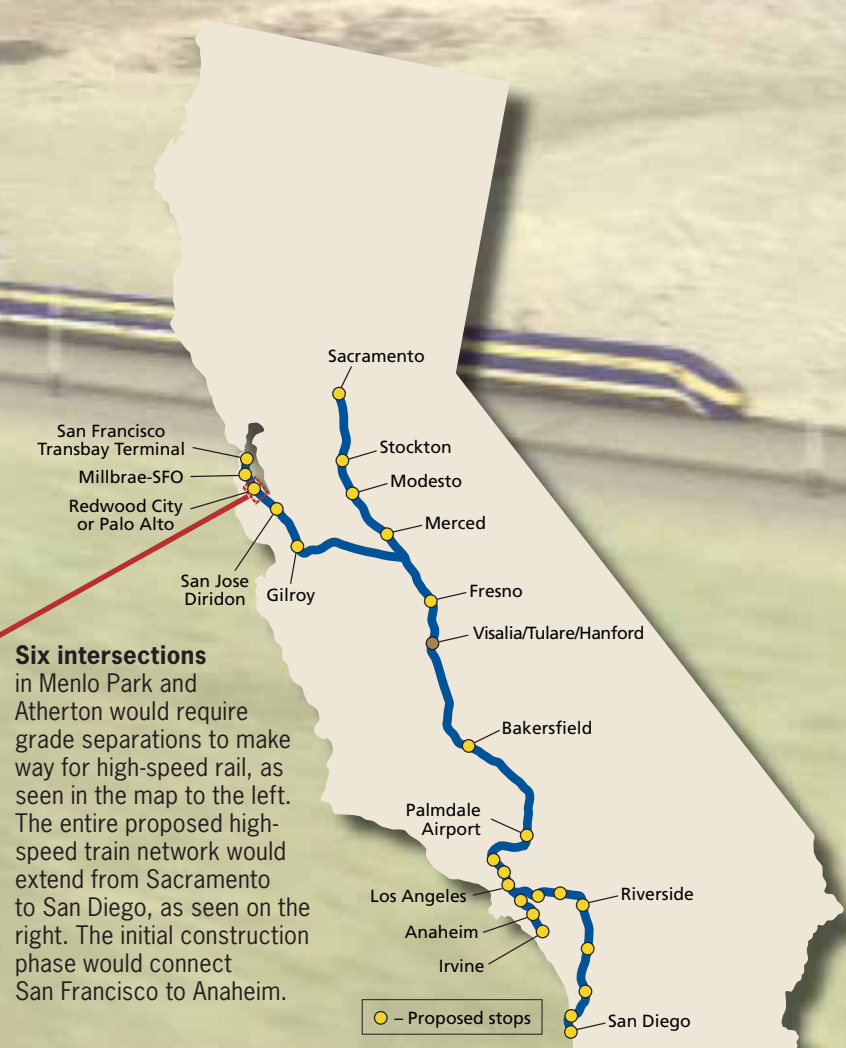
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Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

**Grade separations**, like the Jefferson Avenue traffic underpass in Redwood City, would be required in Menlo Park and Atherton if high-speed rail used the Caltrain right of way.



**Six intersections** in Menlo Park and Atherton would require grade separations to make way for high-speed rail, as seen in the map to the left. The entire proposed high-speed train network would extend from Sacramento to San Diego, as seen on the right. The initial construction phase would connect San Francisco to Anaheim.

● - Proposed stops

# On the right track?

Continued from previous page

California, and shorter trips, such as the 31-minute ride from San Francisco to San Jose.

These projections are at least three times more riders than the 27.3 million people who rode Amtrak trains in the entire country during the 2005-06 fiscal year. But Mr. Leavitt defends the projections.

"This is not science fiction. This is everyday transportation in other parts of the world, and we're confident in the numbers," he said, noting that if not for high-speed rail, highways would have to be widened and airports would have to build more runways.

According to the rail authority, high-speed trains would:

- Reduce statewide carbon dioxide emissions by up to 17.6 billion pounds per year — the equivalent to taking about 1.4 million cars off the roads.

- Reduce California's oil consumption by up to 22 million barrels a year — savings of about \$1.65 billion.

- Erase the need to add a total of 2,970 lane miles to state highways, as well as 91 airport gates and five runways.

## The wrong route?

Despite the carbon-cutting promise of high-speed rail, environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Audubon California have essentially withdrawn support for the project, declaring the rail authority is favoring an environmentally insensitive route for the train.

In December, the rail authority board opted to follow the staff's recommendation and connect the Central Valley to the Bay Area via the Pacheco Pass — land that runs parallel to Highway 152 and would connect Merced County to Gilroy.

The decision baffled

organizations that pushed for the rail authority to select Altamont Pass. Under the Altamont plan, trains would have continued north into the San Joaquin Valley before heading west and crossing a new bridge across the Bay to connect to the Caltrain line at Redwood City or north.

Under that plan, Menlo Park and other Peninsula cities south of Redwood City likely would have been bypassed entirely by the train system.

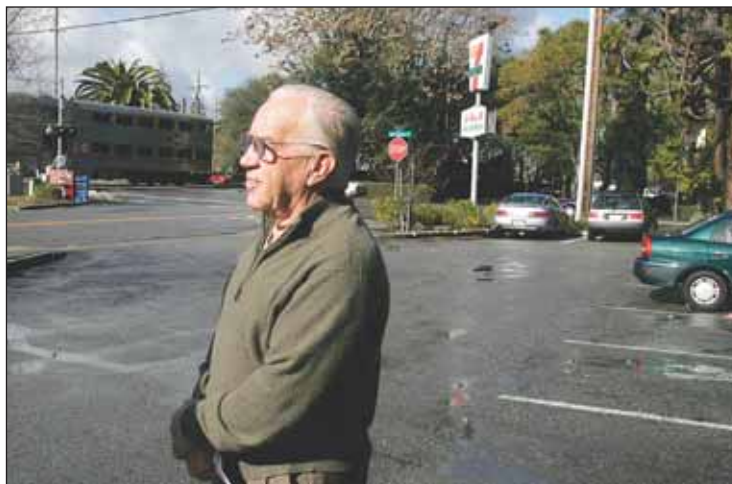
Environmental groups say the Pacheco Pass plan would route trains through the Grasslands Ecological Area — more than 90,000 acres of environmentally sensitive wetlands.

