

County to review 40,000 residential properties for reassessment. Page 5

The Almanac

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

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PEERING INTO THE PAST

Woodside geologist looks back 57 million years to recalculate the age of the Himalayan mountain range SEE SECTION 2



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

'See this stick?'

Portola Valley resident Tenley Breen, though not fluent in Dog, did occasionally persuade Oliver and Charlie Cooper to retrieve sticks thrown into this newly liberated and newly inundated section of Sausal Creek at Town Center on Monday, Feb. 16.

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On the cover

Mt. Everest, as seen from a Tibetan base camp near the Nepalese border, may be 11 million years older than previously thought, according to geological evidence being gathered and tested by Woodside resident and San Francisco State University geology professor Mary Leech. Photo by Ms. Leech. Story begins on **Page 21**.

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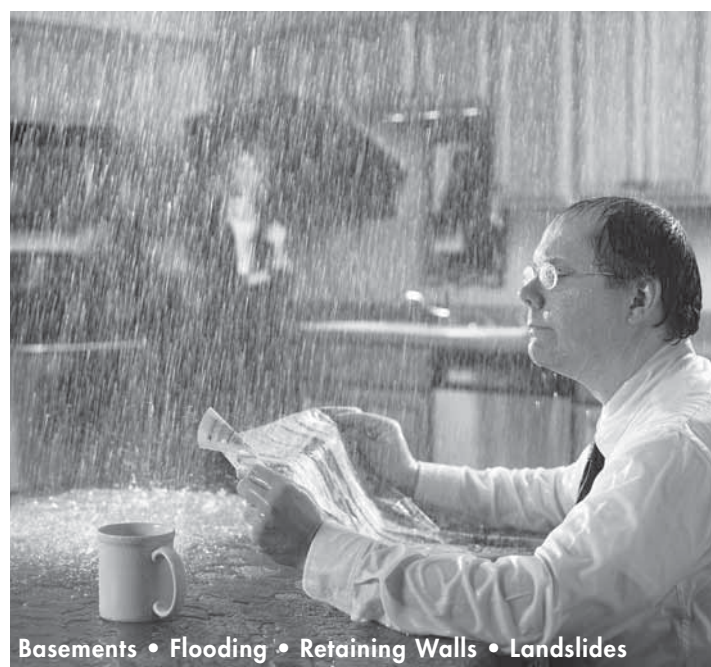
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Roberts Tip of the Week

All Hail Caesar!

Most People generally assume that the famous Caesar salad originated in Italy. The fact is, however, that this modern-day staple has its roots in Baja California, where it was first served at Caesar Bar and Grill on the fourth of July during the 1920's. While Chef Caesar Cardini may have been the author of the recipe, geography lent it its soul. Inspiration for "ensalada Caesar" is said to have come from the lack of ingredients left in the restaurants kitchen on a busy night. To add some flare and compensate for the simplicity of the salad, it was created tableside. The leaves of the romaine lettuce were left uncut so that they could better serve a finger food.



Today, there are many variations available by topping a Caesar salad with grilled chicken, steak, salmon or shrimp. At ROBERTS MARKET, we offer a selection of wine and spirits that rivals local full service liquor stores. We can handle all your wine and liquor needs. If you find yourself pressed for time visit our "heat and eat it" department for wonderful gourmet prepared foods. You can find prepared foods such as home-made hot soups, sandwiches, salads, and gourmet food stuffs.

Hint: Due to health concerns, Caesar salad is no longer made with raw eggs, one of the original ingredients in it's dressing.

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Meet your replacement

In introducing Atherton's new city attorney at the Feb. 18 city council meeting, Mayor Jerry Carlson accidentally gave Wynne Furth a new job title.



Wynne Furth

"I'd like to introduce the new city manager," he said.

The real city manager, Jerry Gruber, played along. "That evaluation didn't go as well as I had hoped," he quipped, referring to the council's recent closed-session review of his first year on the job.

Ms. Furth, a Palo Alto resident, takes over the city attorney job from Marc Hynes.

Bong hits on El Camino

A 5:14 p.m. log note of Tuesday, Feb. 17, from the Atherton Police Department advised that a white female driver had been spotted on El Camino Real near Santa Cruz Avenue, and that she was "talking on her cell phone, tailgating and smoking a bong while driving."

Her last known direction of travel was north. The log is silent as to whether an officer caught up with her, or whether there was any sign of an illegal substance in the alleged bong.

Chances are good that she was obeying the hands-free phone law, as it could be extremely hazardous to hold both a bong and a cell phone while tailgating on El Camino at rush hour.

Keep it clean

The Courier Mail reports that Atherton ran out of toilet paper recently, with residents eagerly awaiting fresh rolls.

Reportedly, the messy situation was averted in Atherton, Australia, sister city to Atherton, California. Supplies had been held up by flooding on a local highway.

"At least the tragedy didn't befall the central Queensland town of Bluff, in which the entire town had diarrhoea from contaminated water last month," said the story on couriermail.com.au.

Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

County to review 40,000 homes for reassessment

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

With real estate prices taking a tumble along with the economy as a whole, San Mateo County has started to reassess the value of many residential properties in the county.

The assessed value of a property determines the amount of tax the state can collect on it.

Generally, the county reevaluates properties only when they change hands, or at the owner's request. But in light of the recent slide in home prices, the county will reassess all homes sold since Jan. 1, 2002, in time for the 2009-10 tax roll, said Deputy Assessor Angelina Hunter.

That means county assessors will be looking at over 40,000 residential properties to determine whether their market value has dropped. The county estimates that the assessed value of 15,000 to 20,000 of those properties will fall.

The county examined just over 1,000 residences for the 2007-08 tax roll, and reassessed just 616 of them. So far, it has

reviewed nearly 9,000 properties for the 2008-09 tax roll, at the request of homeowners, and reassessed about 5,200.

"When we know the market has gotten

'When we know the market has gotten worse, we need to be a little more proactive.'

DEPUTY ASSESSOR ANGELINA HUNTER

worse, we need to be a little more proactive," Ms. Hunter said.

By law, a property's assessed value cannot exceed its market value.

She said she anticipates fewer assessment reductions in The Almanac's circulation area than in much of the rest of the county — with the exception of the Belle Haven neighborhood in Menlo Park, where home prices have plummeted.

Properties in Woodside, Atherton, Portola

Valley and Menlo Park "seem to hold their value more," Ms. Hunter said.

Homeowners can still request a reassessment for the 2008-09 tax roll. The county has not yet set a deadline for such requests, though Ms. Hunter said it would likely be sometime in April.

And county officials have warned homeowners to be on the lookout for a scam that's making the rounds, with companies asking for a fee to help guide homeowners through the reassessment process. Requesting a reassessment is free and straightforward, and the form only takes a couple minutes to complete, according to Assessor Warren Slocum. It's available at tinyurl.com/atuhmx.

Properties are reassessed based on recent sales data from other homes in the neighborhood, according to Ms. Hunter — each home isn't examined individually. Though the county will review nearly 40 times as many homes as it did two years ago, the assessor's office has not increased its staff. The department will just try to be more efficient, Ms. Hunter said. ■

Report details traffic, noise from Hillview

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

A study of plans to rebuild the Hillview Middle School campus in Menlo Park shows significant traffic and noise, but the negative impacts would be even worse if the project wasn't built, according to a draft environmental impact report released Feb. 18.

The Menlo Park City School District plans to build new classrooms, an auditorium, parking lots and other facilities to accommodate an anticipated jump in enrollment, from the current 670 students to an estimated 974 students in 2016.

Most of the traffic and noise

Continued on page 16



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Almost ready ...

With just over a month to go before Rosewood Sand Hill opens for business, Cesar Gonzalez puts finishing touches on columns supporting a meeting space at the facility. The hotel, spa and restaurant complex, located on Sand Hill Road near Interstate 280, is set to open April 2.

Atherton braces for \$2 million revenue shortfall

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Even by Atherton standards, a \$2 million revenue shortfall is a big deal — and the town isn't nearly as rich as many of its residents.

Mid-year budget projections for the fiscal year ending in June show a gaping hole in the town's \$10.6 million adopted budget.

"We're in a pretty serious situation," said Atherton City Manager Jerry Gruber at the Feb. 18 City Council meeting. He promised that a number of budget cuts are in the works, but none of them was part of the proposed mid-year budget adjustments before the council.

"There's no way I can vote to approve a mid-year budget that is \$2 million more than we're taking

in," said Councilman Jim Dobbie. "It's almost absurd to consider."

Mr. Gruber said that every department head has been charged with coming up with a plan for budget cuts of 10 percent, and the results of those proposals will come before the council in March.

"This isn't about paper clips and pencils, but about large items — capital improvement projects and

even staffing cuts, if necessary," Mr. Gruber said.

Fee refunds

The biggest hit to the budget is \$1.1 million stemming from problems with the business license fees charged to building contractors, according to Finance Director Louise Ho.

See **REVENUE**, page 12

Bigger classes, less money for MP schools

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

The next school year could see larger class sizes, fewer materials and less prep time for teachers, as the Menlo Park City School District prepares to make \$1.1 million in budget cuts.

Even with cutting more than \$1 million in spending, the district may still have to dip into its reserves — by as much as \$785,000 — in the next school year, according to Superintendent Ken Ranella. He is estimating that the district could face as much as a \$1.5 million deficit in the 2009-2010 school year.

The school board discussed Mr. Ranella's strategy for trimming the budget at the Feb. 17 board meeting. The board gave input on his plans, but did not take formal action because the unknown impact of the state budget crisis.

"I'm not going to ask you for a vote because this is probably going to be moot tomorrow," Mr. Ranella said dryly.

Dwindling property tax revenues, increasing numbers of students, uncertainty over state

budget cuts and county investment pool losses are making for a grimmer-than-usual financial outlook for the K-8 school district that encompasses much of Menlo Park and Atherton.

Contributions to the school foundation, which typically donates money amounting to 8 percent of the district's annual

The average class size would rise to 26 students in grades 4-8, says Superintendent Ken Ranella.

budget, are running about 20 percent below last year's level.

"We're going to weather this with minimal loss, compared with other (school) districts, but there is a loss," said board member Laura Rich.

Mr. Ranella said he did not plan to lay off teachers, but that he wouldn't hire new teachers to keep class sizes at their current levels. Instead, the average class size would go up to 26

students in grades 4-8, thanks to increased enrollment.

