

WOODSIDE HIGH GIRL struck in Atherton crosswalk;
the driver was a 73-year-old Atherton man. Page 10

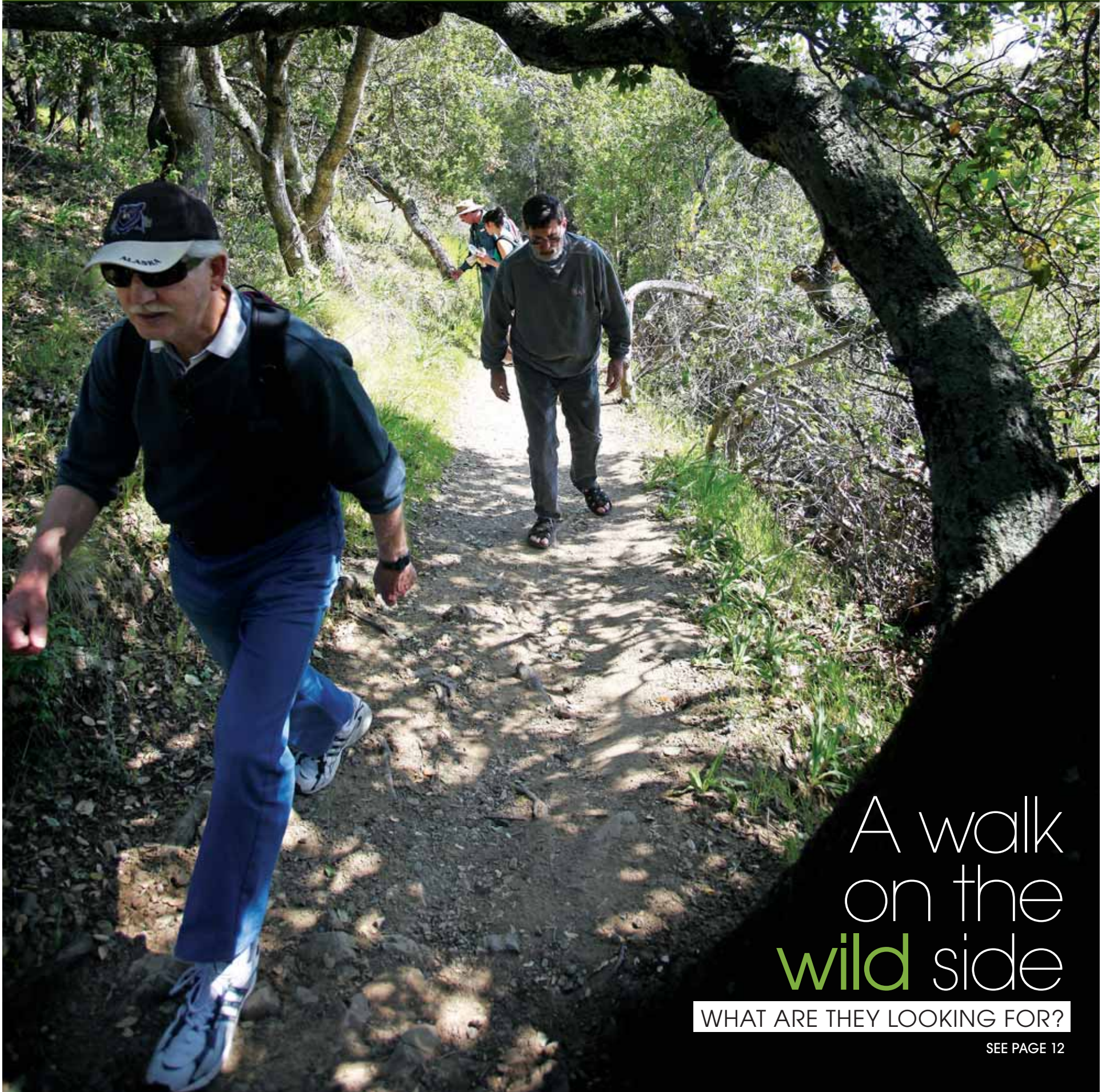
The Almanac

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

APRIL 15, 2009 | www.TheAlmanacOnline.com | VOL. 44 NO. 33



Inside:
Spring
Home &
Garden
Magazine



A walk
on the
wild side

WHAT ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?

SEE PAGE 12

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

High cost of child care

Suetelane Paludo picks up her daughter Zuri and son Enzo from Menlo Children's Center, as staffer Kelly Gallo holds open the door. Ms. Paludo, a single working mother, says she spends \$32,400 per year on child care. She's considering moving out of Menlo Park; if she goes, the high cost of child care would be a big part of the reason, she says. **See story on Page 5.**

Atherton

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Home & Garden Design

■ This magazine (inserted in this issue) has a story on an Atherton remodel, "Command central: Creating a reason to entertain at home."

On the cover

Horst Denner is followed by Pete Slosberg during a recent wildflower walk in Edgewood Park. Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac. See **Page 12.**

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Other Whites

Believe it, or not, Chardonnay is not the only white wine grape in the world. In fact, there are myriad white varieties, many of which produce fantastic, interesting, unique wines. Here are a few hand chosen examples that offer great quality, and excellent value.

2007 Ken Forrester "Petit"

Chenin Blanc, South Africa

A clean, fresh citrusy white with a crisp, dry finish.

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2008 Lee Family Farm Verdelho, Lodi

A Spanish/Portuguese grape best known for Madeira. Fantastic value!

Reg. \$12.99

SALE \$10⁹⁹

2008 Crios Torrontes, Argentina

90 pts - The Wine Advocate! A dry, fragrant white. Refreshing!

Reg. \$13.99

SALE \$11⁹⁹

2008 Morgan Pinot Gris,

Franscioni Vineyard

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SALE \$12⁹⁹

2008 Wild Rode Sauvignon Blanc,

New Zealand

A true rarity from New Zealand, this wine is actually bone dry.

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SALE \$12⁹⁹

2007 Ch. de la Fessardiere Muscadet

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Local parents feel squeezed out of child care

■ As fees increase, they worry that middle-class mothers may be forced to stay home.

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

As the city of Menlo Park works to greatly reduce its subsidy of the city-run West Menlo child care program, some parents are wondering whether child care is fast becoming a privilege of the rich.

Saddled with mortgage payments and child care bills, and squeezed by the recession, several young mothers told The Almanac that their options are limited. Rising child care costs might force some mothers to quit their jobs, or to move out of the city, they said. Nearby private centers are either too costly, or have mile-long wait lists.

A majority of council members say they're sympathetic to the

parents' dilemma, but that they can't justify funding child care with taxpayer money. Menlo Children's Center only serves a small portion of the community, they say — 56 children are enrolled in the preschool and toddler program — and the city subsidizes 40 percent of the program's cost, according to a recent study by a city-hired consultant.

The council has tasked a city commission with evaluating how the city can cut that subsidy, one way or another. But parents say they couldn't afford to pay the full cost, and some shudder at the thought of the city handing the facility over to a private provider.

See photo on Page 3.

Priced out?

Though only a handful of people use the city's child care service, parents argue that it should be a communal concern.

'This shouldn't be looked at as a business. This is an investment in the future of the community.'

PARENT YAEL CASPI

It enables women to stay in the work force, and makes it possible for middle-class families to afford Menlo Park.

"This shouldn't be looked at as a business," said parent Yael Caspi. "This is an investment in the future of the community."

