

AS ECONOMY TOTTERS, 'ultra-luxury' hotel complex
is set to open on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park. Page 5

The Almanac

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SPIRIT UNAFFECTED

Facing terminal illness head-on, **beloved teacher Jason Picetti**
offers lessons in courage & determination | PAGE 12



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Eric Lawson/Special to The Almanac

Welcome home

Zack Wentz (seated, third from left), 16, smiles as his friends react to Villanova's last-second victory over Pittsburgh in the NCAA Tournament Saturday. Friends and neighbors held a block party to celebrate Zack's return from a Denver rehab facility, where he spent 10 weeks recovering from a spinal hematoma that paralyzed him from the chest down. **See story, Page 7.**

Atherton

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Food & Drink

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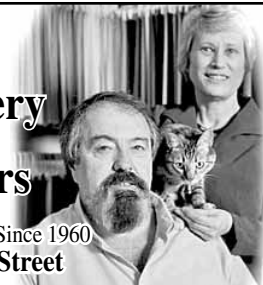
On the cover

Jason Picetti, a former La Entrada School math teacher, and his daughter, Emma, share a birthday: On Wednesday, April 1, Jason turns 40, and Emma marks her first year. On March 28, family and friends gathered for a birthday party, where this photo was taken by Michelle Le of The Almanac. For the story on Mr. Picetti, who suffers from ALS, a terminal illness, see **Page 12.**

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Roberts Tip of the Week

What a Crock

While some people imagine bricks and flue upon hearing the term "Dutch oven," it is actually a cast-iron cooking pot. During the 1600s, the Dutch perfected the manufacture of these cooking vessels, which were shipped to England. In time, Dutch ovens with short legs, a tight lid, and a handle became the favored cooker for boiling, baking, stewing, frying and roasting. In fact, this versatile Dutch oven was one of the pieces of gear that was carried by Lewis and Clark as they explored the American Northwest. The ovens are perfect for cooking over an open fire. These days, Dutch ovens, also known as casserole dishes, are favored for their ability to go from oven to table.

At ROBERTS MARKET, we have everything it takes to prepare a great meal. We offer a wide variety of foods from all over the world. We are your source for specialty foods, including Indian, Asian, European, and other specialties. Our seasonal produce is beautifully displayed in our large produce department. We feature the finest produce, meats poultry, and seafood available in the area, and we have a great selection of marinades, which help change the taste of your favorite meats. We pride ourselves on catering to our valued customers' needs and on the high our wine department is the most extensive in the area, more than most liquor stores. Don't forget fresh cut flowers from our floral department to grace your table.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | A THERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

They built it ... will guests come?

■ As economy totters, “ultra-luxury” hotel complex is set to open on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park.

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

When Stanford broke ground on its hotel/office project off Sand Hill Road in the fall of 2006, the Dow had ticked over 12,000, and home values were soaring.

On Thursday, officials will smile for photos and cut the ribbon to celebrate the hotel’s grand opening as the Dow struggles to reach 8,000, and as Menlo Park residents file out of foreclosed homes on the east side of the city.

The economy has undergone a sea change in the two and a half years since construction began on the complex, owned by Stanford and operated by Dallas-based Rosewood Hotels and Resorts. But officials are confident there is still a market for it.

The sprawling complex, spread out over 16 acres near the intersection of Sand Hill Road and Interstate 280 in Menlo Park, includes 123 guest rooms, a 17,000-square-foot spa/gym, and a restaurant (see **Section 2**). It also boasts several meeting rooms, and a ballroom suitable for events such as wedding receptions, and

bar and bat mitzvahs.

Four new 25,000-square-foot office buildings occupy five adjacent acres.

The complex promises to provide a much-needed boost to the local economy. Twenty-seven Menlo Park residents have been hired in primarily low-wage positions, and the hotel will pad tax revenues as the city confronts a looming budget deficit of \$2 million or more.

‘Urban oasis’

Rosewood is marketing the complex as sort of a sprawling California ranch house, an “urban oasis” that will enable guests to renew their connection to the natural world. The hotel is located in “pristine” territory, offering “stunning views of the Santa Cruz Mountains.”

The restaurant boasts food fresh off the farm. Guests who “indulge” in one three-and-a-half hour spa treatment (\$660 per couple), “inspired by the magic of the coastal forests,” will “find (their) senses altered and (their) sense of self magically transformed.”

In addition to basic massages,



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

The new Rosewood hotel complex, located on Sand Hill Road near Interstate 280, features a 71-foot by 39-foot pool.

facials, manicures and pedicures, customers can enjoy \$2,700-plus “spa gatherings” with friends.

Asked whether people can afford such luxuries these days, Mike Casey, managing director of the Rosewood complex, said that he hoped so.

The current economic climate “is uncharted territory; we have no history in times like these,” Mr. Casey said. (Rosewood operates hotels in the U.S., Mexico, Japan and Saudi Arabia, with another set to open in Dubai in 2010).

“The market is ever-changing out there, and the hotel world is no exception,” he said. He added that he is “extremely optimistic” about the complex, saying he feels there is a market for it.

See **ROSEWOOD**, page 8

Menlo Park eyes plan to take equity stake in homes

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

In an effort to keep low-income residents in their homes, the city of Menlo Park is considering a plan to buy an equity stake in some of those properties.

The plan, one of three foreclosure-related measures under consideration by the Housing Commission at its meeting Wednesday, April 1, is essentially untested, according to Housing Manager Doug Frederick. The city would first try to convince banks to reduce the principal to near market value, and would then purchase equity in the home.

The number of Menlo Park homes in some stage of the foreclosure process has hovered near 100 for months, the vast majority of them in the

Belle Haven neighborhood on the east side of the city, according to the Web site realtytrac.com. So far this year, about 40 Menlo Park homeowners have defaulted on their mortgages.

As home prices have dropped, many Belle Haven residents have found that they owe more in mortgage payments than their home is worth.

The city is considering a separate plan to buy foreclosed homes, renovate them, and sell them to people on the city’s wait list for below-market-rate housing. The city would use \$2 million of its below-market-rate housing fund, buying up three to four homes at a time and recouping some of its investment when it sold the properties. The \$2 million would fund the eventual purchase and renovation of 10 to 15 homes, Mr. Frederick

estimates.

Menlo Park is also at work on a joint venture with Habitat for Humanity to help Habitat buy and refurbish up to five homes. Under that plan, the city would offer up to \$500,000 in total, with Habitat providing \$2 for every dollar from the city.

The city-run plan to flip foreclosed homes would benefit low- to middle-income homeowners, with the Habitat plan aiding a lower income bracket.

To be sure, the projects hinge on a number of contingencies. If banks aren’t willing to absorb the difference between the principal and market value, the city would not buy an equity stake in homes. And the plan to refurbish homes depends on the availability of suitable properties.

The proposal would also have to clear a vote of the City Council; Mr. Frederick hopes to bring a recommendation to the council before April’s out.

But if the projects get off the ground, they would represent a first step toward repairing the damage inflicted on the Belle Haven community by the plummeting housing market.

“There has been a lot of deterioration within the Belle Haven neighborhood,” said Councilman Andy Cohen at a recent meeting with former Menlo Park council members. “It would benefit the whole community.”

Mr. Cohen has been working with East Palo Alto Councilman Carlos Romero since the fall of 2008 to come up with ways to address the spate of

See **FORECLOSE**, page 8

Multiple fire drills to take place in Portola Valley

Tuesdays in April will be fire-drill days in Portola Valley in a month-long exercise by the Woodside Fire Protection District.

Five to seven fire engines from various agencies in San Mateo County will gather at Christ Episcopal Church at 815 Portola Road for morning and afternoon exercises, said Battalion Chief Don Romero of the Woodside district. The nearby open spaces at the Morsehead, or El Mirador, property will be the exercise venue on successive Tuesdays of April 7, 14 and 21, and for three days at the end of the month, April 28-30.

The exercises will not involve live fire, but will include train-

See **FIRE**, page 8

Dr. Barry Rosen, pioneer in addiction medicine, dies at 61

Dr. Barry Rosen, who was recognized internationally for his expertise on the disease of addiction, died at his home in Woodside on March 20 after a long illness. He was 61.

"He was more than a doctor, he was a hero," says colleague Andrea Wilcox. "His life was dedicated to treating the disease of addiction. I can't tell you how many people have said 'Barry Rosen saved my life. Barry Rosen saved my son. Barry Rosen saved my marriage.'"

Dr. Rosen had been the medical director of the Sequoia Alcohol and Drug Recovery Center since 1983, when it was a part of Sequoia Hospital. In 1994, when the Sequoia Center became independent, it continued operating under Dr. Rosen's direction.

Dr. Rosen maintained a private practice at the Behavioral Medicine Clinic of the Peninsula, dealing with all aspects of addiction medicine and its presentations of pain and psychiatric disorders.

He pioneered a pain clinic at San Mateo General Hospital that has been re-dedicated in his name.

Dr. Rosen took part in a USAID grant to train physicians and therapists in dealing with addiction throughout the former Soviet Union from 1991 to 1998. On one of his many trips to Russia, he met with Mikhail Gorbachev, according to his nephew, Michael Frank, of New York City.

He lectured at the Betty Ford Clinic in Palm Desert and con-

ducted sessions with medical students at Stanford Medical School.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, he completed his undergraduate work at Colgate University and graduated from the Chicago Medical School.

In 1977, he moved to San Diego, where he became an emergency room physician. In 1979 he moved to Palo Alto, serving as an emergency room doctor at Sequoia Hospital before heading the alcohol and drug treatment center.

An avid tennis player, Dr. Rosen was also a hiker and skier. He was



Dr. Barry Rosen

a drummer and lover of music. Known for his sense of humor, he was also a very spiritual man, say friends and family.

He was honored with many awards including the "Heroes in the Fight" Award, presented by the National Association of Mental Illness; the Bronze Key from the National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence; and the Vernelle Fox Award from the California Society of Addiction Medicine.

Dr. Rosen is survived by his wife, Linda Rosen; sisters Joyce Starkey and Susan Frank; stepsons Talbot Keefer and G. John Keefer; nephew Michael Frank; and niece Jackie Frank.