Class-size reduction grants from the state make it economically infeasible to boost class sizes in the primary grades, so those will remain at 20 children per class, according to Mr. Ranella.

Other cutbacks include reducing overtime hours for custodians and eliminating the assistant principal position at Laurel School, the assistant school nurse, a library assistant at Hillview Middle School, and a data secretary. Purchases of furniture and technology equipment will be delayed, and teachers currently doing non-instructional work will likely be reassigned to teach in classrooms.

Budget cuts will also postpone the planned introduction of Spanish language lessons for primary grade students that had been set to start in the fall.

School construction projects aren't affected by the planned budget cuts. Dedicated bond money can only be used for the construction of school facilities, and can't be used for other educational purposes. ■

Atherton, Woodside team up for federal stimulus funds

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton and Woodside public works officials are teaming up so that their small towns don't miss out on economic stimulus funds from the federal government.

There are a lot of restrictions on projects that qualify for stimulus money. Road repair projects need to cost at least \$500,000 in order to qualify, but Atherton's share of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is only \$200,000 to \$300,000, according to Public Works Director Duncan Jones.

Woodside's share is an estimated \$150,000 to \$200,000, according to that town's staff.

So the Atherton City Council, at its Feb. 18 meeting, agreed to essentially buy Woodside's stimulus dollars, thus ensuring that neither town misses out on the federal government's largesse.

Without the collaborative effort, both towns would forfeit the stimulus money, officials said.

Atherton's plan to reconstruct part of Atherton Avenue — as

much of it as \$500,000 will cover — would be paid for by stimulus dollars, but the town is willing to dip into its coffers and exchange cash for Woodside's share of the restricted stimulus money.

The Woodside Town Council has the plan on the agenda of its Feb. 24 meeting. If approved, the town will use the money from Atherton for other road projects, according to Woodside staff reports.

Atherton can cover the expense of buying out Woodside with savings from previous Atherton road projects that ran well below budget, Mr. Jones said.

"Woodside didn't have a project that qualified, and they don't have experience with federal projects," Mr. Jones told the council.

Atherton, on the other hand, has its qualifying project ready to go.

Other small towns in the county are teaming up and doing the same kind of horse-trading, with the encouragement of the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG), according to Mr. Jones.

See **STIMULUS**, page 12

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City proposes measures to reduce projected \$1.8 million deficit

■ No layoffs or pay cuts are proposed.

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

With Menlo Park facing the prospect of a \$1.8 million deficit, city staff has recommended a number of stopgap measures that would allow the city to weather the economic downturn — at least through the current fiscal year.

The city estimates that it will be able to trim about \$578,000 from its budget by cutting corners in several departments. And City Manager Glen Rojas has recommended that the city hold off on just over \$1 million worth of projects for now, while it considers a more comprehensive strategy for the 2009-10 budget.

If the City Council agrees to put off those projects at its Tuesday, Feb. 24, meeting, Menlo Park would find itself only \$164,000 in the red for the fiscal year ending June 30, according to Finance Director Carol Augustine. That would allow the city to escape relatively unscathed from a year in which revenues have slid, primarily because of a decrease in fees related to development.

But it would not be a long-term salve, as the country hunkers down for what is anticipated to be a drawn-out recession.

Under the staff's proposed mid-year budget amendment, Menlo Park would draw a total of \$1.18 million from its reserves this year. That expense includes part of the cost of the El Camino Real/downtown planning process — not considered part of the general fund budget — as well as encumbrances from the 2007-08 fiscal year.

Projects deferred

Deferring "infrastructure" projects is a fairly simple way to make ends meet, said City Manager Glen Rojas. But he also acknowledged that it's only a temporary fix.

"We're not assuming that

all these cuts are the right cuts," he said, noting that the council might come up with a different solution.

Still, Mr. Rojas said, several high-cost projects could potentially be put on hold indefinitely.

The "infrastructure" projects Mr. Rojas has recommended for deferral: \$550,000 for new sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue; \$220,000 for new sidewalks on Woodland Avenue; and \$30,000 to refurbish the gymnasium floor at the Onetta Harris Community Center. Those projects

vices related to development subdivisions, and the city stands to fall short by nearly \$1 million in development-related fees alone.

But Menlo Park will take in more revenue than originally expected in utility taxes, property taxes and franchise fees, Ms. Augustine said.

No staff cuts

The city's recommendations do not include layoffs or reductions in staff time. Mr. Rojas maintains that in attempting to cut costs, the city should consider staff cuts only as a last resort — despite the fact that roughly 72 percent of the city's year-to-year expenses are devoted to personnel costs, not including pension payments.

After the city axed some 35 staff positions following the dot-com bust, a reduction in staff hours would mean a concomitant reduction in city services, according to Mr. Rojas.

"You can't cut staff and not cut service," he said. "Because we already had so many reductions, there's very little room to cut."

He also said he wouldn't recommend eliminating raises for department heads not represented by unions, or asking them to take a pay cut.

According to Mr. Rojas, potential expense cuts might include reducing the city's annual contribution to the capital improvement fund; easing the city's dependence on consultants; reorganizing personnel as employees retire; and dipping into the city's sizable general fund reserve to cover deficits.

The city could increase its revenue stream by upping the utility tax. It should also get a big boost from the Rosewood hotel/spa/restaurant complex, set to open April 2. A city-hired consultant estimated that the resort would generate over \$1.3 million in its first full year of operation. ■

■ MENLO PARK

City Manager Glen Rojas recommends delaying just over \$1 million in projects, including plans for new sidewalks on Santa Cruz and Woodland avenues.

would have been funded out of the city's capital improvement fund — separate from the general fund. In delaying them, the city would reduce the amount of money it usually transfers from the general fund to the capital improvement fund.

The city doesn't expect it will be able to meet the state-mandated June 30 deadline for updating its housing element. Removing that project from the budget would save \$282,000 this year.

City staff also recommended deferring a \$6,500 plan to improve the library's Web site.

Decrease in building

Much of the city's projected revenue shortfall can be attributed to a decline in building permit fees and fees related to new subdivisions, as builders and developers scale back construction projects.

After a steep rise in fees for licenses and permits in the 2007-08 fiscal year, Finance Director Carol Augustine expects this year's fees to come in \$750,000 below what the city had originally budgeted. Slash another \$175,000 in expected revenue from ser-

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Pricing in this new economy

Dear Gloria, We were going to put our home on the market and have had a market analysis from a neighborhood realtor. He gave us a suggested listing price which shocked my wife and me. We think our property is worth much more than the realtor does. However, he did provide us with recent statistics which are hard to argue. We have decided to rent our house for a year and then sell it. What would be your opinion of that approach?

or otherwise to pay for rent.

2. What if prices are even softer a year from now when you would like to sell? All of the other potential sellers who have become part of the rental pool may also be putting their house on the market then. What if you have to rent it for a period of time that is such that you lose your \$500,000 capital gains?

3. A leading bank spokesman has said that 70% of foreclosed properties have not been put on the market but are still on the books of the banks.

Those properties will be put on at some time, and you may be in competition with them.

We all need to deal with today's realities. If you have owned your house for a long time, chances are you have some equity. Today is a known, tomorrow is an unknown. You may be better off to bite the bullet and move on, especially if you are buying another house.

Mark V.

Dear Mark, Your reaction is similar to that of many prospective sellers over the last six months. The world economy is being repriced and our local markets are part of that new reality. There are some factors that play in the rental market that should be discussed during your decision making process.

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Local schools face fewer cuts with state budget changes

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

For state Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, the “patch and repair” process that last week resulted in the hard-won agreement addressing a projected \$42 billion state budget deficit “was anything but pretty.”

Perhaps even more painful, though, was the \$8.4 billion hit to education funding that he and other champions of school spending had to accept to complete the deal, which was finally agreed to in the early morning of Feb. 19 after a 45-hour session.

“I’m a person who wants to invest more in public education, not less,” he said later that day. Such spending makes even more sense in times of economic crisis, he said.

“There isn’t a nation in the world that improved its economy by disinvesting in education,” he insisted. “Investing in education equals a healthy economy.”

Local school districts won’t take as great a hit from the budget fix as most other districts in the state, but they will share the pain of cuts in “categorical” funding for specific programs the state has supplemented in the past.

The budget deal cuts about \$8.4 billion in funding for public schools and community colleges. But about half the cuts to K-12 schools won’t touch local schools because they affect only revenue-limit school districts, which receive per-pupil funding from the state.

The Menlo Park City, Las Lomitas, Portola Valley, and Woodside elementary districts; and the Sequoia Union High School District are “basic aid” districts, which forgo per-pupil funding and instead operate their schools with property tax revenue.

But about half of the state budget cuts to schools are in categorical funding, which is required to be spent on specific programs and is allotted to all districts.

Under the agreement, some categorical programs will be fully funded, such as class-size reduction, child nutrition, special education, and after-school education and safety, according to a staff aid in Sen. Simitian’s office.

Although dozens of other programs will be impacted by categorical funding cuts, the agreement gives school districts much more flexibility to spend the money as they see fit for a range of other categorical programs. For example, the high school district might choose to continue funding its school counseling program at its current level by moving money from another categorical program, such as occupational education — a transfer of funding that until now has not been allowed.

Sen. Simitian supported the change, saying, “The message I have heard over and over again from local (school officials) is, when times are tough, it’s even more important that we have the flexibility to make decisions at a local level.”

The change comes with some conditions, including a “sunshine” requirement. Moving money from one categorical program to another requires a hearing at a regular public board meeting, and a report of the transfer to the state department of education, the staff aid said.

The sunshine requirement “is a good balance,” Sen. Simitian said. “If we’re going to allow this degree of flexibility, let’s make sure decisions are made openly” and with public participation, he added.

Another year

Painful as the marathon sessions to address the deficit were, there’s a silver lining: The agreement fixing the current budget also set the 2009-10 fiscal year budget, precluding what has become a traditional, long-drawn-out battle, Sen. Simitian said.

The 2008-09 budget was 85 days late, and Sen. Simitian voted against it because “it was not a real budget.”

“And once we had the budget, we found ourselves still struggling to bail water, so we ended up in budget hearings” from November through February, he said.