Melissa Hippard, director of the Loma Prieta chapter of the Sierra Club, said the longstanding environmentalist organization is considering suing the rail authority for ignoring the environmental impacts.

"We really want to see high-speed rail for California...but we were very disap-

pointed about the Pacheco Pass decision," she said. "Everything has tradeoffs, and we realize there's going to be some environmental impact no matter what, but Altamont is a better deal."

Mr. Leavitt said environmental review of the routes shows the opposite is true.



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber  
**Milton Borg**, who owns the 7-11 store near the Caltrain tracks, says high-speed rail would destroy businesses operated by his tenants.

"Pacheco Pass is the least environmentally damaging route to bring trains to downtown San Francisco and the Peninsula," he said, noting that the Altamont Pass would route trains through portions of the Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge, and would require a costly, and potentially environmentally damaging, rail bridge across the Bay. Mr. Leavitt also said that Altamont Pass is the slower of the two routes, and slower travel times would have a negative effect on ridership.

Margaret Okuzumi, executive director of the Palo Alto-based nonprofit Bay Rail Alliance, said the rail authority failed to address concerns about Pacheco Pass in the latest stage of environmental review, and has likely "torpedoed" the project.

"The bottom line is the environmental impact report doesn't address major environmental concerns," Ms. Okuzumi said. "Without the support of the environmental community,

I just don't see it having a chance."

## A tough market

Even with some opposition from Menlo Park and Atherton residents, and recent squabbling with environmental groups over the preferred route, there is little to no organized opposition yet to California high-speed rail.

That means the biggest challenge facing the authority is trying to convince voters to vote for a \$10 billion bond measure to start building a \$42 billion project in the midst of a \$14 billion state budget deficit.

"Yes, the current state of the economy is a hurdle," Mr. Leavitt said. "But we believe that building this system is a way to strengthen California's economy for today and for the future."

Mr. Brady said the project doesn't make fiscal sense, regardless if it's proposed for his backyard.

"When we start dumping

money into this railroad, it means we're not spending money on other things," Mr. Brady said. "This is the worst thing in the history of California from a taxpayer's standpoint. It's just silly."

Mr. Brady also suggested that if other transportation projects serve as good indicators, the project could go over its \$42 billion budget, requiring the state to return to voters and ask for more funds — something that isn't ruled out in the language of the bond measure.

When asked about the possibility of costs for the project going above and beyond \$42 billion, Judge Kopp labeled the notion a "mistruth."

## Governor's support

A key question heading into the November election, is whether Governor Schwarzenegger will actively support the bond measure.

He pulled the issue off the ballot in 2002 and 2004 due to economic concerns.

Sabrina Lockhart, the governor's deputy press secretary, said Gov. Schwarzenegger supports "the concept of high-speed rail," but will not take a position on the bond measure until closer to the election. ■



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber  
**The Caltrain tracks** run very close to homes in Atherton, as seen above. The construction of grade separations would mean noise and construction impacts on residents who live near the tracks.

# The public/private express

How private investment is key to California's efforts to build a high-speed railroad

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

There's a host of reasons why people are getting excited, one way or another, about plans to build a high-speed rail train system in

California: a \$42 billion budget, top speeds of 220 miles per hour, and the prospect of getting from San Francisco to Los Angeles in two and a half hours without leaving the ground.

But in order for the project to actually happen, the state will have to forge a successful public/private relationship to secure at least \$10 billion of the project's funding.

"I know, I know. I was skeptical at first

too," said Judge Quentin Kopp, chair of the high-speed rail authority explaining to a group of Bay Area transportation officials at a recent meeting in Redwood City how the authority is counting on private investors to contribute one third of the funding for the \$30 billion task of completing the high-speed rail connection from San Francisco to Anaheim. "It's an unusual system, but we're confident that it will work."

Mr. Kopp said the state has several funds dedicated to holding private investments for public facilities. If the high-speed rail project wins a majority

vote in the November election, the state will solicit investments, and store the money in these funds.

Investors would then get a return on their contribution toward the project from the gross revenue of the train service — estimated to be \$2.6 billion to \$3.9 billion a year by 2030. But the gross revenue is also the same pot of money that will be used to pay back the \$10 million bond, putting public and private pressure on the authority to fulfill its ridership projections and stay below its total construction budget of \$42 billion. ■

## Wende Protzman leaves Atherton for new job

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

Wende Protzman, who recently served as Atherton's interim city manager, will be leaving the town on March 4 to take on a new job as the deputy city manager for the city of Solana Beach in Southern California.

Ms. Protzman is currently Atherton's assistant to the city manager, the job she held prior to former City Manager Jim Robinson's retirement last summer. She was appointed interim city manager in August, and was one of three finalists for the permanent city manager position.

Ms. Protzman's time as interim city manager turned out to be a tumultuous one for the town, as Atherton became enmeshed in controversy over her suspension and eventual firing of Finance Director John Johns.

"She had a lot of responsibility

and did a great job," said Atherton City Manager Jerry Gruber, who was hired by the council last month.

Mr. Gruber said that Ms. Protzman's responsibilities went beyond the typical duties of a city manager's assistant.

Ms. Protzman said she gained a lot of experience while working in Atherton. "I feel much more prepared for anything," she said.

She said Atherton was in good hands with Mr. Gruber. "The council hired somebody very capable, who will be good for the organization. It made this decision (to leave) easier on me because I do care about the community and the people here," she said.

