

LOCAL TOWNS work together to try to influence high-speed rail design. Page 14

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Looks pretty good

Three Girl Scouts, from left, Lily Edelstein, Molly Davis and Alexa Thomson, make a batch of peanut butter dog biscuits Friday at Oak Knoll Elementary School for Be Kind To Animals Week, in partnership with the Palo Alto Humane Society.

Atherton

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On the cover

During a lapidary workshop at Little House Activity Center in Menlo Park, Christiane Creighton uses a trim saw to cut a piece of picture jasper for a circular pendant. The center celebrates its 60th anniversary May 12. Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac. See **Section 2**

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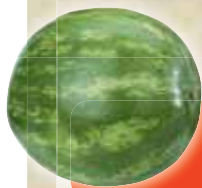
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Bike to work

Get out the spandex shorts and fingerless gloves: May 14 is Bike to Work Day.

The Bay Area Bicycle Coalition will deploy volunteers to several “energizer stations,” where free food and drinks will be available from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Those stations include, in Menlo Park: the Caltrain station; Pierce Road, at the bike bridge over Ringwood Avenue; the end of Willow Place, off Willow Road; and the end of San Mateo Drive, south of Middle Avenue.

There also will be a station at the corner of Woodside Road and Alameda de Las Pulgas, open from 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/clvpcq.

Elect Bill Murray

Late in the May 5 Menlo Park City Council meeting, Mayor Heyward Robinson suggested in jest that the council conduct a meeting using only sign language, to speed things along.

After a string of six consecutive meetings that went past midnight, and two more that came close, maybe the idea merits a closer look. Councilman Rich Cline recently compared the council meetings to the movie “Groundhog Day,” only instead of reliving the same day over and over, council members are making the same speeches on the same issues, meeting after meeting.

So far, no one has proposed conducting the meetings via Twitter.

And the bands played on

Rain didn’t stop the orchestras from Oak Knoll, Encinal and Hillview schools, and the Menlo-Atherton High School orchestra and jazz band from performing during the 15th annual “Magic of Reading” event held on Saturday, May 2, at Kepler’s in downtown Menlo Park.

Kepler’s donated 10 percent of all its in-store sales for the day to the Belle Haven library, raising \$1,880. The event was co-sponsored by the Friends of the Menlo Park Library.

Gym construction could start in fall

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Construction could begin this fall on a new gymnasium that would change the look of Menlo Park’s Civic Center complex — and provide much more space for basketball and volleyball players.

The project, which would also entail the eventual construction of a new gymnastics facility, will have a significant impact on traffic, and might make it tougher to find a parking spot in the Civic Center.

The 25,700-square-foot gymnasium would be built on open land between the recreation center and Alma Street. After the gym opens, the existing 17,400-square-foot gymnasium and gymnastics center, between Burgess Park and Laurel Street, would be torn down to make way for a new 23,900-square-foot gymnastics center.

The new buildings would have a significant footprint, covering an additional 32,200 square feet of land, and would reach a height of up to 50 feet.

More people, cars

City officials say the existing gym, built in 1974, has run its course, and that the new facilities will provide welcome extra space for basketball players, volleyball



Illustration by The Almanac

Menlo Park is planning to build a new gymnasium and a new gymnastics center in its Civic Center complex. The shapes and sizes of the new facilities, as shown here, are not exact. The gymnastics center would be built on the site of the existing gym.

players and gymnasts.

More than 230 basketball and volleyball teams and 1,413 gymnasts use the city’s facilities, according to a consultant’s report.

The new gym will allow more space for those athletes, and might also be able to accommodate boys

volleyball teams, indoor soccer, and some activities that spill over from the recreation center, according to Marc Nuckolls, who supervises the city’s

sports programs.

On weekends, the city often spreads youth leagues between four

separate school- and city-owned gyms across Menlo Park, according to Mr. Nuckolls. The city won’t need to do that after the new gym is built, he said.

The influx of athletes to the new facilities will bring more traffic to the surrounding area. At a May 4 Planning Commission meeting, commission members said they

See GYM, page 8

Fare increases, cut in service likely for Caltrain

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Caltrain riders are facing the possibility of a fee hike, a new fee for bringing a bicycle on board, and the elimination of weekend service as the Caltrain Board of Directors wrestles with a projected \$10.1 million deficit in fiscal year 2009-10.

The board has scheduled public hearings on June 4 to declare a fiscal emergency for the agency and to hear comments on a series of measures being considered to address the deficit.

Caltrain staff will announce dates for three community meetings to be held this month to discuss and receive comments about the possible changes. Meeting locations will be spread out among the three

See CALTRAIN, page 8

City to buy, refurbish foreclosed homes

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

In an attempt to help stave off blight brought about by a spate of foreclosures in the Belle Haven neighborhood, the city of Menlo Park plans to buy foreclosed homes, refurbish them, and sell them to people on the city’s wait list for low-income housing.

The plan has been gestating since the fall of 2008, when Councilman Andy Cohen began looking for a way the city could turn back a rising tide of foreclosures in the neighborhood. The City Council approved it at its May 5 meeting.

The city will allocate \$2 million from its below-market-rate housing fund to buy 10 to 15 foreclosed houses, according to city’s Housing Manager Doug Frederick. The city will also

contribute up to \$500,000 to a Habitat for Humanity plan to purchase up to five homes, and resell them to residents in a lower-income bracket than the city typically serves through its affordable housing program.

The funds the city plans to use for the program come from fees paid by developers, in lieu of incorporating below-market-rate housing into their projects. The money is distinct from the city’s general operating fund, and can only be used on below-market-rate housing.

Opposition

Real estate agents and some residents have objected to the plan in the past few weeks, saying that the city shouldn’t be in the business of buying homes, and that it was undermining private bidders.

Several Belle Haven residents have said they support the plans, saying they’re a step in the right direction for reducing blight and stabilizing home values.

The Habitat plan received a unanimous vote at the council meeting, but Councilman John Boyle dissented in a 4-1 vote on the city’s plan to buy and resell homes. Mr. Boyle cited conflicting reports on how many homes are currently owned by banks, saying he isn’t convinced that the issue has reached crisis proportions, and that the proposal required further study.