Osnat Loewenthal, whose has

two children enrolled in the center, contends that parents who send their kids to child care centers are primarily middle- or upper-middle class. But the cost of care for two children, even in Menlo Park's heavily subsidized program, is on par with college tuition. One single mother, Suetelane Paludo, said she spends \$32,400 per year to send her two preschool-aged children to Menlo Children's Center.

"We're just starting our lives here," Ms. Paludo said. "We like it here, and we need a little help to get going."

Ms. Loewenthal said that friends of hers have moved away because they couldn't afford the already steep cost of child care.

As the economy stagnates, there is a growing need for affordable child care that's not

being met in the private or the public sector, parents say. With a wait list of 67 children, the city should be providing more child care, they say — not cutting back on the program it already offers.

'A complete disconnect'

As parents say rising prices are squeezing them out of the child care service, council members say rising costs threaten to squeeze the city out of its role as a provider of that service. It's expensive to live on the Peninsula, and everyone is feeling the burn of the recession. But that doesn't mean the city should give parents an across-the-board subsidy, a majority of council members say.

"I've been taking my own man-on-the-street poll" about

See CHILD CARE, page 8

Woodside Library marks historical milestone with its 150th anniversary

By Barbara Wood
Special to The Almanac

Woodside, home of San Mateo County's very first library, is celebrating a century and a half of being a community of book lovers this month.

On Saturday, April 18, the Woodside Library will mark 150 years since a library association was first formed in Woodside in 1859.

The celebration also recognizes two other anniversaries: the 82 years since the San Mateo County Library first came to Woodside and the 40 years since Woodside's own library building was officially dedicated, on April 20, 1969.

Woodside's first library was a private organization, as most libraries were in those days. According to a history of the library written by Marilyn M. Kaphan in 1972, readers bought shares at \$5 each, giving them the right to check out the library's holdings.

The \$250 raised by selling the original shares was used to purchase 190 books costing \$212.14.

How Woodside will celebrate.
See Page 8

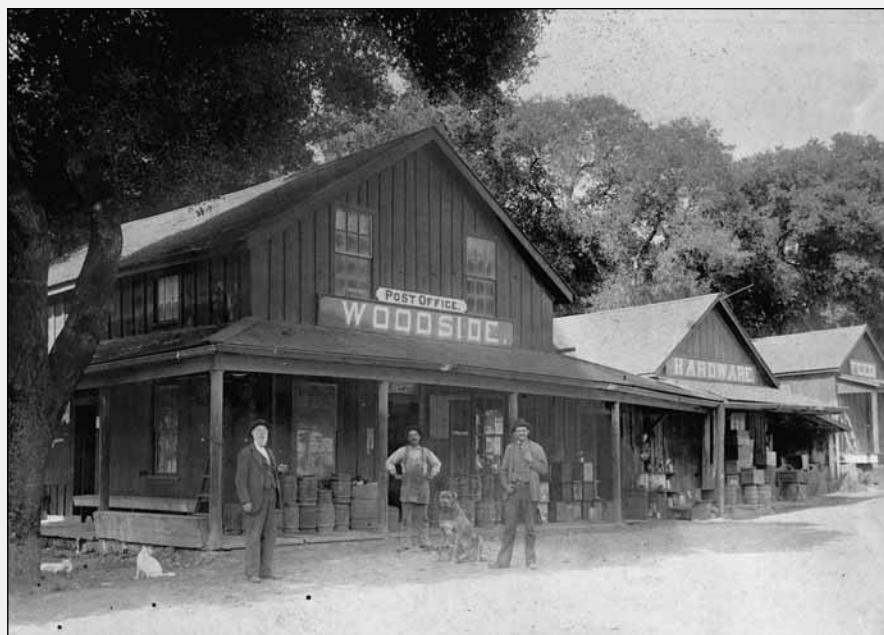
Ms. Kaphan's history says the association eventually owned 589 books, including "Shakespeare's Complete Works," "Swiss Family Robinson" and "Wyeth's Text Book on Surgery."

The books were mainly nonfiction, and Ms. Kaphan tells of an 1859 letter from a Woodsider to the San Mateo County Gazette, bragging that: "People who read such works ... cannot but be intelligent. ..."

Before long, however, the population of Woodside fell dramatically as the local redwoods were logged out, and the library association suffered. By 1865 the number of active readers had dropped to two dozen and in 1872, when only 12 members were left, the association was dissolved and the remaining books divided among the stockholders.

John Greer, president of the library association, wrote the following to the remaining members on June 25, 1872:

"I am sorry to find so little interest taken in our library. We



The Tripp Store was the home of the library for many years in the 19th century. This photo was taken in 1898.

Courtesy, Woodside History Committee

have been unable to get more than one meeting of the members since 1868; in fact, it is no easy matter to call the members together, they are now so scattered, some living in Mayfield, San Francisco, and a few about Woodside.

"Some definite action must now be taken, as the Library is only a bore to Dr. Tripp, who has so kindly kept it in his store for years, for which he merits the sincere thanks of the members."

For the next 43 years, Woodside readers were on their own — until the San Mateo County public library system began in 1915. In 1927, the town was given its own branch library, housed

in the old schoolhouse, which is now the Woodside Elementary School library.

The earliest circulation records, Ms. Kaphan's history shows, were from 1930-31 when 2,079 books were checked out.

By 1946, the library had outgrown its space, and moved into the former Woodside Inn, located where Roberts Market now has its parking lot. In 1948, that building was condemned, and the library moved across the street into the former Neumann Store, located in what is now the front parking lot of the Gilbert Center.

That building also had a few drawbacks, including a leaky roof

and an infestation of rodents. In 1960 a committee began searching for a site for a permanent library. But, as with much of the history of Woodside, all did not go smoothly.

The first site that was proposed was rejected by the town because it did not have enough parking. A second site, at 240 Mountain Home Road, was donated in 1965. But, according to Ms. Kaphan's history, more than 100 residents jammed a Planning Commission meeting to protest the location, citing noise and traffic concerns.

Opponents "also argued that

See LIBRARY, page 8

Water conservation urged; rationing seems unlikely

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Rainfall has been well below normal this season, the third dry year in a row. Neighboring Santa Clara County has already enacted a mandatory 15 percent water reduction program, but Midpeninsula residents of San Mateo County probably will not face water rationing this year.

Officials of both the Menlo Park Municipal Water District and the California Water Service Co. (Cal Water), which also serves local residents, said last week that their agencies

are unlikely to impose a rationing program unless the agency supplying their water — the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission — reduces the supply. And that probably won't happen.

Although the SFPUC has yet to make a final decision, the agency, which gets water from the Hetch Hetchy watershed, "is in a com-

paratively better situation" than other California watersheds, said Tony Winnicker, SFPUC director of communications.

At this point, "unless we see an unexpected surge in use by our customers," SFPUC staff is poised to recommend to the agency's board that the 10 percent voluntary reduction plan already in place be continued, Mr. Winnicker said.

The board will make its decision later this month or in early May, he said.

"But even if we don't impose a mandatory (limits), it's still really important that people keep up their good conservation efforts," he said.

Both Cal Water, which serves Portola Valley, Woodside, Atherton and portions of Menlo Park, and the Menlo Park Municipal Water District have a 10 percent voluntary reduction program in place.

Mr. Winnicker said San Franciscans, who are directly served

See **WATER**, page 17

San Francisco PUC likely will continue a 10 percent voluntary reduction program.