Solana Beach is a seaside community just north of San Diego. The ocean is only two blocks away from where she'll be working at city hall, Ms. Protzman said. ■

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# Schools

NEWS OF LOCAL SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS.

## Chris Zider scholarship winners named

Will Tashman of Menlo School and Sydney Lundgren of Palo Alto High School are winners of the 2007-08 Chris Zider Scholarships.

Each receives a \$15,000 scholarship that can be used for high school or college tuition or for

education-related expenses, such as taking a summer course on a college campus, during the next six years.

The winners and nine finalists represent nine high schools — Menlo School, Menlo-Atherton, Sacred Heart Preparatory, Woodside High School, Woodside Priory, Summit Prep, Eastside Prep, Palo Alto High, and Crystal Springs Uplands in Hillsborough.

The scholarships for a boy and a girl are given annually in memory of Chris Zider, who grew up in Menlo Park and Portola Valley and was the oldest of Bob and Cheryl Zider's children.

Chris died in a snowboarding accident at Lake Tahoe in 1992 when he was 15 and a sophomore at Woodside High School.

He had attended Menlo School his freshmen year after graduating from the Portola Valley School District.

The winners and finalists were selected, said his parents, because they have qualities similar to those of Chris Zider: enthusiasm, love of sports, character, consistent effort to achieve potential in academics and athletics, and love of family and friends.

The boys winner, Will Tashman of Atherton, plays on Menlo School's varsity basketball team and also plays water polo. He's editor and a reporter for "The Coat of Arms," Menlo's paper. He enjoys playing the piano and listening to music.

The girls winner, Sydney Lun-

*Continued on next page*

## Applying for Chris Zider scholarships

High school sophomores who live in Atherton, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, Stanford or Woodside or attend Menlo School or Woodside High may apply for the \$15,000 Chris Zider scholarships, awarded annually to a boy and a girl.

Applications are being mailed Feb. 25 to the schools' counseling offices and also are available by calling the Beta Group at

233-8700.

Preliminary applications must be postmarked no later than Monday, March 24. Semifinalists will be selected by April 7. Deadline for submitting the full application is Monday, May 5.

Financial need is not a requirement for this scholarship. For more information about the Chris Zider Scholarship Fund, go to [www.chrisziderscholarship.com](http://www.chrisziderscholarship.com).



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### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF MARCH 10, 2008

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

#### PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

**Use Permit/Axis LCP, Inc./550 Ravenswood Avenue:** Request to renew a use permit for a private recreational use (personal training) and for new associated massage services in the C-3 (Central Commercial) zoning district.

**Use Permit/Gerald Culas/657 Oak Grove Avenue:** Request for a use permit for wine tasting and retail sale of wine associated with an eating establishment in the C-3 (Central Commercial) zoning district.

**Use Permit/The Hagman Group/1010 Doyle Street:** Request for use permit approval to add 84 square feet to an existing building that currently exceeds 100 percent FAR in the C-3 (Central Commercial) zoning district, and to apply the use based parking guidelines to retain the nine existing off-street parking spaces where one additional parking space would otherwise be required for the additional floor area.

**Planned Development Permit Extension, Vesting Tentative Map Extension, and Planned Development Permit Amendment/Beltramo's Investment Co. Inc./1452 & 1460 El Camino Real and 1457 & 1473 San Antonio Street:** Request for the following: 1) a two-year extension of a Planned Development (PD) Permit for the construction of a new 26,800-square-foot, two-story commercial building with at-grade and subterranean parking and 16 two-story townhomes with partially submerged parking, 2) a two-year extension for a Vesting Tentative Map for the creation of 16 residential lots with associated common areas and one commercial lot for condominium purposes not to exceed 40 commercial units on an approximate 1.5-acre site, and 3) a Planned Development Permit Amendment to modify condition 6.30.1 regarding installation of a temporary 8 foot high plywood noise barrier around the perimeter of the project site. The applicant proposes to install a chain link fence around the construction site with black or green netting, and provide a solid plywood fence where the property abuts residential uses. The rezoning from C-4 (General Commercial, Applicable to El Camino Real) to P-D (Planned Development), the PD Permit, and the Vesting Tentative Map were previously approved by the City Council in August 2006.

#### PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS

None

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on public hearing items in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on Monday, February 25, 2008, 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.

The project file may be viewed 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 call the Planning Division if there are any questions and/or for complete agenda information (650) 330-6702.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto, por favor llame al 650-330-6702, y pregunte por un asistente que hable español.

DATED: February 21, 2008 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](http://www.menlopark.org)

Published in THE ALMANAC on February 27, 2008.

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Photo by Bob Newell

**Chris Zider Scholarship winners** and finalists are, from left, Will Tashman (winner), Nathan Feldman, Bryce Cronkite-Ratcliff, Yvonne Dunlevie, Sydney Lundgren (winner), Matthew Gorman and Matthew Fitzgerald. Other finalists are Shayla Bunch, Holly Irish, Virginia Miller and John Parsons.

*Continued from previous page*

dgren of Palo Alto, goes to Palo Alto High School, where she is a varsity soccer player. She also plays for the De Anza Force Dazzle, one of the top club teams in Northern California, and is a certified soccer referee for the state of California.

#### Other finalists

The winners were selected from 11 finalists. The nine other finalists are:

■ Shayla Bunch of Menlo Park goes to Eastside Preparatory School, where she plays varsity basketball, track and volleyball. She belongs to the National Society of Black Engineers and has attended the summer Math and Science Honors

Academy at the University of California, Berkeley.

■ Bryce Cronkite-Ratcliff of Woodside attends Crystal Springs Uplands School. Besides competing on the school's swim and cross-country teams, he takes part in community service activities such as the Bluebird Recovery Project and as a volunteer for the Department of Veterans Affairs. He has won several science fair awards.