The Web site realtor.com indicates that there are 110 properties in some state of foreclosure in Menlo Park. Real estate agents said their figures show that those figures overstate the issue, and

See FORECLOSE, page 8

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Election measures bound to impact local budgets

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

State officials are counting on the passage of six propositions on the special May 19 ballot to shore up California's finances. Currently, all but one proposition — 1F, which would freeze legislators' salaries during deficit budget years — are trailing badly in public opinion polls.

If the package of propositions fails, the state's budget mess is bound to affect Californians at the local level, with funding cuts in public schools, towns and county services. But while there's a lot of angst about the prospect of deeper cuts, it's coupled with an even greater level of uncertainty.

Who's going to get hit the hardest? At this point, no one knows.

Kevin Bryant, Woodside's assistant town manager, said the working assumption in Woodside Town Hall is that none of the propositions will pass. Town officials aren't paying attention “until that day comes and the state has to ramp up this process to fill the deficit,” he said.

“Up until that time, we're not really speculating,” he said.

The uncertainty is adding an extra level of angst to a difficult budget year, as officials try to draft budgets for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The state's finance director has already recommended that the state borrow property tax funds from counties and cities.

“Pending the results of the May 19 special election on state budget measures, we need to be prepared for the state to dip into revenues that are traditionally ear-marked for local communities,” Menlo Park City Manager Glen Rojas wrote in a recent budget update. In an e-mail, he urged City Council members to lobby state representatives to oppose the idea of the state's borrowing property tax proceeds.

Atherton Councilman Charles Marsala has a more sanguine view. Thanks to the passage of Proposition 1A in 2004, any money the state takes away from cities and counties will have to be paid

back — with interest — within three years. For a town, like Atherton, that has a healthy reserve fund, it's not so bad, he said.

“From my standpoint, that is a wash for Atherton because we are not making exorbitant interest on our (reserve fund) money right now,” Mr. Marsala said. “Because of Prop. 1A, we are in a much better situation than we were in 2003, when (Gov.) Gray Davis was going to withhold money. We're protected.”

Voting no

Mr. Marsala said he opposes the propositions.

“I'm voting no because it doesn't solve the problems,” he said.

The League of Women Voters of California is also opposing four of the six propositions, saying they do “not

'I'm voting no because it doesn't solve the problems.'

ATHERTON COUNCILMAN
CHARLES MARSALA

address real reforms that are needed to get California out of this continuing financial mess,” according to Linda Craig, the advocacy director.

The League has no position on Proposition 1F and is neutral on 1B, which would authorize supplemental education funding payments to offset recent cuts in state funding.

While the special election has been called crucial to shoring up the state's budget, it looks as if only a small percentage of registered voters could be deciding the outcome.

San Mateo County Chief Elections Officer Warren Slocum said he expects an extremely low voter turn-out.

“At this rate, it is doubtful that voter turnout will reach 30 percent,” he said in a press release. “It's discouraging with all that's at stake in this election.”

Based on one-time requests for vote-by-mail ballots, there clearly isn't a lot of interest in this election, Mr. Slocum said.

“It doesn't bode well for turnout in the rest of California, either. Turnout in San Mateo County is generally four to five percentage points higher than the statewide average,” he said.

Almanac staff writers Sean Howell and Dave Boyce contributed to this report.

Celebrating 100 years in Menlo Park

By Jane Knoerle
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

She remembers the days when cowboys rode down the El Camino Real in Menlo Park and recalls the excitement when the first automobiles came to town.

On May 7, there was birthday cake and champagne for Eloise Lancestremere of Menlo Park when she celebrated her 100th birthday at the Menlo Park Recreation Center with her good friends from the Menlo Park Historical Association.

Born in San Mateo on May 7, 1909, to William and Mary Rahtje, Ms. Lancestremere has lived almost her entire life in Menlo Park. Her maternal grandparents, William and Mary Stanton,

were pioneer settlers of the area, according to her daughter, Martha Lancestremere.

Eloise Lancestremere attended the old Central School on El Camino Real from first through third grade. She graduated from Sequoia High School in 1927 and went to work in the office of the Menlo French Laundry on Oak Grove Avenue while still in school. It was there she met her future husband, Laurent Lancestremere.



Eloise Lancestremere turned 100 years old on May 7.

The couple was married in 1939 and moved into their home on Mills Avenue. They bought the French Laundry in 1945. Mrs. Lancestremere continued working in the business until it was sold in 1990. Mr. Lancestremere died in 1980.

She is proud of being a member of the Menlo Park Historical Association and a 75-year member of the Native Daughters of the Golden West, Bonita Parlor.

When asked the secret of her long life, she says her love for people and eating properly have helped her attain the century mark. She makes her home in Menlo Park with her daughter, Martha, and son, Peter.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Market Conditions

Q: Are we seeing the bottom of the real estate market?

A: No one knows where exactly the local and national economy is going in the next months but there are definite signs that the real estate prices in this area are stabilizing in the under \$2 million price range. The \$2-\$3 million range is also becoming more active and prices are firming up as a result. It is still a buyer's market and there is much negotiating taking place between buyers and sellers but there is more activity than at any time since last August. Interest rates are very

attractive and buyers are taking advantage of them. Credit markets are still tight for jumbo mortgages with fewer lenders making these loans. If this situation were to improve the market here would begin to look like any normal year.

Many buyers think that low interest rates are temporary and that rates will have to go up in the not too distant future. These buyers are taking advantage of lower home prices and low rates and buying now. Prices may not go up for a long time but based on current activity, they do not look like they are going down either.

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.

Audrey Rust wins environmental leader award

Audrey Rust, the president of the Peninsula Open Space Trust, is the first recipient of the new Annual Environmental Leadership Award presented by Sen. Barbara Boxer and the California Democratic Party.

Ms. Rust was honored for her 22 years of land conservation work at the helm of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), a local nonprofit land trust dedicated to preserving San Francisco Peninsula and Santa Cruz Mountain range.

"Audrey has a remarkable record of accomplishment at POST," said Sen. Boxer in a press release. "More than 63,000 acres of open space have been protected under her leadership. I'm pleased to honor Audrey with my Environmental Leadership Award in recognition of her exceptional achievement."

Ms. Rust and six other honorees were presented their awards at a ceremony held Friday, May 8, at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

Under Ms. Rust's leadership, POST has partnered with public agencies and private landowners to preserve tens of thousands of acres of open space in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties, including the 1,252-acre Phleger Estate in Woodside and the 1,047-acre Mindego Hill preserve along Skyline Ridge in La Honda.