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The City of Menlo Park is continuing to develop a long-term plan for the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. You are invited to the first of three community workshops scheduled to help develop the Specific Plan for these areas. During this first workshop, the focus will be on Vision Refinement and Specific Opportunities/Constraints. Subsequent workshops will consider Preliminary Concept Alternatives (second workshop) and Refined Concept Plans, Programs and Guidelines (third workshop), resulting in agreement for improvements to the project area.

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Local Lehman hearing postponed

A congressional field hearing on the local effects of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, which had been set for Thursday in Redwood City, has been postponed, said Bill Chiang, a legislative aide to San Mateo County Supervisor Adrienne Tissier.

The hearing was to have been co-chaired by Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, and Rep. Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo.

U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., the chair of the House Financial Services Committee, decided that the Lehman topic was important enough to be heard by the committee itself, and the hearing will be rescheduled for sometime in May in San Mateo County, Mr. Chiang said in an e-mail.

The collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment bank caused

■ SCHOOLS

a number of local government agencies, including the Menlo Park City School and Sequoia Union High School districts, to lose millions of dollars that were held by the San Mateo County Investment Pool.

New principal at Laurel School

Assistant Principal Linda Creighton has been tapped to take the top job at Laurel School in Atherton, Menlo Park City School District Superintendent Ken Ranella announced April 13. Principal Nancy Hendry, who has led the grade K-2 school for the past 19 years, is retiring this summer.

"We are fortunate to have such a

committed educator take the reins from Nancy Hendry, Mr. Ranella said in an e-mail announcing the decision. "I am confident that the transition will be seamless for Laurel's staff, students and families."

Ms. Creighton has worked for the district since 2002. Besides her role as assistant principal, she has taught first and second grades, spent three years as co-director of the district's Summer School Institute, supervised a district-wide science program sponsored by the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation, and been a member of the district's steering committee on strategic planning, according to Mr. Ranella.

She was chosen following a "comprehensive" recruitment and selection process, Mr. Ranella said.

Community leader in Portola Valley dies at 65

Barbara Lotz (Schneiderman), a creative force in the Portola Valley community from the 1980s to the early 1990s, died April 3 in the presence of her children and friends at a Monterey hospital. She was 65.

A celebration of her life will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 19, at the Hidden Valley Institute of the Arts, 88 West Carmel Valley Road in Carmel Valley.

Sixteen years ago, she moved to Carmel Valley after her divorce from attorney Art Schneiderman of Woodside and resumed her maiden name of Lotz.

She is remembered as the impresario who initiated six Portola Valley theatrical productions, involving community members on stage and behind the scenes, to raise funds for the public schools. She is a founder of the district fundraising committee that later became the nonprofit Portola Valley Schools Foundation, which has raised millions for the schools.

A longer obituary on Ms. Lotz will be published in a future issue of The Almanac.

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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.

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

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Portola Valley celebrates Earth Day early with an environmental fair

Earth Day turns 39 on April 22, and Portola Valley is marking the occasion a few days early with its first Earth Day Fair for four hours on Saturday, April 18, at the Town Center at 765 Portola Road.

There won't be a Ferris wheel, but there will be people available to talk about how to reduce your emissions of climate-changing greenhouse gases, including through composting, water conservation, home deconstruction and bicycling, according to a town bulletin.

The fair, which begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m., will include tours of the new Town Center complex, notable for its green-building materials and design and the opening up of some 280 feet of a previously buried creek.

Among the organizations planning to provide information about their programs:

■ GreenWaste Recovery, the town's recycling and

waste-disposal service, which will have a recycling game for kids.

■ CalWater Services, the local water company, which will have water-audit kits for the first 40 residents.

■ San Mateo County RecycleWorks, which will have master composters on hand to demonstrate composting techniques.

■ Palo Alto-based Acterra with a light-bulb display.

■ The Reuse People, an Oakland-based resource for home deconstruction and material salvaging.

■ The town's Conservation Committee with a Conservation Guide and native plant guidelines.

■ The Portola Valley Garden Club with a native-plant demonstration.

■ Safe Routes to School and SamTrans, with bus information and maps.

■ Nike Reuse-a-Shoe, a recycler of athletic shoe for use in synthetic sport surfaces.

Parents feel squeezed out

CHILD CARE

continued from page 5

child care, said Mayor Heyward Robinson. "Everybody I've talked to has agreed with me" that only parents who need a subsidy should receive one.

How such a policy would work is anyone's guess at this point. But asking parents to pay full cost might price the center out of the market. Parents of preschoolers currently pay only 60 percent of the center's cost, but its (subsidized) price is not far behind rates at several comparable centers identified by city staff. (Staff members said they have not calculated the total cost of running the program).

A private operator may be able to run the center at a lower cost, council members say. But some parents balk at that idea, arguing that it would likely mean a revolving door of inexperienced teachers.

And there's no guarantee that the city would have any takers. A search for private providers fizzled in 2006, with several companies saying the controversy surrounding the center made them think twice about

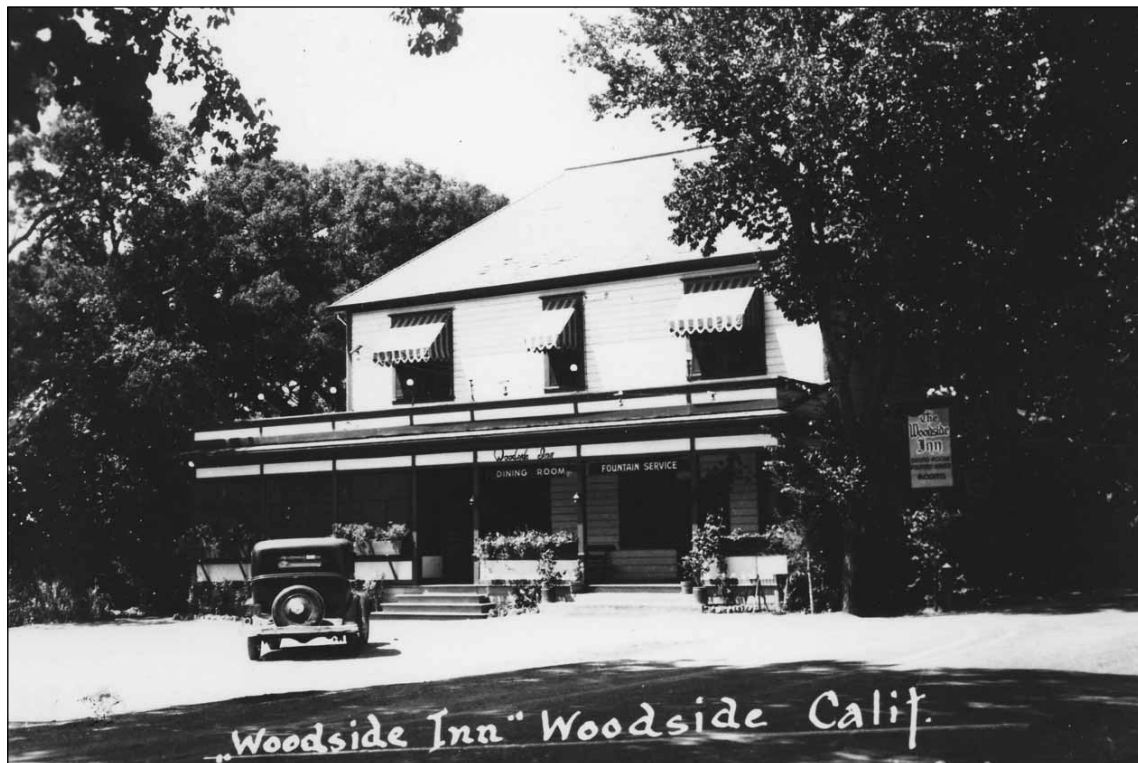
whether they wanted to submit a bid.

