

WOODSIDE adopts tougher building regulations to prevent the spread of wildfire. Page 7

The Almanac

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

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Will they bury the rail lines?

If we must have high-speed rail, run it underground, say local officials. Page 10

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le

Where'd Dorothy go? (And Toto, too!)

Students, faculty and parents at Ormondale School dressed in "Wizard of Oz" costumes on Feb. 25, getting into the spirit of the Portola Valley Schools Foundation's biggest fundraiser of the year — the Emerald City Gala. The gala is set for May 16, and last week's "costume day" launched the effort to collect auction items for the event. Helping with the effort was "Scarecrow" John Holthaus and "Tin Man" Nico Andrighetto.

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Food & Drink

- Chef Margaret MacKenzie teaches wanna-be cooks new tricks of the trade in her Portola Valley home kitchen. **Cover, Section 2**

On the cover

If high-speed trains must come up the Peninsula, local residents and officials want them to run underground as they pass through Menlo Park and Atherton — in a tunnel or an open trench. Will rail officials listen? Photo by Michelle Le. Story on **Page 10**.

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY Volunteer to Make a Difference

The Town of Portola Valley Seeks Dedicated Volunteers for the following Town Committees:

Cable & Utilities Undergrounding Committee

Meets the 2nd Thursday of each month, 8:15 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee meets to oversee the operations of the Cabled TV System in Portola Valley and to oversee broadband access; and further the Undergrounding of utilities.

Community Events Committee

Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee organizes the annual Blues & Barbeque Open Space Fundraising Event, the Town Picnic and the Volunteer Appreciation Holiday Party.

Conservation Committee

Meets fourth Tuesday of each month, 8:00 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term.

Conserve environmental (water, air, lack of noise) and aesthetic amenities of Portola Valley as outlined by the General Plan, the Open Space Plan and the Conservation Element. Propose program and projects to enhance aesthetic and environmental qualities of Portola Valley.

Emergency Preparedness Committee

Meets third Thursday of each month, 8:00 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee works with Town Staff to ensure that neighborhoods and Town government are ready to respond to possible emergencies such as earthquakes, wildfires and flooding. Other duties include maintaining emergency supplies and equipment, planning response to emergencies and educating Town residents.

Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee

Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee supports preservation of the Town's rural environment by advising the Town Council on open space acquisitions and uses.

Parks and Recreation Committee

Meets third Monday of each month, 7:30 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee meets to develop, promote and maintain quality recreational and community enrichment programs, recreational facilities and park areas in the Town of Portola Valley.

Traffic Committee

Meets first Thursday of each month, 8:15 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee meets to assist the Town in advising ways and means for safer conditions regarding motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and road conditions and to encourage proper traffic enforcement.

Trails and Paths Committee

Meets second Tuesday of each month; appointed for a one-year term.

This Committee meets to provide a system of trails and paths that provide passageways for people, whether on foot, horseback or bicycle. It is their objective that these trails be safe, pleasant and provide access to all parts of town.

Applications are available at Town Hall and through the Town's website at www.portolavalley.net. Please return completed applications to the attention of the Town Clerk:

Town of Portola Valley
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028
E-mail: shanlon@portolavalley.net
Phone: (650) 851-1700 ext. 210

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Roberts Tip of the Week
 Cheerful Thoughts

We attach varying emotions with different colors. Yellow, for instance, evokes cheerful feelings, which makes it a good choice for floral arrangements intended for dimly lit areas or rooms with darkly paneled walls. The fresh combination of yellow and white delphiniums, yellow snapdragons, white lilies, and yellow chrysanthemums in a large pedestal arrangement makes strong visual impact in wedding ceremonies held in dark interiors. Additionally, the clean look of yellow arum lilies and gerberas suits contemporary interiors quite well. The greatest impact comes from arrangements that combine yellows monochromatically; however, yellow can also be mixed very successfully with blues and creams. Arrangements of this type often look their best in terra cotta containers.



Let us help you cheer up your surroundings. AT ROBERTS MARKET, our floral department is here to help you with beautiful bouquets and flowers for your dinner table or as a gift for someone special. Please come see our florists today on your way home, and grab some fresh flowers. Your loved ones will thank you.

Hint: A bouquet of yellow flowers would be a welcome gift to someone confined to a hospital bed.

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Worse than their bite

In a Feb. 25 back-and-forth among members of the Portola Valley Town Council and members of the public over how to craft a noise ordinance, the discussion moved to barking dogs, the owners who love them, and the neighbors who don't.

Resident Ed Wells, who wants "serial barkers identified," noted that, having lived in his Naranja Way home for 40 years with "eight barking dogs within 50 feet of our bedroom and view deck, I'm an expert on barking dogs. And I am an expert on interviewing barking-dog owners."

"It's a great college debate subject," said Councilman Ted Driscoll. "It's one of those things where there's just no obvious place to cut the baby."

Councilman Steve Toben, an advocate of solving neighborly squabbles via neighborly conversations, recalled two recent community workshops he led on addressing noises in town. "It's remarkable how many people whose lives had been made miserable, miserable, by dogs in this community," he said.

Repeat canine offenders get three strikes and they're out in Citrus Heights in Sacramento County, according to Councilman Richard Merk. After the third barking incident, the owner must have the dog "debarked," he claimed — which turns out not to be true, according to Gloria Luna, a dispatcher with Citrus Heights animal control contacted by The Almanac.

Just go to the medicine cabinet, said Councilwoman Maryann Moise Derwin. "Barking dogs, I think, ought to be given anti-depressants, like most of the housewives in town, and we wouldn't have an issue," she said.

Stop that dog!

Kudos to the quick-thinking young man in the gray hooded sweatshirt who captured a run-away dog bolting down Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park at lunchtime on Friday, Feb. 27. The spooked golden retriever had been tethered to an outdoor Boulanger cafe table, and the dog dragged it across the street, heading toward El Camino Real. A shrieking trio of women gratefully reclaimed the animal.

See **BUDGET**, page 8

Everest: District offer 'blatantly violates law'

■ Charter petitioners ask for classrooms on Sequoia High School campus; lawsuit threatened.

By **Dave Boyce**

Almanac Staff Writer

Lawyers representing Everest Public High School, a new charter modeled on Summit Preparatory Charter High School and hoping to open for 104 freshmen in September, have sent an unambiguous message to the high school district that has been opposed to Everest's opening.

The Sequoia Union High School District should expect a court battle, the lawyers say, if it does not comply with charter school law, including fulfilling Everest's request for five classrooms and office space in a building on the Redwood City

campus of Sequoia High School.

On Jan. 26, the district offered to place Everest in four portable classrooms yet to be installed on an empty lot on residential Green Street in East Palo Alto. (The Sequoia board denied Everest a charter in September, but the state Board of Education is expected to approve it this month.)

Everest's 20-page response to the district's offer, made public on March 2, alleges that the district's offer is "blatantly violating" charter school law, has "numerous legal deficiencies," and does not treat charter school students fairly. The response was prepared by Paul Minney of the Sacramento law firm Spector, Middleton, Young & Minney.

The Sequoia district has until April 1 to reply.

Everest's lawyers have also asked the district, under the state's public records law, for copies of many documents "that are critical to a complete understanding of the matter."

Everest asked for details, within 10 working days, on the offer's various numerical calculations; on environmental impact reports for the East Palo Alto site, including traffic and neighborhood studies; audio and video recordings of all board meetings at which Everest's petition for facilities was discussed; descriptions of each comprehensive high school, including floor plans in their original-scale sizes; and records of school renovations.

Legal counsel for the Sequoia

district has requested a meeting with Everest's attorneys "to talk further about (Everest's) response and what it is they're looking for," district spokeswoman Bettylu Smith told The Almanac.

Legal deficiencies?

Everest cites a number of legal deficiencies in the offer. Among them:

■ State law requires school districts to make a "reasonable effort" to offer a facility in the petitioners' desired location. Everest asked for a site in Redwood City so as to serve students who might otherwise attend Menlo-Atherton and Sequoia high schools. Everest now asks for classrooms B1 through B7 in a reportedly unoccupied building at Sequoia High School.

See **EVEREST**, page 8

Menlo Park defers projects to reduce projected deficit

By **Sean Howell**

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park will defer several projects in order to narrow the projected deficit for the current fiscal year, but plans for sidewalks on Woodland Avenue will proceed as scheduled.

New sidewalks on Santa Cruz Avenue, a refurbished gymnasium floor at the Onetta Harris Community Center, an update to the city's housing element, and improvements to the library's Web site will be put aside for now, the council decided at its Feb. 24 meeting.

But the \$220,000 allocated for sidewalks on Woodland — a project city staff had recommended to postpone — will stay in the budget, after Woodland Avenue residents pleaded for the council to fund it. Several of the street's residents said they feel it's a hazard for their children to walk along the shoulder of the busy thoroughfare to reach the bus stop.

While the other infrastructure projects would likely not have gotten under way before the fiscal year ends June 30, deferring the Woodland project would have meant a delay in planning, staff said.



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Bleak weather matched Portola Valley Fuel owner Ron Ramies' outlook for the town's only gas station. Mr. Ramies needs to sell 2,000 gallons a day to stay profitable, but he's been averaging around 1,000 gallons.

Portola Valley's one gas station imperiled

By **Dave Boyce**

Almanac Staff Writer

The recession has come to Portola Valley, a town noted for its comfortable lifestyle for people who are comfortably employed. It may lose its only gas station.

"Everyone wants a station in Portola Valley, but how many people *really* want a station in Portola Valley," asked Ron Ramies, the owner of the independent Portola Valley Fuel.

Mr. Ramies said he needs to be selling at least 2,000 gallons a day to stay profitable. Recent sales are less than 1,000 gallons a day, he said in a Feb. 25 interview.

With a profit margin of 8 cents a gallon, that means \$80 a day, while a day's wages for an employee is \$120, he said. The station has lost \$30,000 since December. What's keeping it open? Subsidies from his auto repair and metal fabrication businesses.

There's a 50/50 chance his

station will be closed come June, he said.

Tough times

The troubles began Dec. 10, when his wholesale price started rising between 8 and 32 cents per gallon above what brand-name stations pay, he said.