Ms. Post also headed POST's "Saving the Endangered Coast" campaign in 2001-2005, raising more than \$200 million to protect 20,000 acres of San Mateo County's coastside land.

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Sequoia's Gemma named superintendent of the year

The regional office of the Association of California School Administrators, a professional organization, has named Superintendent Pat Gemma of the Sequoia Union High School District as Superintendent of the Year for San Mateo and San Francisco counties.

The award recognizes superintendents who are "collaborative leaders, able to get the best out of site leaders and district staff, all with the focus of doing their very best for the students they serve," according to an e-mail from Sequoia district spokeswoman Bettylu Smith who quoted a statement from the organization.

Don Gibson, president of the Sequoia district Board of Trustees, said in the e-mail that Mr. Gemma "is an exemplary educator who has achieved noteworthy success in his six years leading the Sequoia district. It's especially (fitting) that Dr. Gemma receives this honor at this



Pat Gemma

serious challenges."

San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Jean Holbrook nominated Mr. Gemma for the award.

Before coming to the Sequoia district in 2003, Mr. Gemma oversaw the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District as superintendent. He received a master's degree in school administration from California State University, Hayward, and a Ph.D. in education from the University of La Verne in La Verne, California.

time, when he is doing such a stellar job in navigating the district successfully through unprecedented economic conditions and other

CALTRAIN

continued from page 5

counties served by Caltrain.

In addition to likely changes in fees and services, the agency will look at reducing employee costs, according to Caltrain spokeswoman Christine Dunn.

All department managers in the agency have reviewed their budgets for possible savings, "and we have cut," Ms. Dunn said. But, she added, they will be taking another look, and deeper cuts are possible.

Whatever cost-cutting measures the board decides on won't be put in place until October, Ms. Dunn said. And the agency acknowledges that the measures will cost Caltrain ridership.

Under consideration

At the board's May 7 meeting, Chuck Harvey, Caltrain's chief operating officer, outlined possible cost-cutting measures that include:

■ Eliminating weekend service. Estimated annual savings: about \$2 million. Estimated lost rides: about 1 million per year.

■ Reducing mid-day service. Trains would arrive and depart every hour, rather than every half-hour, from late morning to mid-afternoon. Estimated annual savings: about \$2.5 million. Estimated lost rides: 100,000 to 200,000 per year.

■ Increasing fares. Fares would increase by 25 cents per ride. Estimated annual revenue boost: \$1.5 million. Estimated lost rides: 400,000 rides per year.

■ Alternative fare hike. Fares would increase 25 cents per zone. The line has six zones. Riders who traveled from one end of the line to the other would pay an additional \$1.50 per ride under this option.

Estimated annual revenue boost: \$2.2 million. Estimated lost rides: 600,000 per year.

If both fare-hike measures were put in place, about \$3.7 million in added revenue would be raised annually, with a loss of about 1 million rides per year, Ms. Dunn said.

Caltrain CEO Mike Scanlon also raised the possibility of charging a fee for bringing a bike on board, Ms. Dunn said. Although he didn't specify how much the fee should be, he casually spoke of a scenario in which \$1 per bike is charged, she said.

Why the deficit?

Caltrain has used one-time funding sources to make up for deficits for each of the past seven years, but those options are now exhausted, according to Virginia Harrington, Caltrain's chief financial officer.

State Transit Assistance, another key funding source, has been eliminated for the next few years, Ms. Dunn said in a press release.

"In addition, the deepening recession and job losses are beginning to negatively impact Caltrain ridership and revenues," she said. "March showed the first monthly ridership decline in many years."

The June 4 public hearings will be held during the board's regular monthly meeting, beginning at 10 a.m. at 1250 San Carlos Ave. in San Carlos.

Comments will be taken during that meeting and during the May community meetings. The public can also comment by mail to: District Secretary, Caltrain, P.O. Box 3006, San Carlos, CA 94070; or by e-mail to changes@caltrain.com. A TDD system for the hearing-impaired can be accessed at 650-508-6448.

Woodworker

At the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park, Joseph Politi, 9, practices some woodwork while, from left, Judith Politi, 5, Karen Mueller, 8, and Eric Steinzeig, 8, wait their turn in line at the The Barn Woodshop. Tom Kieninger (far right), owner of the The Barn Woodshop, opened up his doors as part of the first annual "Flavor of the Gardens" event at the Allied Arts Guild on Saturday, May 9. All donations from the event benefit the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, sponsors said.

Eric Lawson / The Almanac



GYM

continued from page 5

were concerned that traffic jams would abound around the Civic Center and on Ravenswood Street during peak use hours, and that bikers would have a tough time getting to the gym, and other Civic Center facilities.

During peak hours, gym and library patrons might be able to get their day's exercise just walking from their cars to the facilities. The consultant's report identified no need for new parking, despite the fact that each of the Civic Center's six parking lots might be called into service. Roughly a third of a mile separates the library from the farthest lot, as the crow flies.

Several commissioners were dubious of the finding that the current parking situation is sufficient. They suggested adding bike racks, and offering shuttles. The city had at one point considered leasing a nearby lot from SRI International,

but city staff members said they were not planning to pursue that option, in light of the consultant's finding.

Design

An architect selected by Palo Alto billionaire and major Stanford donor John Arrillaga is designing the gym. Mr. Arrillaga has offered to pay most of the facility's cost.

According to the most recent cost estimates, the gym's total price tag will be around \$14 million, with Mr. Arrillaga shouldering any costs over the approximately \$6 million covered by the city.

The building's design will mimic elements from other buildings in the Civic Center complex, though Commissioner Melody Pagee said that's not necessarily a good thing.

"I'm a little sad that this is a duplicate of City Hall, just made bigger," she said, referring to preliminary design plans. She suggested that the gym's design could echo that of City Hall, but with an "elevated"

Some 230 basketball and volleyball teams and 1,413 gymnasts use the city's facilities.

FORECLOSE

continued from page 5

that most of the homes that have been put up for sale have been purchased.

Housing Manager Doug Frederick says the city will only purchase homes that don't appear to have attracted other buyers, noting that he saw inconsistencies in foreclosure data provided by the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors. The main purpose of the program is to help "stabilize the neighborhood," and prevent homes from falling into disrepair, where they might be taken up by squatters and drug dealers, Mr. Frederick said.