"There will be a lot of pressure on the company" that takes over the center, Ms. Loewenthal said. "You'll hear the noise."

The situation might call for some creativity on the part of parents, and the city. Mr. Robinson floated the idea of establishing an endowment, or running the program as a co-op, with parents donating their time. City staff have suggested several measures to make the program more efficient.

Ms. Loewenthal and the other parents who spoke to The Almanac say they have ideas of their own, and that they're eager to work with the city to come up with a plan. But three years removed from the city's scuttled attempt to privatize the center, many are wary of the city's intentions — and perplexed by the claim that parents should bear the full cost of child care.

"There is a complete disconnect" between parents and the City Council, Ms. Loewenthal said. "I come from a country where child care is a public service. Why isn't this part of the public school system?" ■



Courtesy, Woodside History Committee

By 1946 the library had outgrown its space, and moved into the former Woodside Inn (shown here), located where Roberts Market now has its parking lot.

Woodside Library marks 150th anniversary

LIBRARY

continued from page 5

an expanded library would bring in outsiders," the Redwood City Tribune reported in 1966.

In the meantime, in 1962, the library moved into the former Demma's market at 3060 Woodside Road, but the owners soon decided they wanted to demolish the building.

Frustrated by the lack of a permanent home, the Friends of the Woodside Library formed to search for an acceptable site. They found it at 3140 Woodside Road, where the Bonanfant family wanted to sell 1-1/2 acres for \$40,000.

That site was approved without controversy, and the committee raised the money to buy it.

The San Mateo County Library System's newsletter documented one of the interesting side effects of the fundraising campaign in 1967: "Many residents have discovered and used the library for the first time. One elderly gentleman arrived by chauffeured limousine, liked the books which he found, and became a frequent borrower."

If fact, it was reported, the unidentified gentleman was so impressed that he donated \$10,000 to the library fund.

Tom Whitson, a local resident and supervisor of the county's architectural and engineering division, designed the library. It cost almost \$200,000 to build and was designed to hold 30,000 volumes.

Also built in was the possibility of expansion to serve the population of 10,000 residents that Woodside was then predicted to reach. (While the town has never reached that size, in the 2007-2008 fiscal year the library

Library celebration: Schedule of activities

Activities for patrons of all ages, along with displays featuring the history of the Woodside Library and the town, are planned for the library's triple anniversary on Saturday, April 18.

All events are free and open to the public.

Saturday's schedule of events includes:

■ Noon: Opening ceremonies, featuring the building's architect, Tom Whitson, and an original song by Mike Eppley, the library's story-time musician. Winners of a contest to name the kites that hang from the building's rafters will be announced.

12:30 p.m.: Hot dog barbecue lunch.

■ 1-2 p.m.: Old-time crafts from the 1850s, 1920s and 1960s, designed for those age 4 and up.

■ 2-2:45 p.m.: Entertainment by Mr. Horsefeathers, a zany variety show.

■ 3 p.m.: An anniversary cake plus a miniature donkey serving as an equine ambassador from the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy in Woodside.

Library staff members will wear period costumes. Others are encouraged to do likewise for the chance to win a prize.

did have more than 9,000 library card holders).

The new library was dedicated in April 1969, and soon after the County Almanac reported that circulation for the month of April had doubled from the previous year, from 2,073 to 4,554.

Although the population of Woodside did not grow as much as predicted when the library was designed, in recent years the quarters had become tight due to all the modern services offered by the library.

In 2001, the Friends of the Woodside Library raised money to add needed space by enclosing the rear patio of the library. The cost of the project was \$13,000, less than the original budget by Chesler Construction.

The most recent library sta-

tistics, from 2007-2008, show 113,727 items were checked out, and more than 90,000 visits were made to the library.

Today's library circulates, in addition to books, audio CDs, books on CD, movies on DVD, magazines, newspapers, and digital and audio recorded books.

Services include on-site public computers, wireless Internet, children's story time, adult programs, book clubs, a twice-year book sale, and the native plant garden, which in 1970 was installed by the Woodside-Atherton Garden Club and landscape architect Jack Stafford.

Barbara Wood is a member of Woodside's History Committee and an avid patron of the Woodside Library. ■



An architect's rendering of the 110,000 square-foot office/retail project proposed for 1300 El Camino Real. The structure would be set back from the curb by 22 feet for most of its length, and would reach a height of 40 feet.

City reviews plan for abandoned dealership

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

The developer of the site of an abandoned car dealership on El Camino Real laid out the details of a proposed office/retail complex at an April 6 meeting of the Menlo Park Planning Commission, to generally favorable reviews.

The proposal, at the site of the former Cadillac dealership at 1300 El Camino, calls for 58,700 square feet of office space and 51,365 square feet of retail/restaurant, along with 37,400 square feet of landscaped space, including a patio. The project would be designed in the Spanish style, according to the architect, with a

mixture of stucco, stone veneer, tile roofs, and iron details.

To accommodate the project, the City Council would have to approve a rezoning of the site. The changes would allow for an increase in building height from 30 to 40 feet, but would also require a greater setback from the curb and more open space than current zoning laws.

The proposal falls within current density allowances. Though the city is currently engaged in a planning process for El Camino Real that won't wrap up until the fall of 2010, the council has indicated it would consider projects for El Camino Real that don't exceed density restrictions currently in place.

Though plans for Whole Foods to occupy the site appear to be dead, a grocery store is still a possibility, according to Jeff Warmoth of Sand Hill Property Co. The site could also allow for a restaurant, a health club, or other retail operations.

Housing option

During the study session, commissioners weighed an alternative project, put forward by the developer at the behest of the City Council, that would replace some of the retail space with 36 residential units. Commissioner Jack O'Malley said he

See **SITE**, page 10

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EYE CARE NEWS



Presented by
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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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Woodside High student struck in Atherton crosswalk

■ The driver was a 73-year-old Atherton man.

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

A 16-year-old Woodside High School girl remains in Stanford Hospital with a broken leg, broken pelvis and kidney trauma after being struck by a car in a crosswalk on Monday, April 6, at around 12:40 p.m., Atherton police reported.

The driver, a 73-year-old Atherton man whose name is being withheld pending a review of the case for criminal charges by the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office, may be charged with failure to yield to a pedestrian and driving without his glasses, Sgt. Anthony Kockler of the Atherton Police Department said.

The girl, whose name is being withheld because she is a juvenile, had been walking west across El Camino Real at Stockbridge Ave. Other southbound vehicles on El Camino had stopped for her, but the gold 1995 Honda Accord traveling in the center lane did not and hit her, witnesses said, at a speed of between 30 and 40 mph, according to police.

She was knocked about 100 feet south into the far right lane and was initially unconscious, Sgt. Kockler said. There were no skid marks, he said.

The Honda had dents in the hood, a "good sized" dent in the

windshield, and damage to the front bumper, police said.

The driver, after moving past the girl, had pulled over to the shoulder and was out of his car when police arrived. "He was extremely nervous, shaken and upset by what happened," Sgt. Kockler said.