■ Yvonne "Vee" Dunlevie of Atherton goes to Sacred Heart Preparatory, where she is on both the varsity water polo and swim teams. She was named Sacred Heart's female sophomore athlete of the year.

■ Nathan Feldman of Portola Valley is captain of the Woodside

Priory's basketball team. He enjoys playing guitar and filmmaking.

■ Matthew "Matt" Fitzgerald of Menlo Park is captain of Menlo-Atherton High School's wrestling team and soccer team. He plays the lead alto saxophone in the M-A band.

■ Matthew "Matt" Gorman from Menlo Park attends Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City. He was part of group that went to Mexico last fall to work on a building project at an orphanage. He plays baseball and basketball.

■ Holly Irish of Redwood City attends Woodside High School and made All-League first team in pole vaulting. She also plays varsity soccer, is involved in 4-H Club activi-

ties, and is an accomplished cook.

■ Virginia "Ginny" Miller of Woodside takes an active part in athletics at Menlo School. She's on the varsity soccer team, plays varsity lacrosse and is on the cross-country team. Ginny was

student council president of the 10th grade.

■ John Parsons lives in Menlo Park and attends Sacred Heart Preparatory. He is on the varsity tennis doubles team and is a member of the Sacred Heart chorus.

## Inspirations

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9 am Soulwork — Education for Adults

10 am Sunday School — Children's Worship & Education

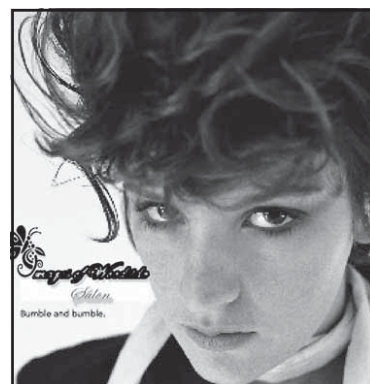
10-11:30 am Childcare

10:15 am Holy Eucharist, Rite II, with hymns, choir, & organ

### INSPIRATIONS

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The Almanac

## Author Jane Nelsen speaks on 'Positive Discipline'

Author and educator Jane Nelsen will present two evening lectures on "Positive Discipline for Developing Capable Young People" on Thursday, March 13, and Friday, March 14. The identical sessions are free and sponsored by the Friends of the Menlo Park Library.

Both lectures will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Menlo Park City Council chambers, however, registration for Thursday night is already filled.

For 25 years, Ms. Nelsen's book "Positive Discipline" has been used

as a reference for adults working with children. Ms. Nelsen, a psychologist, educator and mother of seven, has written a revised and expanded 25th anniversary edition, where she expounds her theory that the key to positive discipline is not punishment but mutual respect.

Ms. Nelsen has written 17



Jane Nelsen

books on positive discipline and conducts workshops for both teachers and parents.

To register for the Friday lecture, call Michelle Barrese, youth services manager, Menlo Park Public Library, at 330-2530.

### Menlo School stages Oscar Wilde classic

Menlo School students will present Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28, through Saturday, March 1, in Florence Moore auditorium on the school campus, 50 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton.

Raven Reddy, a senior from Los Altos Hills, is directing the comedy about two bachelors who live their lives through deception and false appearances in the pursuit of love.

The bachelors' roles are played by Patrick Costello as Algernon and Faiz Abbasi as Jack. Supporting actors include Anne Hawkins, Julie Campbell, Natalie Johnson, Zoe Bjornson, Robert Hurlbut and David Miracchi. Menlo School teacher, Dr. Charles Hanson, is playing the role of a butler.

Tripp Robbins is the students' faculty adviser for the production.

Tickets at \$1 for students, \$5 for adults, will be available at the door.

### SCHOOLS

### Woodside High stages 'Footloose'

The Woodside High School's drama department is staging "Footloose, the Broadway musical" on two weekends (Feb. 29 through March 8) at the performing arts center on the school campus.

This version of the 1980s movie was adapted to the stage by Dean Pitchford and Walter Bobbie. It's the story of a feisty Chicago teenager (Ren McCormack) who is forced to move to a small Southern town where he finds himself at odds with the rigid laws and closed minds of an uptight community.

When he learns of the sanctions against dancing, it begins an emotional yet entertaining battle for the healing and liberation of the whole town, culminating in a joyous dance where everyone finally gets to "cut Footloose!"

Show times are at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 2.

Ticket prices are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors (60-plus) and \$10 for students and staff. The ticket hotline is 367-9750, ext. 4851.

### Deadline looms for CalGrant applicants

The application deadline for CalGrant student aid for the coming 2008-09 college year is March 2.

The state grant program, administered by the California Student Aid Commission, offers merit-based and needs-based financial aid to middle- and low-income families. In 2007, the program distributed \$800 million to some 299,000 students, an average of \$4,000 per student.

To qualify, a student must have at least a 2.0 grade point average, meet eligibility requirements and complete two forms: a federal student aid application and a CalGrant GPA verification form.

For more information, go to [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov).

### College celebrates groundbreaking

A groundbreaking ceremony for a new maintenance facility at Woodside's Canada College at 4200 Farm Hill Boulevard is set for 11 a.m. Friday, March 7, with lunch to follow half an hour later.

The groundbreaking will take place in the open space southwest of parking lot Number 6, where the parking is free. For more information, call the maintenance department at 574-6512.

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## James Dobbie running for Atherton council

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton resident James Dobbie is the first candidate to file for a vacant seat on the five-member Atherton City Council.

A special election is set for June 3. The filing period for nomination papers and candidates' statements ends March 7.

Mr. Dobbie is a member of the Atherton Planning Commission and the chair of the town's general plan committee. He also frequently attends City Council meetings.

He is running to fill the remaining year and a half of former councilman Alan Carlson's four-year term.

Mr. Dobbie, an Atherton resident since 1994, lives in the Lindenwood neighborhood with his wife Patricia. He's been retired

since 1996 from a career in senior management in high-tech companies, including Memorex and Avantek, he said.