Two Menlo Park real estate agents and a representative from the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors spoke at the council meeting in opposition to the city's plan

architectural style.

The city has had early input in the design process, according to Lisa Ekers, the city's engineering services manager.

While design plans have not been completed, the architect expects to incorporate "green" building methods, Ms. Ekers said. Those would include designing the building to utilize light and heat from the sun and to allow for passive ventilation, and installing LED lights, she said.

A decision hasn't yet been made on whether solar panels would be installed on the roof.

The idea of planting a line of trees along the side of the gym fronting on Burgess Park was also floated at the meeting. ▀

INFORMATION

Residents have until May 26 to comment on a report detailing the expected impacts of a new gymnasium and gymnastics center on the Civic Center complex, and the surrounding area. To access the report, or for more information on the project, visit www.menlopark.org/gym.

to buy homes, saying city officials are overstating the problem, and that they're skeptical of claims that some homes have not attracted any interest.

Several residents e-mailed Mr. Frederick and the City Council, contending that city funds should not be used for the program. Several housing commissioners replied that the city has more money in its below-market-housing fund than housing projects to spend it on.

There are more than 200 people and families on the city's wait list for below-market-rate housing.

Prevention tabled

Mr. Frederick said that while the programs might be a step in the right direction, he does not anticipate that they will have a significant effect on the housing market. He has said that the foreclosures have only exacerbated plunging home

prices in the neighborhood.

The city's plan to buy and refurbish homes will move slowly, with the city likely buying and refurbishing only one home at a time, according to Mr. Frederick. The council would have to approve every home purchase, as well as the contract to renovate it, according to City Attorney Bill McClure.

At the meeting, the council tabled a third plan, designed to inject equity into homes that are in danger of falling into foreclosure. Because that plan would likely also rely on funding from the city's below-market-rate housing fund, the city might have to set a cap on the resale price of the home — a condition some fear homeowners may not agree to. The city will continue to look into the idea, with an eye toward finding a source of funding that would not impose onerous restrictions on the homeowner. ▀

Everest and Sequoia district gird for battle

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Within days, attorneys for Everest Public High School, a new charter school set to open in September, are expected to sue the Sequoia Union High School District after alleging “disparate treatment and blatant disregard” for charter school student rights.

The attorneys refer to the district’s offer to install portable school buildings on a street in East Palo Alto instead of offering one of several existing buildings in Redwood City, as Everest officials requested.

“We feel very confident,” Everest founder Diane Tavenner said in an interview. “We’re hoping that, with this case, the district will be told very clearly what the law is and that they will follow it.” She said she expects Everest’s attorneys to file suit by May 15.

The Sequoia district said it expects to prevail. “The district’s offer is legally compliant and can and will be defended as such,” Assistant Superintendent James Lianides said in a letter received by Everest officials on May 7 and reviewed by The Almanac.

A court battle would be the next chapter in a nine-month saga during which majorities on the Sequoia district board and the San Mateo County Board of Education denied Everest a charter. The reasons include economic hardship for the district and an unbalanced mix of students in charter schools, with a particular lack of low-performing students.

Everest petitioners hope to

clone Summit Preparatory Charter High School, also founded by Ms. Tavenner and notable for its very high four-year-college acceptance rate, its ethnically and academically diverse student body chosen by lottery, and its low-budget operation.

The state Board of Education and its charter school advi-

‘We’re hoping that, with this case, the district will be told very clearly what the law is and that they will follow it.’

EVEREST FOUNDER DIANE TAVENNER

sory panel disagreed with the Sequoia and county boards and backed Everest’s petition unanimously. The school received a charter in March.

Everest opponents also claim that charter schools embody a discriminatory effect: parents who choose a charter are inherently more involved, thereby draining traditional schools of such families.

Everest backers counter that traditional schools segregate students by academic ability and deny average kids the advanced-placement classes and the attention that allows them to thrive.

New claims

In his letter to Everest, Mr. Lianides notes that the Sequoia district’s East Palo Alto offer now includes access to a nearby new 30,000-square-foot YMCA

gym equipped with a climbing wall and pool.

“It’s a nice facility (but) incredibly busy,” Ms. Tavenner said. In negotiating with such gyms for Summit Prep use, she added that “it’s really hard to get your kids in there because these facilities are very heavily used.”

Everest rejected the East Palo Alto site in April and has leased an 18,500-square-foot office building at 955 Charter St. in Redwood City for \$300,000 a year, plus about \$1.2 million in improvements over three years. (Everest is engaged in fundraising.)

Everest plans to open there in September with a freshman class of about 100 students.

Everest proposed the Charter Street site as an alternative, but the district refused. In his letter, Mr. Lianides said it has toxic contamination problems, including PCBs, that would put the district at a liability risk.

Ms. Tavenner acknowledged the buried PCBs, but said that Redwood City is well aware of them, that a “special safe cleanup” will not endanger anyone — including Summit Prep in a district-owned building a block away — and that, as an extra precaution, it would be done during an Everest vacation break.

“Really what we have here is the district attempting to create alarm with the community when they don’t have accurate information about it, and they’re trying to thwart our efforts,” Ms. Tavenner said.

Sequoia district spokeswoman Bettylu Smith attributed the information about contaminants to the Redwood City Planning Division. ■

Packed agenda for Portola Valley council Wednesday

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Plan to refresh Triangle Park at the corner of Alpine and Portola roads and add more parking to the mall there is among the many matters on tap for the Portola Valley Town Council on Wednesday, May 13.

The council may act to update the town’s noise ordinance and adopt fire-safe building practices at the meeting, which starts at 8 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road.

The Triangle Park matter will follow discussions of four ordinances and possible council action that would take the first step of a two-step process to enact some or all of them. The topics include:

■ An update to the noise ordinance. The council consid-

ered voting on this ordinance on April 22, but a last-minute change of language — allowing commercial gardening activities on Saturdays — forced a delay.

■ An amendment enacting fire-safe building practices across town. A state wildfire-hazard map has singled out the Woodside Highlands neighborhood as deserving of a “very high” risk label. The council, using results of an independent study, proposes toughening the building code for every homeowner and ignoring the state’s map, in part to avoid a label that homeowners say could give insurance companies reason to raise rates or cancel coverage.

■ An update to the solicitation ordinance. The town’s ordinance was adopted in 1964 but solicitation law has since “changed dramatically” to provide more free speech protection, including

for religious and political speech, Town Attorney Sandy Sloan said in an April 2 memo.