Memorial arrangements will be announced at a later date.

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Rich Gordon to run for state Assembly

Rich Gordon is officially looking to trade his seat on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors for a seat in the California State Assembly.

Mr. Gordon, a Menlo Park resident, will be taking advantage of an open seat in the 21st District when Assemblyman Ira Ruskin is termed out of office in 2010. It's no secret that he's been considering running, but he made it official on March 18.

"I'm fully aware of the mess in Sacramento. We must fix the dysfunctional system and make our government accountable to the real needs of our

people," Mr. Gordon said in his announcement. "I'm confident I can provide the leadership that is needed for California."

Mr. Gordon's key endorsements include that of Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, and Mary Davey, a director of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

Mr. Gordon is a Democrat currently serving his third term on the county Board of Supervisors. He previously served two terms on the San Mateo County Board of Education. His announcement is online at www.RichGordon2010.com.

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'Is there anything I can do?'

Family finds plenty of help when young son is paralyzed by hematoma

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Darci Wentz didn't know how her family would do it.

Her son, Zack, 15, had woken up one morning in December during a family vacation in Kirkwood with a stiff back, severe chest pain, a pounding headache, and tingling legs.

A helicopter transported him to the Reno Hospital, where doctors discovered a hematoma pressing against his spine. By the time they were able to drain it, Zack had no movement or sensation from the chest down. (Doctors later determined that the hematoma was not caused by an injury.)

The family decided Zack — a sophomore at Menlo-Atherton High School — would be able to get the best treatment at a rehabilitation facility in Denver, Colorado. Darci flew out with her son Jan. 15, leaving her husband, Brad, and their two other children in Menlo Park.

She and Brad decided to fly back and forth every four or five days, with one caring for Zack while the other manned the fort at home.

That, Darci said, is when the calls started pouring in.

"People would call and say: 'Is there anything I can do?'" she said. "I would say, 'no no no,' but they'd press me, and I'd say, 'Well, there really is something you can do — do you really mean that?' They would say, 'Of course.'"

Soon, neighbors were bringing dinners to the Wentz's house, walking the family dog, and baking cookies and brownies for the Wentz's other children (Taylor is a junior at M-A; Ryan is in the eighth grade at Hillview).

Friends began to research possible treatments for Zack, and scouted out local rehabilitation facilities and sports programs; people Darci didn't even know e-mailed her with medical advice, putting her in touch with doctors. An entire class of second graders sent cards to Zack. A family friend told her mother, who lives in Denver, about Zack's condition; shortly thereafter, the woman came by the hospital with a homemade lasagna dinner.

"It goes on and on and on: stories of kindness from people who have done amazing things," Darci said.

Many were total strangers to the family before Zack's illness.

One friend set up a morning coffee for Darci at her home; about 75 women packed into the house. She went from person to person, thanking them and receiving advice and well wishes.

"There's this perception that it's this affluent community, that everyone is just into themselves," she said. "It's so not true. So many people were just amazingly giving, loving, and warm."

On Friday night, March 27, Zack returned home, after 10 weeks in Denver. Darci estimates that over 300 friends and neighbors turned out for a block party to celebrate his return Saturday afternoon.

'Community was with us'

Not least among Darci's concerns during the ordeal has been Zack's emotional well-being. He played tennis at M-A, and took the first semester off this year to attend an "outdoor adventure" program in Switzerland that involved skiing, hiking, and rock climbing, among other activities.

"Then he comes home, he's home for a week and a half, and suddenly his world's turned upside down," Darci said.

On weekends, Zack's friends would fly out to Denver. They played ping-pong, with Zack in a wheelchair. They set up a baseball game in the recreation room, using a bottle of hand sanitizer for first base. One night, they wrangled a few wheelchairs, snuck into the cafeteria, and set up an obstacle course.

"They were having so much fun, it didn't matter what the circumstances were," Darci said. "They were just being high school kids."

Weeknights were hard for Zack, alone in his hospital room after his friends had flown home. He would be exhausted after a day of therapy. Complications sprang up: several urinary tract infections, a blood clot in his left leg, a bout of pneumonia.

Doctors and nurses "were always poking and prodding him," Darci said.

After Zack suffered the blood clot, an I.V. stand followed him everywhere he went, delivering blood thinner to his veins.

Darci noticed that it was about 8 p.m. every night, with nerve pain setting in, when Zack's spirits would start to flag. She mentioned this to one of her



Zach Wentz, 16, was welcomed home Saturday with a block party. See another photo on Page 3.

Photo by Eric Lawson

friends, and sure enough, Zack's phone started ringing around 8 p.m. every night.

"Having all this support made all the difference in the world," Darci said. "It's what held us up, what made us able to do this."

She and Brad felt that Denver would be the best place for Zack to do his rehab, but being so far away from family and friends worried them.

"We weren't away from the community, because the community made sure they were with us," Darci said.

Coming home

Zack's homecoming was a grand affair. People brought hot dogs and hamburgers, cakes and pies; a band of local dads played. And after a semester in Switzerland and 10 weeks in Denver, Zack got to reunite with friends.

Now, he will settle into a life with more of a semblance of routine. He came home to find that his bedroom had moved downstairs, into the dining room. Family friends got everything set up: picking out color-coordinated drapes, scouring for shower equipment and a commode.

He will continue an independent study course in algebra that he had started in Switzerland, and will take two classes through the Stanford Hospital.

Zack still has no movement below his chest, but Darci is hopeful that through the natural healing process, developments in stem-cell research, or divine intervention, he will be able to walk again.

She insisted that the story of Zack's rehabilitation isn't a story about Zack, but about the people who have supported the family and held him up. She painted a big sign, thanking everyone for their help, and planted it at the entrance to the block party.

"I'm so grateful to have everyone together to just celebrate," Darci said. "To celebrate goodness ... it just feels good." ■

Contact Zack

Want to hear more about Zack's story, or send him a message? Visit <http://caringbridge.org/visit/zackwentz>

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Moving Up

Q: I have been watching prices soften for properties above \$2 million and I am thinking that it would be a good time to move up from the starter home I currently own to one that will serve my growing family's needs for a long time. Do you agree with this?

A: Yes, this could be a good opportunity to move up to a larger home. If you have job security and the economic means to do this, your timing could be excellent for such a move. The market for properties priced above \$2 million has not been as active as it has been for properties in the lower range because lenders have priced jumbo loans out of

reach of many buyers. This may be about to change and if and when it does, watch the higher end market become more active.

You are smart to look at the period we are in as a time to buy your next property. Your starter home will likely sell in a reasonable period of time (if it is well priced and presented) and you should be in a position to negotiate a good price for the home you want to live in for the next several years. Choose a house you can grow in, in the best location you can afford. Lock in a low loan rate for up to 30 years, if possible. Then you will have peace of mind knowing that your loan rate is stable.

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Atherton
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 or **Woodside**

Rosewood hotel complex opens doors Thursday

ROSEWOOD

continued from page 5

Rosewood is currently offering rooms for as low as \$200, a far cry from the \$400 to \$450 officials initially projected as the rate for standard rooms. Mr. Casey said the pricing would be “dynamic,” rather than fixed.

The hotel includes 91 single rooms ranging from \$200 to \$495 a night, 30 suites from \$395 to \$950 a night, and two “villas” from \$1,500 to \$3,500. The rooms are housed in several low-slung “cottages.”

During April, the hotel’s first month of operation, guests will be greeted upon arrival with a gratis glass of champagne. They can use a single remote control to adjust the lighting, change the TV channel, order room service, and send housekeepers and valets scurrying. Dogs will be accommodated for a \$50 fee, and will be provided bowls of Fiji water.

The spa facility includes 13 “treatment” rooms, a fitness center, dance/yoga studio, salon, cafe, and a jewelry store. There’s also a couples’ suite with its own outdoor courtyard, complete with whirlpool.

Finances

What does the new resort mean for local towns, and for the environment?

It promises to generate a substantial amount of revenue for Menlo Park, the reason the City Council approved the project. A city-hired consultant estimated that the city would rake in \$1.3 million from the resort in its first year of operation and \$1.9 million in its fourth year, but that calculation was made in the breezy economic climes of early 2006. The city is counting on \$250,000 for the fourth quarter

of the 2008-09 fiscal year, which ends June 30 — a “conservative” estimate, according to Finance Director Carol Augustine.

Hotel guests will be the primary contributors to the city’s coffers: 10 percent of each room bill will go to the city of Menlo Park, in the form of a transient occupancy tax. The city also stands to benefit from property, sales and utility taxes, as well as “franchise fees.”

Footprint

The Sand Hill complex figures to have a big impact on another set of data the city has been tracking of late: carbon emissions. Environmentalists will likely cringe at the description of an eight-headed shower in the spa, at a time when the city is funding the distribution of low-flow showerheads to residents through a “house call” program.

The facility is not LEED-certified. Stanford and Rosewood officials said they have not calculated the facility’s “carbon footprint,” and that there are currently no plans to purchase carbon offsets.

But “sustainable methods” were used in designing the hotel, said Steve Elliott, managing director of development projects for Stanford University. The buildings, constructed with “low-emission” concrete augmented with fly ash, are designed to allow for a lot of sunlight, and to retain heat.

The landscaping includes drought-tolerant plants. Stanford employed “low-flow” toilets, “high-performance window technology,” an automated irrigation system, and storm water infiltration techniques, according to Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Casey, the hotel’s managing director, added that the spa will try to use local products,



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Electrical foreman Scott Hodson works on floor outlets in the library lobby of the Rosewood Sand Hill hotel.

and that the restaurant will cull herbs from a garden on the property. Employees will be trained to recycle and turn off lights, Mr. Casey said; guests will be encouraged to do so.

Mr. Elliott said he didn’t know whether any fluorescent lighting was installed; Mr. Casey didn’t mention it.

During construction, Stanford covered over nearly an acre of wetlands that provided a nesting habitat for two bird species — the Alameda song sparrow and salt marsh common yellowthroat — in addition to invertebrates and tree frogs. To compensate, Stanford was required to create an acre and a half of new wetland habitat, near where San Francisquito Creek crosses the far end of the property.