This "inverted market," said Mark S. Mitchell, president of Coast Oil Co., a San Jose-based supplier for independent sta-

See **STATION**, page 8



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Almost nine years later, Kaelyn is fully recovered, working on a bachelor's degree and building on her dreams of interior design. Her battle with leukemia long behind her, Kaelyn is free to focus on the promise of her future. Visit www.lpch.org for more information.

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AT STANFORD



Fire-safe rules toughen building code

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ WOODSIDE

Tougher regulations designed to prevent the spread of wildfire have come to Woodside.

The Town Council, with Councilwoman Sue Boynton absent, voted unanimously on Feb. 24 to incorporate state regulations on the use of ignition-resistant building materials and methods, known as Chapter 7A, for all new building projects with permit applications dated after May 1, 2009.

The council also applied Chapter 7A rules to replacement roofs, windows and decks throughout town. These rules take effect 30 days after they are adopted by a second confirming vote, which the council is expected to do at its March 10 meeting.

"We're doing this because of all the communities that burned in California, and we don't want

to be one of them," Councilman Dave Burow said before casting his vote. "Make no mistake, each one of us will have people in the community who complain to us because they want to put a (wooden) shake roof on their house."

The new rules will be part of Chapter 150 of the town's building code. A staff report summarizing the new rules is available at tinyurl.com/WS-fire, starting on Page 11.

The report states that replacement roofs will have to be fire-retardant; replacement windows will have to include at least one tempered pane or have a fire-resistance rating of at least 20 minutes; and replacement decks, stairs and landings within 10 feet of a home will have to be built using fire-resistant methods and materials.

A definition for "new build-

ing" is being worked on and will be a topic for a future discussion and decision, Town Manager Susan George said.

Chapter 7A includes language on fire-resistant landscaping, but the council plans to deliberate more before enacting regulations.

Meanwhile, the Woodside Fire Protection District will address fire-safe landscaping through annual safety checks on vegetation-based fire hazards, though such checks will not get around to every property every year, Fire Marshal Denise Enea has said.

Safer landscaping is often as simple as removing brush that threatens to ignite tree canopies, she said.

Responding to the council's decisions, district Fire Chief Armando Muela applauded the changes. "We thank you," he said. "We know it's a hard decision to make and we hope that it works out." ■

Town may not adopt state fire-hazard map

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

A severe risk of wildfire, according to a recent analysis by the Woodside Fire Protection District, exists in several neighborhoods in Portola Valley, a woodland town abutting the Santa Cruz Mountains.

In a separate analysis, to which the Woodside fire district contributed its views of the threat, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection updated a map that had shown no areas of severe risk, but overruled the district by showing "very high" risks only along the town's northern border — the Woodside Highlands neighborhood.

In early December, Cal Fire sent Portola Valley its map and, in keeping with state law, gave the town 120 days to craft an ordinance accepting the findings. (To view the map, go to tinyurl.com/budgmw.)

The "very high" label affects new home construction, requiring the use of ignition-resistant materials and fire-safe landscape management. But if a town government chooses not to adopt the map — as seems likely in Portola Valley after a Feb. 25 hearing in which residents complained about the impact of the label on their insurance rates — there is no apparent penalty.

"The law is very specific about the (Cal Fire) director's responsibilities and what the director is not to do," Wayne Mitchell, Cal Fire's staff chief for fire planning, said in an interview. "The director cannot rebut the decision of local government."

In recommending inaction on accepting the map, Councilman Ted Driscoll said, "I don't, frankly, at this point, see a reason why we should proceed at all," adding that he'd like to invite in a Cal Fire representative to explain the map before the mid-April deadline.

Mayor Ann Wengert noted that the town's own risk map is now complete and that strategies for fire safety should follow, possibly including a town-wide building-code update. Residents seemed to welcome the idea.

"I certainly agree with my colleagues in that I

see no compelling reason to accept this map," Ms. Wengert added.

Residents greeted the council's decision with scattered applause.

Cal Fire's map is one of hundreds sent to jurisdictions last year. "In the grand scheme of things, I think we've made tremendous progress," Mr. Mitchell said. Some 200 local jurisdictions have adopted the updated maps, he said, a group that includes Woodside.

"They get it. I think we're seeing very good support of the program," he said. "By and large, they're moving along and adopting the zones and setting up the ordinances and moving on."

What's the risk?

Another constituency likely affected if the Portola Valley council does not adopt Cal Fire's map: future homeowners in Woodside Highlands.

Not accepting Cal Fire's "very high" risk label means the label is not official. With an official designation, real estate agents are required to make a "point-of-sale" disclosure to prospective home buyers about the risks, Mr. Mitchell said.

Asked to comment, he said that home buyers might remain ignorant of the risks "unless the local jurisdiction takes some other measures to take care of their citizens."

Taking care

No residents spoke up to support the Cal Fire map, but they did have suggestions on fire safety.

"I think we should all abide by (rigorous building-code chapter) 7A," resident Richard Crevelt told the council and the assembled neighbors. "It makes a lot of sense for us."

A designation on a map "won't do a bit of good for us," he said, adding that what really matters is community action. Among his ideas: hydrant checks, dead tree removal and roads kept clear.

Wayside Road resident Chris Buja said he recently lost his insurance after 24 years with the same company. He had to hurry, but did find new insurance at a lower rate, he said.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Housing Stimulus Needed

Q: I am in the market to buy a home but I am waiting for jumbo loan interest rates to come down before I buy. Is it realistic to expect them to be more attractive soon?

A: Jumbo loan rates are substantially higher than rates for lower conforming loans. This is because conforming loans are insured and are of less risk to the lenders. Another factor is liquidity. Lenders used to make loans and keep them in their portfolio for the life of the loan. In the past several years banks stopped holding these loans and resold them

in mortgage backed security offerings. Presently there is no market for mortgage backed securities so lenders are very cautious about making these loans. Lenders who are making them are requiring larger down payments from borrowers. They are also looking carefully at the employment stability of the borrower.

If and when the federal government focuses attention on this segment of the housing market, interest rates will probably come down. Short term adjustable jumbo rates are much more attractive than long term rates so you may want to secure one of these loans and then refinance when the long term rates improve.

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

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- T-Ball (ages 5-6): Registration closes March 2, 2009

Alpine Little League also offers recreational girls softball for 5-14 year olds who live in Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside and Atherton through AMA Softball. Please register for softball only at:
<http://www.eteamz.com/amsoftball/index.cfm>

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See FIRE, page 17

Staff cuts on the table, council members say

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

If the dot-com bust didn't already make it clear, the current economic recession has hammered home the fact that Menlo Park is not recession-proof.

Accordingly, city staff should not be immune to layoffs and pay cuts as the city tries to shore up its budget in light of falling revenues, say residents and council members alike.

At the council's Feb. 24 meeting, Menlo Park resident Edward Moritz waved a newspaper article about high employee salaries and rising payroll costs to the city.

"The community has been very generous, it's clear, in its compensation rules," Mr. Moritz said. "The community, however ... is being asked to make its own contribution," he continued, in the form of deferring capital improvement projects. Mr. Moritz concluded by asking the council to consider salary reductions for staffers.

His comments resonated with Councilman Rich Cline.

"We can't just put this on the backs of the community," Mr. Cline said of the \$1.8 million deficit the city was projecting before making a variety of expense cuts, mostly in deferred projects. "In 2010, there are no sacred cows. We have to evaluate everything, without any institutional defense."

Former councilwoman Lee Duboc proposed more radical

measures in a widely circulated e-mail, repeating a suggestion she had made during her time on the council that the city look into outsourcing jobs to private contractors. She suggested that voters petition to add several ballot initiatives aimed at keeping payroll costs down, including upping the retirement age for new city employees, and requiring voters' approval for any increase in spending on employee salaries and benefits.

Ms. Duboc's proposals don't tend to get much traction among the council majority, but most council members do seem to agree that the possibility of staff cuts — through layoffs, pay cuts or furloughs — should be on the table as the city looks to balance its budget.

They figure to meet with resistance, however, from City Manager Glen Rojas. Mr. Rojas has said he views staff cuts — including salary reductions or freezes — as a last resort. Increasing the utility tax, drawing on reserves, and reducing capital improvement spending would have less of a long-term impact on the city than laying off city staff or reducing employees' hours, he said.

Everything should be on the table, said Councilman John Boyle, as the city looks to head off an ongoing deficit of at least \$2 million per year.

Calls to the city manager's office were not immediately returned. ■

BUDGET

continued from page 5

Councilwoman Kelly Ferguson was reluctant to put off the projects, expressing concern over when they would get done.

"I'm very hesitant to defer the capital improvement projects," she said. "I don't think this is the time for city hall to stop investing in our assets, as a community."

She moved to cut only \$282,000 of the \$1.18 million in projects recommended by the staff, but failed to get a second.

Councilman Rich Cline maintained that "deferrals aren't cuts," saying he didn't want residents to get the impression that the projects wouldn't happen.

Lack of information

Councilmen Andy Cohen and John Boyle dissented in the 3-2 vote. Mr. Boyle refused to support approving a general fund deficit greater than the \$164,000 in the plan outlined by city staff, saying he would only support proceeding with the plan for sidewalks

on Woodland if the council could come up with \$220,000 in cuts elsewhere in the budget.

Although he voted to defer the projects, Mayor Heyward Robinson said he didn't feel the council had sufficient information to decide which projects to cut, because city staff hadn't provided the council with any reasonable alternatives. Council members received a long list of projects in the city's budget the day of the meeting.

"I don't think I was given enough options here," Mr. Cohen said in explaining his vote. "I was ready to do some horse-trading. I am not satisfied with the answers from staff."

"It would have been nice to get this list earlier," said Councilman Rich Cline. "This is a critical part of the debate."

But with no regular meetings on the schedule until March 17, council members felt they had to act on the staff's recommendation.

City Manager Glen Rojas defended the projects he and his staff had recommended for deferral.



New Web site in town

There's a new expanse of sophisticated Portola Valley real estate to explore, and you can investigate it from your desk, said Stacie Nerdaahl, the town's point-person for the town's new Web site, which launched Feb. 26 at www.portolavalley.net. It is notable for its clean and elegant look, and for allowing visitors to filter content according to their interests.