■ An earlier start to council meetings. After several meetings that went past midnight, the council on March 25 directed the town attorney to draw up an amendment to change the start time to 7:30 p.m. from the longstanding time of 8 p.m.

The town’s Architectural & Site Control Commission has reviewed plans for Triangle Park that include adding new benches and picnic tables, making it accessible to people with disabilities, and reorganizing the parking from its nine parallel-parking slots to 21 side-by-side spaces.

A common parking lot connects the park and a four-store strip mall. Store owners have complained that the current parking arrangement is inadequate. ■

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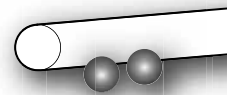
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Town of Portola Valley Architectural and Site Control Commission Recruitment

The Town Council is seeking an individual to serve on the Town’s Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC). The objectives of the ASCC plan review and approval is to promote the preservation of the visual character of Portola Valley, assuring that all building sites and residences are developed in a manner minimizing disturbance to natural terrain and vegetation.

The ASCC consists of 5 members appointed by the Town Council, meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. ASCC is charged with the review of all applications for building permits for new residential projects and additions over 400 square feet, site development permits, conditional use permits, subdivision and matters referred from the Planning Commission or Town Council.

If you are interested in serving on the ASCC, please submit a letter of interest to the Town Council by Friday, June 5, 2009.



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- Tuesday, May 26: 7:00-8:30pm

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City does not anticipate tax hike, service cuts

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

After weeks of speculation over whether Menlo Park would raise taxes or cut services in balancing a projected \$2 million budget deficit for the 2009-10 fiscal year, the answer appears to be: neither.

City Manager Glen Rojas' preliminary budget proposal does not call for the utility users tax to rise above its current level of 1 percent in the fiscal year that begins July 1. And while the budget calls for delaying maintenance and cutting several positions, Mr. Rojas says residents will not, for the most part, notice a difference in city services.

The City Council plans to review his preliminary budget in a study session at its meeting Tuesday, May 12; Mr. Rojas will present a final proposal in a public hearing in June.

Though the country is mired in a recession, the city expects revenues to increase by 3.8 percent in 2009-10 from current projections for the 2008-09 fiscal year. The city will see significant increases in property tax revenues, charges for city services, and tax revenues associated with the opening of the Rosewood Sand Hill hotel, according to Finance Director Carol Augustine.

The city's preliminary budget doesn't call for layoffs, and doesn't depend on city staff members' taking pay cuts, Mr. Rojas said. Budget projections do not antici-

pate a raise for city employees when the contracts for non-safety staff members expire in October — though Mr. Rojas was quick to point out that the city is not trying to pre-empt labor negotiations.

Mr. Rojas emphasized that many of the cost-cutting measures he has proposed are temporary. Deferring maintenance projects and equipment purchase for more than a year or two is risky, he said, adding that he's more concerned about the 2010-11 fiscal year, and

The city expects revenues to increase by 3.8 percent in fiscal year 2009-10.

the city's long-term financial footing, than he is about weathering the recession in 2009-10.

The city plans to freeze hiring for, or eliminate the equivalent of, three full-time positions and to contract out two jobs — meaning the employees would not be represented by a union.

After making those cuts, hiring fewer contractors for planning and building services, foregoing some employee training, and deferring maintenance projects and equipment purchases, the city anticipates drawing \$575,000 from its general fund reserve in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

A total \$450,000 dedicated to the El Camino Real/downtown planning process is included in that figure. The City Council elected to fund that project from the reserve, calling it a one-time expense.

The council meeting is slated to begin at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the council chambers in the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets. ■

State may borrow from cities, counties

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

After a judge blocked an attempt by the state of California to take property tax income from the state's redevelopment agencies, California's finance director is recommending that the state borrow from property tax revenues that go to cities, counties and special districts.

Under Proposition 1A, passed by voters in 2004, the state could borrow up to 8 percent of property tax revenues. The state would be required to repay the funds within three years.

Any borrowing of property tax revenues would require approval by two-thirds of each

house of the state Legislature.

In the event that the state does choose to borrow the funds, Menlo Park City Manager Glen Rojas said, the city would likely lend it from its sizable general fund reserve. The city would probably not make expense cuts from its ongoing budget operations, he said.

On April 30, a Sacramento County Superior Court judge ruled that a bill calling for the transfer of \$350 million from redevelopment agencies to the state was unconstitutional. That would have meant an approximately \$700,000 hit to Menlo Park's redevelopment fund, according to Mr. Rojas.

The state could still appeal that ruling. ■



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Frustration rises over child care program USGS plans open house

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO WATCH

With fingers pointing every which way over the alleged mismanagement of Menlo Park's Burgess preschool child care program, the City Council voted 4-1 at its May 5 meeting to raise fees by 6 percent at the Menlo Children's Center in the Civic Center.

Eight parents spoke against the proposed fee increase, which council members say is necessary to keep up with, if not outpace, rising costs.

Parents also slammed the city's management of the center, noting that while fees have increased over the last several years, revenue has not. Despite a long waiting list of children, the center hasn't filled vacant spots. Parents alleged that, in some cases, the city had even neglected to collect fees from parents with enrolled children.

Barbara George, the city's community services director, attributed "inefficiencies" in the program's management to turnover in the program director position. Two directors have left in the past two years.

Council members joined par-

ents in questioning the center's management, saying they doubt the city can run the center effectively.

Mayor Heyward Robinson said it seems to him that the city needs to hire an outside provider to run the center — a move parents have strenuously opposed.

Councilwoman Kelly Ferguson voted against the fee increase, saying she wanted to hold off until a city commission makes its recommendation on how the city can cut its subsidy of the center.

City negotiates for garbage collector

As Menlo Park prepares for a switch in garbage collection companies beginning in 2011, the city has begun negotiations with a new provider.

The city is negotiating with Norcal Waste Systems, the company that serves San Francisco, to take the contract over from Allied Waste. Garbage would be picked up weekly.

With the change in providers, residents would get a 96-gallon bin for yard waste and compost;

a 64-gallon bin for recycling; and a 32-gallon bin for trash. They would be able to downsize to a 20-gallon bin for trash, or to request additional bins.