Traffic

Residents will also see the impact of the hotel/office project on their streets. The office buildings and resort facilities will generate about of 2,800 new car trips per day, with most



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

In preparation for the hotel’s opening this week, Chase Hoblatzell and Chase Weimer hang artwork inside the spa.

of those trips confined to Sand Hill Road, according to the consultant who conducted the environmental review process. About 360 of those trips will pass through downtown Menlo Park.

The city used the \$430,000 paid by Stanford in traffic-mitigation fees to replace the traffic signal at the entrance

to the facility, according to the city’s transportation department. (The green light will last longer for drivers on Sand Hill.) And right turns will be allowed from a second lane on the northbound side of Interstate 280.

Stanford will also run shuttles to the complex from the Caltrain station, at the behest of the city. ■

Menlo Park weighs three plans to deal with foreclosures

FORECLOSE

continued from page 5

foreclosures. In addition to depressed real estate values that cause the community to atrophy, there’s a risk that vacant homes will be taken up by crack dealers and squatters, Mr. Cohen said.

In buying a stake in homes, the city would not be assuming a great deal of risk, according to Mr. Frederick.

“We’ll be responsible in whom we pick to do this with,” he said.

“Where it does work, we’re tickled pink to help (homeowners) out. But if it doesn’t, we’re not gonna stick our neck out for it to get chopped off.”

He estimates that about 20 percent of homeowners — those who have other debts, on credit cards or cars — would not be good candidates for the program.

But if banks agree to lower a loan’s principal, some homeowners might not need any additional help from the city, he said.

The city has not yet identified a source of funding for

the program, but the redevelopment pool — set aside for improvements in an area that encompasses Belle Haven — is a likely candidate. The city would recoup its investment when the property owner decided to sell the house, according to Mr. Frederick. It could also choose to package its shares in several homes to sell to a third party.

The city would invest about \$90,000 in each home, Mr. Frederick said — 30 percent of a representative \$300,000 home.

EARN, a San Francisco-based

company that has been developing a plan independent of Menlo Park to buy equity in homes, would advise the city, and help homeowners to renegotiate terms with banks. The group is offering its assistance pro bono (save a small service charge to homeowners) because it is looking to test its model in the hopes of taking it to a wider market, Mr. Frederick said.

San Mateo County has not received any federal funding to deal with foreclosures, but the city may be able to find other sources of funding to amplify its efforts, Mr. Cohen said. ■

FIRE

continued from page 5

ing on laying hoses, protecting structures, deploying fire-safety shelters and other “offensive and defensive” firefighting tactics, Mr. Romero said.

The Woodside district serves Portola Valley, Woodside and nearby unincorporated areas of the county. The visiting firefighters will be from Redwood City, Belmont, San Carlos, Menlo Park, Foster City and the county, Mr. Romero said.

Council OKs \$18.8 million in projects

The Menlo Park City Council on March 24 approved a total of \$18.8 million in new projects for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The project list won't be finalized, however, until the council signs off on the 2009-10 budget, a vote that likely won't happen until June.

The bulk of the money — \$17.2 million — would go toward four major projects: construction of a new gymnasium at Burgess Park, renovation of Kelly Park, street resurfacing, and a new water pump station in Sharon Heights.

Most of the funding would come from purses that don't contribute to the city's ongoing budget operations, such as bond measures, water usage rates, state redevelopment funds, and cash for mitigation efforts from development projects.

A total of \$2 million would come from the city's capital improvement fund, and \$100,000 from its general fund.

Councilman John Boyle dissented in the March 24 vote, and Councilman Andy Cohen abstained. Mr. Boyle has said he is concerned the city is trying to take on too many projects, especially in these uncertain

■ MENLO WATCH

economic times.

Mr. Cohen, who has been fairly quiet in recent budget discussions, said he had a gloomier view of the prospects for economic recovery than his fellow council members.

After fire, Peet's reopens

Less than two weeks after a four-alarm fire broke out above Peet's Coffee & Tea in Menlo Park, Peet's is back in business.

The popular morning hangout reopened at 6 a.m. Saturday, March 28, 11 days after the March 17 fire. The fire also shut down the Calla clothing boutique next door, and the professional offices upstairs.

Peet's wiring had been isolated from the rest of the building, and the shop suffered only minor water and smoke damage, according to a Menlo Park building official.

Council OKs changes in garbage rates, fees

Menlo Park residents and businesses will see an 18 percent

increase in their garbage collection rates this year.

In addition to the higher garbage rates, the City Council approved several fee changes at its March 24 meeting. Those include new fees for film production companies, higher penalties for false alarms, a slight increase in downtown parking permits, and a shift in the way the city calculates building fees.

Under the new garbage rates, residents with a 32-gallon can will pay \$14.81 per month. Current monthly rates are \$12.55. The new rates will begin July 1 for single-family residences. For commercial and multi-family residences, the rates are retroactive to Jan. 1.

The increase is so steep because recent rate increases haven't matched rising costs, said John McGirr, the city's revenue and claims manager. Council members expressed frustration at inaccurate estimates by Allied Waste, saying that was part of the reason they signed off on the switch to a new waste provider, beginning in 2011.

Under current estimates, residents would see another 14 percent increase in garbage rates in 2010.

Sequoia board to vote on Everest facilities offer

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A "final offer" of facilities to Everest (charter) Public High School is scheduled for a vote by the governing board of the Sequoia Union High School District at a meeting set to start at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at the district office, 480 James Ave. in Redwood City.

Everest rejected the Sequoia district's Jan. 26 offer of four portable buildings to be installed at 763 Green St., a residential street in East Palo Alto. An adult school would use the portable buildings in the evenings.

Everest officials, who plan to open the charter school in September, asked instead for five classrooms and office space in an unused classroom building at the Sequoia High School campus in Redwood City. The Sequoia district faced an April 1 deadline to respond.

Everest said the district's initial offer "blatantly" violated the law by not making a "reasonable effort" to meet Everest's request for facilities that are "reasonably equivalent" to what is offered at Menlo-Atherton High School.

The Sequoia district did not respond to The Almanac by press time on what changes, if any, were

made to its offer. A district staff report will be available at the district office on Tuesday, March 31, according to the agenda.

Everest has threatened a lawsuit if its requests are not fulfilled.

Everest would be modeled on Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, now in its sixth year and with many more applicants than available seats each year.

Everest and the Sequoia district have been at odds since September 2008, when the board voted 4-1 to reject Everest's petition for a charter. The district lobbied against Everest to the board of the San Mateo County Office of Education, which voted 5-2 against the petition in December.

Two panels in Sacramento disagreed. The Advisory Commission on Charter Schools gave Everest its unanimous approval in February, as did the state Board of Education in March when it approved Everest's charter. ■

Bizet's 'Carmen' at The Sequoias

Bizet's "Carmen" will be performed at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 4, in Hansen Hall at The Sequoias in Portola Valley.

The performance will be presented by Verismo Opera, a traveling opera group, accompanied by a live orchestra.

The performance of comedy and tragedy is free and open to the public.

The Sequoias is located at 501 Portola Road in Portola Valley. For more information, call 851-1501.

MP author to read from his first novel

Nick Taylor, a Menlo Park resident, will read from the just-released paperback edition of his first novel, "The Disagreement," at Borders books in Palo Alto at 1 p.m.

Thursday, April 2.

The novel follows a Southern medical student during the Civil War who is pressed into duty treating wounded soldiers.

Border's is located at 456 University Ave. in Palo Alto.

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PV venture capitalist in Obama spotlight

■ Paul Holland introduces president at clean-tech event.

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

President Barack Obama began his March 24 press conference by commenting on the topic of job creation. "And yesterday," he said, "I met with a man whose company is reopening a factory outside of Pittsburgh that's rehiring workers to build some of the most energy-efficient windows in the world."

Mr. Obama was talking about Portola Valley resident and venture capitalist Paul Holland, who was called to Washington in his capacity as vice-chair of the board of Sunnyvale-based Serious Materials, a manufacturer of efficient windows and drywall made with a process that cuts greenhouse gas emissions. Serious Materials recently reopened a shuttered window factory in Western Pennsylvania.

At a March 23 gathering of clean-tech entrepreneurs at the Eisenhower Office Building on the White House grounds, Mr. Holland spoke in support of the president's proposal for a 10-year extension of a federal tax credit on research and development.

The event had initially seemed to Mr. Holland like a "small trade show" for the president on clean technology, but things evolved to put Mr. Holland in a public speaking role after the original speaker, the chief executive of Serious Materials, had other commitments.

The new arrangement also became an opportunity for the president to announce his tax-credit proposal.

A surreal experience

With plans for the event in place, on the afternoon of Saturday, March 21, the White House called the Holland-Yates residence in Portola Valley — Mr. Holland is married to green-building advocate Linda Yates.

"You have been moved up to the 'main program,'" the caller said, which included giving a speech and introducing the president. "I said, 'Oh. ... Oh really,'" Mr. Holland recalled. "I was just shocked down to my toes."

A call to his mother-in-law arranged babysitting and the couple hopped on a plane, where he said he put together his speech based on material from the Web.

In their room at the Hay-Adams hotel on Lafayette Square, Mr. Holland said he practiced his speech on Sunday. At one point he stood, partially dressed, speech in hand, and looked out the window at the White House. "I just turned to Linda and said, 'This is surreal,'" he said.

At the White House the next day, after a security check of Mr. Holland's bag of samples and promotional items, they were led to an ante-chamber that serves as a green room for the 120-seat theater.

The "sleepy" mood in the room built slowly into a buzz, then "the excitement went way up," Mr. Holland said. The Secret Service came in, followed by the president. "He was very animated and engaged," Mr. Holland said. "He looks good. He looks healthy."

Mr. Holland said he showed Mr. Obama a photo of his wife, Ms. Yates, who had chaired the Obama campaign's national women's caucus. "Oh, I remember her," Mr. Obama replied.

"He was very gracious," Mr. Holland said.