The budget approved for next fiscal year is subject to change in June, he acknowledged. “There’s not a lot of good news for next year, but at least there was an effort to sort it out sooner rather than later.” ■

Empty inside

The hollow core of a large old oak tree at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park was revealed on Jan. 30. Major construction is getting under way at the K-5 school, including new classrooms and parking lots. The oak tree wasn’t slated for removal until an arborist report deemed it too dangerous to keep, school officials said.

Photo by Jamie Ferranti/
RGM and Associates



Fire district weighs belt-tightening measures

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Members of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District board of directors will discuss six proposed actions to address growing concerns about future revenue declines at a special meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24, at the district headquarters.

The board may take action on the proposals, crafted in light of “an extremely precarious fiscal state at present and for the foreseeable future,” both nationally and locally.

The proposals include: placing planned real property acquisitions for fire station expansion and improvement on hold; eliminating the option of using reserves for operational costs this fiscal year; and directing staff to seek “participation and input from the community and employees of

the district in setting priorities for reduction in services.”

Board member Peter Carpenter, who has been sounding the alarm about probable significant declines in revenues for the district, said he wants the district to be “proactive in controlling expenses now” because 92 percent of its revenue is from property taxes.

At the special meeting, he plans to present his research on local developments regarding home foreclosures and property-value declines. Each year, the district projects a greater revenue stream from property taxes, but, Mr. Carpenter said, his research indicates that in 2010, that revenue could drop an estimated \$275,000 to \$1.12 million.

That drop would result from a number of factors, including a step-up in the number of homes that are being reassessed; and the

growing number of foreclosures and pre-foreclosures in the area served by the district — Menlo Park, Atherton, East Palo Alto, and nearby unincorporated areas.

In a recent closed session, the board abandoned plans to buy property from St. Patrick’s Seminary adjacent to the headquarters station on Middlefield Road, Mr. Carpenter said. The district was close to purchasing the land, but reconsidered because of concerns over future revenue declines, he added.

“Local government really needs to get ahead of the curve,” he said. “We know the impact of (a drop in) property tax revenue is going to occur, and we need to start tightening our belt now.”

The special meeting will be held in the classroom at district headquarters, 300 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park. ■

Atherton rejects planned recycling facility

■ Menlo Park staff recommends approval.

By Andrea Gemmet
and Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writers

Now is not the time to spring for a \$65 million “world class” regional recycling facility, according to Atherton officials.

The price is too high and the bond market too unstable, said members of the Atherton City Council, who voted unanimously on Feb. 18 to oppose funding the proposed Shoreway Environmental Center, a single-stream recycling

facility serving the South Bayside Waste Management Authority.

“This is a moving target: they don’t know what it’s going to cost from a financing perspective,” said Mayor Jerry Carlson at the council meeting.

The original estimates for the facility came in at just under \$26 million in 2007, according to City Manager Jerry Gruber. The estimate was recently revised to more than \$59 million, and with the cost of issuing bonds added in, the project would cost \$65.5 million.

Atherton’s share of the cost would be nearly \$1 million, according to the most recent estimates, Mr. Gruber said. It would be funded by an increase in the

monthly garbage collection rates paid by residents and businesses.

Kevin McCarthy, executive director of the waste management authority, called the 2007 estimate a “preliminary” figure, “not based on any engineering work.” While he acknowledged that the dramatically higher estimate might be frustrating for city officials, he noted that the scope of the project had not changed.

Even with the new estimate, the new facility’s impact on garbage collection rates would only increase by an average of 4 to 5 percent, according to Mr. McCarthy.

The Shoreway facility would

See SHOREWAY, page 16

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Computer illustration of the high-speed rail train, courtesy of the California High Speed Rail Authority.

High-speed rail critics win extension of comment period

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

Amid cries from Peninsula residents that they had been blindsided by the impending high-speed rail project's potential impacts on their communities, the authority that oversees the project has agreed to allow an extra month for comment about the project's potential environmental impacts.

"We wanted to show communities we are absolutely wanting to work with them throughout this process," said Dan Leavitt, deputy

'For some reason, people impacted by the project didn't know about it.'

DUNCAN JONES, ATHERTON'S
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

director of the High-Speed Rail Authority. "Obviously, people are nervous about the potential impacts to their homes, cities and communities, and we're very respectful of that."

The deadline for comment on the potential impacts of the \$40 billion project, which will shoot trains up the Caltrain corridor at 125 miles per hour as it shuttles residents between Los Angeles and San Francisco, was extended to April 6. The city of Palo Alto requested the extension, with

the support of several other Peninsula jurisdictions that wanted more time to comment.

Palo Alto residents in particular have voiced concerns about the project in recent days, as they became aware of how the Caltrain corridor might be altered to accommodate high-speed trains. They have recoiled at the possibility that the tracks might need to be widened and raised through Peninsula cities, flanked by walls to reduce noise and overlaid by high electrical lines to propel the trains.

Duncan Jones, Atherton's public works director, said he feels the rail authority hasn't done enough to inform residents who own property near the tracks about the project.

"My main thing is: Somewhere along the line, there wasn't enough outreach," said Mr. Jones, who added that he was pleased with the authority's decision to extend the comment period to April 6. "For some reason, people impacted by the project didn't know about it."

The rail authority only sent letters soliciting comment to residents who own property adjacent to the tracks, and within 500 feet of each station, as required by law. But Mr. Jones contended that it should have sent letters to a broader swath of residents.

Many homeowners who don't live directly beside the tracks will still be affected, Mr. Jones said — especially at six local intersec-

Portola Valley meets on Web site, wildfire risk zones

The town of Portola Valley takes the wraps off its new online presence on Wednesday, Feb. 25, when it debuts the revamped Web site to the Town Council.

The Web site presentation is set for shortly after 8 p.m. in the community hall at 765 Portola Road. The normal meeting location, the Historic Schoolhouse, is not wired for the Internet.

The council is also set to discuss a noise ordinance and consider

a resolution to label as at "very high" risk of wildfire the neighborhoods along and around Hayfields Road, Wayside Road and Santa Maria Avenue on the north end of town.

The designation would be in keeping with a final wildfire-risk map published in November 2008 by the California Department of Fire, or Cal Fire.

In April 2008, the council unanimously rejected recom-

■ INFORMATION

Upcoming meetings

In response to calls from Peninsula residents for more information on the high-speed rail project, the authority that oversees the project will hold three presentations in the next two weeks:

■ Wednesday, Feb. 25, 7-9 p.m., Millbrae: Chetcuti Community Room, 450 Poplar Ave.

■ Thursday, Feb. 26, 7-9 p.m., Palo Alto: Mitchell Park Community Center, Main Hall, 3800 Middlefield Road.

■ Wednesday, March 4, 7-9 p.m., Redwood City: Veteran's Memorial Center, Redwood Room, 1455 Madison Ave.

Submitting comment

Residents can submit comment by April 6 on the environmental considerations they think should be taken into account. Comments can be submitted via e-mail to comments@hsr.ca.gov, with the subject line "San Francisco to San Jose HST." The project's Web site is www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov.

tions that will require overpasses or underpasses to separate streets from the rail line.

Atherton residents have approached the city recently to say they didn't realize how extensive the impacts might be, Mr. Jones said; the city has sent letters to 29 homeowners whose properties are adjacent to the tracks, urging them to share their concerns with the rail authority. ■

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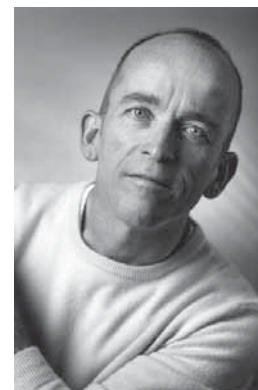
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Wastewater system manager: 'We averted a major disaster'

■ Malfunction threatened to dump sewage into the storm drains of Menlo Park, Atherton and other nearby towns.

A facility in Redwood City that treats wastewater for Menlo Park, Atherton and other local towns narrowly escaped what could have been the biggest sewage spill ever into the San Francisco Bay, the facility's manager said Feb. 19.

South Bayside System Authority, which treats an average of 15 million gallons of wastewater each day for Menlo Park, Atherton, Belmont, San Carlos and Redwood City, experienced a shorted out control panel on Feb. 15 that prevented wastewater from entering the disinfection stage, according to General Manager Daniel Child.

The wastewater then built up in the tanks preceding the disinfection tank until it overflowed and spilled into the agency's tunnel system where the pumps and motors are located, Mr. Child said.

About 5 to 6 millions gallons of wastewater accumulated in the tunnels over a period of three hours before agency staff could reopen a valve that allowed the water to run back to the disinfection

tion tanks again, he said.

Had the valve not been reopened within another hour or two, all of the pumps would have been submerged and the facility's electrical system would have been destroyed, he said.

Additionally, all of the sewage building up in the tanks would have spilled into the storm water drains of Menlo Park, Atherton, Belmont, San Carlos and Redwood City, and ultimately into the Bay, Mr. Child said.

"We averted a major disaster," he said. "Within another hour, the water would have raised to a point where all of the pumps would have been submerged (and) it would have shut down everything. The staff really stepped up (to save the facility)."

The problem began when rainwater entered an outdoor pipe leading to a control panel in the facility. The control panel then shorted out and closed the valve that leads to the disinfection process.

"The water stopped there; it

couldn't go through disinfection process," Mr. Child said.

Once crews located the valve and reopened it, wastewater began flowing through the disinfection process again, he said.

The buildup of wastewater, however, came with costly repairs.

Mr. Child estimated that making all the necessary repairs, such as replacing ruined equipment, will cost between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

Warren Lieberman, a member of the South Bayside System Authority's commission, said he expects the commissioners will receive a report on the incident within the next week, and the

commission will then examine how to deal with such a disaster in the future.

He said the plant's outdated equipment may have contributed to the incident and the commission will also continue to work on a \$350 million improvement plan.

"We're living on borrowed time with this plant," Mr. Lieberman said. "I anticipate that to some extent, the old plant did contribute to Sunday's incident."

He added that workers at the plant prevented a potentially major disaster on Sunday. "I'm quite pleased and proud of the staff that they were able to address the problem before it became a

catastrophe," he said.

As of Wednesday night, about 85 to 90 percent of the plant was back to running on automatic control with working equipment, instead of the manual mode that was implemented after Sunday's incident, Mr. Child said.

The near-catastrophe in Redwood City came the same week that a leaking pipeline at the Sausalito-Marín City Sanitary District in Fort Baker south of Sausalito spilled hundreds of thousands of gallons of partially treated wastewater into the San Francisco Bay.