Atherton police have forwarded the facts of the case to the state Department of Motor Vehicles and have asked for a reevaluation of the driver's suitability to continue driving.

Deputies from the county Sheriff's Office routed traffic around the accident scene for about an hour as California Highway Patrol officers assisted Atherton police in gathering evidence, Sgt. Kockler said.

El Camino and the crosswalk are under the control of the California Department of Transportation. That crosswalk does not get a lot of pedestrian traffic, Lt. Mike Guerra of the Atherton Police Department said.

The nearest red light to the crosswalk is at Fifth Ave. in Redwood City, a few hundred yards to the north, Lt. Guerra said. The next light to the south is Atherton Avenue about a half mile away.

Travel speeds in that section of El Camino are often 35 to 45 mph, he said, but it varies with time of day and traffic conditions. Southbound traffic can reach 50 or 55 mph with a green light at Fifth Avenue, he said. ■

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SITE

continued from page 9

would support the project only if it included housing. Elizabeth Lasensky, a member of the Housing Commission, said in public comment that the site was one of the last available spots in the city to add high-density housing.

But Commissioner Katie Ferrick said she was concerned that requiring housing might be too onerous.

"I just don't want to see us force something on them that becomes a project not built," she said.

Mr. Warmoth said it would be difficult to obtain financing for housing, and that a mixed-use project with condominium units would be tricky to pull off for other reasons. "Adding housing complicates things quite a bit," he said.

Sand Hill previously proposed constructing 135 apartments and 81,000 square feet of commercial space in buildings up to 60 feet tall — a project praised by past council members, but not the current council. At the meet-

ing, he said apartments would be easier to incorporate into the design than condominiums.

Parking, traffic

Sand Hill's proposal calls for 422 parking spaces, less than two-thirds of the 661 required by current zoning laws. Henry Riggs, the commission's chair, argued that the request for fewer spots is valid because many of those spots would be shared between people who use the offices during the day, and those who use the retail or restaurant facilities at night.

Mr. Warmoth called the city's requirement of six parking spots per 1,000 developed square feet excessive, saying he was confident that a parking study by a city-hired consultant would conclude that fewer parking spaces are sufficient.

A ground-level lot would contain 98 of those spaces, with 324 in an underground structure.

Traffic would increase significantly on several nearby streets, according to an environmental review by a city-hired consultant. ■

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In search of flowers

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHELLE LE

Docents provide the facts, flowers offer the pleasure on weekend hikes in Edgewood Park

Edgewood Park has long been a springtime destination for wildflower-lovers, who feast their eyes on the colorful flowers that enliven the hills and meadows of the preserve, located just off Interstate 280 and Edgewood Road, near Redwood City.

The county park and designated natural preserve comprises 467 acres of grasslands, chaparral, coastal scrub regions and foothill woodlands. Serpentine soil on 160 of its acres nurtures native plants that don't thrive in most other environments.

On Saturdays and Sundays through mid-June, volunteer docents lead free hikes from 10 a.m. to about 1 p.m. Depending on what's in bloom at the time, hikers can see flowers ranging from Indian warrior, owl's clover and lupine to fairy lanterns, Ithuriel's spears, farewell-to-springs, and shooting stars.

Hikers are advised to bring water, a hat, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, and a snack, if desired.

For more information, go to friendsofedgeswood.org

Hikers enjoy the walk, as well as the wildflowers, at Edgewood Park.



Left, middle: Luci Wilkins, Ron Horii and docent John Morse stop to admire the silver bush lupine, also shown above. Left: Sticky monkey flower tolerates clay and serpentine soil; they are half an inch to one inch in diameter.



Left: A gopher snake is camouflaged by branches and greenery along the Edgewood Natural Preserve pathway. Below: Miner's lettuce is an edible native plant.



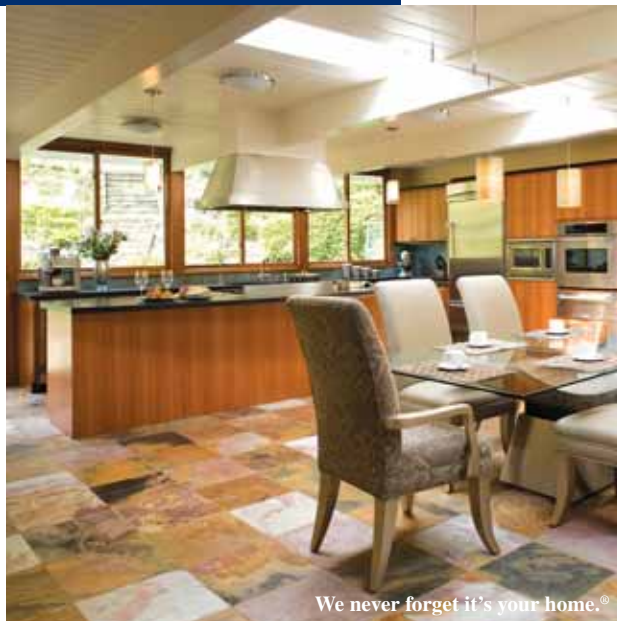
Left: Docent Frances Morse shows hairs from the root of a soap plant, used by Native Americans for many uses, including to treat rashes caused by poison ivy.

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Tensions resurface over bike/pedestrian bridge

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

Long-simmering tensions surrounding a bike/pedestrian bridge over U.S. 101 at Ringwood Avenue in Menlo Park are boiling over again, as Caltrans evaluates design options for a new bridge.

Residents of the Flood Triangle neighborhood on the west side of the freeway are petitioning for the bridge not be replaced after the current structure is demolished, while residents on the east side of the freeway are asking that plans to rebuild it move ahead.

The bridge last sparked controversy in December 2007, when the City Council recommended that Caltrans rebuild the bridge after the existing one, which has been in place for over 50 years, is torn down to allow for additional freeway lanes.

But the final decision will lie with Caltrans, not Menlo Park — and the transportation agency has already concluded its environmental review process, siding with the city's recommendation for a replacement bridge.

The council could choose to

review the design options put forth by Caltrans. Theoretically, it could even recommend that the bridge not be rebuilt, if council members aren't satisfied with the designs, said City Attorney Bill McClure.

But the project is not subject to the city's approval. Calls to a Caltrans spokeswoman were not returned.

Bridge controversy

In late March, when Caltrans held two meetings in Menlo Park to solicit input on bridge design options, Flood Triangle residents who hadn't been aware of the city's initial recommendation expressed shock at the plan to rebuild the bridge. They began rallying for the decision to be reversed, circulating a petition.

In response, Belle Haven residents, M-A students, cyclists, and others who use the bridge weighed in with e-mails to the City Council's e-mail log, urging plans for a rebuild to continue.

Flood Triangle residents say the bridge provides criminals easy

See **BRIDGE**, page 15

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Former editor arrested again on drug charges

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton resident Brian Bothun, a former reporter for the Daily Post and former editor of the Palo Alto Daily News, was arrested on drug-related charges in a parking lot at 2331 El Camino Real in Palo Alto at 4:50 a.m. Monday, April 5.

Mr. Bothun, 47, was booked into Santa Clara County jail on charges of possessing and being under the influence of dangerous drugs. His bail was set at \$11,000, but the arrest report from the Santa Clara Police Department does not say whether he made bail.