A native of Scotland, Mr. Dobbie said he moved to the United States with his wife in 1957. Prior to moving to Atherton, the Dobbies lived in Palo Alto for 19 years.

He earned degrees in electrical engineering from Glasgow University in Scotland and from Arizona State University, he said.

In a written candidate statement, Mr. Dobbie said his goals as a council member will be to increase the transparency of the town's activities, help the council become a unified team, and ensure closer oversight of town operations.

"I hear a lot of complaints," Mr. Dobbie told the Almanac. "People feel the council doesn't communicate enough, that there are too many secrets. We need to somehow

find a way so that the council gives the feeling that everything is open and above board."

He also aims to find a more permanent source of town funding than the parcel tax, but he declined to name any specific ideas just yet.

"I have a lot of ideas, but I don't want to bring them up until I've analyzed them more," he said.

Mr. Carlson, who was serving as Atherton's mayor at the time, resigned his seat in November after selling his house in Atherton and buying a new home in Carmel. ■

### ■ POLICE CALLS

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

#### ATHERTON

**Burglary report:** Laptop computer and CD player stolen, 100 block of Fair Oaks Lane, Feb. 15.

**Robbery report:** Three men with baseball bat, no further details available; Middlefield Road and Linden Ave., 1:30 a.m. on Feb. 17.

**Fraud report:** Resident's name and Social Security number used to attempt to obtain credit card, first block of Irving Ave., Feb. 21.

#### MENLO PARK

**Grand theft report:** 1400 block of Adams Drive, Feb. 15.

#### Burglary reports:

■ Items stolen from vehicle after break-

in, 300 block of Lennox Ave., Feb. 18.

■ Documents stolen from truck's glove compartment, 300 block of O'Connor St., Feb. 21.

#### Fraud reports:

■ Identity theft, 900 block of Oak Lane, Feb. 19.

■ Fraud by former employee, 1500 block of O'Brien Drive, Feb. 21.

#### WOODSIDE

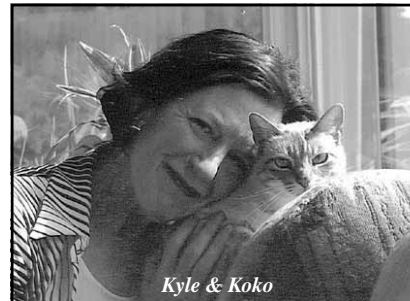
**Theft report:** Charges worth \$1,232 made on resident's credit card account but from Southern California, 100 block of Alta Mesa Road, Feb. 13.

**Burglary report:** Jewelry worth about \$143,350 stolen from residence via unlocked door, 100 block of Moore Road, Feb. 15.

**Accident report:** Bicyclist taken to hospital with complaint of rib pain after colliding with vehicle's passenger side mirror during signaled right turn, Arbor Court and Canada Road, Feb. 16.

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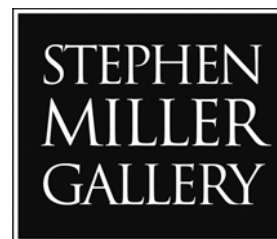


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By Oscar Wilde



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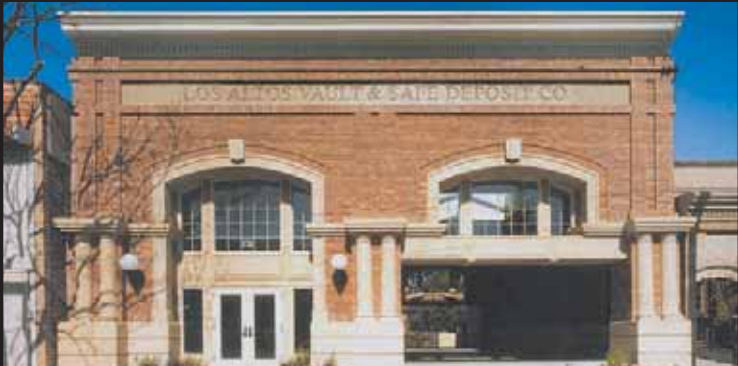
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**Lavon Duncan**

30-year Peninsula resident

A celebration of the life of Lavon Duncan will be held Saturday, March 22, at 11 a.m. at Valley Presbyterian Church, 945 Portola Road in Portola Valley. Ms. Duncan died Feb. 15 at her home in Palo Alto. She was 82.

Ms. Duncan lived in Portola Valley and Sharon Heights before moving to the Hyatt Classic in Palo Alto in 2005.

Born in Los Angeles, Ms. Duncan grew up in Whittier and graduated from Pomona College in 1947. On her 21st birthday, she married Caltech graduate student Don Duncan.

The couple lived in Southern California and Greenwich, Connecticut, before moving to Portola Valley in 1977.

For 25 years, Ms. Duncan was an active member of Valley Presbyterian Church, serving as a deacon and on many committees. She hosted new member brunches and the annual picnic for those awaiting heart-lung transplants at Stanford Medical Center.

Ms. Duncan was a 20-year volunteer at the Children's Health Council (CHC) resale shop, the Bargain Box. She was one of the authors of the 1984 cookbook, "Peninsula Potpourri," published

**OBITUARIES**

These obituaries are based on information provided by families and funeral homes.

by the CHC Auxiliary.

She also was a former member of the Children's Home Society and AAUW.

The Duncans traveled throughout the world on many of Stanford University's travel/study trips. Ms. Duncan enjoyed cooking, entertaining, reading, and spending time with her children, grandchildren, and friends, say family members. She remained close to her women friends from college. She survived both breast cancer and being struck by a car in downtown Menlo Park in 1999.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Don Duncan of Palo Alto; daughter Debbie Duncan of Stanford; sons Brent Duncan of Arcata, Dwight Duncan of Littleton, Colorado, and David Duncan of Marblehead, Massachusetts; a brother; and seven grandchildren.