— Bay City News Service

San Mateo County receives rebate for energy savings

San Mateo County was recognized Feb. 3 for its efforts to conserve energy with a \$418,344 rebate check from Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

The county also received a Flex Your Power award, which PG&E uses to recognize California businesses and government agencies that demonstrate successful efforts to save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

San Mateo County has saved enough energy to power 250,000 homes for a year and has cut greenhouse gas emissions by 1,400 tons per year. The added efficiency translates to an annual savings of about \$450,000, county officials said.

The county's energy-saving measures have included switching to energy-efficient light bulbs, installing a computerized power management program, and improving heating and cooling systems, county officials said.

"This couldn't have come at a better time," Board of Supervisors President Mark Church said, referring to the county's financial challenges following the collapse of investment firm Lehman Bros. and subsequent loss of millions of dollars in taxpayers' money.

— Bay City News Service



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A night with Ambassador Thomas Graham

Menlo Park dinner focuses on nuclear weapon dangers and challenges

By Les DeWitt

When one considers the fact that Russia currently has five thousand strategic nuclear weapons deployed on intercontinental missiles and the United States has seven thousand weapons aimed at Russia, and that both countries are on "hair-trigger" alert status with these weapons, it seems very relevant to learn more about these issues for us as citizens of the United States of America.

On a recent evening, 28 local citizens attended a dinner at Trellis restaurant in Menlo Park to hear Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr. deliver an address entitled "Nuclear Weapon Dangers and Challenges for the 111th Congress."

The evening was hosted by the Fund for Peace Initiatives, a Menlo Park-based organization, formed in 2002, to facilitate peace-building through art, education, and civil advocacy.

Ambassador Graham has served as a distinguished senior diplomat for the United States, and has been involved with every major international arms control and non-proliferation agreement since 1970. He currently serves as the board chair of the Cypress Fund for Peace and Security (www.cypressfund.org).

About the author: Les DeWitt of Atherton is managing partner and founder of the Fund for Peace Initiatives, a Menlo Park-based organization, formed in 2002, to "facilitate peace-building through art, education and civil advocacy."

org) in Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Graham talked of the arms race during the Cold War years, when the United States alone built 70,000 nuclear weapons, most of which were thousands of times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

He recalled President Kennedy's haunting vision of a world where

These are the most critical issues that affect the global community and our future as human beings.

20 to 30 nations were armed with such weapons. This concern led to the creation in 1970 of the non-proliferation treaty, the major piece of diplomacy that even today limits the unchecked spread of nuclear weapons by nation-states. A total of 183 nations have adhered to the treaty.

Today, Russia and the United States possess 95 percent of the

worlds' nuclear bombs. China, France, Great Britain, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea possess most of the remaining 5 percent.

What is not known is how much nuclear material that has been generated over the past 60 years remains outside the control of these nuclear states. The threat of terrorists gaining control of these materials is real, and may have already occurred.

Ambassador Graham says it's vitally important that the United States and Russia put recent disagreements aside and actively engage the other nuclear states in reducing nuclear arsenals and, ultimately, eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The importance of the United States and Russia working together cannot be overstated. Ambassador Graham emphasizes that an educated citizenry must be engaged in this debate, and that true leadership from our country with nonproliferation and disarmament issues will not occur until our Congress responds to such a civic outcry.

The most current hopes lie in the U.S. Senate ratifying the conventional test ban treaty, signed by President Clinton, but never ratified by our Senate. Russia has already ratified the treaty.



Speakers at the Menlo Park dinner were Dr. Siegfried Hecker, left, co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, and Ambassador Thomas Graham, who has been involved with every major international arms control and non-proliferation agreement since 1970.

This, along with collaboration with the Russians on "standing down" our anti-ballistic missiles from 30-minute ready alert status, is achievable with the 111th Congress with leadership from the Obama Administration, but garnering the votes to make it happen will not be easy according to Ambassador Graham.

Introducing Ambassador Graham was Siegfried Hecker, co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. Dr. Hecker, formerly the director of Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory

in New Mexico, emphasized the need and importance of educating political leaders about the challenges our world faces with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Both Ambassador Graham and Dr. Hecker stressed that these issues are not new topics and that they are not partisan issues. These are the most critical issues that affect the global community and our future as human beings. To change the current status-quo, leaders and citizens of great vision, who are willing to take risks, are called for. ■

■ ASK THE DEPUTY

Deputy Stephanie Josephson, of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, answers questions about law enforcement.

Send questions to: editor@AlmanacNews.com; call 854-2626, ext. 213; or mail to: Ask the Deputy, The Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.



Q A new law that went into effect Jan. 1 prohibits "texting" while driving. How does this affect hand-held phone use while driving? As I understand it, under an earlier law, drivers could not hold a cell phone up to their ears while driving, but they could enter phone numbers in their cell phones and talk using the speaker-phone or a hands-free system. Are drivers now barred from holding the cell phone for any purpose, such as entering a phone number or talking on the speaker

phone? How is the Sheriff's Office enforcing this law?

A That's a great question that many people must be curious about. When the hands-free cell phone law came out, it was very publicly discussed. The texting law followed without quite as much conversation.

This new law, CVC 23123 (a), states, "A person shall not drive a motor vehicle while using an electronic wireless communications device to write, send, or read a textbased communication." Note that subsection (b) states that "textbased" communication does extend to instant

messages and e-mails. To specifically answer your question about entering a phone number, the law explains in subsection (c) that reading, selecting, or entering a telephone number IS absolutely permitted.

As far as using the phone in speaker mode, I must admit some personal guilt in doing that. The original cell phone law states that the phone must be used in a "handsfree" manner. So, feel free to use the speaker phone as long as the phone is not in your hand. Holding the phone three inches from your face will not trick us.

The Sheriff's Office will be enforcing this law as we do every other law. In

talking with my partners, I believe each officer will use his or her discretion in determining whether to issue a citation or a warning based on each case. If the phone is only being used for a brief moment to enter a phone number, that can easily be noticed and explained.

On a personal note, I think there is still some gray area here. Our cell phones are capable of so much more than texting and talking. As of yet, legislation has not broached the topic of calendars, notes, music, pictures, or the many other applications that are on our phones. We all need to use common sense and caution by using these items as little as possible while driving.

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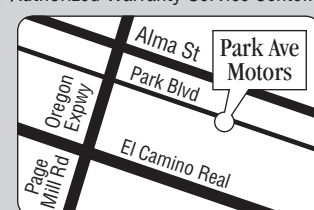
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Atherton
Menlo Park
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Atherton braces for revenue shortfall

REVENUE

continued from page 5

Flaws in the town's methodology for calculating the fees — which it scrapped recently, amid threats of lawsuits — could translate into a loss of \$425,000 in projected income, and an additional cost of \$680,000 to refund all the contractors who were overcharged in the past two years.

Thanks to the troubled housing market, property tax revenues could be \$116,000 lower than anticipated, and sales tax projections are off by \$68,000. Building permit fees are \$500,000 lower than expected. Interest revenue on the town's funds are half of what was budgeted, a drop of \$200,000.

Atherton also lost \$282,500 of funds invested with the San Mateo County treasurer's investment pool when Lehman Bros. went belly up last fall.

Ms. Ho said that her revenue projections are "based on a very ultra-conservative approach."

"I hope revenues will be better than what I projected," she told the council.

The lone bright spot in revenues is an additional \$60,000 in encroachment permit fees, thanks to Cal Water projects in town, Ms. Ho said.

All in all, the town is now forecast to take in \$8.6 million by the end of this fiscal year, as opposed to the more than \$10.6 million it budgeted for last year.

"At the beginning of the year, we had a balanced budget," said Mayor Jerry Carlson. "Part of this is just cleaning up past problems," he said, referring to the business license refunds.

Atherton's reserves

Absent some major budget cuts or an unexpectedly big jump in

revenues in the next few months, Atherton's reserve funds could take a major hit.

If the \$2 million revenue shortfall holds up, the town's general fund balance is projected to drop from \$7.6 million to \$5.5 million by the end of June. And the full amount of those reserve funds aren't there for the taking — most of that is earmarked or restricted to things ranging from natural disasters to compensation for employee sick days and vacations.

Besides delivering alarming news about revenues, the mid-year budget report included requests for additional funding.

The town's budget for legal services is nearly gone, with five months remaining in the fiscal year, triggering a request for an additional \$100,000.

Town staff also asked for \$64,000 to buy new financial software and computer servers, saying that the existing DOS software system is cumbersome and inefficient.

The council did not take action on those requests.

After the meeting, Ms. Ho said she believes that it's still within the town's power to balance the budget by the end of year. Next month, she and City Manager Gruber will present the council with a proposal for a long-range, five-year financial plan that should clarify whether Atherton is facing an ongoing structural budget deficit, Ms. Ho said. ■

"I knew exactly where I would have my baby."

As the birth of my first child approached, I decided to visit the Birth Center at Sequoia. I hadn't taken classes and I was a bit nervous. But after a few hours, I knew this is where I would have my baby. The environment was warm and caring and I immediately felt at home.

While I was there everyone treated me as if I were the only patient. In fact, my nurse felt like a best friend. Having a private room was great, too — it made me feel safe and comfortable.

After I got home I told everyone I loved Sequoia. I'll definitely return if I have another baby.

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Sequoia Hospital
A member of CHW

*Karly and baby Elijah
San Carlos, CA*



STIMULUS

continued from page 6

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission is expected this week to calculate the exact share of stimulus money coming to each town.

Atherton Avenue has a number of base failures that need repairing, Mr. Jones said.

"We've been chasing them with patches for years," he told the council. "I drive it in a jeep, and it's not smooth. Basically, it's patches from utilities (projects) holding hands."

Mr. Jones said he hopes to get the project out to bid while contractors are still anxious for work. Once more of the stimulus-funded projects get going, prices will certainly go up, he said. ■

■ BIRTHS

Woodside

■ Carrie and Heath Lukatch, a son, Feb. 3, at Sequoia Hospital.

Emerald Hills

■ Nadine and Cameron Wolff, a son and daughter, Feb. 4, at Sequoia Hospital.

Armed robbers hit victims in Willows, Sharon Heights

Menlo Park police are investigating two robberies that took place Feb. 16: an armed robbery of the Willows Market, and a strong-arm robbery in Sharon Heights.