The yard waste bin would come with a smaller, portable bucket for food scraps. Garbage with food remains in it, such as pizza boxes, could be disposed of in the yard waste bin, according to Norcal representatives. ■

■ CORRECTION

In a May 6 story titled, "Commission chair blasts council," we reported that Councilman Andy Cohen and resident Morris Brown accused two planning commissioners, one of them Melody Pagee, of "hijacking" the commission's process of revising a section of the city's zoning ordinance. In fact, Mr. Cohen and Mr. Brown did not identify the commissioners by name; Mr. Brown said he was not referring to Ms. Pagee, and that she was not, in his view, involved in the "hijacking" process. The Almanac regrets the error.

USGS plans open house on its Menlo Park campus

The U.S. Geological Survey will hold an open house at its Menlo Park campus on Saturday, May 16, and Sunday, May 17, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.

The open house will include hands-on exhibits on gold panning, earthquakes, ocean science, and volcanoes. USGS scientists will be on hand to offer explanations and answer questions.

The event is held once every three years. The 2006 event drew about 10,000 people over two days, according to USGS representatives. It is "kid friendly," and all of the exhibits are accessible to people in wheelchairs. Admission is free of charge.

Founded in 1879, USGS is the nation's largest mapping

agency, according to its Web site. Its mission is to provide reliable scientific information to describe and understand the earth, to minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters, and to manage the country's resources. The Menlo Park campus serves as its western region headquarters.

USGS is located at 345 Middlefield Road. Parking will be available at several sites along Middlefield, between Ravenswood Avenue and Willow Road, with handicapped parking available on the campus.

For more information, call 329-4390, or visit <http://open-house.wr.usgs.gov>. For a parking map, visit tinyurl.com/pbfpg4.

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Atherton burglar sentenced to eight months in county jail

Menlo Park resident Marcus Alan Thompson, who has pleaded “no contest” to several counts of burglary in connection with residential break-ins in the wee hours of Dec. 4 in Atherton’s Lindenwood neighborhood, was sentenced to eight months in jail and other penalties at a May 6 hearing in San Mateo County Superior Court, according to a report from the District Attorney’s Office.

Prosecutors wanted 16 months of jail for Mr. Thompson, 18, who will receive credit for 230 days already served, Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said.

Why 230 days of credit when the crimes occurred about 180 days ago? Prisoners can earn credit for activities such as working while in jail, pursuing a high school diploma, and undergoing counseling, said Savas Loukedis, Mr. Thompson’s attorney.

The plea bargain with Judge James Ellis also requires Mr. Thompson to serve three years of probation at a cost of \$75 per month, abstain from alcohol and drugs, refrain from possessing weapons and ammunition, undergo counseling and submit a DNA sample.

He must also submit to search and seizure as a consequence of losing his Fourth Amendment rights, pay fines and fees totaling \$370, and pay restitution to his victims in amounts to be determined by a probation officer, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Atherton police arrested Mr. Thompson after being called to Mosswood Drive at about 1

a.m. on Dec. 4. A resident woke up upon hearing the sound of her garage door opening, then looked out and called police after seeing the door open and her vehicle’s dome light on.

More calls followed. Police reported 11 property crimes that night, including six incidents on Greenoaks Drive, three on Mosswood and one on James Avenue.

Police apprehended Mr. Thompson after a short foot chase. After a yard-to-yard search using a police dog, and with help from the Menlo Park Police Department, they captured his 17-year-old accomplice, who was not identified because he was a juvenile.

Both suspects were in possession of evidence from the burglaries, police said.

Woman carried out of meeting by police

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

A roomful of spectators looked on as police officers dragged a longtime Menlo Park resident out of the council chambers at a City Council meeting Tuesday, May 5. The woman was detained in the police station, but no charges were pressed, according to the Menlo Park Police Department.

Saying the city had forced her out of her home, Nitza Derfner refused to return to her seat after the three minutes allotted her for public comment had expired, calling the time limit “unconstitutional.” Mayor Heyward Robinson then called a recess, and Ms. Derfner left the podium.

Several police officers had been summoned to the council chambers earlier in the meeting

when Ms. Derfner interrupted discussion on the dais. “Call the police!” she said when council members told her she was out of order during the earlier interruption.

After her second confrontation during the public comment period, Ms. Derfner returned to her seat when the mayor called the recess. At that point, four officers surrounded her, asking her to leave the building. When she refused, they carried her out, at one point prying her legs from the door frame as she resisted being pulled from the room.

Once outside, she was handcuffed. From inside the council chambers, she could be heard screaming as the officers carried her to the police station.

The officers removed Ms. Derfner from the meeting because of the potential of her continuing to disrupt the coun-

cil meeting, said Nicole Acker, a police department spokeswoman.

During each of Ms. Derfner’s trips to the front of the room to address the council, Mayor Robinson turned to City Manager Glen Rojas, saying, “Mr. Rojas.” Assistant City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson left the council chambers when Ms. Derfner first interrupted the meeting; several minutes later, two officers entered the chambers, had a brief conversation with Ms. Derfner, and waited in the back of the room.

Ms. Derfner regularly spoke at City Council meetings in the early 1990s, alleging that City Attorney Bill McClure and certain council members had contributed to the loss of her property. She mounted an unsuccessful bid for City Council in 1994. ■

Simitian honored by state PTA

The California State PTA honored state Sen. Joe Simitian with its honorary service award at the organization’s annual convention in San Jose recently.

“Senator Simitian has distinguished himself in the Legislature by authoring legislation that supports education and children’s services,” said Pam Brady, president of the state PTA, in a press release.

In accepting his award, Mr. Simitian said, “(The) PTA has never been more vital, more necessary than it is now.”

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Local towns look to influence high-speed rail design

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

As the agency that oversees the high-speed rail project begins to plan how high-speed trains will pass through the Peninsula, local cities and towns are trying to figure out how best to get the agency's ear.

Seeking strength in numbers, Menlo Park and Atherton have signed an agreement to formalize an ad hoc group that has been meeting weekly to discuss issues related to the project. A majority of council members say the cities will have more sway if they work together to lobby the High-Speed Rail Authority, and that they will be better able to share resources and ideas.

Rail agency plans

The main question in the minds

of local officials has been, and continues to be: In designing the rail, will officials pay attention to how it will affect local communities?

Rail officials have said repeatedly that they plan to work with local jurisdictions throughout the process, though local officials have said they're skeptical that the agency will do more than state law requires. At an April 30 meeting, a state Senate subcommittee that included Sen. Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto) expressed concern over the rail agency's outreach efforts, holding off on granting the agency its next wave of funding until it showed a better program for "outreach and oversight."