EVEREST

continued from page 5

■ State law entitles charter schools to facilities "reasonably equivalent" to district norms. Everest asked for five classrooms, including one that could serve as a science lab; a multipurpose room; a library/computer lab; a reception area; office spaces; conference and computer server rooms; kitchen, storage and physical activity spaces; and student and faculty restrooms. The district's offer included four furnished classrooms, one with water and sinks, plus cafeteria tables, bookshelves and access to "reasonably comparable

facilities" at comprehensive high schools such as M-A.

■ The "reasonably equivalent" provision also bears on the district's offer to share the East Palo Alto site with an adult school in the evenings. Teachers and students at M-A, the school Everest uses to derive reasonable equivalence, are not subject to the same inconvenience. Given that Everest's instructional and extracurricular activities will run beyond 5 p.m., the sharing aspect would violate laws specifying that a charter's facilities be available for an "entire school year," Everest says.

■ State law requires school districts, when offering non-

contiguous facilities, to "minimize the number of sites" and "consider student safety." Everest students would have to be driven, via freeway, "all over the area to attend high school," specifically for athletic activities, special education, lunch, meetings, counseling, nursing services and use of fine-art facilities.

Mr. Minney, the attorney for Everest, also knocked the Sequoia district for improperly basing Everest's annual rent, or "pro-rata share," on factors related to per-student funding rather than the facility's square footage, as required, and for a lack of accounting for sharing of that space with the adult school. ■

STATION

continued from page 5

tions, is due to several factors, including a tight supply coming out of California refineries, the branded companies muscling in to buy up what gas there is, and the state's gasoline formulation, "the most stringent in the world."

The costs of complying with environmental laws have "tripled in the last five years," Mr. Mitchell said. "All independent stations are suffering."

Mr. Mitchell's analysis came via e-mail forwarded to The Almanac by Mr. Ramies.

Mr. Ramies is trying discounts — 45 cents off for paying with a debit card, for example — and buyers of at least 200 gallons get a free oil change and alignment check.

He installed new toilets three months ago. Bike riders like

them, and Mr. Ramies said he asks that they "spend a buck for a bottle of water," but not enough do. "That's what I want to do," he noted, "is clean that bathroom for half an hour for nothing."

A state deadline is looming. He said he has until April 1 to update his station's gasoline-vapor-recovery system, which will lose him three days of business and cost at least \$50,000, with the bids rising because he's "a captive audience."

"I would do it if I knew I was going to get continuing support," he said.

No logo

Mr. Ramies bought out his partner at the station in May 2008, and switched from Texaco brand to independent to "take away the stigma of high prices."

But being unbranded has drawbacks among his occasion-

al customers. One lady, he said, explained that she buys branded gas in Ladera because she gets "way better gas mileage."

He could give in and become a franchise again and let the parent company set prices. "I do have that option, but do I want that hand to be on top of me, telling me what to do?" he asked. "That's kind of a nightmare, being controlled by a big oil company. I'm a competitive guy. I'm really trying to help Portola Valley."

To that end, he's installed a back-up generator that keep pumps running during power outages so residents can run their generators. They need to understand, he said, what they've got before they lose it.

"If it goes, it's done," he said. "I'm teeter tottering with this gasoline thing. The public-service thing only goes so far." ■

OK to use fireplaces again

The winter air pollution season is over, which means that Bay Area residents don't have to worry about running afoul of the law if they decide to brighten a dreary evening with a fire in the fireplace. The Winter Spare the Air season ended Feb. 28, and won't resume until Nov. 1, according to the Bay Area Air Quality

Management District.

Even though the winter Spare the Air season is over, residents who use a fireplace or outdoor fire pit must still burn cleanly, using dry seasoned firewood and avoiding other material that causes excessive smoke, according air district officials.

More information is available at sparetheair.org.



Jane Wyman, co-chair of the library foundation's fundraising campaign to renovate the Menlo Park Library's children's area, talks to Changchun Zeng and his son Eric, 4, about some of the planned changes. In the foreground is a mock-up of the \$100,000 check given to the project by the Friends of the Menlo Park Library.

Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Library renovation should start soon

By **Renee Batti**

Almanac News Editor

The donations have come in \$20,000 short, but Menlo Park Library Foundation leaders are determined to begin the project to renovate the children's area of the library as soon as City Hall ties up some loose ends.

Jane Wyman, who with Nancy Flowers co-chairs the nonprofit foundation's renovation fundraising effort, said she's still "confident that the project can be completed by early summer."

On Feb. 27, Bill Harris, president of Friends of the Menlo Park Library, presented foundation president Bill Critzer with a \$100,000 check, bringing the total of donated funds to \$480,000.

Ms. Wyman said the foundation is hoping the remainder of the money will come by way of a grant. "We have a couple of grant requests still outstanding," she said.

In addition to a general facelift for the children's area, the project will create a new homework center with six computers and Internet access, improved space for "storytime" and other children's programs, more shelving for books, and a

new early literacy section.

Of the \$500,000 budget for the project, \$241,000 comes from the city, most of which was earmarked for the library. That includes \$145,000 of the financial reserves that have accumulated since the main library was renovated in 1992; and \$65,000 from an endowment fund held by the city for the benefit of the library.

Another \$31,000 is from the Public Works Department budget to cover the costs of painting and new carpets.

As part of the project, the young adult section — generally, books meant for high school teens — will be moved into the main area of the library. Books geared more for 12- and 13-year-olds will remain in the children's section, according to children's librarian Michelle Barrese.

All the renovation plans have been approved by the city, Ms. Wyman said, but the Public Works Department has yet to complete the bidding process. Once begun, the project is expected to take about six weeks, she said.

Ms. Wyman said that when the project is finished, there will be a public kick-off event, and a separate event to honor significant donors. ■

Woodside district to trim jobs and cut costs

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

The Woodside Elementary School District plans to prune next year's budget, a reflection of the belt-tightening facing most districts. Both teaching and administrative positions are being cut back.

Woodside, a one-school K-8 district, is not immune to the troubles plaguing other local basic aid school districts. Property tax revenues are flat, donations to school foundations are down and state budget cuts are taking a toll. On top of that, Woodside has uncertainty about its parcel tax.

The annual grant given by the Woodside Education Foundation is expected to drop by \$100,000 next year from \$1.7 million to \$1.6 million, according to estimates by Assistant Superintendent Tim Hanretty.

If voters don't approve Measure C in the special May 5 election, the district will lose another \$242,000 in annual

revenue when the current parcel tax measure expires in June.

The school board considered a long list of efficiencies and cost-cutting measures proposed by Mr. Hanretty at a special meeting Feb. 24. A number of part-time teaching assignments will be eliminated under the plan approved by the board, including a half-time art teacher and a half-time physical education and health teacher.

Two full-time technology positions will be cut, although they may be reconfigured into a single new position or contracted out. The plan also calls for eliminating a full-time para-educator in special education that will no longer be needed.

Also slated for elimination is the new position of dean. The board approved a plan to replace the dean with the old position of assistant principal, but with additional duties. The full-time assistant principal will take on the tasks of the part-time counselor and part-time community specialist, as those two positions

are being eliminated.

"We're having to keep our eye on the administration head count. We're trying to be efficient and trying to do the best for our kids," said Karen Werner, the board president.

The board's goal is to try to consolidate many of the district's part-time positions into full-time positions, in order to improve continuity for the students and have a leadership team that's on campus full-time, Ms. Werner said. It's "the notion of developing a team that can work closely together and get to know all our kids," she said.

In another bit of consolidation, the district is going ahead with a plan to change its schedule to a seven-period school day, lengthening class times to 50 minutes each. The board approved the new daily schedule in concept on a 5-0 vote, with Principal Diane Abbati to work out the details.

"We had lot of churning about

See **WOODSIDE**, page 14


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Will locals have a seat at the table?

Officials, residents fear backroom decisions on high-speed rail

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

From the laying of the first tracks on the transcontinental rail line, the little folks have had a notoriously tough time getting The Railroad's attention.

Jesse James made conductors shake in their boots, and Pullman strikers succeeded in temporarily forcing trains to grind to a halt. But for as long as the railroad has been a viable form of transportation, the powerful people behind it have generally succeeded in running their opponents — including Mr. James and the Pullman workers — off the tracks. It's no accident that "to railroad" has crept into our parlance in the verb form.

Now, as the California high-speed rail project races ahead with the full steam of the state's voters behind it, local officials and residents are doing everything they can to be heard, short of dynamiting the tracks.

That's not to say that the relationship between high-speed rail officials and residents of the communities the rail line will pass through is an inherently adversarial one. Locals would like to see a project that does as little damage as possible to their communities, and rail officials say that they plan to work with the cities throughout the process.

But to hear local residents and council members tell it, their interactions with the High-Speed Rail Authority fit right into the mold of David vs. Goliath, Jesse James vs. the carpetbaggers, the railroad union vs. the Pullman company. They have even found their own version of Leland Stanford (in his role as robber baron, not University founder)

The impact on her property's value of a rail along a raised berm, flanked by high walls and overlaid by electrical lines, would be 'inconceivable,' says Atherton resident Mary Lou Timpson.

among the ranks of the rail authority: Judge Quentin Kopp, a charismatic former state senator who chairs the authority's board.

Judge Kopp heralds high-speed trains as the way of the future, calling attention to their low greenhouse gas emissions, their perfect safety record (according to the Judge, the trains have never caused a fatality), and, of course, their speed. It's easy to imagine Mr. Stanford, the chairman of the Central Pacific, trumpeting the electric trains' coal-guzzling counterparts in much the same way at the dawn of the industrial revolution.

Menlo Park Councilman Rich Cline characterizes the rail authority as a "powerhouse organization," as obsessively focused on the promise of bringing riders from Los Angeles to San Francisco in two and a half hours as their forebears were on trans-

porting passengers from coast to coast on a single rail line. Menlo Park and Atherton have taken what officials describe as a two-pronged approach to getting Judge Kopp and the rail authority to listen to them: negotiation, and litigation. The cities joined a lawsuit against the project back in August, contending that the authority's decision to run trains up the Peninsula was premature.

"We chose to litigate because the odds of them compromising with a small town like Menlo Park or Atherton ... those are long odds," Mr. Cline said. (The proposed rail line would cross through the cities for only three of its 800 miles.)

Judge Kopp waves off Menlo Park and Atherton's lawsuit like an elephant flicking at a fly.

"I am confident it will be heard and disposed of" when the California Superior Court takes up the suit in May, he said, characterizing Menlo Park and Atherton council members as taking a not-in-my-backyard stance. "I listen to the 57 percent of Menlo Park voters who passed" the bond measure providing the project's first wave of funding, he said — not the elected officials who joined the suit.