Two men held up an employee at the market, located at the corner of Willow Road and Middlefield Road, around 7:10 p.m., police said. Brandishing a handgun, the men forced the employee to empty the market's cash registers, then ran south on Middlefield, according to witnesses.

Customers were in the market when the robbery occurred, but no patrons were targeted, Acting Sergeant Kevin Paugh said.

In another incident at 5:45 p.m., two men robbed an employee of the Blockbuster Video at 3532 Alameda de las Pulgas, as he went to deposit cash from the store at a bank in Sharon Heights.

The men approached the Blockbuster employee near the intersection of Warner Range and Sharon Park Drive, pushed him to the ground and stole the bag of money he was carrying, according to Acting Sergeant Paugh. They then fled in a black

Toyota pickup truck.

Witnesses described one of the men who robbed the Willows Market as a 5-foot-7 or 5-foot-8 black man, wearing dark pants and a dark-colored hooded sweatshirt, with a white ski mask covering the lower part of his face. The other man, also black, was described as standing between 6-foot-2 and 6-foot-4, and weighing between 220 and 250 pounds. He wore dark pants and a black, hooded sweatshirt, with a mask or shirt covering his face.

The perpetrators of the Sharon Heights strong-arm robbery were 19 or 20 years old, witnesses said. One, a white man with blond hair, wore jeans, a red T-shirt, white basketball shoes and a black baseball cap. The other, a Hispanic man with short brown hair and a mustache, wore a white T-shirt and gray sweatpants.

The police department asks anyone with information to call the police department at 330-6300, or the anonymous tip line at 330-6395.

—Bay City News Service contributed to this report.



The Music Man

Peninsula Youth Theatre presents "The Music Man," Meredith Wilson's celebration of small town America, March 7-15 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St. in Mountain View. The cast includes, from left, Zane Tucker of Menlo Park, Emily Ott of Los Altos, Brian Miller of Cupertino, and Lucy Wallace of Palo Alto. Tickets cost \$7 to \$18. To order, call 903-6000 or visit www.pytnt.org.



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KEPLER'S FEATURED AUTHORS IN MARCH

Laurie Halse Anderson
Wintergirls

Sunday, March 22
6:00 p.m.

From the author of *Speak*, an intense, emotionally wrenching exploration of a girl's descent into the powerful vortex of anorexia, and her painful path toward recovery.

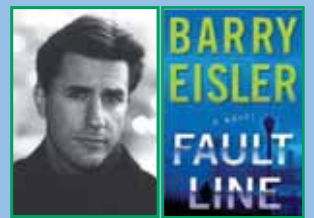


Barry Eisler
Fault Line

Friday, March 20,
6:00 p.m.

Location: Four Seasons Hotel, Silicon Valley

Barry's back! A smart new thriller from the acclaimed and bestselling author of the John Rain novels.



John B. Taylor

Getting Off Track: How Government Actions and Interventions Caused, Prolonged, and Worsened the Financial Crisis

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

Hoover fellow and Stanford economist offers empirical research to explain what caused the current financial crisis, what prolonged it, and what worsened it.



Sharon Meers & Joanna Strober

Getting to 50/50: How Working Couples Can Have It All by Sharing It All

Friday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.

Two Bay Area professionals, wives and mothers discuss the challenges and rewards of two-career households.

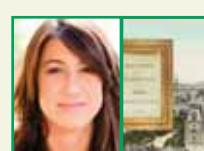


Sara Houghteling

Pictures at an Exhibition: A Novel

Monday, March 16, 7:30 p.m.

Offers a wrenching insight into the art looting practiced by the Nazi party during World War II.



Cara Black

Murder in the Latin Quarter

Tuesday, March 17, 7:30 p.m.

Aimée Leduc "is one of the best heroines in crime fiction." — Lee Child.



Blake Bailey

Cheever: A Life

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

Written with unprecedented access to essential sources, Bailey's biography reveals the troubled but strangely lovable artist.



New Series to Focus on Financial Literacy!

Kepler's will debut a series of free financial literacy events in conjunction with leading financial and real estate advisors.



Surviving the Economic Tsunami (and Thriving)!

Sunday, March 15, 2:00 p.m.

Do I (Still) Have Enough for Retirement?

Sunday, March 22, 2:00 p.m.

Financial Peace of Mind — Discover the Top Books Financial Planners Recommend to Their Clients
Sunday, March 29, 2:00 p.m.

Story Times

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

March 1st -

Missing Toy Story Time

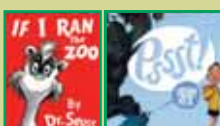
As we all know, there is nothing worse than a missing toy . . . except a toy that goes missing under mysterious circumstances.



March 8th -

A Day at the Zoo Story Time

Pst . . . who wants to take a trip to the zoo? I do! You do too? Come on down and we'll read too!



Our event program is updated often. Please visit keplers.com for current information. All events are free at Kepler's unless otherwise noted.



Follow me to Kepler's. It's our bookstore.

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park • 650-324-4321 • Learn more at Keplers.com

An Evening of Poetry with Local Authors

Idris Anderson:
Mrs. Ramsey's Knee

Charlotte Muse:
A Story Also Grows

Thursday, March 19, 7:30 p.m.



Kathryn Stockett

The Help: A Novel

Tuesday, March 24, 7:30 p.m.

A deeply moving novel about three extraordinary women whose determination to start a movement of their own forever changes a town.



William Lobdell

Losing My Religion: How I Lost My Faith Reporting on Religion in America and Found Unexpected Peace

Wednesday, March 25, 7:30 p.m.

Veteran journalist's journey from faith to doubt to the collapse of faith.



Nicolette Hahn Niman

Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms

Thursday, March 26, 7:30 p.m.

A searing account of an industry gone awry and one woman's passionate fight to remedy it — a must-read for anyone who cares about food sources or good eating.



Jamaican Eats and Travel!

Saturday, March 28, 2:00 p.m.

A rare opportunity to learn about Jamaican travel and food directly from the Jamaican Tourist Board and a renowned Jamaican Chef

Admission: \$5 per person

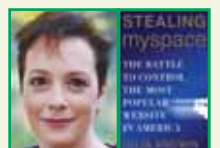


Julia Angwin

Stealing My Space: The Battle to Control the Most Popular Website in America

Tuesday, March 31, 7:30 p.m.

Angwin explores the Internet culture, a voyeuristic world, and she dishes on the epic real-world battle for control of a virtual empire.



Special Youth Event!

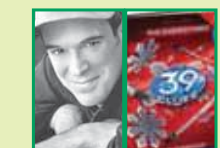
Peter Lerangis

39 Clues Book 3: The Sword Thief

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

ATTENTION! ALL AGENTS ON RED ALERT! PRIORITY MESSAGE INCOMING!

Mission Overview: The Cahills are the most powerful family the world has ever known. 39 Clues hidden around the world guard the family's power. Whoever finds the clues controls the power.



March 15th -

I'm an Artist Story Time

Everyone's an artist in these delightful books. After reading about these budding young masters, you'll have a chance to make your own masterpiece!



March 22nd -

Crazy about Cats Story Time

You don't have to be a cat lover to enjoy these books, but be warned you just might find yourself won over by their feline charm.



March 29th -

Llama Llama Story Time

It's Llama Llama's first day at preschool. It seems fun at first, but then Mama Llama leaves. What's a lonely Llama to do?





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**Information Night:
March 4: 4:30-5:30**

**2800 West Bayshore Road, Palo Alto RSVP: 650-424-1267
www.headsup.org**

New fund supports exceptional teachers

By Kelly Todd

This Valentine's Day — as on every Valentine's Day for the past 19 years — more than 150 students in Richard Weaver's history classes will be treated to Valentine candy and treats, a tradition started by Mr. Weaver's mother, continued by his father, and now assumed by his two sisters.

The tradition has sparked the exchange of notes and visits

This story was posted on TheAlmanacOnline.com by Kelly Todd, a member of the Menlo-Atherton High School community.

between students and the Weaver family over the years, and is one small example of what makes Mr. Weaver special.

In his 43rd year at Menlo-Atherton, Mr. Weaver is a legend. A Stanford University graduate with a BA in history and master's in education, he has taught Western Civilization and United States history to generations of students.

As head of the history department in the 1970s, he succeeded in getting the Advanced Placement designation for the U.S. history course so popular today.

"Mr. Weaver has been an unforgettable influence on my life," says Steve Westly, M-A class of 1974, and former California state controller. "He is an extraordinary teacher and

human being. A real hero."

"Mr. Weaver is one of those teachers a student never forgets," agrees Kelly Wright, M-A class of 2005. "He's upbeat, devoted to teaching, and an incomparable role model."

To recognize his years of teaching and his unrivaled contributions to Menlo-Atherton, the Foundation for the Future has launched the Richard Weaver Social Studies Fund.

The Fund seeks donations to continue the exceptional work of teachers like Mr. Weaver, and to support the Social Studies Department at M-A.

If you are a former student or the parent of one of his students, please help honor Mr. Weaver by mailing your check to the M-A Foundation for the Future, P.O. Box 1228, Atherton, CA 94026. ■

■ INFORMATION

For more information, go to <http://tinyurl.com/WeaverFund>.



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

**TOWN OF ATHERTON
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**STREET RECONSTRUCTION-PHASE 5
PROJECT NO. 08-023**

Notice is hereby given that SEALED BIDS will be received at the office of the City Clerk, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, California 94027, until 3:00 p.m. MARCH 12, 2009, at which time they will be publicly opened and read, for performing the following work:

LAYOUT OF WORK, REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF ASPHALT CONCRETE PAVEMENT ON STREET, REPLACEMENT OF DRIVEWAY APPROACHES, REPLACEMENT OF CONCRETE VALLEY GUTTERS, INSTALLATION OF GRADED SWALES AND PLACEMENT OF PERMANENT STRIPING FOR THE FOLLOWING STREETS:

- LUPIN LANE
- FENNWOOD DRIVE
- MARIANNA LANE
- OAK GROVE AVENUE (ADD ALTERNATE)

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for STREET RECONSTRUCTION-PHASE 5, Project No. 08-023", along with date and time of bid opening.

Plans and specifications may be obtained at the Town of Atherton Public Works Department, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton CA 94027, for a non-refundable fee of \$30.00. Additional important information is contained in Town of Atherton Standard Specifications, which are available for an additional \$20.00. If shipping is requested, there will be an additional charge of \$20.00.

Bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of cash, a cashier's or certified check or bid bond for not less than ten percent (10%) of the amount of the bid, as a guarantee that the bidder, if awarded the Contract, will fulfill the terms of the bid. The Town of Atherton reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and/or to waive any irregularities therein.

Bidders are hereby notified that, pursuant to California Civil Code Sections 3247 and 3248 and Standard Specifications Section 3.02, the successful bidder will be required to provide payment and performance bonds in the amounts stated in Section 3.02 of the Standard Specifications.

Bidders are hereby notified that provisions of California Labor Code regarding prevailing wages are applicable to the work to be performed under this contract. Pursuant to Section 1773 et seq. the general prevailing wage rates have been determined by the Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations and appear in the California Prevailing Wage Rates. Copies are on file at the office of the City Engineer and are available to interested parties upon request. The successful bidder shall post a copy of the wage rates at the job site.

The Contractor may elect to receive 100 percent of payments due under the contract, without retention of any portion of the payment by the Town of Atherton, by depositing securities of equivalent value to the retention amount in accordance with the provisions of Section 22300 of the California Public Contracts Code.

The successful bidder must be licensed under the provisions of Chapter 9, Division 3, of the California Business and Professions Code to do the type of work contemplated in the project at the time the contract is awarded and shall be skilled and regularly engaged in the general class or type of work called for under the Contract. Failure of the bidder to obtain proper and adequate licensing for an award of the contract shall constitute a failure to execute the contract and result in the forfeiture of the bidder's bid security.

Each bidder shall submit with this bid a statement setting forth his/her/its experience and qualifications. The statement shall be made on the forms provided by the Town and must accompany each bid. The three lowest bidders will be required to submit subcontractor's experience and qualifications statements within 48 hours of the bid opening, on forms provided by the Town.

By submitting a bid in response to this advertisement for bids, the bidder shall be conclusively deemed to have read, understood and agreed with all of the information and materials contained in the bid documents, including but not limited to the construction contract, the standard specifications, the special provisions, the required nature and amount of insurance and the documentation evidencing said insurance.

Any questions regarding the project should be directed to the City Engineer, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0532, preferably no later than five days before bid opening. Requests for Information may be faxed to (650) 688-6539. Plan holder's lists may be obtained by calling (650) 752-0570.

By: _____
Duncan L. Jones, P.E., City Engineer

Date: _____

Published in THE ALMANAC on February 25, March 4, 2009.

'Green industry' offers hope

An emerging "green industry" could offer huge economic gains for Silicon Valley, according to an economic-outlook analysis released Feb. 17.

The outlook showed the region suffering recessionary economic woes in 2008, but analysts cautiously report the emerging green industry could offer huge economic gains for the area.

In a special analysis companion to the "Silicon Valley Index 2009," published each year by community groups Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, financial analysts detailed trends in the valley's portfolio that are both worrisome and favorable.

"The national trends have finally overtaken the Silicon Valley and brought us down," said Russell Hancock, president and CEO of Joint Venture. This year's report, he said, indicates the area has the economic equivalent of a head cold that could threaten to escalate into pneumonia if left untreated.

Home foreclosure sales are higher than the statewide aver-

age and the demand for commercial real estate has dropped, the report said.

However, the region is better poised than most to reinvent itself, Mr. Hancock said.

"We don't have a single industry that has been our mainstay for generations," he said. "It's an idea-driven, knowledge-intensive economy."

Mr. Hancock said clean technology, especially solar technology, is thriving, and could be the key to invigorating the Silicon Valley economy.

While venture capital investment fell 7.7 percent from 2007 to 2008, capital investments in clean tech are up 94 percent, according to the report. Data shows this sum accounts for 31 percent of all national clean industry investment over the same time period.

"This is the world's epicenter for solar technology right now," he said. "Maybe we won't be the Silicon Valley anymore; maybe we're the green valley."

— Bay City News Service

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Doctors miss Lyme disease diagnosis

By Kathleen O'Rourke

Ten years ago, I had what would become a critically important conversation with an older woman, also a former trail runner. She had previously been stricken with a mysterious illness that no doctor could define.

Two years later and a whole lot sicker, she finally got the diagnosis: Lyme disease. The kicker was that she knew it was Lyme disease way before she could get a doctor to agree with her. They were adamant that Lyme wasn't in California.

Ten years later, most of us know that Lyme disease is here, and 2008 will always be, for me, the year my family met Lyme.

It started with Ribbon. The kids were thrilled with the new puppy. But, every return to our kitchen from outside revealed she was a tick magnet. It wasn't long before I pulled a tick off my son, Louis. The tick seemed barely attached, and I was sure it had been on him less than an hour.

Within the next two days, he had a very red bar-shaped rash. It wasn't a ring or target rash, so I knew we didn't need to worry about Lyme disease.

Wrong — absolutely wrong! The target rash is rare; less than 10 percent of Lyme patients have had one. If you have one, you have Lyme. But, if you don't have one, the jury is still out.

By February 2008, Louis started complaining of exhaustion. Other symptoms followed — aching legs, and feet “heavy like lead.” The pediatrician set about trying to figure out what could be wrong.

I asked about Lyme; after all, there was a known tick bite. He said confidently, “It can't be Lyme. The tick wasn't on for 24 hours and he didn't have the target rash.” Again, this is wrong. Infection can take place after 15 minutes. But that night, I was relieved.

The next morning, I knew it was Lyme. Joint pain had been added to Louis' list of complaints. The doctor refused to pursue Lyme disease. He was adamant. I remembered the Lyme conversation 10 years ago

About the author: Kathleen O'Rourke is a Woodside resident who has organized a Lyme disease awareness event, set for March 4.



Louis Sheridan of Woodside contracted Lyme disease after being bitten by a tick carried by Ribbon, who was a “tick magnet” as a puppy.

and knew that it had been a gift. Similarly to the trail runner, here I was faced with a doctor who was sure of his facts.

The problem was that he ignored other facts, such as a known tick bite and Louis' clinical assessment. His symptoms were in alignment with Lyme, a neuro-pathic ailment. It turns out that feet “heavy like lead” is a beautiful description of a neuropathy.

There is more to this story. Louis became a very ill little boy. One year later, he is finally able to do well at school while still being treated. It has been a huge struggle.

But, there is another gift in this story. This fall, I was diagnosed with Lyme disease. Turns out the last four years of dizziness, vertigo, asthma, vision problems, fatigue, heart palpitations, sleeplessness, cognitive deficits, stabbing pains and even the plantar fasciitis really aren't normal parts of aging, at least not at 43. I am sick.

Without Louis' acute presentation, I would never have discovered my own Lyme disease. I would have just slipped away. A conversation with a trail runner essentially saved us.

To extend this Lyme conversation to as many people as possible in our community, there will be a “Lyme Disease Awareness Night” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 4, at Ladera Community Church. Three Lyme-literate and wonderful doctors are coming to talk about this emerging disease. They are: Dr. Christine Green, Dr. Deborah Metzger and Dr. Nick Harris (founder of Igenex).

Come and learn. You may save yourself or someone you love a great deal of suffering by simply learning basics of prevention, diagnosis and treatment. ■

■ INFORMATION

“Lyme Disease Awareness Night” begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 4, at Ladera Community Church, 3300 Alpine Road in Portola Valley. For more information, e-mail kmorourke@earthlink.net.

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WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT

Notice is hereby given that the District Board of the West Bay Sanitary District shall conduct a Public Meeting to Consider a Regulation Amending the General Code of Regulations, at the regular District Board meeting of February 25, 2009, at 7:30pm. The meeting shall take place at the Temporary District Offices, 431 Burgess Drive, Menlo Park, CA.

The Proposed amendment to the Code of General Regulations is as follows:

A REGULATION AMENDING GENERAL REGULATION NO. 58 “A GENERAL REGULATION ADOPTING CODE OF GENERAL REGULATIONS”

BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED BY THE District Board of West Bay Sanitary District that General Regulation No. 58, “A General Regulation Adopting Code of General Regulations”, passed and approved on November 27, 1982, as heretofore amended, is further amended as follows:

SECTION 901 (03) Amount of Connection Fee

The connection fees shown below shall be assessed each new applicant for wastewater service. In the event that a parcel will have combined residential and non-residential uses, the residential connection fee shall be applied to each living unit and the non-residential connection fee shall be applied to the non-residential uses. In no event shall a connection fee be less than the residential connection. A separate meter serving the non-residential premises shall be required for annual user charge assessments.

Connection Fee Dollars

	District	Authority		Total	
Residential Unit	\$2549.00	\$1740.20	\$2750.00	\$4289.20	\$5299.00
Supplementary Connection Fee	\$347.70	\$237.30	\$375.00	\$585.00	\$722.70
Non-Residential Use Equal or Less than 325 mg/l BOD and/or SS	\$11.59/gpd +\$347.70	\$7.91/gpd +237.30	\$12.50/gpd +\$375.00	\$19.50/gpd +585.00	\$24.09/gpd +\$722.70
Greater than 325 mg/l BOD and/or SS	\$11.59/gpd	Ratio(a)		Total(b)	

(a) The connection fee for Authority expansion costs is calculated by multiplying ~~\$7.91~~ ~~\$12.50/gpd~~ times the average daily flow in gpd, times the ratio of the highest of the BOD and SS concentrations to 325 mg/l subject to a minimum connection fee of ~~\$7.91~~ ~~\$12.50/gpd~~ plus ~~\$237.30~~ ~~\$375.00~~ connection.

(b) The total connection fee is the sum of the District and Authority connection fees subject to a minimum connection fee of ~~\$19.50~~ ~~\$24.09/gpd~~ plus ~~\$585.00~~ ~~\$722.70~~ connection.

(c) The connection fee for a supplementary connection(s) to the same building shall be ~~\$585.00~~ ~~\$722.70~~ per connection.

Vivian Housen
Interim District Manager, West Bay Sanitary District
Published in THE ALMANAC on February 25, 2009.

Hillview: more traffic, noise forecast

Continued from page 5

problems detailed in the environmental report stem from the sharp increase in students, which will occur whether or not the facilities are built.

Construction is expected to begin next spring and last until December 2011. It would give the school an extra 7,100 square feet of building space, for a total of 80,000 square feet when the project is complete. The existing grass field would be replaced with an artificial turf athletic field.