When he asked Mr. Obama if he would wear a Serious Materials lapel pin, the president declined, saying that if he did it for one company, he'd have to do it for them all, Mr. Holland said.

Then a young man with a "spiked haircut," Mr. Holland said, and a speaking style like that of Saturday Night Live announcer Don Pardo announced a two-minute warning and they all reviewed the walk-through onto the stage.

Mr. Holland, who was following Mr. Obama on stage, said the president went over the procedure again with him to ensure no stumbles.

A rust-belt rebound

In October 2008, Serious Materials acquired a window factory in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, for "8 cents on the dollar," Mr. Holland said.

The factory reopened March 16 with a core of the old factory's laid-off staff, who are now making highly efficient windows. The remaining workers, all of whom still live in the area, are likely to be rehired, too, Mr. Holland said.

"As these traditional makers have gone broke, we've been able to go in and inhabit the bodies, as it were, and reopen," Mr. Holland said. "We're trying to build the most energy efficient plant in the world."

Mr. Holland is a general partner with Foundation Capital in Menlo Park. As a venture capitalist, he has helped take public



From C-Span online video
Paul Holland of Portola Valley introduced President Barack Obama to a group of entrepreneurs.

a number of companies, includes Kana Communications and Pure Software. He sits on the boards of several companies, including Bella Pictures, CalStar Cement, TuVox — as well as Serious Materials, according to his online biography.

Can domestic clean-technology manufacturing draw talent and capital away from the financial industry, where compensation and return-on-investment are traditionally high, or used to be before the recession?

Mr. Holland recalled a talk he gave on clean technology at Dartmouth University in 2002, when one out of 10 responding students came to him with a clean-tech idea. Today, that rate is seven of 10, he said.

But challenges remain. Private equity and hedge fund money that used to fund a second or third factory is now gone, and the government has to step in, he said. "I think, with the stimulus, it's a huge push."

In his prepared remarks at the event, Mr. Obama sounded a call to duty.

"It's said that necessity is the mother of invention. At this moment, we need you," he said to the gathering of entrepreneurs. "We need some inventiveness. Your country needs you to create new jobs and lead new industries. Your country needs you to mount a historic effort to end, once and for all, our dependence on foreign oil."

The country is facing hard choices on energy independence, climate change and the jobs of the future, he added.

"We know the right choice," Mr. Obama said. "We have known the right choice for a generation. The time has come to make that choice, to act on what we know." ■

Go to tinyurl.com/cl7usc for a C-Span broadcast of the event.

EYE CARE NEWS

Presented by Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician

EYEGLASS MAKEOVER

If you update your wardrobe and hairstyle, why not your eyeglasses? A pair of old frames can date a person as much as an outdated hairstyle. It is an accepted fact of modern life that eyeglasses no longer serve solely functional roles. As a fashion accessory, eyeglasses also say a lot about who you are. It is no secret that people in the public eye often make themselves over with a switch to new eyeglasses. Some wear eyeglasses to create a new look even if they don't need eyeglasses to

see better. In this respect, the switch to glasses has more to do with how people see them. Make sure that your prescription is updated along with your new frames.

If you're clearing out your closet and making room for new spring clothing, it may be a good time to also consider a new pair of frames. Bring your eyewear prescription to MENLO OPTICAL at 1166 University Drive, on the corner of Oak Grove Avenue and University Drive. We can help you select frames that fit properly on the bridge of your nose and that flatter your facial construction. You can reach us at 322-3900.

P.S. Be sure to add an anti-reflection coat to your next pair to enhance your vision as well as your looks.

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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SPIRIT UNAFFECTED

STORY BY RENEE BATTI • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHELLE LE

Is it possible to sum up a life in six words? Jason Picetti, a man who embraces challenge, recently decided to try.

Inspired by SMITH magazine's "Six Word Memoir" project, the La Entrada Middle School math teacher wrote and rejected several mini-memoirs before settling on the half-dozen words he believes best describe who he is, at present, in the roiling, rapidly changing world he has come to inhabit: "Speech and movement compromised; spirit unaffected."

‘When I found out I was pregnant and I told (Jason), it was probably the happiest moment of both of our lives. Who would’ve thought that only a few months later, we would experience the worst moment of both our lives together?’ — FEHMEEN KHAN

Those who know and love "Mr. P" have over the last year witnessed the process that has irreversibly compromised his speech and movement, reducing his spoken words to what he calls "mumblese" and confining him most of the time to a wheelchair. But they also have marveled over the courage and tenacity

"... Mr. P could not have this, they must be mistaken, this cannot happen," student Diane Maske said in a graduation speech that June, recalling her first reaction to the news.

Diane was among the eighth-graders in Mr. Picetti's algebra class during what turned out to be his last year of teaching. Once the students finally accepted the truth, their learning experience went far beyond algebra. They were given a powerful lesson in courage, which, Mr. Picetti taught them by example, means "facing your largest fears and tackling them until they are not a fear anymore," Diane said in the speech.

"The class turned out to be as much of a class on life as it was on math," Ms. Khan said in a recent interview. Mr. Picetti added: "I never once thought about quitting. I wanted to finish the year, no matter what."

Although he struggled with the decision about whether to return to the classroom last August, with special equipment to help him communicate, he eventually decided against it. "It came down to wanting to spend more time with Emma," their new baby, he said. "It was an important lesson for me — learning priorities."

This school year, he has accompanied his wife, a sixth-grade teacher, to school most days, spending much of his time in Room 25, where teachers come by to visit and play card games on their breaks, and former students drop by to talk.

Here, he also immerses himself in another pursuit: Since late last August, Mr. Picetti has blogged to the world The Adventures of ALS Boy — a name he chose in reference to "my love of the geeky world of comics," he says.

Why would a blog about a fatal disease have more than a hint of fun and joviality imbedded in the title? Well, to answer that question as succinctly as possible, I guess that I am tired of feeling sorry for myself. I am tired of crying about it and I

refuse to let this disease rule my life and control my spirit. ... I plan to enjoy every second I have with my wonderful family and incredible friends. I plan to do things and go places and experience life with a (relatively) reckless abandon.

— The Adventures of ALS Boy, Aug. 22, 2008

Jason and Fehmeen, who married in June 2006, did their share of crying after hearing the ALS diagnosis. Since the previous fall, he had noticed a change in his ability to talk, and to sing — a skill of great importance to the ardent musician who played keyboard and sang in a band for 15 years.

At the time the symptoms began, Ms. Khan was three months pregnant.

As other symptoms began to appear, Mr. Picetti went to his doctors for help. He was at first mistakenly diagnosed with, among other things, Bell's palsy.

Physical therapist Robin Tobias, whose daughter, Leah Worthington, had been Mr. Picetti's student, began working with him in December, and had "a sinking feeling" that he had been misdiagnosed and that he was suffering from ALS, Ms. Tobias says in an e-mail. She urged him to go back to Kaiser to be re-evaluated, and the subsequent testing confirmed her fears after "a grueling couple of months" of uncertainty, she recalls.

"When I found out I was pregnant and I told (Jason), it was probably the happiest moment of both of our lives," Ms. Khan says. "Who would've thought that only a few months later, we would experience the worst moment of both our lives together?"

This was February, and their baby was due the next month.

I go to a place of hope when I look into my beautiful Emma's eyes. When I gaze into those limpid pools of blue gray tranquility, I catch a glimpse of her future, both near and distant. Walking, talking, singing,



and dancing. Reading books, riding a bike, going to school, and making friends. Driving a car, graduating from school, getting married, and becoming a mother.

— The Adventures of ALS Boy, March 12, 2009

But Emma had other plans — she was 10 days late arriving in the world. "And I'm always very punctual," Ms. Khan notes with a shrug.

Emma's tardiness may have made her mother's life a bit more difficult for a time, but it gave her father tremendous joy: Her delay means father and daughter share a birthday. On April 1, Mr. Picetti turns 40, and Emma logs in Year No. 1.

"People say there's a reason for

WHAT IS ALS?

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain that control muscle movement.

According to the ALS Association:

■ Early symptoms of ALS often include increasing muscle weakness, especially involving the arms and legs, speech, swallowing or breathing.

■ Most people who develop ALS are between the ages of 40 and 70, with an average age of 55 at the time of diagnosis.

■ The life expectancy of an ALS patient averages about two to five years from the time of

diagnosis.

■ About 5,600 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with ALS each year. The incidence of ALS is two per 100,000 people, and it is estimated that as many as 30,000 Americans may have the disease at any given time.

■ ALS is difficult to diagnose. To date, there is no one test or procedure to ultimately establish the diagnosis of ALS. It is through a clinical examination and series of diagnostic tests, often ruling out other diseases that mimic ALS, that a diagnosis can be established.

For more information, go to alsa.org



See MR. P, page 14

At right, former student Elle Allen pays “Mr. P” a visit after school, accompanied by Anton Savinov, left, and Diana Romley. Mr. Picetti spends much of the school day in Room 25 at La Entrada School. Far right, physical therapist Robin Tobias stretches Mr. Picetti’s leg at the end of a session, which she provides weekly.

For more photos, go to www.TheAlmanacOnline.com



‘I’m certainly not living my life the way I imagined it but who really does, anyway. Who really does?’ — JASON PICETTI

MR. P

continued from page 13

an e-mail: “In the months prior to her birth, when we were anxious about having a baby, and the shocking newness and sadness about my diagnosis, Emma was an oasis that the two of us could go to in order to escape the seeming nightmare of our current reality.

“Once Emma arrived, she became more like an angel sent to our little family to provide us with more joy and light and love than we ever imagined. And especially now, when I see and interact with my beautiful baby, I forget all about things like my life expectancy with ALS in lieu of visions of our shared future together.”

The baby’s name was his idea. The couple debated the name for some time before she was born, but at 3 o’clock one morning, Mr. Picetti had a dream, he says in his blog. “I woke Fehmeen up immediately and told her we

should name our baby Emma. I explained to her that in my dream the letters in the name Emma represented the words Every Moment Matters. The Always part came a few days later, courtesy of my Aunt Nancy.”