Judge Kopp added that, as far as he can remember, the suit has not been mentioned in any of the board's meetings. The rail authority is following the same process in its dealings with those two communities as it has with every other city in the county, he said, bristling at the suggestion made by several Menlo Park council members that the lawsuit will give the city more leverage. "That's their myth," he said.

Councilman Cline is frustrated with what he sees as Judge Kopp's one-track approach to the issue — and with the tendency of journalists take the judge's word as gospel.

"The matter is so much more complicated than Judge Kopp makes it sound," Mr. Cline said. "It's not black-and-white."

He rejected the judge's suggestion that local communities could pay the cost differential if they want the trains to pass through a tunnel, as Berkeley residents did when voters passed a bond measure to pay for BART tunnels in the 1960s.

"It's our right of way, we owned it before Judge Kopp decided to make trains a hobby, and it's still ours," he said. "We should (have the leverage in) a

negotiation, not an institution that came up with an idea and got some money. I feel he's trying to turn the negotiation around.

"Just because the cheapest and laziest alternative is a 25-foot-high berm doesn't mean we should succumb to that, or be stuck putting up hundreds of millions of dollars" to pay for the trains to run underground, Mr. Cline continued.

He acknowledged the heat Menlo Park and Atherton have taken for joining the lawsuit — to date, they are the only two jurisdictions in the state to have sued over the project. But he added that they were ahead of other Peninsula cities in worrying about the details of how high-speed trains would pass through their communities. Palo Alto residents who live near the tracks seem to have become aware of the rail's potentially deleterious effects on their properties only in the last few weeks, holding several meetings to protest the possibility that the tracks would need to be widened and raised through Peninsula cities.

"Why shouldn't we join other cities in suing you guys and stopping this thing?" Palo Alto Councilman Jack Morton asked of rail officials at a Feb. 26 meeting.

Locals frustrated

At several information sessions hosted by the rail authority, residents have expressed frustration at the lack of answers provided by rail officials, whose responses tend to range from "We'll consider that" to "We'll look at everything that's required by environmental law." Duncan Jones, Atherton's director of public works, complained about the authority's inability to furnish answers on issues as basic as how many tracks the project will require — a decision that should have been made while rail officials were deciding whether to run



A rail crossing in Atherton. The high-speed rail project might require as many as six side-by-side tracks, potentially tearing through residents' properties and forcing trees to be removed. Residents have been frustrated with the lack of detail provided by rail officials.

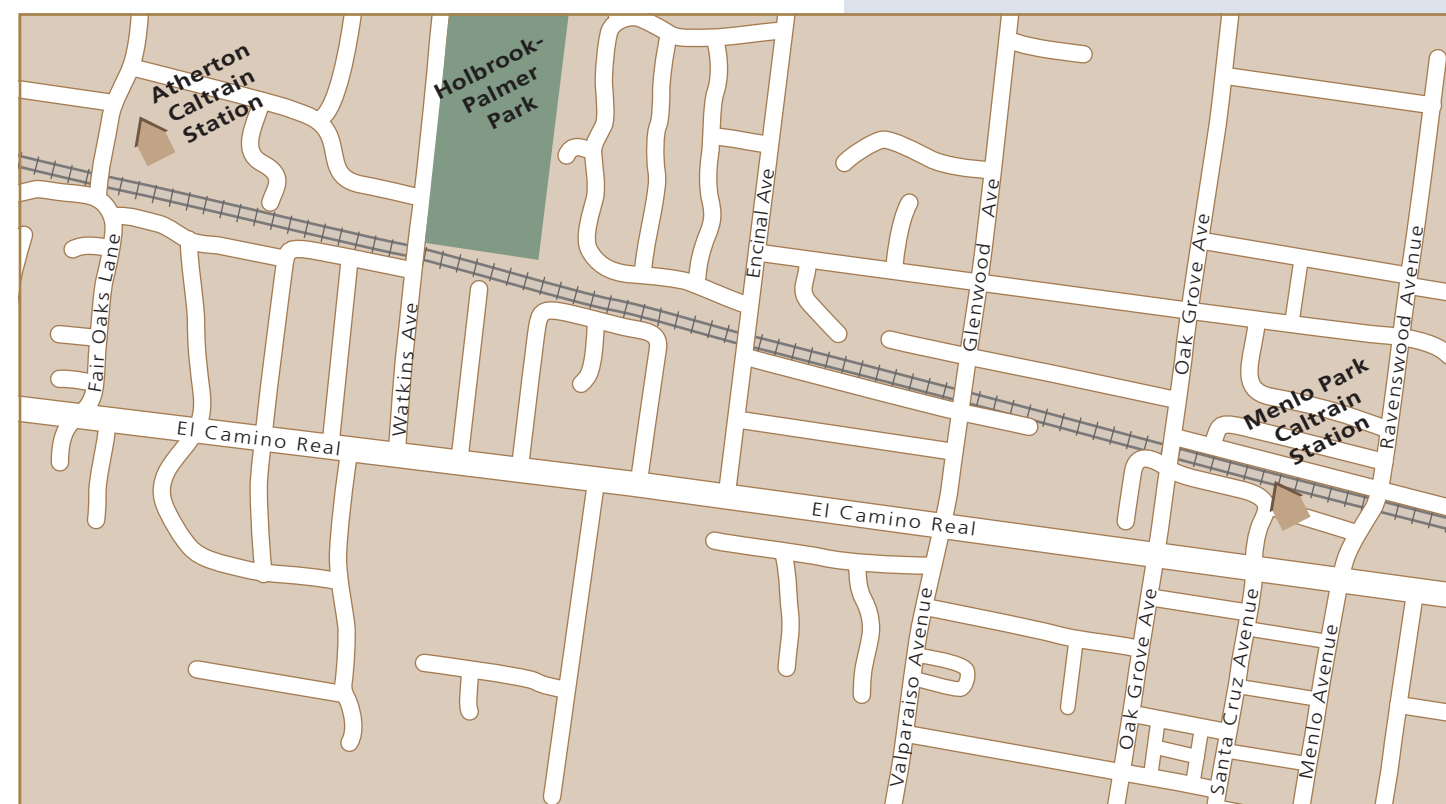
Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

trains up the Peninsula, or the East Bay, Mr. Jones argued.

"They're saying they think they can come through here without taking any right of way, without disturbing anyone," Mr. Jones said. He doesn't believe that would be possible if the project requires five or six tracks.

Mary Lou Timpson, whose Atherton property abuts the tracks, said she is skeptical that the rail authority will actually consider putting the tracks underground through Atherton and Menlo Park. Widened tracks would likely cut through her backyard, she said, forcing the removal of high trees she has planted to provide a sight barrier to the Cal-

See HIGH-SPEED RAIL page 12



Bury the rails, say local officials

If high speed rail must come, run it underground, they say

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

When it comes to deciding how high-speed trains will shoot up the Peninsula, officials in Atherton and Menlo Park have pretty much one request: put them underground, and out of sight.

Their first preference, of course, is that the trains not come through their communities at all. The cities have joined a pending lawsuit to contest the project, contending that the High-Speed Rail Authority's decision to shoot the trains along the Caltrain corridor — rather than through Altamont Pass in the East Bay — was premature.

But if trains must come up the Peninsula, local officials and residents would like to see them run in a tunnel or trench, rather than at ground level or along a raised berm. Both communities are in the process of drafting letters to the rail authority, outlining the environmental considerations that should be taken into account as the project moves through the planning phases.

In its letter, the town of Atherton outlines the possibility of a trench that would begin at Fifth Avenue in Redwood City and terminate at San Francisquito Creek in Palo Alto, sending the train below ground level as it passes through Atherton and Menlo Park. The trench would be open-air for most of the route, but could be covered in some areas, Atherton officials say — such as near Atherton's park and town offices, or by Menlo Park's entire downtown area.

The project, with an estimated total price tag of \$40 billion, promises to bring commuters from Los Angeles to San Francisco in roughly two and a half hours. High-speed trains could be zoom-

ing up the Peninsula at 125 miles per hour as early as 2014.

Atherton and Menlo Park officials argue that routing the rail line through a trench or a tunnel would reduce noise, and would keep out of sight the trains and the electrical lines that will be installed to guide them. (The lines are similar to those that conduct San Francisco's buses.)

In Atherton's letter, Public Works Director Duncan Jones makes the case that fewer trees would need to be torn out if the trains run below ground level, because the canopy wouldn't have to be cleared to make way for the high electrical lines. "An amazing number of trees need to be removed in electrification projects," said Mr. Jones, refuting the rail authority's suggestion that it might be able to avoid removing any trees.

In its letter, Menlo Park notes that a trench or tunnel would make it easier for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as wildlife, to cross the tracks. City officials maintain that a raised alignment would divide the city.

Digging a trench or a tunnel is widely assumed to be more expensive than building a berm, but Atherton and Menlo Park officials both argue that that might not be the case — especially because raising and widening the tracks might require the purchase of additional property, a costly proposition on the Peninsula. The potential loss in value to nearby properties, and the potential financial losses to local businesses during construction, should also be factored into any cost estimate, local officials argue.