The rail agency has laid out a plan to meet quarterly between May 2009 and April 2011 with "working groups" from Peninsula counties and agencies.

Mike Garvey, a former San Car-

los city manager who's heading up outreach efforts in San Mateo County for the engineering company contracted to design the rail line, said he's sympathetic to the concerns of local residents.

"The (environmental review) process is a formal, ritualized process," he said. "Some people had the impression that that specific, fixed process would be the only opportunity for comment, and it's not. This will be an ongoing, informal attempt to involve grassroots organization, and to hear from every community."

In convincing local officials that the rail agency is serious about working with local communities, Mr. Garvey has his work cut out for him. Count Menlo Park Councilman Rich Cline among the skeptics.

"Our point is that there needs to be a dialogue. We need to work

together to plan this thing successfully," Mr. Cline said. "The work group (plan) doesn't necessarily make it better, because we have to see that there's a proper input and reaction process."

Mr. Cline characterizes the rail authority as an organization that's still oriented toward promotion of the concept of high-speed rail, rather than the logistics of how trains will pass through the state. He has joined a rising number of people calling for a restructuring of the organization.

The rail agency expects to issue a draft of its analysis of the various design possibilities in January 2010, according to Mr. Garvey. He said it's too early to say whether that report will identify a preferred configuration.

The agency plans to make portions of its analysis available to the public throughout the

course of its analysis in the coming months, according to Mr. Garvey. He said he doesn't yet know exactly how that information will be presented, but that "everyone will have access to it."

Local strategy

The group of Peninsula jurisdictions, dubbed the "Coalition of Cities," would include one council member from each constituent jurisdiction. In addition to Menlo Park and Atherton, the ad hoc group has included representatives from Palo Alto, Mountain View, Burlingame, and Sunnyvale.

The group is separate from the "working groups" set up by the rail agency. That group is divided along county lines.

The coalition of cities would likely only take positions on broad issues that affect most of the member communities, Menlo Park council members say.

Menlo Park Councilman John Boyle said he supports the cities working together, but fears that formalizing the group would clog an already complicated bureaucratic process. The rail agency is legally required to listen to each city throughout its design process, he said. And if the group takes a stance on an issue that Menlo Park opposes, the city runs the risk of having its position misinterpreted in the press.

In an interview, Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson said she thinks a "formalized communication strategy" would make it easier, not harder, for news outlets to interpret the stance taken by Peninsula cities.

Peninsula counties would seem to have built-in leverage with the rail agency, because they own the Caltrain corridor. The agency will negotiate to lease the corridor from the joint powers board that oversees it, in order to run trains along it. But some local officials think the board is more focused on securing benefits for the Caltrain system than it is on the impacts to the communities along the rail line.

Mr. Boyle disputed the notion that the board's interests are by definition inimical to those of the jurisdictions it represents. "I think they would represent our interests, if we asked them to." ▀

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■ INFORMATION

The High-Speed Rail Authority has set up a hotline for people to get general information on the project: 510-597-8640. For questions specific to San Mateo County, call outreach coordinator Mike Garvey at 596-9047, or e-mail him at garveycgs@yahoo.com. The project's Web site is cahighspeedrail.ca.gov.

Woodside elementary school parcel tax passes easily

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

■ SCHOOLS

Voters in the Woodside Elementary School District overwhelmingly approved the ballot measure renewing the district's parcel tax that was set to expire July 1.

The Measure C vote was 75 percent in support of the tax, which will raise \$242 per parcel the first year, with a cost of living adjustment up to 4 percent a year until 2017. For passage, the

measure required approval by two-thirds of the voters.

The ballot was by mail only, and only about 41 percent of the district's 2,257 registered voters returned ballots. The vote was 788 in favor, and 266 opposed. Ballots were counted on May 5.

The tax is expected to raise about

\$242,000 annually for the one-school district. Woodside Elementary School serves students from kindergarten through eighth grade who live in portions of Woodside.

According to the ballot argument in favor of Measure C, the tax will provide funding for maintaining and improving instruction in math, science, reading and writing; maintaining small class sizes at all grade levels; and retaining teachers.

Property owners 65 years and

older can apply for an exemption if they live on the parcel. Those currently exempt will be automatically exempted from the renewed tax.

Owners of two or more contiguous parcels will be taxed for only one.

Revenue from the tax will be placed in a special account, according to the county's impartial analysis. An independent citizens' committee will be formed to monitor spending of the funds, and an annual report will account for revenue raised, and how it was spent, the analysis says. ■

Menlo School clinches another PAL baseball title

By Keith Peters
Palo Alto Weekly

■ MORE ONLINE

See more sports and other news on TheAlmanacOnline.com.

Menlo baseball coach Craig Schoof probably figured his team would have to wait until Wednesday, May 13, to claim the outright championship in the PAL Bay Division. He was wrong.

A short while following the Knights' 12-1 victory over host El Camino in South San Francisco on Friday, May 8, Schoof learned that Woodside had upset second-place Burlingame, 7-4, enabling Menlo to clinch the outright title. The Knights have a three-game lead with only two to play, both against Burlingame next Wednesday and Friday.

This is Menlo's second consecu-

tive Bay Division crown and its fourth PAL divisional title in seven years (Lake in 2004, Ocean in 2005, Bay in 2008, Bay in 2009).

After clinching their 21st Central Coast Section playoff berth in the past 22 years on Wednesday, the Knights (11-1, 22-6) took the field on Friday hoping to clinch no worse than a tie for their consecutive PAL Bay Division title. El Camino starting pitcher Rustin Mayorga, however, had other ideas and held Menlo scoreless and with just two hits through the first five innings.

But the last two innings were a different story, as Menlo exploded for 12 runs and 12 hits while coasting to the victory. Trevor Williams and Alex Smith were the hitting stars for Menlo, as Smith blew open a 2-1 game in the sixth with a grand slam and John Hopkins-bound Trevor Williams finished his four-hit day with a three-run homer in the seventh.

The Knights got great pitching from USC-recruited walk-on Steven Zavodnick, who was making his first start in two months after recovering from an arm injury. He went 3 1/3 innings, giving up only three hits and one unearned run. Dustin Williams, also coming back from an arm injury, picked up his third win of year with 3 2/3 innings of shutout relief. ■

Parent info night for Pop Warner Vikings football

The Menlo-Atherton Vikings, the local Pop Warner football program for boys and girls from age 5 to 15, is holding a parent information night from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, at the Menlo Park Library.