I go to a place of gratitude when I think of the sacrifices my family has made on my behalf. Your unwavering commitment to my health and well being is inspiring beyond my meager ability to adequately describe how much you all mean to me.

— The Adventures of ALS Boy, March 12, 2009

After the birth of Emma, and with the start of the school year last August, the couple found the burdens of life increasingly difficult. They were living in a Sunnyvale condo, with Fehmeen’s parents, Iqbal and Maheen Khan, in the East Bay and Jason’s parents in San Bruno.

With Jason’s symptoms becoming progressively worse, they started looking for a home

closer to his parents. But early on in the search, John and Judy Picetti, Jason’s parents, said they were willing to sell their home of 40 years, where their only child grew up, and buy a home where they could all live together. Judy Picetti was devoting much of her time to being one of Emma’s daytime “nannies” while Jason and Fehmeen were at La Entrada (Fehmeen’s mother shared the duties). The older couple would help with the care of both their son and their granddaughter while sharing the home, they proposed.

“I knew there wouldn’t be anyone else in this world, other than his own parents, who would love Jason and care for him as much as I do,” Ms. Khan says, explaining her willingness to make the move.

The extended family now lives in San Carlos, near several of Jason’s aunts and uncles.

I think about that rainy day ... when I was told that I was dying and how it feels to be me right now,

how it feels to be living my life right now, doing the things I am doing right now, and (it) doesn’t really feel like I’m dying. I’m certainly not living my life the way I imagined it but who really does, anyway. Who really does?

— The Adventures of ALS Boy, Feb. 11, 2009

There is no known cause for ALS. It strikes unexpectedly, and initially affects the afflicted in various ways, although the symptoms and degeneration become more common to all as the disease progresses.

While Mr. Picetti isn’t able to live as he imagined he would live at the age of 40, there are certain things he’s been able to count on, most of all, the support of the school community and others who love him.

Last October, a party — “Mr. P, You Rock” — was held at an Atherton home. More than 500 people, including many of his former students, attended.

The event was a fundraiser to help with Mr. Picetti’s medical costs, which are significant: The alternative treatments he seeks for the incurable disease are not covered by insurance. Each week he attempts to relieve pain and symptoms through physical therapy, acupuncture, qigong, and other therapies. (Ms. Tobias provides her services at a Menlo Park medical clinic free of charge.)

Teachers from both La Entrada and Las Lomas have donated unused sick time that, along with Mr. Picetti’s unused hours, allowed him to stay on the payroll through the end of April. That development was the result of a new catastrophic leave program put in place by the Las Lomas school district after it was suggested by teachers Su Logie and Diane Goldman.

Ms. Logie said many school

districts have such programs, and she and her colleagues wanted to create a support system quickly “because it was clear Jason was deteriorating quite rapidly.”

In addition to financial support, Mr. Picetti has been showered with cards, letters and other good will gifts from students and their parents. “Throughout this year, you have struggled with many things, but you never turned your back on us,” student Kathryn J. Coyne wrote last year. “You woke up every morning and came to school, which made all the difference in the world to us. ... You showed each and every one of us the true definition of courage, strength and perseverance.”

Leah Worthington and Julia Sommer, now sophomores at Menlo-Atherton High, took math classes from Mr. Picetti before he became ill, and said he was teaching them “life lessons” even then. “He ‘cultured’ our class,” Leah says. He taught us about math, but taught us about music, movies, writing ... how to score baseball. I felt like I knew more when I was with him.”

Julia adds: “He made me more open ... always wanting to learn more, willing to learn about new things.”

The best friends used to have lunch with Mr. Picetti and Ms. Khan almost every day. Now, they still show up in Room 25 to visit their former teacher. And they continue to learn from him — lessons about how having the right attitude, and “how you approach an illness or any other challenge really makes a difference,” Julia says.

When he first started carrying a cane, she recalls, he didn’t really use it. “It showed us who he was. It showed his independence and his strength,” she says.

Leah adds: “He wasn’t going to let the disease take over his life.” ■



Jason and his father, John, listen to medical updates from Jason’s neurologist, Dr. Will Adlai North, at Kaiser Permanente in Hayward.

Controversial math books get go-ahead from Menlo Park City School District

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park City School District is going ahead with plans to roll out new math textbooks in the fall, despite the vocal opposition of a group of parents.

School board members appeared surprised by the controversy, and said at the March 24 meeting that they would do more to explain their decision to use Everyday Mathematics and dispel parents' "misconceptions" about the program.

"I don't appreciate a process in which the community was almost totally shut out," parent Perla Ni told the school board. "The choice of a math curriculum needs to be a total community process."

The board approved the adoption of the textbooks in December, on the recommendation of a committee made up of teachers and administrators. At the March 24 meeting, a number of parents complained that they had just heard about the adoption of Everyday Mathematics and that the adoption decision was poorly publicized.

"Every parent I talked to was unaware (of the decision)," said Claire Giordano at the meeting. "I think any new curriculum, especially one as dramatically different as this one, needs parent involvement."

Several people said they'd done Google searches and found scathing indictments of the textbooks — that kindergarteners learn to use calculators instead of learning basic math, that strange alternative algorithms for multiplication, like the "lattice method," are taught in place of traditional ones, and that students are left frustrated and in need of supplemental math tutoring.

David Ackerman, the principal of Oak Knoll school, said those accusations simply are not true, and warned people that just because there's a lot of criticism on the Web doesn't mean it's valid. Try Googling "creation science," and you'll find a lot of hits, but it doesn't mean that creation science is valid or meaningful, he said.

"I have the third-grade textbook. Nowhere does it say to use calculators for learning basic math," Mr. Ackerman told the board, waving the textbook in

the air. "Out of 600 pages, there are three pages on the lattice method."

He said he was troubled by the amount of misinformation about Everyday Mathematics and he questioned the motivation behind it.

Superintendent Ken Ranella said that Menlo Park's math scores on the state STAR tests are very high. "A lot of districts would die for 80-85 percent of their kids (testing at) proficient or advanced. I don't think we're going to do something to go back on that."

Board members said they supported the decision to go with Everyday Mathematics, but that they clearly needed to do more to explain that choice to the community.

"A meaningful part of this community is not understanding this issue," said board mem-

'I don't appreciate a process in which the community was almost totally shut out,' parent Perla Ni told the school board.

ber Jeff Child. "There's a group out there that is going to be trying to destroy this program, this book, from day one."

A written response to criticisms and questions about Everyday Mathematics will be sent out to parents, and Mr. Ackerman said he would hold a "math night" at Oak Knoll School so parents can examine the textbooks themselves.

"I have confidence and faith in the teachers and administrators who looked at (Everyday Mathematics)," said board member Mark Box, referring to the district's year-long study of various math textbooks. "It's not replacing basic and computational (skills) but enriching them with a deeper understanding of mathematics."

The "Everyday Mathematics" textbooks are being used in the nearby Woodside and Portola Valley school districts, but a recent recommendation to adopt them in the Palo Alto Unified School District has stirred up a great deal of controversy.

"If Palo Alto wasn't buzzing about this, there probably would not be a buzz (about it) here,"

said Mr. Child.

Better math

The discussion about Everyday Mathematics occurred after a three-hour study session about the district's overall approach to math instruction while agitated parents waited for a chance to speak. David Foster, director of the Silicon Valley Math Initiative, discussed the importance of teacher training.

The Silicon Valley Math Initiative, funded by the Noyce Foundation, offers professional development and funding to improve mathematics instruction.

"We get way too hung up on the curriculum. The curriculum will never do it — it's about the teaching, so preparing our teachers is the answer," Mr. Foster said.

He also advocated better testing and assessment methods, and cultivating a positive attitude and a deeper understanding of mathematics in students.

"Almost 85 percent (of students) are advanced or proficient in math. It's a real success story," said Mr. Ackerman. "Our kids are really good at arithmetic.

Our concern is the problem-solving. With real-world problems, the arithmetic is fine, but the problem-solving is not."

He also discussed disbanding the practice of grouping elementary school students by ability in math, an idea supported by fellow principals Nancy Hendry of Laurel and Alison Liner of Encinal schools.

"It's putting kids on a track that's limiting them," said Ms. Liner. "This is about increasing opportunities for all kids in third and fourth grades so they can achieve in the higher grades."

Hillview principal Mike Moore said the district needs to do more to address what he called the "underclass of math students" that reach middle school feeling lost when it comes to math.

District officials also discussed problems surrounding the impending state mandate to have all eighth-graders take Algebra I.

"Eighth-grade algebra is an artificial benchmark," said Mr. Foster. "I wouldn't have been a math major if I'd had to know algebra in eighth grade. There's no way I would have been ready."

Math, he said, is not a race. ■



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HOLBROOK-PALMER SEWER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
PROJECT NO. 08-027

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. APRIL 9, 2009, at which time they will be publicly opened and read, for performing the following work:

LAYOUT OF WORK, MOBILIZE EQUIPMENT, INSTALLATION OF 780 ft OF FUSED SEWER PIPE BY COMPETENT WORKFORCE, REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF CONCRETE SIDEWALK SLAB AND ASPHALT PAVEMENT, INSTALLATION OF ALL NECESSARY CLEANOUTS AND LATERAL CONNECTIONS.

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Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for HOLBROOK-PALMER SEWER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, Project No. 08-027", 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 Assistant Engineer, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0555, 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 25, April 1, 2009

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Alameda Round Table pizza to close

By Jane Knoerle

Almanac Lifestyles Editor

After more than 25 years in West Menlo Park, Round Table pizza parlor is closing April 3, said owner Jim Meola.

Located at 3550 Alameda de las Pulgas, the restaurant's lease is up in the building owned by the Beltramo family.

Business has been steadily decreasing for the last three years, said Mr. Meola. The Round Table

at 3130 Alpine Road in Ladera Country Shopping, which he also owns, will remain open.

The pizza business has faltered since the dot-com bust of a few years ago, said Mr. Meola. Corporate lunches for Sand Hill Road companies were a good source of income. "It's hard to sell pizzas to offices that are empty," he said.

"Most of our business today is from take-out and delivery," he said.