INFORMATION

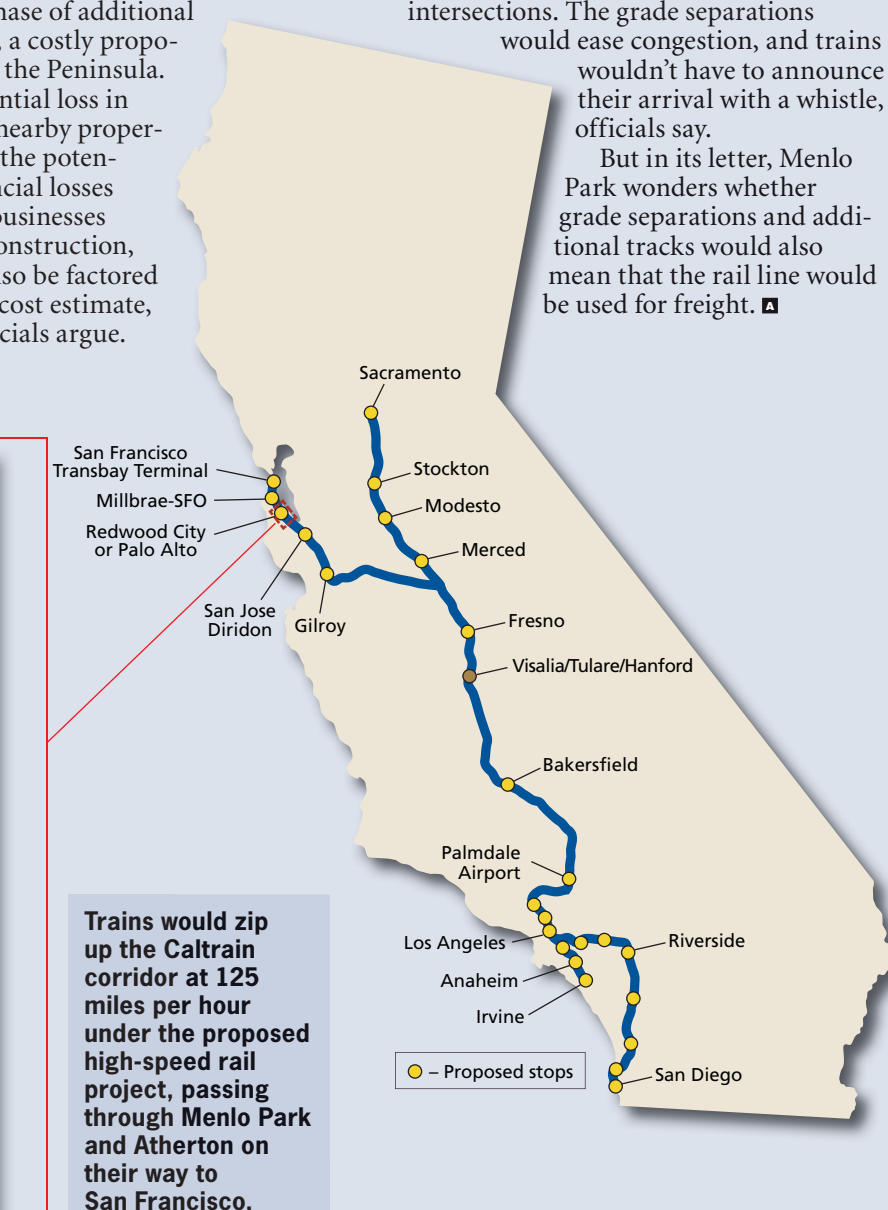
- The California High-Speed Rail Authority will hold an informational meeting Wednesday, March 4, on the San Francisco to San Jose leg of the high-speed rail project. The meeting will run from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Redwood Room of the Veterans Memorial Center at 1455 Madison Ave. in Redwood City.
- People have until April 6 to submit comment on the environmental considerations that should be taken into account in planning the local leg of the high-speed rail project. Comments can be submitted via e-mail to comments@hsr.ca.gov (with the subject line "San Francisco to San Jose HST"). Comments can be mailed to: Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director, ATTN: San Francisco to San Jose HST Project, EIR/EIS, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L St., Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814.
- The project's Web site is www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov.

And the state would have to purchase "air rights" along the corridor if the rail authority opts to raise the tracks, Menlo Park officials note.

Rail officials have highlighted the benefits to local communities of grade separations, which would allow streets to pass over or under the rail line at local intersections. The grade separations

would ease congestion, and trains wouldn't have to announce their arrival with a whistle, officials say.

But in its letter, Menlo Park wonders whether grade separations and additional tracks would also mean that the rail line would be used for freight. ■





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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

NOTICE OF JOINT TOWN COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

The Town of Portola Valley Town Council and Planning Commission will be conducting a meeting to receive a report from the Town Planner for discussion purposes on a Progress Report of the Proposed Housing Element for the Town's General Plan. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 8:00 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA.

Portola Valley is updating the Housing Element of its General Plan. California cities are required to update their housing elements every five years. By state law, the housing element needs to plan for specified numbers of new housing units, including affordable housing, within the Town.

If you would like further information, please contact Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager at (650) 851-1700, extension 212 or llambert@portolavalley.net

Published in THE ALMANAC on March 4, 2009

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Photo by Michelle Le/ The Almanac

Pedestrians cross the tracks in Menlo Park at one of six local intersections that would require grade separations — overpasses or underpasses to separate the rail from the street — to accommodate high-speed trains.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

continued from page 11

train line. The impact on her property's value of a rail along a raised berm, flanked by high walls and overlaid by electrical lines, would be "inconceivable," she said.

Dan Leavitt, deputy director for the rail authority, said that rail officials fully intend to listen to and consult with cities and residents along the Caltrain corridor — as required by law.

"It's to our benefit to make sure there's a high level of concurrence, to help us have a draft that is more acceptable to the public," Mr. Leavitt said. "As we're developing our plans, we'll be studying what cities are asking for."

Rail authority representatives are "saying all the right things," said Atherton Mayor Jerry Carlson, but he isn't confident the authority will actually incorporate comments from cities and residents in its plans. Council members from

Menlo Park have said they share Mr. Carlson's fear that the major decisions about how the rail will cut through local communities will be hashed out behind closed doors, then presented to the public. Representatives from a wide swath of Peninsula jurisdictions, including Atherton

'I am confident it will be heard and disposed of,' says Quentin Kopp of the lawsuit against the high-speed rail project.

and Menlo Park, have sought strength in numbers, forming an ad hoc coalition to make their shared concerns and preferences known.

"It's frustrating when they ask for your comments ... then say, 'Here are

your comments, and here are our plans,'" Mr. Carlson said, adding that the regional coalition would press for more of a role for Peninsula cities throughout the planning process.

Under state and federal environmental law, project planners are required to avoid adverse impacts to the environment, where "feasible." But cost considerations can override that

See **HIGH-SPEED RAIL**, page 14

Seventeen months later, rail officials respond

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

In their interactions with the overseers of the California high-speed rail project, local residents and council members have expressed frustration at the lack of detail provided by the High-Speed Rail Authority.

The rail authority's 17-month delayed response to comments submitted by the city of Menlo Park as part of the project's initial planning process has added to that frustration.

The city originally sent its comments in September 2007, when the rail authority was deciding whether to send

trains up the Caltrain corridor, or the Altamont Pass in the East Bay.

In July 2008, rail officials opted for the Caltrain corridor. But they did so without having responded to Menlo Park's letter, which urged the rail authority to consider an alternate route.

On Feb. 19 of this year, 17 months after Menlo Park submitted its comments, the authority finally responded in a six-page letter.

The authority didn't even know of the city's comments until August 2008 when Menlo Park joined a lawsuit against the project, according to Judge Quentin Kopp, chairman of the authority's board.

Yet it took another seven months for the rail authority to actually issue its response.

For all the confusion and delay, the authority's response doesn't contain much that local officials haven't already heard. In it, rail officials explain their decision to use the Caltrain corridor, and assert that Menlo Park's suggestion for a 50-mile tunnel through Peninsula cities would be unfeasible.

Of most interest to local residents is the rail authority's suggestion that a trench through Atherton and Menlo Park "may be a cost-effective approach," though rail officials said the issue required further study. ■

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Menlo Park agrees to recycling center

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park's City Council has agreed to a plan to re-tool the Shoreway Recycling Center in San Carlos.

The new facility, which could cost as much as \$65 million to construct, would allow for single-stream recycling, and would increase diversion rates by an estimated 30 percent, according to the regional agency that oversees waste collection.

The council voted unanimously in favor of the plan at its Feb. 24 meeting, a week after Atherton council members voted unanimously to oppose issuing bonds for the new facility, citing its cost. The Menlo Park council said that the new center would be cheaper to operate, and would prolong the life of the nearby landfill currently used by the waste authority's jurisdictions.

The Shoreway facility is inefficient, too small, and seismically

unsafe, said Kent Steffens, director of public works for Menlo Park. The facility would need \$20 million in improvements just to maintain it in its present state, he said.

For the recycling center to get the go-ahead, eight of the 12 jurisdictions in the South Bay Waste Management Authority would have to sign on to the plan. So far, six have approved it, and two have rejected it.

If the center is approved, the

jurisdictions would vote again on a specific financing plan.

The new center will be funded through increased garbage collection rates to residents and busi-

nesses. Officials estimate that collection fees for the average Menlo Park resident would increase by 61 cents per month to help subsidize the new facility. ■

Middle-schoolers shine at science fair

Local middle school students made an impressive showing at this year's San Mateo County Science Fair, with Hillview, Corte Madera and La Entrada schools reporting top placements in categories ranging from biology and behavioral science to physical and environmental science.

La Entrada in Menlo Park led the schools with first-place awards. That school's winners are: Ian Bennett, eighth grade, environmental science, first place; Ashley Utz and Jennifer DiSanto, sixth grade, physical science, first place; Conner Bennett, sixth grade, environmental science, first place;

Talbott Paulsen and Healey Montague-Alamin, sixth grade, behavioral science, first place; Niall Patrick, seventh grade, materials science, second place; and Natalie Baker and Isabel Tearse, sixth grade, environmental science, third place.

Corte Madera School in Portola Valley listed the following winners: Ally Howe and Siobhan Rickert, seventh grade, materials science, first place; Erin Miller, sixth grade,

materials science, first place; Roger Romani, seventh grade, engineering/technology, second place; Isaac Polkinhorne, seventh grade, materials science, second place;

Jesse Rothbard, eighth grade, biology, second place; Eliza Ozden, seventh grade, physical science, second place and special award in energy engineering from the Bay Area Chapter of the Association of Energy Engineers; Connor Jordan and Shane Hunt-Dusse, eighth grade, physical science, third place; and Emma Schectman and Serena Houghton, eighth grade, physical science, third place.

Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park reported its winners: Amal Duriseti, eighth grade, first place; Rebecca Stark, eighth grade, second place; and Cassandra Bethel, eighth grade, second place.

All seventh- and eighth-graders who placed first or second will compete in the San Francisco Bay Area Science Fair in mid-March, according to Gary Nakagiri of the San Mateo County Office of Education.