According to the environmental impact report, the "environmentally superior alternative" to the project would require adding a new traffic signal at the intersection of Santa Cruz and Elder avenues. There are no feasible remedies for significant

traffic impacts at a number of other nearby intersections, according to the report, prepared by Benson Lee Consulting and DKS Associates.

The report also says that a 6-foot sound wall along a portion of Elder Avenue is necessary to protect residents from significant noise from daily school operations.

The artificial turf fields should be "aired out" before installation to reduce potential airborne contaminants, and signs should be posted encouraging users to wash their hands after using the field, according to the report.

The 45-day public comment period on the environmental report began Wednesday, Feb. 18, and runs through Friday, April 3. Written comments may be submitted to: Ahmad Sheikholeslami, Director of Facility Planning and Construction, Menlo Park City School District, 181 Encinal Ave., Atherton, CA 94027.

A public meeting on the draft EIR document and an update on campus design has been scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26, at the Hillview School Library. A public hearing to take verbal comments has been scheduled

for 7 p.m. Thursday, March 19, during a special meeting of the Menlo Park City School District Board of Education at the Hillview School Library.

The consultants who prepared the environmental document will respond to written comments in the final EIR, which should be completed sometime in May.

The draft environmental impact report, or DEIR, is available online at www.mpcsd.org/facilities or it may be viewed at the following locations: the district office, 181 Encinal Ave., Atherton; the Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St.; and the Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane. ■

SHOREWAY

continued from page 8

improve recycling capabilities and increase the amount of waste diverted from landfills.

With the 5-0 vote, Atherton becomes the second of 12 jurisdictions in the waste management authority to oppose the Shoreway project. The Burlingame City Council also voted against the project.

So far, five cities have approved

Menlo Park rainfall Nearly 12 inches

Menlo Park's rainfall total, at 11.85 inches through the morning of Feb. 23 is approaching last year's total of 15.45 inches on that date, said resident Bill Russ, who tracks local precipitation with a rain gauge at his Cotton Street home.

The normal total for a full year — from July 1 to June 30 — for central Menlo Park is 16 to 18 inches, Mr. Russ said, adding: "My observation is that with the balance of February, all of March and into April we have the chance for a solid year of rainfall."

Elissa Lynn, a senior meteo-

rologist with the California Department of Water Resources, said in an interview that the Sierra Nevada snow pack, which represents a third of the state's water supply, is 76 percent of normal for this time of year.

The recent rains helped, but the storms were tropical in origin and thus warmer and depositing less snow, she said. The next couple of storms are expected to be cooler.

It's been dry. According to state data going back to 1894, January was the eighth driest month on record, Ms. Lynn said.

funding the recycling facility — Redwood City, East Palo Alto, San Mateo, San Carlos and Foster City. The approval of eight of the 12 jurisdictions is needed for the project to go forward.

Menlo Park vote

Menlo Park staff has recommended that the council approve funding the center at its meeting Tuesday, Feb. 24. Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson has been an ardent supporter of the facility.

"We need a state-of-the-art facility, providing an example of leadership throughout the state and the world," Ms. Fergusson said, adding that the facility was "worth every penny."

Ms. Fergusson has called the current Shoreway facility, which does not support single-stream recycling, "an embarrassment."

Menlo Park would be on the hook for funding \$4.8 million of rates would increase \$1.86 per month, according to city staff. ■



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Sat 3/14	Sun 3/15	Sat 3/21	Sun 3/22

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www.StanfordDrivingSchool.net

■ OBITUARY

Sophia Chamberlin Alway

Former Portola Valley school board member

Sophia Chamberlin Alway, a pediatrician and resident of Portola Valley from 1955 to 1977, died Feb. 10 in Redmond, Washington. She was 92.

Dr. Alway was born in Concord, Massachusetts. She graduated from the Concord Academy and Smith College. After graduating from the Yale School of Medicine, she served her residency in pediatrics at the University of Minnesota. While at the university, she met Robert H. Alway, also a pediatrician, and they were married in 1942.

The Always moved to Portola Valley in 1955 when Dr. Robert Alway became dean of the Stanford Medical School.

While living in Portola Valley, Sophia Alway was active in community and school activities, serv-

ing on the Portola Valley school board. She worked with well child clinics, and became the coordinator of the newly formed Human Biology program at Stanford University.

She was highly thought of by many people in the community, according to her longtime friend, Adaline Jessup of Portola Valley.

After Dr. Robert Alway's retirement, the couple moved to Oak Harbor, Washington, and after her husband's death, Dr. Alway moved to Redmond, Washington.

Dr. Alway is survived by her five children, Anne Bliss of Alexander Creek, Alaska; Maria Alway of Vancouver, British Columbia; Rick Alway of Port Orchard, Washington; and Joan Alway and Ted Alway of Pashastin, Washington. Other survivors are a sister, Anne Newbury of Hanover, New Hampshire, and nine grandchildren.

A family service will be held at a later date. Remembrances may be sent to altiz@charter.net.

■ 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.

MENLO PARK**Commercial burglary reports:**

■ Man in early 30s got away after store employee caught him and retrieved stolen ski jacket, ski pants and running shoes, Big 5 Sporting Goods at 700 El Camino Real, Feb. 13.

■ German American School, 275 Elliott Drive, Feb. 14.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Home broken into and wheel rims stolen, 1100 block of Hollyburne Ave., Feb. 18.

■ Hair dryer and quilt stolen after break-in, 100 block of O'Connor Ave., Feb. 18.

■ Tire rims, shoes, boots, toolbox with tools, and drill stolen from possible victim of fraud and abuse, 300 block of Sand Hill Circle, Feb. 18.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Window smashed, 100 block of Creek Drive, Feb. 14.

■ Window smashed and nylon bag

containing papers stolen, 1000 block of El Camino Real, Feb. 16.

■ GPS device stolen, 700 block of Coleman Ave., Feb. 17.

■ Stereo stolen after vehicle break-in, 300 block of Bay Road, Feb. 18.

Grand theft reports:

■ Bicycle stolen from bike rack, 1100 block of Merrill St., Feb. 16.

■ Wheels stolen from bed of pickup truck, first block of Arbor Road, Feb. 17.

WEST MENLO PARK

Residential burglary report: Tools valued at \$4,000 stolen from home under construction after someone cut padlock on chain link fence with bolt cutters, 200 block of Leland Ave., Feb. 17.

Auto burglary report: Window smashed and portable GPS device stolen from vehicle, 1000 block of Orange Ave., Feb. 11.

Scout makes Eagle

Troop 206, Boy Scouts of America, held an Eagle Court of Honor recognizing Eagle Scout Bernard Archbold on Feb. 21 at Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park.

A senior at Woodside High School, he is a eucharistic minister and youth group leader at St. Matthias Catholic Church in Redwood City. His sports are swimming and water polo.

Bernard started his scouting career when he was in second grade. He earned all the ranks from Wolf to Arrow of Light in Den 2 of Pack 991.

He joined Troop 206 in 2002. His scouting experiences include the Oljato Wilderness survival experience, Camp Baker high adventure COPE course, and the Mt. Whitney troop trek.

He plans to become assistant scout master and continue in Troop 206.

KATHERINE C. BOYER

Katherine C. Boyer, 96, passed away peacefully on January 26, 2009, in San Mateo, CA. She was preceded in death by Howard, her loving husband of 63 years. Katherine was the devoted Mother of Mary Lu Newell of San Mateo, CA and Emily Spiegel of St. Petersburg, FL, the proud Grandmother of Jennifer Neary, Jason Maxwell, Daniel Spiegel and Steven Spiegel, and the ever-delighted Great Grandmother of Jack, Henry and Emma Neary, Kyle and Cole Spiegel and Carson Spiegel. She also leaves her sister, Marjory Van Nort of Sarasota, FL., and many nephews and nieces. Katherine's greatest joy was being with her family; her unconditional love and devotion to them all set an example for each of us to live by.

Katherine was born in Pittsburg, PA and graduated from Beaver College in Philadelphia with a major in Home Economics; she was a gifted seamstress with especially fine skills in hand stitchery. Katherine and Howard raised their family in Wilmington, DE, moving to Atherton, CA 35 years ago. She leaves many friends who have benefitted from her positive attitude, gracious, unassuming ways and kindness toward others.

We will celebrate her life with a Memorial Service at Skylawn Memorial Park, Hwy 92 at Skyline Blvd., San Mateo 94402, at 3 pm on Saturday, April 18, 2009. The family suggests donations in her memory to: Mission Hospice 1900 O'Farrell St., Suite 200 San Mateo, CA 94403

PAID MEMORIAL

KATIE CONLON
DECEMBER 9, 1940 - JANUARY 9, 2009

With her family by her side, Katie Conlon (Janice Katherine Wright Conlon) went home to be with our Heavenly Father on January 25 after a courageous 8-month battle with melanoma. She was 68.

Katie was born in Colorado, moving with her family to California when she was four years old. In 1960 she met her future husband, Dr. Robert Conlon, while they were students at Stanford University. There she earned her Bachelor of Science and Nursing degrees in 1963. After working as a registered nurse at Stanford Hospital and UCSF, she became a mother and homemaker with the birth of her first child in 1965. She and her family settled in Woodside, where she spent 41 happy years. She was an extraordinarily devoted wife and mother.

Although she considered herself a homemaker first and foremost, she also found time (usually late at night after the children were in bed) to handle the office manager and bookkeeping functions for her husband's Portola Valley dental practice. Katie raised her children with the guidance of the LDS church and remained dedicated to its principles throughout her life. In 1986, with her children reaching college age, she returned to Stanford University Medical Center as an administrator in the Department of Medicine. She retired in 1996, the year her first grandchild was born. She enthusiastically embraced her

role as a grandmother. She was an irreplaceable support to her daughters as they became mothers themselves, and she cherished the innumerable hours she spent caring for and playing with her grandchildren. Her grandchildren are among those who miss her the most today.

In addition to cheerfully and faithfully nurturing her family, Katie loved to read. She also spent time as a volunteer in adult language and literacy programs and in the gardens at Filoli. She was a master gardener, who cultivated award-winning roses, and an accomplished photographer. She enjoyed time flying with her son piloting the plane, adding aerial photography to her varied portfolio. The gardens at her home and the many moments of beauty she captured in photographs now serve as enduring remembrances for her family.