Mr. Bothun has had earlier run-ins with the law, including a March 2008 arrest by Atherton police related to misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia — a glass pipe — and an under-the-influence citation from a late-night traffic altercation in Menlo Park in July 2008.

The March incident included a search of his home that led to the discovery of child pornography on his computer, police said. Mr. Bothun pleaded not guilty to that charge on Sept. 30 in San Mateo County Superior Court, with his

See **BOTHUN**, page 21

BRIDGE

continued from page 14

access to and from the low-income Belle Haven neighborhood, arguing that its removal would lead to a decrease in property crimes.

Belle Haven residents, meanwhile, say the bridge is a critical access point to the west side of the city, especially for students who attend Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton. West Menlo residents are using complaints about crime as a flimsy cover for their racism, they say.

People on each side of the issue offered similar arguments when the council made its 2007 recommendation.

Councilman Andy Cohen, who dissented in the council's original recommendation over concerns that Caltrans wouldn't work with local communities, said the city should try to persuade the agency to leave the bridge down after it removes it.

"We need to stop that project," Mr. Cohen said, arguing that running shuttle buses across the overpass at Willow Road would be a more efficient solution.

But several residents have argued that shuttles would unduly inconvenience M-A students. ▀

Bohannon project could go to council within a year

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

A massive office/hotel project proposed by developer David Bohannon could be the subject of at least a dozen public meetings over the next 10 months, as the city of Menlo Park works to negotiate public benefits in exchange for major zoning concessions.

At its meeting on Tuesday, April 14, the City Council will discuss a proposal on how the city should proceed in its negotiations with Mr. Bohannon.

The proposed 930,000 square-foot project, near the intersection of Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway, would include three, eight-story office buildings and a 230-room Marriott hotel.

Current zoning allows for buildings up to 35 feet tall; that would shoot up to 140 feet under the

new zoning proposal. The project proposed by Mr. Bohannon would be more than twice as dense as the current maximum level.

In July, the city plans to hold three public meetings to find out what type of public benefits residents would like in exchange for amending the general plan and creating a new zoning district. Benefits could come in various forms, from providing open space to paying money to the city.

The city would hire a consultant to help determine the value of the zoning concessions, according to Thomas Rogers, an associate planner.

No complaints about shorter minutes

After a four-month trial period, residents haven't registered any complaints with the city about a new, abbreviated form of meeting

■ MENLO WATCH

minutes, according to City Clerk Margaret Roberts.

The briefer style of minutes simply reports the outcome of council votes. It does not summarize discussion on the dais, as did the form of minutes previously used by the city. The briefer style also lists announcements and topics addressed by public speakers in brief, Twitter-like bursts.

The City Council will decide whether to permanently adopt "action" minutes at its meeting Tuesday, April 14.

Council members unanimously approved the new form of minutes for a trial period in December, saying video technology that allows residents to watch past meetings makes the more detailed minutes superfluous.

But Councilman Andy Cohen

subsequently said he had changed his mind, arguing that the video technology is unreliable and more difficult to negotiate, especially for older residents.

Ms. Roberts said the city would work to better index the video, and make it more compatible with Apple computers.

Sidewalk arts festival

Work by more than 90 artists will grace Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park from Friday, April 17, through Sunday, April 19, as part of the city's 27th annual Sidewalk Fine Arts Festival.

Mixed media paintings, photography, and jewelry will be on display from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. The event is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. ▀

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Deadline on fire map passes, but building code changes likely

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

A deadline will pass without the Portola Valley Town Council acting to formally adopt a wildfire hazard map prepared by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The council had until April 14 to accept a Cal Fire map that showed a “very high” risk of wildfire in the northwest corner of town, including the Woodside Highlands neighborhood. The agenda for the April 8 meeting did not mention the map, and the next scheduled meeting is April 22.

Mayor Ann Wengert said in an interview after the April 8 meeting that the council, at its Feb. 25 meeting, had, in her estimation, reached a consensus: the town will establish its own wildfire

hazards policies in concert with a community discussion that will likely lead to amending the building code to increase fire resistance throughout town.

“We wanted to consider all the aspects (of fire protection) and not just the Cal Fire map,” she told *The Almanac*, adding that the missed deadline does not mean that the Cal Fire map won’t be adopted.

Several neighborhoods have severe wildfire risks, according to a map prepared by the Woodside Fire Protection District, which serves Portola Valley. This map, district officials said, was based on a scientific analysis of terrain, prevailing winds and the types and moisture content of vegetation.

When the community discussion begins, there will be a third map — the so-called “Moritz

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

map” prepared for the town by consultant Ray Moritz — that largely agrees with the fire district’s map.

There are no penalties if Portola Valley does not adopt Cal Fire’s map, but if it is adopted, real estate agents selling homes in areas labeled as “very high” risk would have to notify potential homebuyers.

Asked about the potential for a new Highlands homeowner to be uninformed about the risk, Ms. Wengert said the town has “always encouraged” full disclosure, and added: “I don’t believe there would be a significant deviation by anyone in the real estate community.”

A staff report, scheduled for the May 13 council meeting,

will compile the council’s recommendations, recent conversations with Cal Fire officials, and plans for the community discussion, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert said.

Shades of meaning

Cal Fire makes a distinction between the words “hazard” and “risk,” according to its Web site’s frequently asked questions (FAQ).

Hazards, the focus of Cal Fire maps, are factors that influence the potential for a wildfire, such as fuel type and quantity, degree of slope and weather, the FAQ says.

Risks, the FAQ says, concern the potential for damage, including a structure’s flammability, the use of safety measures such as fire-resistant materials and designs, and the existence of a defensible space around a home such that vegetation won’t

readily burn.

Residents have argued that a “very high” risk designation would negatively impact their homeowners insurance. In interviews with *The Almanac*, insurers have said that they have their own maps and do not consider Cal Fire maps.

That may be, but there is no guarantee, Cal Fire says in its FAQ. “However,” it adds, “to respond to such issues, the California Department of Insurance and Cal Fire have established a partnership and joint commitment to protecting Californians from fire losses.”

Cal Fire’s process

In updating its wildfire hazard maps throughout the state, Cal Fire had sent out draft maps in early 2008 seeking comment from communities considered vulnerable to wildfire.

The draft map for Portola Valley showed no “very high” risk areas, and the council’s comment back to Cal Fire did not argue with that view.

In sharp contrast was the map prepared by the Woodside fire district, which labeled parts of several neighborhoods as at severe risk, including Woodside Highlands, Westridge, Alpine Hills and Portola Valley Ranch.

Cal Fire considered both views and agreed with the district on the danger in the Highlands neighborhood, but not the other areas, Ms. Lambert said. Cal Fire officials then asked for and received the part of the Moritz map that dealt with the Highlands, she said.

Wayne Mitchell, Cal Fire’s staff chief for fire planning, when asked to comment on the missed deadline, said: “We were trying very hard to work with Portola Valley and every local jurisdiction to have a very rigorous validating process before it gets this far.”

In their Feb. 25 discussion, council members said they were dissatisfied with a state bureaucracy weighing in on a controversial local issue without coming to town to explain its reasoning and respond to questions. Another point: the “very high” risk designation, once applied, appears difficult to remove.

Ms. Lambert, looking back on contacts with five Cal Fire officials in recent weeks, said they are “pleased” that the council is looking at amending the building code to increase fire resistance.

“They have offered to come and meet ... and do whatever they need to do” to move that plan forward, she said. “I think they’ve been very responsive.” ■

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Western Ballet performs in Portola Valley on Friday night, April 17.