Contributions in her name may be made to the Children's Health Council, 650 Clark Way, Palo Alto 94304.

**Sondra Sargis**

Former Sunset employee

Sondra "Sandy" Sargis, a resi-

dent of Menlo Park since 1963, died Feb. 17. She was 73.

Ms. Sargis was a former flight attendant who began her second career as a hostess with Sunset magazine in 1975.

Born in Arkansas, Ms. Sargis moved to San Mateo County as a child. She graduated from Sequoia High School, where she was a cheerleader, in 1952. She was employed as a flight attendant by United Airlines until she married Joe Sargis in 1963.

Ms. Sargis was an active member and former president of the local chapter of "Clipped Wings," an organization for retired flight attendants. She volunteered for many charities and philanthropic endeavors, primarily with the Community Association for Rehabilitation (C.A.R.) Center, say family members.

An avid sports fan, she was a devoted to Stanford football and the San Francisco 49ers, and regularly attended the Bing Crosby/AT&T golf tournament at Pebble Beach. She enjoyed bridge, dominoes, and hosting dinner parties her home, say family members.


She is survived by her children, Julie Sargis and Paul Sargis; brother Terry Brust; and three grandchildren. Her husband, Joe Sargis, died in 1989.

Funeral services have been held.

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## Lawyer, coach Brad Blocker dies in skiing accident

Memorial services are scheduled for Saturday for Brad W. Blocker, 48, of Portola Valley, who died Feb. 22 following a skiing accident at Lake Tahoe.

A Portola Valley resident since 1976, Mr. Blocker was a litigator with the Carr & Ferrell law firm in Palo Alto for the past eight years, and previously was with Ropers Majeski Kohn & Bentley in Redwood City.

He received his law degree from Tulane University, where he met his wife, Denise, also a law student. Both graduated in 1986.

Following graduation from Woodside High School, Mr. Blocker played basketball at UCLA, and carried on a lifetime of participation in various sports.

He coached youth basketball, baseball, softball, and Menlo-Atherton Vikings Pop Warner football while raising his family in Portola Valley.

He played in local softball leagues, and was a participant for 22 years with other former college athletes in the highly competitive adult basketball league at Menlo Park's Burgess Gymnasium.

He was a motorcycle and skiing enthusiast, as well. Among his civic activities, Mr. Blocker was co-president of the Portola Valley Schools Foundation.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Blocker is survived by three children, Lauren, 17; Jessica, 16;

and Ryan, 13.

He also leaves his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Barry Blocker of Portola Valley, and four brothers, Todd of Los Altos; Chris of Morgan Hill; Scot of San Francisco; and Brian of Campbell.

A viewing is scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday at Spangler Mortuary, 399 South San Antonio Road in Los Altos; and a celebration of life on Saturday at 11 a.m. at the Woodside Priory Gymnasium, 302 Portola Valley Road in Portola Valley.

### Palmer Louis Blote

Palmer Louis Blote of Atherton, who died Feb. 11, will be remembered at a service at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 8, at the Spangler Mortuary, 650 Live Oak Ave. in Menlo Park.

"He will be remembered as a loving, caring and intelligent individual," say family members.

He was a contractor who established Palmer Electric in San Carlos. He was an avid pilot and a dedicated golfer, say family members.

He is survived by his wife, Irene; daughter Shannon; son Patrick and daughter Beth; and two grandchildren.

The family requests donations to Let Them Hear Foundation, 1900 University Ave., Suite 101, E. Palo Alto, CA 94303.



Brad Blocker



Paul Blote

## Fergusson won't run for supervisor's seat

■ She's "leaning toward" running for re-election to the City Council.

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park City Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson says she has decided not to run this year for the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

After considering a challenge to District 4 Supervisor Rose Jacobs

Gibson, Ms. Fergusson said she's dropped those plans to stay focused on issues specific to Menlo Park.

"My heart remains in Menlo Park where there is more I would like to accomplish," she said in a news release.

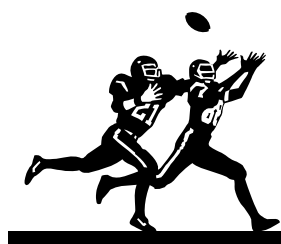
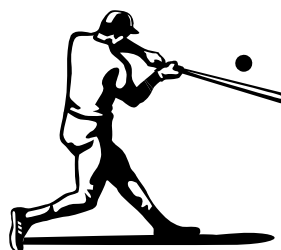
She told the Almanac that she is "leaning toward" running in November for her second four-year term on the City Council, but has not decided yet. The terms of Ms. Fergusson and Mayor Andy Cohen end in December. Mr. Cohen has not said whether he will run.

The Board of Supervisors' District 4 seat includes Menlo Park, Redwood City, East Palo Alto, and the unincorporated area of North Fair Oaks.

Ms. Jacobs Gibson was appointed to the seat in 1999, ran unopposed in 2000, and was elected to another four-year term in 2004.

Earlier this month, Ms. Jacobs Gibson formally announced that she will run in the June 3 election for her third four-year term, which would be her last due to term limits. ■

## CITY OF MENLO PARK



### PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

Menlo Park residents are invited to attend the monthly meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM in the Onetta Harris Community Center, located at 100 Terminal Avenue.

At this meeting, several conceptual plans for improvements to Kelly Park will be presented to the public and the Commission. These plans, along with public feedback, will be considered by the Commission for possible recommendation to the City Council as a future project.

To preview the conceptual plans or to subscribe to e-mail notifications regarding this particular project, please visit the City's website:

[www.menlopark.org/PlayingFields](http://www.menlopark.org/PlayingFields)

Also included on this meeting's agenda is a status update on the Burgess Gym Expansion Project.

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



## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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.

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

## Save Cañada College housing

The Woodside Town Council holds the key to a project that will bring much-needed housing to some staff and faculty members at Canada College, which is perched on a hill straddling Woodside and Redwood City.