She is survived by her loving husband, Robert ("Dr. Bob"); her children Trish Conlon Conte of Santa Cruz, Kelly Conlon Heycke of Portola Valley, and John Conlon of Woodside; her father Herschel J. Wright of Los Altos; her brother Herschel E. Wright of Jacksonville, Oregon; and six grandsons.

Throughout her life and during her recent illness, Katie embodied optimism, good cheer, and grace. She will be dearly missed by her adoring family, her treasured friends, and all those whose lives she touched.

Private family services will be held at a later date. Memorial gifts may be made to Stanford Cancer Center, payable to Stanford University, Office of Medical Development, Attn: Janice Flowers-Sonne, 2700 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025; or Filoli Center, Attn: Jane Risser, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside, CA 94062.

PAID OBITUARY

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■ WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

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CALL

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

The letter of the law

It is difficult to imagine a more bitter rivalry in local secondary education than the feud between the Sequoia Union High School District and the founders of Summit Prep, the popular and successful Redwood City charter high school, who are petitioning to open Everest Public High School, a sister charter startup, in September.

Woodside vs. M-A seems tame when compared to the unbridled animosity displayed by Sequoia's Superintendent Pat Gemma when he talks about the petitioners and their application for Everest.

Despite Summit Prep's wide popularity with students and parents and its stellar record of students' acceptance into four-year colleges, Mr. Gemma has a far different take. He claims that another Summit-like

school has scant public support, would cherry-pick top students from the district, sidestep its obligation to special-education students, and solve problems he claims the district does not have. Everest, therefore, does not deserve a helping hand in getting off the ground, in his view.

How else to interpret the district's late January decision to follow the letter of the law, and offer facilities to Everest in the form of four portable classrooms and some office space in East Palo Alto. The kicker: the school would only have use of the spaces until 5 p.m. each day, when an evening adult school would take over. And the school is hardly being welcomed by neighbors, some of whom seem extremely upset and claim to have been blindsided by plans for a new school on an already busy street, although a minister at a church next door said he would welcome the school.

Sequoia's animosity bloomed in September when the school board voted to deny a charter to Everest, then successfully advocated for a similar rejection before the county Board of Education. The two public agencies then followed the petitioners to Sacramento, where they contested a highly favorable assessment of Everest by the state Advisory Commission on Charter Schools. The 9-0 favorable vote, plus a positive report from the commis-

sion's staff, virtually assures that Everest will win its charter when the state Board of Education makes its decision next month.

At the time, Mr. Gemma and the Sequoia board had just released Sequoia's offer of the shared East Palo Alto site to Everest. The charter school has until April 1 to respond. The offer has drawbacks and the district has not explained why it considers this site the best available.

Everest spokesperson Diane Tavenner sees plenty of problems, including details about how space would be shared with the adult school if students stayed, as expected, until 5 p.m. or later. And it will presumably be a significant hardship for teachers and students to clear out all their materials every day so adult students can use the classrooms.

As far as we know, no other school in the Sequoia district must share classrooms with an adult school. Under state guidelines, charter schools must be given facilities that are "reasonably equivalent" to what is typical in a school district, Ms. Tavenner said. "Four classrooms, one with a sink, does not make a comparable facility with what other students are in. We're concerned that it's not an appropriate offer," she told The Almanac. We agree.

Summit-type charter schools do not deserve such second-class treatment. They succeed by fostering deep involvement between teachers, students and parents. The success rate shows that few students are left behind and that few, if any, are allowed to earn a failing grade. And the results are astounding, with Summit achieving a 95 percent acceptance rate at four-year colleges for a student body that reflects the diversity of the school district. And word has spread, with 237 applications in already for the 100 seats at Everest this fall.

It is time for Mr. Gemma and the Sequoia district to back off from their mean-spirited campaign to hinder the Everest charter effort. Summit went on to great success, and there is every reason to believe Everest will do the same when it is approved.

The Sequoia district board should take the advice of longtime member Olivia Martinez, who was the lone vote against denying the Everest petition in September of last year. She said the petition represents "the will of the people." We hope her fellow board members will agree with her and get behind Everest and the community support that it clearly has.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Los Trancos water district offers good value

Editor:

Linda Craig, a member of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), obliquely suggests in her letter to the editor last week that the state Legislature was acting to forcibly remove the Los Trancos County Water District from the Bay Area Water District Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) through legislation passed in 2006 (AB-2236).

The real rationale behind this action was to correct a procedural oversight in the original 2002 legislation (AB-2058) that created BAWSCA. That legislation called for all of the water agencies that were served by the Hetch Hetchy system to join BAWSCA. The original legislation failed to

See LETTERS, next page



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

This organ, donated to the unfinished Our Lady of the Wayside Church in Portola Valley, was delivered before the church was completed, sometime in 1912. The organ was a gift from The Family, whose members were instrumental in raising money for the church's construction. The Family's retreat was, and still is, next to the church.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

make provision for the exit of any agency from BAWSCA.

The sale of the district distribution operations to CalWater created a dual representation for the residents of our district on the BAWSCA board. The district and BAWSCA leadership jointly requested that the Legislature provide a mechanism for the Los Trancos district to leave BAWSCA, a move the district actively supported.

Ms. Craig is also critical of a program that provides a district-sponsored discount to the cost of water for residents who check for and correct leaks and act to install multiple water conserving devices such as the most water efficient toilets, clothes washers, and irrigation controllers. It is the belief of the district leadership that this program serves to accelerate the conversion to eco-friendly and environmentally responsible use of water. These policies continue a long history of the district's focus on responsible use of water. On average our district residents use less than 60 percent of the average residential water use in the CalWater-Bear Gulch District.

The balance of district funds are directed to services that are fully within the range of activities allowed by the state water code. These services are important for the safety and welfare of our community and are services that are not being supported by other local agencies. More importantly these services are being realized with almost no overhead costs. Well over 90 percent of district revenue goes into achieving real results for the members of this community from whence the taxes come; not paying for staff salaries and facilities.

Rather than shrill criticism that the Los Trancos district board is a bunch of spendthrifts, Ms. Craig and the other members of LAFCO should come to our district and observe the real results that are being achieved with a remarkably small amount of money. We think the results are worthy of praise, not contempt.

Stan Gage
Old Spanish Trail, Portola Valley

What other options to high-speed rail?

Editor:

Palo Alto City Council member Yoriko Kishimoto's thoughtful analysis in the Feb. 11 Almanac does not quite ask a single overriding question regarding alternatives to the current high-speed rail proposal.

Why has there has been no serious consideration of rail options which focus on transportation,

Question and answer on police contracts

The following letters were posted to the Menlo Park City Council e-mail log.

Looking for details on budget discussion

To Menlo Park council member Kelly Fergusson:

I have a couple of questions about this quote in the guest editorial that you wrote in the Feb. 4 Almanac:

"In granting a raise to line officers last spring, council made it clear that the sergeants would be receiving a similar raise when their contract expired at the end of 2008. This issue was discussed in setting the 2008-09 budget, and the budget approved in June 2008 had money to pay for the sergeants' raises."

Could you tell me at which meetings the discussion of giving a "similar raise" to the sergeants as was given the line officers occurred? I'd like to review the public record (staff reports, minutes, videotapes) to better understand that point. If, however, that discussion only occurred in closed session with no public record, that would be worth knowing as well, even if no further details can be divulged.

I've looked through the budget documents from last June's council budget discussion, and while police salaries are certainly listed under many categories, I could find no specific reference or line item related to projected raises for the sergeants. Since I may have missed the relevant section of those lengthy documents, could you point me to the section of those documents that describes the budgeted raises in question?

Thank you for your assistance in clarifying these points.

Frank Tucker
Politzer Drive, Menlo Park



More clarity would have been helpful

Editor's Note: This letter addresses questions from Frank Tucker:
Dear Mr. Tucker:

In response to your e-mail question regarding my guest editorial in The Almanac, I may not have been as clear as I might have been and I probably used the wrong terms or words to explain my position.

In voting to approve the Police Officers Association contract, I personally felt committed to approving a similar compensation package for the sergeants, out of concern about the safety and security of our residents, and in fairness to the sergeants and to our efforts to retain officers. Sergeant pay is a key factor in retaining line officers as they consider their prospects for career advancement. In no way did the full Menlo Park City Council commit to providing the same compensation to the sergeants at that time or during ensuing budget discussions.

Discussions did take place in public back on Sept. 11, 2007, when the city manager presented his findings from the task force that he formed to address this very critical issue. The city manager stressed that the key factor that impacted our ability to retain officers was competitive salaries and benefits for officers (including sergeants).

Even though I may have used the wrong terms in my guest editorial, I was of course speaking for myself and not the full City Council. I hope this responds to your question and clarifies my position.

Kelly Fergusson
Menlo Park City Council member

quality of life, and economic benefits for Northern California, and especially the Peninsula? Why, indeed, are Peninsula residents apparently so ready to forfeit a huge opportunity to design our own rapid rail from San Jose and San Francisco, of course connecting to a southern link, but not dictated by it?

The answer is that the proposed high-speed rail project exists mostly through the project's environmental impact report process. These so-called EIRs are not for planning. Their primary, and important, role is to analyze a single defined project in the highly

formalized and legal context of the California Environmental Protection Act.

But an EIR does not help formulate and compare options too different from the so-called "preferred alternative." By framing a decision in terms of a single dominant option, such as a grade-separated high-speed rail, the EIR process narrows public debate about a range of north-south transit options into a polarized, mostly up or down choice. Given a more rational planning process, numerous and massive grade separations would be just one option among many.

Where are trade-offs considered between Peninsula-oriented rapid rail, and the projected need for a mostly direct, high-speed connection between Los Angeles and San Francisco? Who has compared adding a modest 10 to 40 minutes to the total travel time between San Francisco and Los Angeles, considered against improvements in Bay Area commutes, transit-oriented growth in the El Camino Real corridor, property values, and recaptured economic prosperity?

Of course, such comparisons are yet to be made. They will be made once there is awareness of the

immense give-aways by Northern California implicit in the current high-speed rail concept.

The rail proposal is probably a bit of a Trojan Horse. As shown by Ms. Kishimoto's inquiring piece, civic leaders are now contemplating vastly better alternatives for Peninsula rapid rail linking to high speed rail at San Jose or elsewhere. That's what this game is about. Thanks go to Ms. Kishimoto for alerting us, whether this was her intention or not, that we're ready to play this game, and to play to win.

John Kadvany
College Avenue, Menlo Park

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