Western Ballet performs in Portola Valley

Western Ballet will present an evening of classical ballet at 7 p.m. Friday, April 17, in Hanson Hall at The Sequoias retirement community in Portola Valley.

The performance is free and open to the public. The Sequoias is located at 501 Portola Road.

The young dancers, ranging

in age from 8 to 18, will present excerpts from "La Bayadere," choreographed in 1877 by Marius Petipa to music by Ludwig Minkus. This will be followed by Petipa and Minkus' "Don Quixote Variations," and then "Imagined Notions." The performance will close with "Holberg Suite,"

AROUND TOWN

danced to Edward Grieg's music. Alexi Zubiria is artistic director of Western Ballet, based in Mountain View. For more information, call 851-1501.

Kite Day at Bedwell-Bayfront Park

Menlo Park will hold its annual Kite Day from noon to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 26, at Bedwell-Bayfront Park (end of Marsh Road at U.S. 101). A kite, hot dog and soda will be available for \$5.

Kite Day is co-sponsored by the city of Menlo Park and the Kiwanis Club. For more information, call 330-2200.

Residents challenged to drive less

As Earth Day (April 22) approaches, a volunteer Menlo Park environmental group is challenging people who live and work in the city to carpool and find alternatives to driving for a week.

People who sign up for the "Drive Less Challenge" are asked to keep a log of their trips from April 22 through April 28. Residents can compete to win gift certificates and other prizes from several local businesses, including Kepler's, Cheeky Monkey Toys, Menlo Velo, and Reclaim.

The Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee organized the event to encourage people to cut down on single-occupant car trips through "a little social pressure and some incentives," said spokeswoman Adina Levin. "It's often the case that people have practical options, but are just in the habit of driving."

She notes that 46 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in Menlo Park come from the transportation sector, according to a recent study.

Prizes will be handed out to the school, company and neighborhood with the most participants. Residents can also sign up to compete with a group of friends.

To sign up, go to <http://driveless-challenge.com>.



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Exhibit spotlights the 'Sunset Way'

In recognition of the 80th anniversary of the Lane family's acquisition of Sunset magazine, the Museum of American Heritage in Palo Alto will mount California Living the Sunset Way, 1929-1961.

The exhibit, opening Friday, April 17, will focus on the creation of the California lifestyle as portrayed in the pages of Sunset in three periods: the Great Depression, World War II, and the 1950s suburban development boom.

While Sunset magazine had

been published since the late 19th century, its purchase and redesign by the Lane family in 1929 shifted its focus to a magazine of "home life and family interests," says Gwenth Claughton of the Museum of American Heritage.

Over the next 30 years, it became synonymous with a uniquely Western lifestyle, says Ms. Claughton. For newcomers settling in the California suburbs, Sunset offered advice on topics such as gardening, architecture and building, home

economics, traveling and do-it-yourself projects.

The Sunset exhibit continues

through Oct. 4. The Museum of American Heritage is located 351 Homer Ave., in Palo Alto. It operates programs to collect, preserve and present objects that illustrate the evolution of 19th-

and 20th-century invention and technology.

Exhibit hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call 321-1004.

Church foregoes services for service

By Nicole Laubscher

is director of communications at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church.

For three years, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church has closed its regular Sunday morning services for one weekend in the spring in order for its members and others to volunteer together in the community.

This year, faced with growing needs in the Bay Area, the church is taking a new approach to its service activities on "Compassion Weekend," which will be held Saturday and Sunday, April 25-26, and will be open to all who want to participate.

"We know the economic downturn has led to a great deal of hardship right here in our community," said Mission Pastor Mark Swarner. "We've spent a lot of time rethinking how we can help people in ways they need it most."

This has led to a project slate that includes a job search workshop, collecting 10,000 pounds of food, and investing in science education in local schools.

"One unexpected impact the downturn has had is that people in our church who were previously working full time are not working right now, and they have been instrumental in helping us to be as innovative as possible in developing 25 great projects on this weekend," said Pastor Swarner.

He said the church invites everyone — kids, teens and adults — to participate by going to www.mppc.org, clicking on Compassion Weekend, and signing up.

Earlier this year, a "Career Actions Ministry" was launched by human resource professionals who attend the church. The program provides job search support and now serves about 100 people through workshops and small groups.

Note: The author, Nicole Laubscher, a resident of Woodside,

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Charles "Chuck" Harold Masters Jr.

World War II, Korea vet

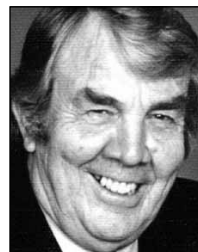
A funeral service for Charles "Chuck" Harold Masters Jr., who died March 8 after a short illness at age 90, is set for 2:30 p.m. Saturday, April 18, at St. John's Cemetery in San Mateo. He will be buried with his late wife, Shirley.

A fourth generation Californian, he was born in Richmond and lost his mother to the flu epidemic of 1918 when he was only 4 months old.

Mr. Masters joined the U.S. Navy and served in World War II and Korea, and was awarded a Purple Heart. He married Shirley Wood Janes in 1943, and the couple lived in Redwood City for most of their lives, moving to Menlo Park in 2004.

Mr. Masters was proud of his long career as an electrical worker. He was a member of IBEW and NEBF, and received his 60th anniversary pin in 2008.

OBITUARY



Charles Masters

Prior to his entering the military, he played drums and vibraphone in dance bands. He and Shirley were lifelong jazz fans and he donated their extensive jazz record collection and memorabilia to KCSM public radio station. He was also a licensed pilot and flight instructor.

Mr. Masters was preceded in death by his wife Shirley in 2005. Memorial donations may be made to Fisher House, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Voluntary Service (135), 3801 Miranda Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304; or to your favorite charity. For information about the funeral, call Mary King at (650) 854-1978.

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- **Fashion Show & Luncheon**, Art to Wear - Friday, April 17
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- **Flavors of the Gardens**, Arts and Food Festival - May 9 - 10am to 5pm
Local vendors, wine tasting, kids activities, artists en plein air, live entertainment. Suggested donation: \$5.00
- **Mother's Day Brunch**, The Red Currant Cafe - Sunday, May 10

For more info visit: www.alliedartsguild.org or call 650-325-2450

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Obituary policy

The Almanac publishes obituaries about people who lived in Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley and Woodside, or played a prominent role in these communities. These obituaries

are news stories, written by Almanac staff writers, based on information provided by mortuaries and family members. There is no charge. Due to space limits and other reasons, these stories may not include all the information a family wishes. Some families

choose to write their own memorial announcements, and purchase space to publish them in the Almanac. For information about that, e-mail Blanca Yoc in the Advertising Department at byoc@paweb.com or call 326-8210, ext. 221.

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■ 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

Suspicious circumstances report: Resident home from mini-vacation found washer and dryer operating with someone else's sheets and pillowcases inside, possibly landlord's, Laurel St., April 7.

MENLO PARK

Residential burglary report: Canned tuna, toilet paper, cookie sheet, gift card and wallet among items stolen, 200 block of Van Buren Road, April 3.

Auto burglary report: Break-in and tools stolen, 200 block of Robin Way, April 7.

Grand theft report: Wallet and jewelry with total value of \$900 stolen, 1600 block of El Camino Real, April 4.