The college wants Woodside to cede a 3.8-acre site to Redwood City, where zoning allows multiple-family housing, so that it can build the housing on the parcel. The council is willing but wants a say in the design of the project.

A glitch in the approval process came up at a Feb. 12 meeting, when four Woodside council members criticized the 56- to 60-unit apartment complex scheduled to be built this summer on an under-used campus parking lot. The council members said the scale of the two buildings was not suitable for the site, which overlooks Farm Hill Boulevard and is visible from a small section of Woodside.

In a meeting 10 months ago, the council unanimously approved the concept of on-campus housing. Although many meetings had been held to discuss the project — both at the college and before the Redwood City Planning Commission — Woodside council members apparently did not see preliminary designs. After their first look on Feb. 12, a majority attending said design changes will be needed before they approve the redrawing of the town boundary.

The negative reception of the project moved Councilwoman Deborah Gordon to recommend putting off the critical vote to initiate trans-

fer of the site from Woodside to Redwood City until “a date uncertain.” The council agreed. Although Mayor Ron Romines later asserted his optimism that the land transfer will proceed, it may require the scrapping of some of the college’s costly, already completed plans.

Let’s hope that a good design for the housing can be found soon, and that major, costly revisions to the plans are not necessary. As noted in this space last May, it is difficult to imagine a more suitable project for the college, which can build the units at a rock-bottom price by using its own land, employing tax-exempt financing, and avoiding property taxes thanks to the exemption for higher education. And, there is no profit motive

in this project.

Barbara Christiansen, the college’s director of community relations, was understandably distressed when the council balked at the transfer.

She told the council: “This is the first we have heard that Woodside is going back on its word.”

But Mr. Romines was reassuring. “We are not going back on our word. I don’t think it is our fault. It’s the way things work.”

We hope this means the mayor is committed to working for consensus on the council to move the project forward in the near future. He has said that he supports the housing project and the land transfer. The challenge for the council will be to work toward a redesign that will convince reluctant members to quickly jump on board.

## EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### What are cities doing to conserve water?

Editor:

Your Feb. 13 cover story, “Making Every Drop Count,” was very informative.

It would be interesting to see a follow-up article with details about what our local cities are actually doing to conserve water now. It is one thing to educate, study and recommend what their residents should do; quite another for the cities and towns to implement serious conservation measures themselves.

Do all the public bathrooms have waterless urinals? How much municipal landscaping is watered with reclaimed water? Do permitting departments make it easy or hard to add cisterns or gray-water systems?

Judith Murphy  
Portola Green Circle,  
Portola Valley

### Check plan before adopting new ideas

Editor:

I have been reading about Portola Valley’s basement ordinance, about which I have no opinion. But I would add this:

We all have moved to Portola Valley attracted by the town’s rural scene and peaceful quiet, among other virtues. But these features did not happen in a



Menlo Park Historical Association

## Our Regional Heritage

Doyle’s general store opened at the corner of Santa Cruz Avenue and County Road (now El Camino Real) in 1874 and soon became a focal point of Menlo Park. Later, the store became Duff and Doyle’s after James Doyle added Michael Duff as a partner. The business lasted until the early 1920s, when it was liquidated.

vacuum. With expert advisers, countless hours of deliberations by our town fathers, supplemented by volunteer service on our boards, commissions and committees, the vision for this town was engraved in our town’s general plan, which is revised by volunteer committees of residents every few years.

Before we waste hours of frustration when we differ with an ordinance that affects us, I suggest that we all make the effort to get in on the process early on, attending committee meetings to offer our comments. By making the effort to become familiar with our general plan and its goals, we can then offer informed opinions and

options for a problem.

Our town is democratic and runs on volunteer contributions of time and interest. We have one common interest: preserving and enhancing the values that brought us here originally. Let’s keep making it work.

Marilyn Walter  
Coyote Hill, Portola Valley

# The ups and downs of high-speed rail plan

## Stop the bonds to stop the project

By Martin Engel

You've heard me rail before about the disaster that Caltrain grade separations will bring to Menlo Park. We all should understand that they won't happen without capital funding from the high-speed train bond issue that will appear on the November ballot. If the bond issue passes, and that seems likely, they are guaranteed.

Having been a diligent student of the California High Speed Rail project for several years, here's what I've learned.

Most people seem not to know about or care about this train one way or the other. California newspapers have been mindless supporters of this \$40 billion project. No one is asking hard questions.

For example, do you know that, as a rule of thumb, each \$1 billion of new bonds sold at 5 percent interest adds close to \$65 million annually in state debt-service costs for as long as 30 years? (This is from the Legislative Analyst's Office.)

This means that paying the debt service on the \$10 billion high-speed train bond will take \$650 million each year from the state treasury for as long as 30 years. Over 30 years that amounts to \$19.5 billion, twice the cost of the original bond. Are we that crazy? And there's still the original \$10 billion loan that has to be paid back, the principle on a "mortgage" payment that will be paid by us, our children and their children.

And, there are costs to operate the train. Ticket sales won't begin

to cover this expense. Also, high-speed trains are very maintenance-intensive. Who pays? We pay.

If history is any indicator, this train will cost far more than proponents say it will. At \$40 billion it will be the single most expensive infrastructure project in the history of the United States. But once construction begins, will taxpayers be asked to pony up even more than the original \$10 billion in state bonds? Even Quentin Kopp, chairman of the rail authority's board of directors, has hinted that they might need "several billion more."

What the high-speed train promoters want us to believe about their project is simply not true. They understate costs and persistently exaggerate the profits and rider numbers. The environmental costs of constructing this train will be as great, or greater, than those caused by the Three-Gorges Dam in China.

Comparing the California train with those in Europe, Japan or elsewhere is comparing apples and oranges. Distances, population densities and tax-based economies (state subsidies) are only some of the critical differences.