The Ladera store will continue delivery to West Menlo Park customers, who can use the familiar phone number, 854-1140.

Mr. Meola says the hardest part of closing is losing his 22 employees, most of whom have been with him for at least 10 years.

"I'm talking with friends in the business, trying to place them in other Round Tables."

Local resident Marie Klein says she's been a Round Table fan "since it opened." She recalls

going there with her Girl Scout troop and had hoped to take her daughter Katherine's Girl Scout troop on a similar field trip.

Round Table Pizza is a hometown success story. The national chain of 500 restaurants got its start in Menlo Park in 1959 when the late William Larson took his life savings of \$1,800 and opened his first pizza parlor at 1235 El Camino Real in Menlo Park.

He named his restaurant Round Table after the redwood tables he and his dad, Henry Larson, constructed.

The pizza parlor relocated a

few years later next door at 1225 El Camino Real. Today, Mr. Larson's son, Bob, still owns and operates the original Round Table Pizza in Menlo Park.

Joe Meola got into the pizza business when he moved to California from New Jersey. "I went to work for Bill Larson part-time, while studying for an engineering degree, and I never left." ■

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7:00 pm

GOOD FRIDAY
APRIL 10

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EASTER SUNDAY,
APRIL 12

10 am: Holy Communion
Family Service
12 pm: Holy Communion

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Easter Vigil (4/11 | 7:30 pm)

Maundy Thursday (4/9 | 7:30 pm)

Easter Sunday (4/12 | 8:30 am, 10:45 am)

Good Friday (4/10 | 12 pm & 7:30 pm)

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12:10 pm Holy Eucharist & Healing Rite
7:15 pm Foot Washing in Narthex

7:30 pm Holy Eucharist

April 10 ♦ GOOD FRIDAY

12 noon Service of music, reflection, and prayer
7:30 pm Meditation on the Passion of Christ

April 11 ♦ HOLY SATURDAY

9 pm Great Vigil of Easter, Holy Baptism & Eucharist

April 12 ♦ EASTER DAY

8 am Eucharist with Hymns
10:15 am Sung Eucharist
11:30 am Easter Egg Hunt in the Courtyard
Nursery available 10-11:30 pm

April 13 ♦ EASTER MONDAY

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Holy Week Services

April 9 6:00 pm Seder Dinner
April 10 Noon & 7:00 pm Good Friday Services
April 12 9:30 am Easter Festival Service
(Children's Easter egg hunt follows)



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❖ 2:00 to 3:00pm Labyrinth Stations: A Walking Meditation
❖ 7:30 to 8:30pm Good Friday Prayer and Meditation

Easter — April 12

❖ 5:30am Easter Vigil, Eucharist & Baptism
❖ 8:00am Festive Breakfast & Family Easter Activities
❖ 10:00am Festive Holy Eucharist

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April 5, 11:00 am

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April 9, 7:30 pm

Maundy Thursday: A Tenebrae Service recalling the Last Supper

April 10

Good Friday: Sanctuary open for prayer 8 am to 8 pm

April 12, 6:30 am

Outdoor Sunrise Service

April 12, 9:30 am

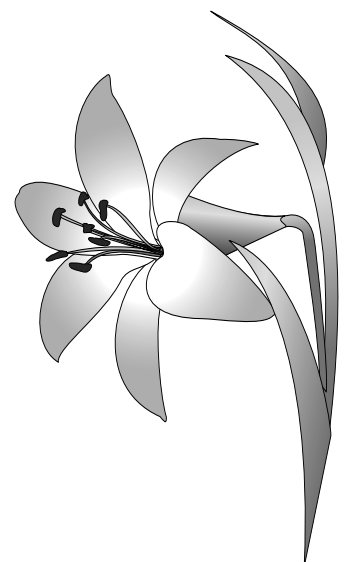
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Portola Valley warms to idea of fire-safe building code

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The terrain and vegetation of the towns of Portola Valley and Woodside are similar: Both towns are nestled in wooded foothills on the eastern slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains, both are crisscrossed by streams that are dry much of the year, and both are considered by the local fire district to be at serious risk in a wildfire.

Now Portola Valley may follow Woodside in amending its building code to require the use of fire-resistant materials and designs for all new construction and major remodels.

The Town Council met in Portola Valley on Wednesday, March 25, to discuss amendments that would affect roofs, siding, windows, attics and decks.

The new rules, if they're adopted, would comply with Chapter 7A of the state building code, which applies to new homes located in “very high” wildfire risk zones as defined by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection,

or Cal Fire, on a set of maps.

In a staff report to the council, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert asked for direction in preparing an ordinance.

Material and design rules aren't all that's in Chapter 7A. It also cites landscape management practices for creating a defensible space around a home, but they would likely not be immediately implemented, as was the case in Woodside. The Woodside Fire Protection District, which includes Portola Valley and Woodside, already does vegetation surveys and would be asked to advise residents on fire-resistant landscaping.

Fire-retarding landscaping need not denude a home of vegetation, according to Councilman Steve Toben, who said his Woodside Highlands home had a safety inspection recently that allowed overhanging branches and some underbrush. “It's actually not the straightjacket that some may fear,” he said.

Cal Fire's map for Portola Val-



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ley happens to show Woodside Highlands as at “very high” risk in a wildfire. If the council adopts that map — a decision is required by mid-April — the 7A landscape management rules would apply to all new homes in the Highlands. If the council ignores this deadline, there are no sanctions. (The council is expected to meet on Wednesday, April 8.)

A second vegetation hazard map, commissioned by the town and prepared by wildfire consultant Ray Moritz, shows serious risks beyond the Highlands. Council members cited the Moritz map repeatedly in the context of addressing wildfire risks.

Though Chapter 7A is aimed at new homes, the Portola Valley council seemed ready to follow its Woodside counterpart and extend 7A to replacement roofs, siding, windows and decks.

Fire safety for the town could take too long if only new homes were affected. By extending the rules to cover these replacement activities, some 50 homes a year would be affected, Councilman Ted Driscoll said, versus 16 or 17 new homes.

Some say certified fire-resistant materials aren’t aesthetically pleasing, but Deputy Building Official Gary Fitzer may have put some of those concerns to rest in noting that homes in Blue Oaks, an upscale subdivision in an upscale town, are built to tougher standards than Chapter 7A.

“There are plenty of homes in Blue Oaks that are architectural gems,” Mr. Toben said. ■

Go to tinyurl.com/dmq7mk for the Portola Valley staff report, which includes Chapter 7A.

\$15.5 million for VA facilities

A total of \$15.5 million of federal stimulus money has been approved for the Menlo Park and Palo Alto Veterans Affairs facilities, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, announced March 24.

The money is part of \$1 billion set aside in the stimulus bill for the Veterans Health Administration.

The Menlo Park VA will receive \$12.5 million to repair a loop road, repave a parking lot, replace exhaust units and flooring, expand storm drains, and renovate the auto shop. The funds will also pay for the evaluation of a solar power system.

The Palo Alto VA will receive \$3 million for patient lift equipment, fire sprinklers, renovated bathrooms and interior lighting, and new roofing, flooring and windows.

Community Health Education Lectures & Workshops

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Living Well with Osteoarthritis

Tuesday, May 12, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Presented by Andrew Rozelle, M.D., Ph.D., specialist in Rheumatology
To register or for more information, call 650-853-4873.



Mountain View Center – 701 E. El Camino Real



Putting on Your Best Face: Ladies Night Out

Wednesday, April 8, 7 – 8 p.m.

Presented by Cindy Russell, M.D., specialist in Plastic Surgery
To register or for more information, call 408-523-3295.

Sports Medicine for Kids (and their parents)

Dr. Marvin Small Memorial Parent Workshop Series

Tuesday, April 14, 7 – 9 p.m.

Presented by Ken Vereschagin, M.D., specialist in Pediatrics and Sports Medicine
To register or for more information, call 408-523-3295.



Sunnyvale City Council Chambers – 456 W. Olive Avenue

Allergies

Wednesday, May 27, 7 – 8 p.m.

Presented by Steve Rubinstein, M.D., specialist in Allergies
To register or for more information, call 408-523-3295.

Sunnyvale Library – 665 W. Olive Avenue

Prescription for Health Care Reform

Tuesday, May 5, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Presented by Hal Luft, Ph.D., Director of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation Research Institute
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Atherton fills revenue shortfall with reserve funds

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

The Atherton City Council moved to close a projected \$1.5 million revenue shortfall with money from the town's reserve fund, augmented by a combination of budget cuts and parcel tax funds.

On a split vote at a special March 26 meeting, the council chose to use \$1.16 million from the town's \$7.9 million reserve fund and \$350,000 in parcel tax revenue to

fill the projected shortfall in the current fiscal year. The vote was 3-2, with Kathy McKeithen and Jim Dobbie opposed.

The town is in a slightly better position than it was in February, when the council was faced with a projected revenue shortfall of over \$2 million. Projected revenue is about \$101,000 better than expected and expenses have been trimmed by more than \$500,000, said Finance Director Louise Ho.

Projected expenditures for

the current fiscal year now total \$10.2 million.

More than half the projected shortfall — \$1.1 million — is attributed to problems with the collection of the town's business license tax. The town is giving refunds to building contractors who were overcharged in the past two years, and had to strike an anticipated \$425,000 in business tax income from this year's books.

Council members disagreed

on how to make up for the rest of the projected shortfall.

Councilwoman McKeithen said she'd rather take only \$686,000 out of the town's general fund reserves and make up the remaining \$476,000 by deferring several large public works projects. Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis said she would rather take the \$1.1 million for the business license tax directly out of the general fund reserve as a "clear line item."

"We recognize we made a mistake in the past in collecting funds that shouldn't have gone into the general fund," said Mayor Jerry Carlson.

Despite the split vote on where to get the funds to close the shortfall, the council unanimously voted to approve the mid-year budget adjustments, which include \$100,000 in additional spending for legal services.

Ms. Ho warned that her revenue projections are very conservative, and the town could end the fiscal year with a smaller shortfall than projected.