Fraud reports:

■ Two identity theft incidents, 1200 block of Hoover St. and 600 block of Santa Cruz Ave., April 3.

■ Counterfeit bills passed, Perfect Tan at 875 El Camino Real, April 5.

■ Unauthorized charge of \$1,200 to credit

card, 1000 block of Menlo Oaks Drive, April 6.

■ Unauthorized use of Social Security number, 1000 block of Atkinson Lane, April 9.

Stolen vehicle report: Green Isuzu Rodeo stolen, 1100 block of Windermere Ave., April 8.

Child Protective Services report: Main police station at 701 Laurel St., April 3.

WOODSIDE

Theft reports:

■ Two white men went door-to-door falsely alleging that they were baseball players

from San Jose State University and fundraising for a tournament in Hawaii, 100 block of Stadler Road, April 1.

■ GPS device and sunglasses valued at \$550 stolen from unlocked vehicle, 100 block of Ranch Road, April 1.

■ Items valued at \$450 for nursery school auction stolen from unlocked Mounted Patrol club house, 500 block of Kings

Mountain Road, April 1.


WEST MENLO PARK

Theft reports:

■ Cell phone stolen from unlocked vehicle, 300 block of Leland Ave., April 4.

■ Apple iPhone stolen from unlocked vehicle, 400 block of Vine St., April 4.

JIM CIARDELLA
4/20/1924-4/8/2009



Jim Ciardella, 84, died Wednesday. An 82 year resident of Menlo Park, he owned Jim's Meat Market. He graduated from Sequoia High School and served in the Air Force. He was an active member in the Italian American Social Club and Italian Catholic Federation of Menlo Park.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, sons Jim, David (Jamie) and Ron (Lisa), grandchildren Lia, Gina, Kim, Caryn, Lauren, Joel, John and Jesse, and brother Pete Ciardella (Joan).
Rosary at 7 pm Monday, April 13 Spangler Mortuary in Menlo Park.
Funeral mass at 10 am Tuesday, April 14 St. Denis Church in Menlo Park.
A service immediately after mass at Alta Mesa Memorial Park in Palo Alto.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, PO Box 50, Memphis, TN 38101 or Children's Skin Disease Foundation, 1501 N. Broadway, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

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■ BIRTHS

Atherton

■ Muna and Jad Elias, a son, March 30, at Sequoia Hospital.

Menlo Park

■ Amy Javernick Will and Nathan Will, a son, April 3, at Sequoia Hospital.

■ GRADUATES

■ **Whitney E. Wheeler** has received a doctorate degree in health law from Boston University. He is a resident of Atherton.

BOTHUN

continued from page 15

attorney alleging that someone else put that material on Mr. Bothun's computer.

At the time, Atherton Detective Sgt. Joe Wade said he couldn't reveal details, but did say the search originated from a tip about possession of child pornography.

Mr. Bothun served several years as editor of the Palo Alto Daily News chain. He was replaced after publisher Dave Price sold the paper to Knight Ridder in 2005. In the summer of 2008, Mr. Bothun began working as a reporter for Mr. Price's new publication, the Daily Post.

Mr. Bothun was suspended from his job at the Post following the July incident. ■

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



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

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Quick action needed to stem foreclosures

The real estate market in Menlo Park and the surrounding communities is renowned for its apparent insulation from larger economic trends.

But that hasn't been the case in the Belle Haven neighborhood, where plummeting housing markets threaten to force residents out of their homes.

At any one time in recent months, about 100 Menlo Park homes have been in some stage of foreclosure proceedings, according to realtytrac.com, with the great majority of those coming in Belle

Haven. And the foreclosure bug has shown no signs of slowing, as property owners increasingly find themselves saddled with more debt than their home is

worth. Over the past two weeks, realtytrac.com reported that nearly 20 Menlo Park property owners had defaulted.

Out of concern that Belle Haven is rapidly deteriorating as home prices plummet, with vacant properties in danger of becoming havens for crack dealers and squatters, city officials have looked for ways to combat the problem.

At a recent Housing Commission meeting, city Housing Manager Doug Frederick outlined three sensible steps the city might take to keep residents in their homes, and to rehabilitate foreclosed homes and resell them.

Councilman Andy Cohen has been concerned about the Belle Haven foreclosures, working since the fall of last year with East Palo Alto Councilman Carlos Romero to develop ways to combat the problem.

At a recent meeting of current and former Menlo Park council members, Mr. Cohen said: "There has been a lot of deterioration in the Belle Haven neighborhood," adding that the city's package of ideas "would benefit the whole community."

We agree, and we urge the city to act quickly. First, Mr. Frederick must finalize his proposals and bring them to the City Council, which he hopes to do by the end of April. Each has

merit, but a revenue source must be identified for one of the three plans.

Here are Mr. Frederick's proposals:

■ To keep low-income owners in their homes, the city could buy a stake in properties, providing the bank would reduce the principal to near market value. In this case, the city benefits by keeping the home out of foreclosure, and its owners can continue to maintain the home and pay property taxes.

■ In another plan, the city would actually buy foreclosed homes, renovate and sell them to people in low- and middle-income brackets who are on the city's wait list for below-market-rate homes. The plan would be financed with \$2 million from the city's BMR housing fund, which would be partially replenished when the homes are sold. The city could use the \$2 million to purchase and renovate 10 to 15 homes.

■ In a third plan, the city would take part in a joint venture with Habitat for Humanity to buy and refurbish up to five homes and sell them to residents in a lower income bracket. The city would invest up to \$500,000, and Habitat up to \$1 million.

Some residents have raised concerns about such expenditures in a tough budget year. But these proposals would not depend on the city's general fund revenues, reserved for year-to-year operation. Instead, only monies dedicated for housing (the BMR fund), or for improvements in a specific area on the east side of the city (redevelopment funds) would be used.

The majority of Menlo Park has escaped relatively unscathed from the home foreclosure crisis thus far, though foreclosures have not been limited to the east side of the city. The Belle Haven neighborhood, however, is under great duress — and the crisis is not showing any sign of letting up. With very little risk, the city might be able to help some distressed owners stay in their homes, or help provide a new home to people who may have been waiting for years to enjoy the benefits of ownership. Given the magnitude of the problem, the city should get these plans moving quickly before more owners lose their homes. ■

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

Our Regional Heritage

George and Eliza Griffiths, left and second from right, and Henry Hawes and his wife pose near a home in Redwood City in 1886.

The Griffiths are said to be the great grandparents of a current Atherton resident, who asked to remain unidentified.



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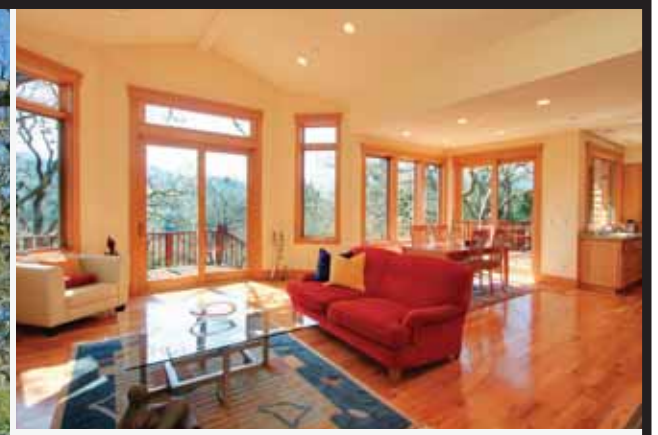
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