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

TOWN OF ATHERTON STATE OF CALIFORNIA 2009 SPRING PATCHING PROJECT NO. 08-007

Notice is hereby given that SEALED BIDS will be received at the office of the City Clerk, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, California 94027, until 2:00 p.m. March 12, 2009, at which time they will be publicly opened and read, for performing the following work:

Grind and replace approximately 28,584 square feet of asphalt to a six-inch depth. This work to include all necessary traffic control and will involve grinding, sweeping, tack coating, replacing asphalt to appropriate depth in an appropriate number of lifts and finish rolling per town of Atherton Standard specifications (see below) and special provisions included in this document. Some hand work around utility access hole covers will be necessary (special provision #107).

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for 2009 SPRING PATCHING, Project No. 08-007", 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 Street Superintendent, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0541, 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 March 4, 11, 2009.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL

continued from page 12

requirement. It will be up to the rail authority to decide whether putting the trains underground — the alignment local residents say would have the least impact on their communities, though it may be more expensive — would be financially feasible.

Of all the uncertainty surrounding the project, perhaps the biggest question mark is whether the authority will be

able to secure the estimated \$40 billion required to fund it. Its financing plan calls for money from the federal government, local and regional agencies, and private sources — no sure thing, especially given the depressed state of the economy. And rail officials are still waiting for the state to issue the \$9.95 billion bond measure approved by voters in November, which was put on hold as California legislators scrambled to find another \$40 billion to shore up the budget deficit. ■

WOODSIDE

continued from page 9

a seven-period day, but I'm excited that kids will have longer learning blocks. I think every minute counts," Ms. Warner said.

The seven-period schedule will allow for more time for weekly art classes, as well as longer instructional blocks for language arts, she said.

Spanish-language instruction will be expanded into fourth grade under the new schedule. Fifth-grade Spanish instruction will be reduced to twice a week, while it will increase in sixth

grade to five times a week.

The results of a school community survey on Spanish instruction presented at the Feb. 24 meeting showed that parents were willing to have a longer school day in order to make time for foreign language instruction. Those who responded to the survey overwhelmingly picked Spanish as the foreign language of choice.

"I think (Ms. Abbati) has creative and thoughtful strategies, without making a longer day. I think we already have one of longest school days," Ms. Warner said. ■

Menlo Park photographer exhibits at 'Foto Nova 19'

Nick Winkworth of Menlo Park is one of 19 Bay Area photographers whose work will be on display at "Foto Nova 19," an exhibition by emerging Bay Area photographers, from March 6 to 29 at Modernbook Gallery, 494 University Ave. in Palo Alto.



Skyway by Nick Winkworth

from a family of painters and sculptors. For the past 25 years, his artistic-expression outlet has been the camera.

A native of England, Mr. Winkworth graduated from Cambridge University and started working in the computer industry, while continuing to take photographs.

After moving to the United States in 1989, he focused his creative energies on music, but says "the emergence of digital technology around 2000 re-sparked my excitement in photography as an art form and gave me a whole new learning curve to master in the digital darkroom."

Of his work, Mr. Winkworth says, "I happen to see modern abstract paintings everywhere."

Mr. Winkworth's first solo exhibition was held in September 2008.

For more information on Foto Nova 19, call 327-6325.

More than 500 guests are expected at the opening reception, the organizers say. The reception takes place from 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, March 6.

The artists, chosen by a jury, are taking part in a Stanford continuing studies program led by photographer Brigitte Carnochan of Portola Valley and Modernbook owners Mark Pinsukanjana and Bryan Yedinak.

The class teaches photographers how to deal with the business aspects of the art world.

Mr. Winkworth, a Menlo Park resident for nearly 20 years, comes

Update on the bacteria war

It sometimes seems that bacteria, the creatures that cause infections, are winning our war against them.

Scientists develop drugs to kill them, but not all of them die. The generations reproduce rapidly and, over time, the characteristics of the original survivors propagate to the offspring, the drugs stop working, and hospitals, and lately schools, are faced with hardy, drug-resistant strains.

All is not lost, says Stanford University's Annelise Barron, an associate professor in bioengineering. Ms. Barron is scheduled to speak on the subject at Cafe Scientifique Silicon Valley, a free public event between 6 and 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, at SRI in Menlo Park.

Ms. Barron is a leading researcher in developing peptoids — bio-engineered organisms that mimic peptides, the antimicrobial agents in the human body, including the lungs, intestines, sweat and tears, that kill invading organisms by punching holes in their cell membranes, according to a Cafe Scientifique statement.

The meeting takes place in SRI's International Building, located at Middlefield and Ringwood roads. For directions, go to www.cafescipa.org and click on the link for a map and directions.

Refreshments — coffee, tea and biscotti — will be served; bring

BRIEFS

your own mug to avoid using a disposable cup.

Water awards

Nominations will be taken until Friday, March 6, for six Silicon Valley Water Conservation Awards that will be presented to individuals, businesses, agencies and organizations whose programs and leadership have advanced water conservation in Silicon Valley.

The awards are sponsored by a coalition of organizations, including Acterra and Sustainable San Mateo County. For a nomination form, or for more information, go to waterawards.org, or call 882-7252, ext. 302.

Scholarships

Local high school sophomores are invited to apply for the \$15,000 Chris Zider scholarships. Two scholarships are awarded annually, one to a boy and one to a girl.

The applicants must live in Atherton, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, or on the Stanford campus; or attend Menlo School or Woodside High. Financial need is not a requirement.

Preliminary applications must be postmarked by March 30. For more information, go to ChrisZiderScholarship.com.



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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
- FENWOOD 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.

Jensen Hauser

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Survey on Bohannon project?

Menlo Park residents reported receiving a phone survey last week, asking a series of questions about the prospect of a hotel/office complex near the intersection of Marsh Road and U.S. 101 in eastern Menlo Park.

Though the survey did not specifically identify the project as the one proposed by developer David Bohannon, Mr. Bohannon's project seems to fit the given description.

Residents reported that callers quizzed them on whether they would support or oppose the project when a variety of facts and arguments were taken into consideration.

A subcommittee of the City Council is currently trying to figure out how to make sure the city would get enough of a benefit in exchange for approving the project, which would require a general plan amendment and zoning change.

Mr. Bohannon did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

■ MENLO WATCH

Gemma to speak

Parents with children in the Sequoia Union High School District will have a chance to quiz Superintendent Pat Gemma on the state of the district at a meeting of Sustainable Menlo Park.

The meeting will be held in the Burgess Recreation Center Wednesday, March 11. It is slated to begin at 5:30 p.m.

Free compost

Menlo Park residents can pick up free compost at Bayfront Park, courtesy of the city. A large pile will be available just inside the entrance to the park on Saturday, March 14, and Saturday, April 4, from 9 a.m. to sunset both days — unless it rains, in which case the events will be postponed. The entrance to the park is situated at the intersection of Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway.

■ POLICE CALLS

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

ATHERTON

Grand theft report: Projector values at \$3,000 stolen, Menlo College at 1000 El Camino Real, Feb. 24.

MENLO PARK

Auto burglary reports:

■ Window smashed and GPS device stolen, 800 block of Coleman Ave., Feb. 20.

■ Window smashed and radar detector stolen, 800 block of Coleman Ave., Feb. 20.

■ Vehicle broken into but nothing stolen, 500 block of Farley St., Feb. 25.

■ Vehicle broken into and laptop, GPS device, cell phone and charger, pager and cash stolen, Euclid Ave. and O'Keefe St., Feb. 25.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Attempted break-in discovered after alarm went off, 200 block of Chester St., Feb. 25.

■ Chainsaw and weed trimmer stolen, 900 block of Peggy Lane, Feb. 26.

Grand theft reports:

■ Laptop computer stolen, 400 block of Pope St., Feb. 24.

■ Bicycle stolen from carport, 1000 block of Fremont St., Feb. 25.

Fraud reports:

■ Unauthorized uses of credit card at these locations: 100 block of Hedge Road, 300 block of Middlefield Road, 300 block of Fair Oak Ave., and 2100 block of Harkins Ave., Feb. 20-25.

■ Unauthorized charges on phone bill, 900 block of Alice Lane, Feb. 25.

Child Protective Services referral: 400 block of Ivy Ave., Feb. 23.

Spousal abuse report: 200 block of Van Buren Road, Feb. 26.

WOODSIDE

Mountain lion sighting report: Canada College campus at 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Feb. 18.

TOWN OF Portola Valley's

NEW WEBSITE!

Have you heard about the Town's all new website?????

The Town of Portola Valley is pleased to announce the launch of its newly redesigned website

Along with a refreshed appearance, improved navigation and broadened content, site visitors will enjoy these additional refinements:

- Committees now have their own individual pages;
- The Town Center classes have additional online features, including a calendar, catalog, instructor bios and a new online registration feature;
- Additional ordinances and regulations are located in the Building & Planning area of the site;
- The Town's Municipal Code and sections of the General Plan will soon be available;
- The new Sustainability section provides the latest information on what the Town is doing to support and develop a more sustainable community, while also connecting residents to information and resources for sustainable living.

www.portolavalley.net

Be sure to visit the new site!



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FIRE
continued from page 7

Insurance company representatives say they don't rely on Cal Fire maps.

Steve Toben, a council member who sat in the audience during the discussion because he lives in the Highlands neighborhood, didn't mince words in his frustration with the fire district, which had communicated its harsher views of the wildfire threat to Cal Fire.

"I'm quite troubled by the fact that we owe our troubles tonight to actions by the Woodside Fire Protection District," he said. "That will have major financial impact on 400 people who live in Portola Valley."

Citing property tax revenues of \$7 to the town for every \$17 the fire district receives, Mr. Toben said his neighborhood deserves something back, including meetings with residents, more funding and more staff. "If we're going to be stuck with this designation, I think the district owes us," he said.

Fire Chief Armando Muela briefly addressed residents' complaints. In an interview, he said Portola Valley's fire station already has an extra person, that the district is helping to train

residents for emergencies, and that the Portola Valley station is equipped to fight Highland fires with its 3,200-gallon water truck and a "Patrol" vehicle designed for tight spaces.

The town, through building department regulations, sets levels of risk to homes, he added.

Asked about the council's stand on the Cal Fire map, he noted that the Woodside council unanimously approved its map, which has several "very high" risk zones, including along the Portola Valley border.

Here are two communities, he said, separated by a town border and by how they're tackling this issue. Woodside is "moving forward," while Portola Valley is "very concerned about the labeling component of it," he noted.

The fire district has been advocating for fire-resistant roofs with little success, he said. "Now that we have a map, now there's interest," he said. "The map was the catalyst to get it on the radar."