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY SPRING 2009 CLASSES

Are you interested in exploring your creative side or want a fun, new way to get fit? We have what you are looking for! Our spring quarter is blooming; don't delay in signing up for our fun and exciting classes for all ages!!! Classes begin April 13th and are all held in our beautiful new Town Center.

Portola Valley residents may begin registration on March 16th, open registration will begin March 30th. Classes fill quickly, so hurry in and register.

Please visit our new website for details on classes. Online registration is now available at www.portolavalley.net or you may register in person at Town Hall. For more information call (650) 851-1700 ext. 200 or e-mail crodas@portolavalley.net

765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028

Atherton's early out

Ending the day at 10:30 p.m. doesn't sound early, but for Atherton City Council meetings, that's practically banker's hours.

The council's monthly meetings start at 7 p.m. and often stretch past midnight. Councilman Jim Dobbie lobbied to end all future meetings at a more reasonable hour, and at a special March 26 council meeting, the council voted to give it a try, said Mayor Jerry Carlson.

Of course, shorter meetings could equal more meetings. The council met March 26 to hear eight leftover agenda items from the March 18 regular meeting. That meeting, at the behest of Mr. Dobbie, ended at 10:15 p.m.

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Barbara Shenk

Former Menlo Park resident

Barbara Jean Shenk, who grew up in Menlo Park, died Feb. 1 in Seattle, Washington, after a six-year battle with breast cancer. She was 66.

Ms. Shenk was born in San Francisco and graduated from Castilleja in Palo Alto.

After graduating from the University of Montana, she joined the Peace Corp and was sent to Columbia as an English teacher. She taught at a Kibbutz in Israel for two years in the late 1960s.

After receiving a master of arts degree from the University of Arizona, she moved to Puerto Rico for several years, where she established a first-time physical education program for high school girls.

An avid traveler, she backpacked through most

OBITUARY

of the Middle East, Europe and South America. She moved to Seattle in 1979, where she worked for the Seattle Parks & Recreation Department. She retired from the department in 2000.

Ms. Shenk was preceded in death by her parents, Jay and Virginia Shenk, who were residents of Menlo Park for more than 50 years. She is survived by her sister, Margaret Head of San Jose; niece Marcia Cheney of Portola Valley; nephew Ryan Cheney of San Jose; and grand-niece Emma Virginia Cicchetti of Portola Valley.

Services have been held. Memorials may be made in her name to the American Cancer Society.

■ 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

Auto burglary reports:

■ Vehicle alarm alerted resident to see man entering resident's vehicle parked in driveway, first block of Catalpa Drive, March 20.

■ Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, March 24.

Theft report: Family in white van seen driving away with resident's two pots of dirt, first block of Fairview Ave., March 21.

Fraud report: Check fraud, Marymont Ave., March 24.

MENLO PARK

Auto burglary reports:

■ GPS navigation devices stolen in three incidents: 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, 400 block of Oak Grove Ave., and 300 block of Terminal Ave., March 20, 21 and 22.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Burglar broke in but left after learning that resident was home, 100 block of Hamilton Ave., March 26.

■ Two bikes stolen from unlocked garage, 800 block of Fremont St., March 26.

Stolen vehicle report: Blue 1998 Ford Mustang, 1100 block of Willow Road, March 24.

Fraud reports:

■ Unauthorized use of credit card, 400 block of Shirley Way, March 24.

■ Check fraud, Tyco Federal Credit Union, 220 Jefferson Ave., March 25.

■ Check fraud for \$3,500, Bank of America, 633 Santa Cruz Ave., March 25.

WOODSIDE

Fraud report: Landlord received check for several thousand dollars covering rent, security deposit, etc., on guest house. The check's sender claimed to be a priest from England but the check was postmarked in Scranton, Pennsylvania. 200 block of Olive Hill Lane, March 19.

Threat report: Intel Security agent came to Town Hall to report on Woodside client who received phoned-in death threat from woman with Russian accent, 100 block of Canada Road, March 23.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Weapons discharge report: Deputies alerted to shots being fired discovered two suspects who admitted to having fired an unregistered shotgun four times at television in driveway, 17000 block of Skyline Boulevard, March 24.

Want to serve on county grand jury?

Applications for service on the 2009-2010 San Mateo County civil grand jury will be accepted until April 17. The grand jury, whose members are appointed by the Superior Court, investigates complaints about public officials and agencies and recommends action.

The next grand jury term begins July 1 and ends June 30, 2010.

Members of the civil grand jury must be residents of San Mateo County for more than one year, a citizen of the United States, 18 years or older, and have sufficient knowledge of the English lan-

guage. Elected public officials are not eligible.

Judge Clifford V. Cretan of San Mateo County Superior Court will interview prospective jurors. Application forms may be obtained by calling 599-1711 or writing: Grand Jury Clerk, Court Executive Office, 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

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MARGARET ANNE ADAMS VITALE DECEMBER 3, 1923 - APRIL 27, 2008

Margaret Anne Adams Vitale passed away April 27, 2008 at her home in Portola Valley, California.

Maggie was born December 3, 1923 in Phoenix, Arizona to Margaret Hiltz Adams and Joseph (Jack) Finney Adams. Her younger sister Elizabeth passed from pneumonia at age 13 and her older sister Jacqueline Adams Haxton predeceased Maggie in Bozeman, Montana.

Maggie was the great granddaughter of the McPhelemy family who founded the town of Buena Vista, Colorado. Her father's family was a descendant of President Adams.

Maggie's family moved to Los Angeles California in the 30's seeking a new life after her father passed away when she was 13. She attended Fairfax High School in Los Angeles and was a member of the Meglan Kittens dance as well as cheerleading. She met Jim Vitale, her husband, at the Phelps Terkel on the UCLA campus, where he was attending college. "Love at First Sight" occurred and they married in San Antonio Texas in 1943.

While Jim was a navigator during WWII in the European theater, Maggie pursued a career as a model and clothing designer. She appeared in LOOK Magazine frequently and other publications. She also designed clothing, sewing all the samples by her own hand. She continued to sew, as her children were born, making and designing exquisite outfits for them.

She was also a lifelong artist, illustrating books she made for her children. As well, she also taught herself upholstery, knitting and gardening. Maggie had 3 children all born in Santa Monica, California. Timothy, Rebecca and Damian Vitale. She was a busy wife and mother lovingly caring for her family and beautiful homes as her husband's career with Burroughs Corporation flourished, requiring with every promotion a move to a new locale. From the Hollywood Hills of California (including Encino) to the Bloomfield Hills area of Michigan and eventually to the Bay Area (Los Gatos where Tim and Rebecca attended Los Gatos High School, and eventually Menlo Park).

Upon her husband's retirement in 1980 they moved to Aptos, CA enjoying a 20-year stay at the beach entertaining friends and family and supervising projects for her 5 grandchildren.

In 2000, they moved to Portola Valley, CA to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Jim passed away in September 2001 and Maggie continued to live in Portola Valley encumbered by the onset of dementia.

She is survived by Timothy James Vitale of Emeryville, Rebecca Vitale Mandich of Palo Alto and James Damian Vitale of San Carlos. Also survived by Jennifer West Vitale and Mitchell Mandich. Her five grandchildren include Matthew James Mandich, Madeleine Vitale Mandich, J.R. Vitale, Trentino Vitale and Bianca Vitale. Extended family includes sister in law, Lydia Modi Vitale, and nephews Christopher and Marc Vitale, Richard and Ronald Haxton.

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



■ WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

TOWN SQUARE FORUMPOST your views on the Town Square forum at
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854-2626, ext. 222.

Challenges at Menlo Park City district

Just a few weeks ago the Menlo Park City School District was humming along, secure in its top performance on statewide tests and moving steadily toward breaking ground on its new \$36 million campus at Hillview Middle School.

Then Superintendent Ken Ranella received a letter from the state saying the district was falling behind in educating some minority and low-income students, and soon after a controversy erupted over the district's decision to adopt what now appears to be a controversial math textbook.

EDITORIAL*The opinion of The Almanac*

Now the district is working hard to resolve both problems. The most serious is the district's failure to better prepare a handful of minority and low-income students for state proficiency tests in

English and math. Although only a very small number of students did not meet the criteria, we have to question how this could happen when virtually all other Menlo Park district students achieve such high marks on the exams.

The test results indicate teachers were successful in four of the six subgroups of students defined by the federal No Child Left Behind program. But fewer than 30 percent of the African American students made a minimum score on the English test (the goal was 35.2 percent) and only 33.3 percent made it in math, when the goal was 37 percent. Students in the lower income category achieved similar results.

Other student groups did somewhat better, with Hispanic students, Pacific Islander students, English language-learners, and students with disabilities surpassing the state target.

But that is little comfort to Mr. Ranella, who in a memo to staff said that unless the failing scores improve in the next two years, the school will receive the unwelcome designation of "program improvement," a euphemism which means state officials will intervene in the district's plans to bring all students up to speed.

Given its overall excellent test scores, the Menlo Park district surely has

the tools to pull up those students who need help. It won't be easy, due to the ever-rising proficiency targets in the years ahead. For example, at least 35.2 percent of students were expected to test as proficient or advanced in English in 2008. But the number jumps more than 10 percent each year to 78.4 percent in 2012. Similar jumps are expected in math.

Problem No. 2 is the unexpected wave of opposition from some parents about a new math textbook, "Everyday Mathematics," that was approved in December and will be introduced in the fall. The textbooks were adopted after receiving a solid recommendation from a committee of district teachers and administrators.

The parents complained that the decision was poorly publicized and one, Perla Ni, said the choice of a math curriculum "... needs to be a total community process."

Other parents said they found scathing reviews of the textbook in Google searches that said kindergarteners are taught to use calculators instead of learning basic math.

David Ackerman, principal of Oak Knoll School, strongly disagreed, saying such accusations are not true and warning parents that just because there's a lot of criticism on the Web doesn't mean it's valid. Try Googling "creation science" he said, and you'll find a lot of hits, but it doesn't mean that creation science is valid or meaningful.

He said he has the textbook, and "Nowhere does it say to use calculators for learning basic math."