We all should be asking who the real beneficiaries will be if the bond issue passes. Answer: the construction companies, the landowners and developers, the hundreds of consultants, engineers and contractors, the lawyers and politicians, the vast bureaucracies and their empire-building agendas.

Even if high-speed trains are a good idea, this particular project,

## State voters face \$10 billion decision

On the November ballot, California voters will be asked to approve a ballot measure for startup funding of \$9.95 billion for California High Speed Rail. It is anticipated that a federal funding agreement and private sector investment will finance the first phase from San Francisco to the Los Angeles area at an estimated cost of \$30 billion.

at this particular time, in this particular economy, with this particular route, is a terrible idea. This train will not be a mass-transit commuter train. It will not solve any traffic problems, either on the highways or in the sky. This train will be a luxury train for the white-collar well-to-do. It will be the Disneyland Express. The government has no business building it.

California needs serious solutions to its transit problems in both the Bay Area and the Los Angeles Basin. This train won't solve these problems in either area. It's time for our state to put aside this political pork-barrel and get on with the serious issue of integrated mass transit for all its citizens. This is a project the state doesn't need and cannot afford.

Martin Engel lives on Stone Pine Lane in Menlo Park

## Imagine SF to LA in just 2-1/2 hours

By Jim Bigelow

California High Speed Rail is a proposed new transportation system that would use lighter-weight equipment and operate at speeds of 220 mph or more between the state's major population centers.

As proposed, the new system would extend over 700 miles, connecting Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, and the Central Valley via Palmdale to Los Angeles, Anaheim and then down to San Diego. The first phase is planned from San Francisco to San Jose south to the Central Valley to Los Angeles and Anaheim. Additional services extension will connect to Sacramento and San Diego with a number of additional stops along the way.

The question is how will this new transportation mode benefit the Menlo Park area? Many of us fly out of area airports, particularly San Francisco International, and in storm conditions or long periods of low overcast we experience flight delays of two or more hours. When this happens many flights within California are cancelled.

With the new high-speed rail train, a trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles would take just over two and one half hours regardless of weather conditions. Air travel growth will cause further delays in the future without this new train system. Vehicle travel on these same corridors is becoming more and more congested. Transportation experts indicate it would cost Californians far less to develop the

new high-speed trains than expand our airports and highways to meet future mobility needs.

The high-speed trains would be electrified and all rail grade crossings would be grade-separated, thereby improving safety and reducing vehicle travel delays. Electrified trains are much quieter than the current Caltrains that operate on the Peninsula, which are heavy diesel locomotive train sets.

Caltrain is currently planning to electrify and upgrade the Peninsula Corridor to new Federal Railway Administration standards and the system being planned is compatible with high-speed rail operations. Train whistles and horn noise would be significantly eliminated with a grade-separated rail system, which would provide noise relief to residents who live or work near the rail system.

High-speed rail is considered green and provides many environmental benefits, such as saving 22 million barrels of oil per year, reducing air pollutants, substantially reducing CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions. Besides, Menlo Park is always looking for ways to be green. It is estimated that about 100 million passengers annually would use these trains by 2030. High-speed rail and Caltrain passengers would arrive in San Francisco at a new TransBay Terminal, which is currently being rebuilt and will also serve regional buses.

Jim Bigelow is chair of the Transportation Committee of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce

## Here's what they're saying on Town Square

### School wants use permit revision

Posted by X. Lieu, a resident of the Menlo Park Willows neighborhood

The German American School seeks to install three "portable" classroom buildings on its site off Elliott Drive. Two buildings would be placed by the basketball courts on the asphalt, encroaching and violating privacy and use and enjoyment property rights of three neighbors on the O'Connor Street side. In addition, the school plans to widen the fire lane to allow more cars to enter, drive, and park on the school grounds. In addition to the noise, car exhaust, and attendant congestion problems, this use could expose children to harm. Willows residents have to rush to the Planning Commission and the City Council to protect their property rights on this one. Enough is enough. The city should buy these intruders and allow the community to protect its rural, green, environmentally sound character.

### Who should pay for sidewalks?

Posted by Just Wondering, a resident of the Menlo Park Downtown neighborhood

Now that Menlo Park is at least moving ahead with a sidewalk master plan, I am wondering who will pay the bill. As I understand it, in the past the Willows area wanted a rural atmosphere and now with increased traffic and many more youngsters walking on their way to school, the need for sidewalks has become a priority. The same need can be applied along Santa Cruz Avenue. I have

heard no one say anything about funding for these projects. It surely seems to me that homeowners in these local areas should be paying at least part of the expense. It is an improvement to their homes and will increase their property values. If these property owners are going to be assessed, say 50 percent of costs, is community support going to disappear? There is no free lunch here. This should be resolved sooner and not later in the process.

Posted by Gimpy, a resident of the Menlo Park Downtown neighborhood

I would love to see sidewalks along Santa Cruz Avenue, at least between downtown and Avy Avenue, but even more than that, I'd like to see the city take care of all the potholes in the streets. It's gotten beyond inconvenient; it's hazardous in a lot of places. Maybe Menlo Park should have a moratorium on taking on new projects until it can keep up with the basics, like maintaining streets.

Posted by Truth, a resident of the Menlo Park Belle Haven neighborhood

I believe the city should pay for sidewalks and I can find very little evidence of any other city that makes homeowners pay for sidewalks. What is next — making homeowners pay for stop signs and crosswalks and sewers and gutters? Pray tell what exactly do you think we pay taxes for now? Big union contracts and that is it? Fix my potholes, fix my sidewalks, keep my roads safe for my kids and stop trying to tell me what my government does or does not do. If there is full approval by a neighborhood and it is deemed unsafe, that is exactly what local government is elected to do — spend our taxes on infrastructure and maintenance.

## TownSquare

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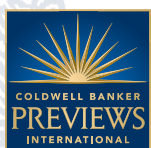
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