"I feel for the homeowners that live in those areas (but) there is a wildland threat there and we're behind" in addressing it, he added. "The fuel grows and grows over the years and we haven't been on top of that component." ■

Free lunch at AchieveKids event

AchieveKids, a nonprofit providing educational and mental health services in the Bay Area, is hoping to raise its profile at its True Colors Luncheon on Wednesday, March 4, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Decathlon Club, 3250 Central Expressway in Santa Clara.

The lunch is free and open to the public. The event, emceed by local TV personality Roy Avila, aims to raise awareness about mental health issues affecting local children.

AchieveKids offers low- and no-cost services to families of children with emotional or mental disabilities, according to spokeswoman

Trish Ridgway. The organization supports San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Alameda counties, providing mental health services to 34 school districts, and operates 2 special education schools, she said.

"More than 12 million U.S. children are afflicted with emotional or developmental disorders, yet only two-thirds receive treatment. The state of California provides some mental health services but only for children up to age 3," said Ms. Ridgway in a press release.

Information is online at www.achievekids.org.

OBITUARY

Clementine Carroll

Resident of Woodside

A celebration of the life of Clementine Carroll will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday, March 8, at the Redwood City Elks Lodge, 938 Wilmington Way in Redwood City. Ms. Carroll died Feb. 10 at her home in Woodside. She was 97.

Contributions in her name may be made to Mounted Patrol Foundation, Attention: Huddart Park Trail Fund, 521 Kings Mountain Road, Woodside, CA 94062; or Canine Companions for Independence, P.O. Box 446, Santa Rosa, CA 95402.


ASK THE DEPUTY

Q. Who is responsible for what in the cities covered by The Almanac?

A. Menlo Park incorporated areas are policed by the Menlo Park Police Department. Unincorporated areas are policed by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office with the California Highway Patrol providing traffic enforcement and traffic accident investigation. Atherton is completely incorporated and policed by the Atherton Police Department. Portola Valley and Woodside are both towns that contract through the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office to provide all of their law enforcement services.

Deputy Stephanie Josephson, who patrols locally for the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, answers your questions about law enforcement. Submit questions to editor@AlmanacNews.com; or call 854-2626 and leave a message on ext. 213; or mail questions to: Ask the Deputy, The Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.





EYE CARE NEWS

Presented by Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician

ADVICE FOR COLD SUFFERERS

As if the common cold did not make us feel bad enough, contact-lens wearers are advised to take special precautions. According to researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry, upper-respiratory infections can compromise the functioning of the eyes. What this means for people who wear contact lenses is that a decline in tear production associated with common colds renders their eyes more prone to conjunctivitis (inflammation of the outermost layer of the eye and the inner surface of the eyelids). What is more, the antihistamine medications that cold sufferers often take can compound this eye-drying effect even further. With this in mind, contact-lens wearers with colds should switch to wearing eyeglasses until their colds pass.

Contact lenses are worn directly on the eyes and can therefore affect how eyes function. Keeping eyes lubricated can be a challenge when a contact lens wearer has a cold. At MENLO OPTICAL, we feature hard, soft, and multi-focal contact lenses.

We also provide instruction on how to clean, disinfect, and replace the lenses. Call us at 322-3900, or bring us your eyewear prescription. We are located at 1166 University Drive, on the corner of Oak Grove Avenue and University Drive.

P.S. Contact-lens wearers who are suffering from colds may want to switch to daily-wear disposable lenses to avoid infection if they balk at wearing eyeglasses.

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

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TELLER WEINMANN



Teller Weinmann passed away peacefully at his home in Woodside on February 25. He is survived by his loving wife of 52 years, Shirlee, and three children, Roderick, Paul, and Lynette Marchant; three grandchildren, Paul Teller Marchant, Erin Leahy Thomas, and David Leahy; and one great grandchild, Dylan Leahy.

Teller was a Vice President of Emporium Capwell Company, President of Broadway Department Store, and Executive Vice President of Amfac. An active businessman in San Francisco for many years, he was involved in a variety of civic organizations: Vice President, the Downtown Association; Treasurer and a Director, San Francisco Better Business Bureau; on the Board of Directors of both the Visitors and Convention Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce.

An outdoorsman, Teller enjoyed duck hunting and gardening, and he was an avid golfer. He was also an enthusiastic chef, loved sharing his latest culinary creations, and especially enjoyed concocting new soup recipes. Teller adored his many dogs, and his latest, Baxter, was constantly by his side. Known for his great sense of humor and storytelling ability, he was never happier than when he was in the company of good friends. He was a member of the Bohemian Club (and the Pink Onion Camp) and the Menlo Country Club.

A private family funeral was held, and a memorial service is planned for the spring. Friends wishing to make a memorial donation should contact one of the following organizations: the Family Service Agency of San Mateo County (24 Second Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94401); Pathways Hospice Foundation (585 North Mary Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085-2905); Peninsula Open Space Trust (222 High Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301).

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The Almanac, established in September, 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued November 9, 1969.

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



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

TOWN SQUARE FORUM

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

EMAIL your views to:

letters@almanacnews.com and note this it is a letter to the editor in the subject line.

MAIL or deliver to:

Editor at the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

CALL the Viewpoint desk at

854-2626, ext. 222.

Atherton on the budget ropes

Like many communities, Atherton is facing a major shortfall in this year's budget. But while the economic downturn is partially at fault, Atherton has only itself to blame for a large part of its expected \$2 million deficit.

It all started in 2003 when the council, on the advice of its finance director, decided to charge contractors and subcontractors a business license fee based on .36 percent of 1 percent of the project's value, rather than the annual flat fee assessed in the prior years. While it was easy for the town to collect \$250 from each general contractor,

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

keeping track of numerous subcontractors was not.

The idea was to make up the revenue the town thought it was losing to hundreds of

subcontractors who some officials said were side-stepping their \$150 annual license fee.

The argument was convincing, and the City Council went along, voting unanimously on March 19, 2003, with the approval of its then city attorney, Marc Hynes, to impose the recommended new business license fee. The new charges were strongly opposed by contractors working in Atherton, who said the new fee overestimated the number of subcontractors on expensive jobs. They met with Atherton officials in an effort to change the new assessment plan, but the town held fast and revenues from the business license tax jumped from \$150,000 to \$450,000 annually.

The system remained in place although the town's resolve wavered last year, when more and more protests were lodged against the tax. Sacred Heart School, for example, said it was charged \$55,000 in business license fees when it was building a new gym. Other resi-

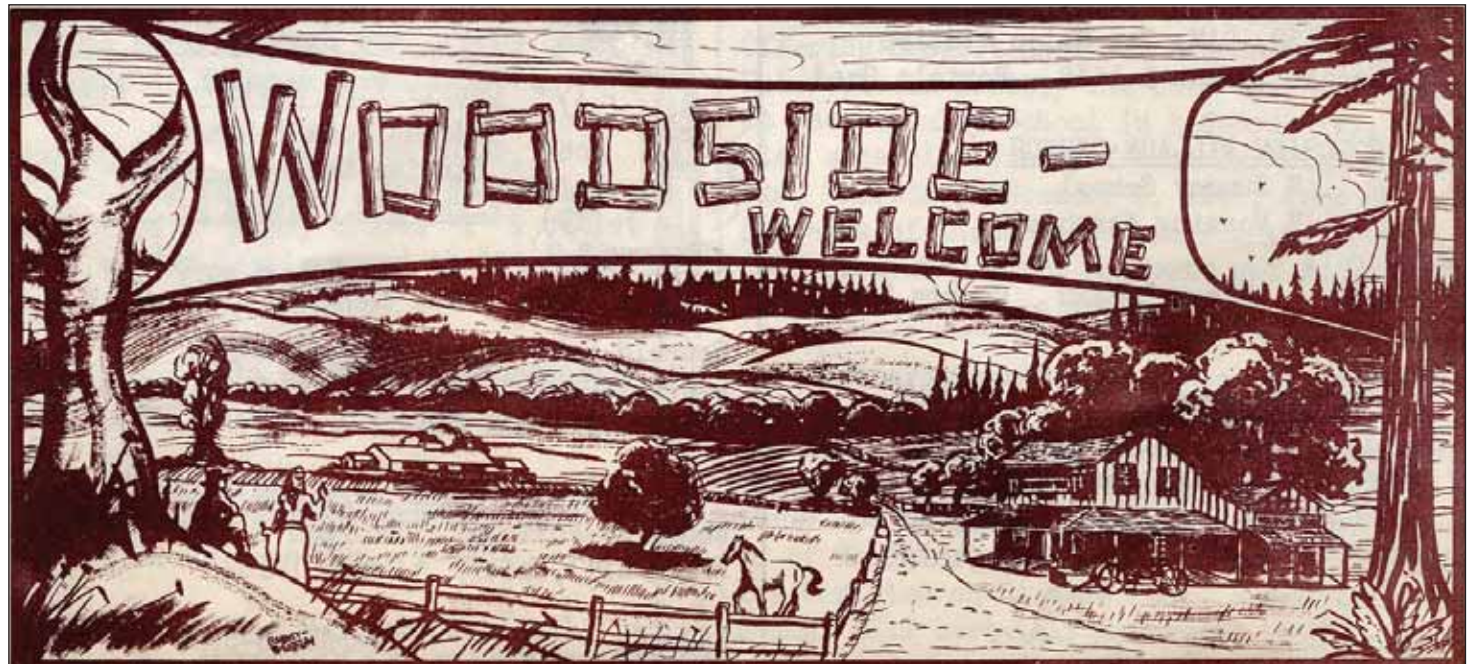
dents echoed the private school's story, saying they had paid far too much for simple remodeling jobs.

Council member Charles Marsala took up the cause, and for the past year, has continued to press his fellow council members to consider changing the tax. Finally, under the threat of legal action, the city hired a consultant to review the business license tax system for contractors, and although the resulting advice was heard in a closed session, the council voted in December of last year to go back to its old method of flat fees and offer refunds for fees paid in the past two years.

This isn't the first time Atherton has had to refund money to irate and potentially litigious builders. In September 2006, the council rescinded the controversial construction off-haul fee a year after it was imposed, and announced it would refund the approximately \$350,000, plus interest, that had been collected. Opponents of the off-haul fee, a charge on excavated dirt carted off building sites, said that it was an illegal tax, not a reasonable fee for road damage caused by heavy trucks.