At this point, it appears to be far past the deadline for changing or delaying the new math textbook. Mr. Ranella said that Menlo Park's math scores on the state STAR tests are very high. "A lot of districts would die for 80 to 85 percent of their kids (testing at) proficient or advanced. I don't think we're going to do something to go back on that."

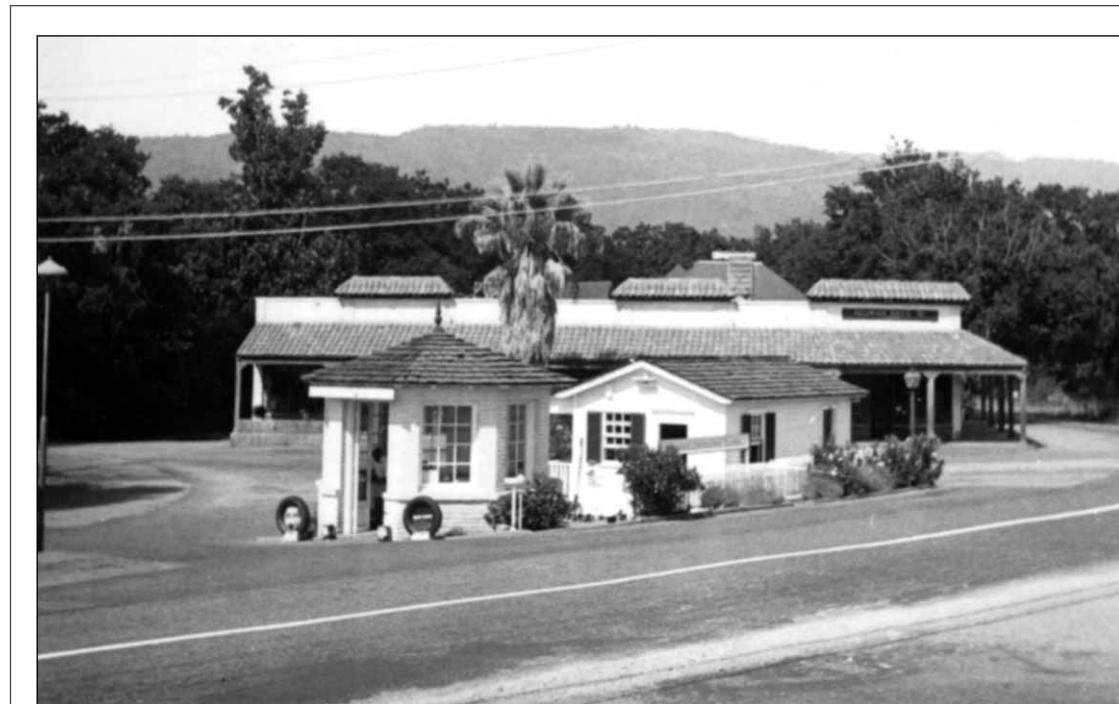
Board member Mark Box expressed confidence in the teachers and administrators who looked at "Everyday Mathematics." "It's not replacing basic and computational (skills) but enriching them with a deeper understanding of mathematics."

LETTERS*Our readers write***Sorry to see early blast at PV utility tax***Editor:*

Last week, The Almanac published a guest opinion piece by Ed Wells and Charles Engles, urging Portola Valley residents to oppose any consideration of renewing the Utility Users Tax (UUT) next November. As a member of the Portola Valley Town Council, I was troubled to read this piece.

Portola Valley has a long history of sound and prudent financial management. We have almost no sales tax revenue (the financial mainstay for most cities and towns) and receive only \$7 of every \$100 that our residents pay in property taxes. The additional funds provided by the UUT, together with a very lean town staff, have enabled us to avoid the financial upheavals that have plagued many neighboring communities.

The UUT has also provided funding to acquire open space. Although the yearly amounts collected are small, over time they enable major purchases of land that enhance the quality of



Audiffred Collection

Our Regional Heritage

The Standard Oil Station in the triangle between Woodside and Mountain Home roads in Woodside was a landmark for years. This 1953 view looks toward Roberts Market (seen behind the station) from Woodside Road.

life for all residents.

The Town Council will take up renewal of the UUT in coming months. It is unfortunate that Mr. Wells and Mr. Engles

would seek to stir up public opinion to abolish this vital revenue source for open space and essential services even before the Town Council holds a meeting

on the subject.

Steve Toben
Vice mayor, Santa Maria Avenue

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Portola Valley utility tax has got to go

Editor:

I support the letter written by Charles Engles and Ed Wells in last week's Almanac to repeal the utility tax in Portola Valley. As a result, I will be contacting the town as well in support of repealing this tax.

I am not aware of other upscale communities that have imposed this tax. At the end of the day it amounts to over \$500 or more per household. Furthermore, it is punitive when tied to usage-based bills such as PG&E. Our older population needs to keep their homes warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, so as they pay more for utilities, their tax rate goes up too.

With shrinking portfolios, many seniors are feeling the pinch. Businesses are feeling the pinch. Charitable donations, including local churches, are off by 15 percent in this neighborhood. So why can't the town operate within budget constraints as the rest of us are?

Try this. What if we could spend that \$500 per year per household in support of local merchants and service purveyors who are also feeling squeezed in this economy. As remote as we are, it is nice to have a gas station, a hardware store and a restaurant or two that are close by. Wouldn't that be a better way to support our wonderful community?

Karol Bondy
Saddleback Drive, Portola Valley

New study shows higher risk from meat

Editor:

A massive National Cancer Institute study in last week's Archives of Internal Medicine corroborates dozens of earlier findings linking meat consumption with premature deaths and reaffirms the role of lifestyle in determining our life expectancy.

The 10-year study of 545,653 Americans found that those consuming the equivalent of a small hamburger (every day) were 33 percent more likely to die, mostly from heart disease and cancer, than those who ate the least meat.

Last October, a study of 16,000 people in 52 countries, published by the American Heart Association, found that a "western" diet of meat, fried foods, and salty snacks raised the risk of heart attacks by 35 percent. Conversely, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables reduced heart attack risk by 30 percent. A 24-year study of 88,517 female nurses, published in last April's Archives of Internal Medicine found that those who ate lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole

grains, reduced their risk of heart attack and stroke by 24 and 18 percent, respectively.

A landmark review of 7,000 diet and health reports, released in the fall of 2007 by the World Cancer Research Fund, found a "convincing" link between consumption of meat and an elevated risk of colon cancer, as well as a "likely" link with cancers of the lung, stomach, pancreas, esophagus, prostate, and uterus.

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly we condemn regulatory authorities for traces of toxins in our food or water, while ignoring the much larger dietary health threat of animal products.

Miles Barne
Sharon Park Drive, Menlo Park

■ TOWN SQUARE

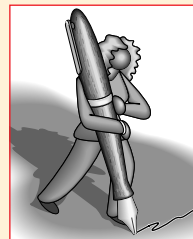
Post your views and comments on TownSquare:
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A tribute to Woodside's Bill Jackson

By Gary McKae

For four years I had the honor and privilege to sit next to and serve with Bill Jackson on the Woodside Town Council. Throughout those four years of working with Bill — as mayor pro-tem, mayor and council member, I was impressed with the dedication to service and fairness he applied as he took on the problems that faced us on the council.

"Not on my watch" were Bill's words when we were faced with a decision that was politically charged. He took to solving a problem as he took to the sails when he sailed his boat. He attacked with vim and vigor and determination to solve the problem and find the middle ground that satisfied all council



GUEST OPINION

members, the citizens of Woodside, as well as town staff members

The town of Woodside was very fortunate and has been very fortunate in

having the volunteer services of people like Bill Jackson. In looking back over the 24 years I lived in Woodside and the over 10 years of committee and council service, there is no one person who stands out as much in terms of service and dedication as Bill Jackson.

To give you an idea of the type of man Bill Jackson was let me

tell you what he said to me when we left the council:

"Gary, do you know what I will miss about you?"

"No I don't, Bill," I replied.

"Your smile," he said.

Do you know what he said when we met when the town put on a service recognition event for the town's anniversary?

"Gary, good to see you and that smile of yours again."

There could be no greater recognition for Bill than for the town to create a Bill Jackson Recognition Award for Community Service for an individual who has served the town of Woodside. No one person would deserve it more than "Not on my watch" Bill Jackson.

Gary McKae is a former Woodside Town Council member. ■

Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection**A Bright Idea!**

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Woodside **\$6,850,000**
Completely remodeled home privately situated on 4.5+ac surrounded by Wunderlich Park. Pool, 10-stall barn/ring.



Patricia Robison & Ursula Cremona
650.209.1620/ 650.209.1621
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Los Altos Hills **\$4,200,000**
California living tucked away in the hills on 3+/- acres. This 3bd/2ba home was designed by renowned architect Goodwin Steinberg.



Carol, Rosemary & Nicole
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Palo Alto **\$2,350,000**
4bd/3ba located on one of Crescent Park's most enchanting streets where each home is a custom classic.



Grace Wu
650.543.1086
gwu@apr.com



Palo Alto **\$2,295,000**
Extensively remodeled 5bd/3ba with top-of-the-line amenities and fine details throughout.



Lynn Wilson Roberts
650.209.1563
lwilsonroberts@apr.com



Redwood City **\$2,095,000**
Elegant 4bd/3.5ba home + bonus room. 3 fireplaces with hand-carved limestone mantels. Bay and canyon views.



Maggie Heilman
650.543.1185
mheilman@apr.com



Menlo Park **\$1,975,000**
Price slashed! was \$2,295,000. Stunning superior quality new construction. Las Lomas Schools.



Joe & Mary Merkert
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jmerkert@apr.com



Menlo Park **\$1,750,000**
Top of Sharon Heights. Impeccably remodeled in 2004 this 3bd/2.5ba home boasts tasteful finishes throughout.



Kyra Gebhardt
650.740.1811
kyra@apr.com



Menlo Park **\$1,495,000**
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Julia Keady
650.400.0100
jkeady@apr.com



Palo Alto **\$1,098,000**
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John Forsyth James
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