In the next fiscal year, Atherton expects a negative swing of \$1.1 million from the business license fiasco, based on \$425,000 in lost income and an estimated \$680,000 in refunds that will be paid to contractors who were overcharged during the last two years. No refunds will be given for the higher fees paid from 2003 to 2005.

Even in a good budget year, Atherton cannot afford to pay for a \$1.1 million mistake that was approved on what appears to be terrible advice from its finance director and city attorney. Everyone is entitled to a bad decision now and then, but now it appears that a consultant's analysis of the new business license fee should have been commissioned before it was assessed, not five years later, after the damage had been done.



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Phone ULmar 1-3887

Our Regional Heritage

Before The Almanac came along in 1965, Woodside boasted a weekly newspaper that began publication in 1948 with this attractive heading. It was distributed to all 2,000 residents of Woodside, Woodside areas, La Honda, Portola, Skylonda, Los Trancos Woods, and S.W. Emerald Lake. The publishers were Jane and Bill

Worthington, who typed the copy and hand-lettered the ads on six legal-sized pages printed in brown ink. The content included names of available babysitters, updates on local Boy Scout troops and a few historical notes, as well as ads from various businesses serving the area, including the Pioneer restaurant in Woodside and the Old Mill Tavern in La Honda.

Copy provided by Ralph Oswald

LETTERS

Our readers write

Another view of Everest sharing space

Editor:

I was bothered by your editorial this week implying that the facilities and the people of East Palo Alto are second class.

Your editorial states that "you know of no other school in the Sequoia high school district that shares classrooms with an adult school." From 1988 to 1993 I attended adult school at night at Woodside High School and Sequoia High School and none of the classrooms were emptied of all their materials to support our night classes. The night teachers brought the materials needed in and took them home with them.

To have a high school facility located in East Palo Alto is, I believe, a benefit to all the students who now must ride a bus to attend high school as no high school has been within the town limits since 1976 when Ravenswood was closed.

If the Sequoia district is forced to fund another high school I believe the **only** place it should do that is in the town that is left without a public high school.

Scale down the high-speed trains

By Brielle Johnck

The high-speed train project arrived at our front door before Palo Alto and Menlo Park have had the time and funding to address the Caltrain issues of electrification and grade separations.

Accomplishing these upgrades would make for a quieter and less polluting public transit system. For years we have made do without these upgrades, but the high-speed train, an electric system, requires such improvements. The questions of right-of-way accommodation and speed of the Los Angeles/San Francisco trains add grist for the mill.

The High Speed Rail Authority seems to be withholding information that residents in communities along the Caltrain right of way need now. Why delay until 2011 the decision to designate stations? Neither Redwood City nor Palo Alto can make plans regarding



transit-oriented developments, zoning and funding for public amenities without knowing if their city is to be selected.

If the authority would scale back the project in the Midpeninsula area to a two-track system for a discrete number of trains destined for and leaving San Francisco, it could at a later date adjust the number based on actual ridership.

For example, the initial service plan might have only 20 southbound and 20 northbound trains a day between Los Angeles and San Jose. Ten of these trains would terminate in San Jose and 10 would continue on to San Francisco.

In this scenario the trains running between San Jose and San Francisco will run no faster than the current Baby Bullets, 79 mph. The entire line would be grade-separated and electrified, resulting in quieter and less polluting trains.

No eminent domain actions need to be carried out in this plan. The existing width of the right of way is ample for a two-track version of the high-speed train, shared with Caltrain.

And in this scenario the argument as to tunneling or berming the train would be

moot. The Midpeninsula is a region with small towns built on a modest scale that is suburban in style. The rail authority should recognize both the aesthetic and the monetary value of the property along the Caltrain right of way and take the path of least resistance. One of the reasons BART was rejected by the towns on the Peninsula is that the system of few stops requiring huge parking structures is inappropriate for the scale of this area.

The towns from San Francisco to San Jose along the Caltrain corridor might consider forming a commission that would insist on a more realistic and modest approach, one that would gain support for the high-speed train concept rather than the angry opposition that is mounting today. The question should not be to tunnel or to berm.

Hopefully a two-track system can accommodate high-speed trains and co-exist with Caltrain. A four-track system with stops only in San Jose, Millbrae and San Francisco creates a sacrifice too great for the Peninsula to bear, even if electrification and grade-separations benefiting Caltrain are paid for by the High Speed Rail Authority.

Brielle Johnck lives in Menlo Park.

San Carlos, Menlo Park/Atherton, each have one public high school while Redwood City has three. The only town served by Sequoia high school district without a high school is East Palo Alto.

If Sequoia must be forced to fund another high school then

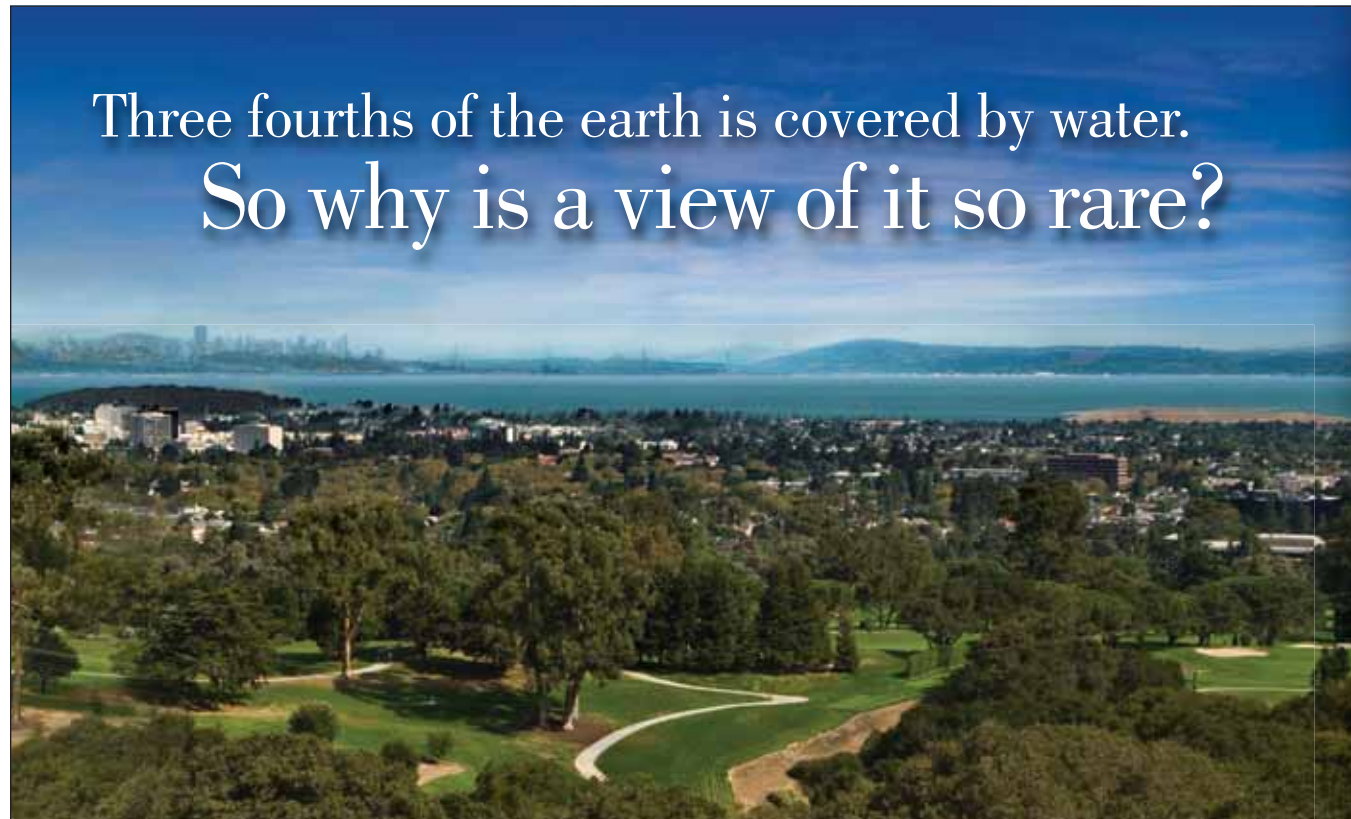
it is time to end the one-way busing and reopen a high school within the town limits of East Palo Alto. With Everest's mission to get students into four-year colleges there could be no better location for a new high school than East Palo Alto.

I don't believe the district

needs another high school. They plan to lay off 20 teachers from the district this year. Will Everest take Spanish-speaking students the way all the other high schools served by the Sequoia district must? How about students who have other learning or developmental problems? It

is unfair to the Sequoia district to compare a cream of the crop charter school with a public high school that has to take everyone who shows up.

Maria Flaherty
Sherman Street, Menlo Park



Three fourths of the earth is covered by water.
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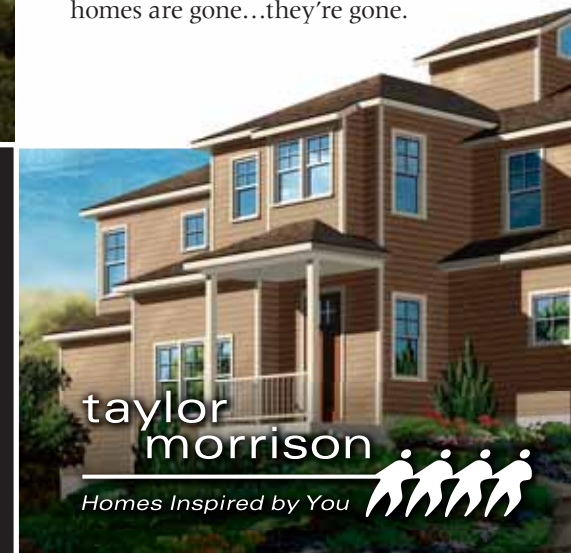
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Atherton, 1.6 acres
FOR SALE \$13,900,000



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FOR SALE \$24,000,000



Woodside, 4 acres
FOR SALE \$4,150,000



Woodside, 4 acres
FOR SALE \$12,500,000



Woodside, 3 acres
FOR SALE \$3,995,000



Atherton, 1.7 acres
FOR SALE \$4,688,000



Woodside, 17.6-acre forest
FOR SALE \$1,995,000



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