Registration is now open for the 2009 season, says Michelle Becker, secretary for the Vikings, who encourages families to register early. Practice begins in early August. The season runs from

September through October.

For more information, go to www.mapopwarner.com.

Conrad Russell wins 'Little Mo' sectionals

Conrad Russell, an active member of the Ladera Oaks Swim and Tennis Club junior tennis team, defeated No. 1 seed Sam Riffice of Roseville to win the "Little Mo" boys 10 and under Northern

California sectionals at Diamond Hills Sports Club in Oakley, California, on April 19.

Conrad won his match 6-3, 6-1, reports Ray Bilsey, the Ladera Oaks club's tennis director who coaches Conrad.

School district honors its volunteers

Volunteers who have devoted their time to the Menlo Park City School District are being honored at a ceremony from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday, May 28, at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park.

The 2009 service award winners are parents and teachers who have gone "above and beyond" to help district schools, said Carla Posthauer.

The following people are being given Honorary Service Awards, Continuing Service Awards, Golden Oak or President's Awards.

■ From Laurel School: Roxanne Bozdog, Cathy Brown, Mari Chazen, Eileen Rozanski, Priscilla Seely, Principal Nancy Hendry and Leslie Burke.

■ From Encinal School: Joanne Andrew, Betsy Colby, Debi Rice, Caroline Wang, Ang-

ie Holman and Elizabeth Katz.

■ From Oak Knoll School: Alicia Bush, Mary Hoffman, Susan Hogan, Joan Joss, Bee Tee and Valerie Ambwani.

■ From Hillview Middle School: Mario Orozco-Mendoza, Irene Searles, Kim Reed, Kathy Oppenheimer, Jill Roumeliotis, Principal Mike Moore, Emily Liggett, Lisa Carhart and Natalie Diller.

■ From the Menlo Park Atherton Education Foundation: Deglin Kenealy, Alison Leupold, David Schneider, Jill Zanolli, Rebecca Bloom, Kim Guthrie and Shari Conrad.

■ From the PTO Council: Bruce Ives, John Kelly, Carol Metzler, Terry Thygesen, Kim Young, Julie Brody and Traci Brinton.

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Renaissance Kid Ashley Simons leads a group of grandparents on a tour of La Entrada Middle School on Grandparents' Day. The grandparents said they loved going back to school.

Event draws grandparents near and far

By **Pattie Dullea**

La Entrada assistant principal

The Las Lomas Educational Foundation and the La Entrada Renaissance Kids' Program hosted the first ever Grandparents' Day on the morning of March 23 in the new gym at La Entrada Middle School in Menlo Park.

Over 120 students and almost 200 grandparents participated, some journeying from as far away as Italy, Chile, France, Canada, Texas, the East Coast, Maryland and Oregon.

Fifty La Entrada Renaissance Kids, student ambassadors for the school, donned bright green shirts and greeted grandparents and senior citizen friends with wel-

come signs and festive balloons.

These student ambassadors were key players in the planning of the day's events, creating table decorations for the luncheon, welcome posters and banners for the actual day, and a Power Point presentation entitled "Life at La Entrada." They also served as tour guides and hall directors for the morning.

Several La Entrada music students, directed by Colin Cooper, also contributed to the day's festivities by performing at the "Morning Welcome Coffee" and the lovely luncheon. These exemplary performances put the exclamation point on the day!

Grandparents observed this "Blue Ribbon School" firsthand, and loved going back to school. They were treated to dissecting squid in one science lab, learning about labs in atmospheric pressure, making collages in art, and partnering up with their grand-

children to complete compare/contrast lessons on Smart Boards.

Some participated as interviewers and interviewees and even did problem-solving games in math. They witnessed firsthand the engaging curriculum as well as the commitment of La Entrada teachers, who were the true stars of the day as they welcomed grandparent guests into their classrooms.

Following the classroom visits, the grandparents, grandkids and teachers were all treated to a delicious luncheon by Su Hong Restaurant in the new gym.

Dawn Simons, the head of the Las Lomas Education Foundations' Grandparents' Group, and I partnered to plan and chair this event.

As Superintendent Eric Hartwig noted, "They, along with a phalanx of foundation regulars, turned the day into a fabulous well-oiled event." ■

About the author: Pattie Dullea is the assistant principal of La Entrada Middle School in Menlo Park.

Woodside woman writes book on financial fitness

Teresa Dentino of Woodside will introduce on May 21 the first book in her planned series called "Women Get Financially Fit: What Your Mother Never Taught You About Money."

The public is invited to a reception from 6 to 10 p.m. Thursday, May 21, at NYAXE Gallery, 818 Emerson St. in Palo Alto.

Ms. Dentino's appearance coincides with the opening of the gallery's spring exhibition, featuring contemporary art from around the world.

In tandem with the book, Ms. Dentino has launched a Web site, WomenGetFinanciallyFit.com.

Ms. Dentino is founder and CEO of the consulting firm, The

Financial 411.

She is a member of the town of Woodside's Open Space Committee and a volunteer mediator with the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center.

To attend the book launch and gallery reception, RSVP by e-mail to rsvp@catmacart.com or call 838-9942.

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30 years of mystery at Menlo library

Meredith Phillips, who started Perseverance Press in the garage of her Menlo Oaks home 30 years ago, will talk about her years of mystery publishing before the Mystery Readers group at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, May 20, at the Menlo Park Public Library.

An exhibit of all the books Ms. Phillips has published will be on display at the Menlo Park Library through the month of May.

Ms. Phillips lived in Menlo Park for 21 years, publishing 10 books during that period as a one-person press, before moving to Palo Alto. Ten

years ago, Ms. Phillips joined childhood friend, John Daniel, to form Perseverance Press/John Daniel & Company. Mr. Daniel, formerly a manager of Kepler's Books, lived at one time in Portola Valley. He and his wife, Susan, now live in McKinleyville.

The combined firm of Perseverance/Daniel has published more than 40 mysteries in the last 10 years.

The Menlo Park Library has had a long association with Ms. Phillips, according to Friends of the Library volunteer Jackie Drew. Ms. Phillips, who began her career as a writer, wrote her

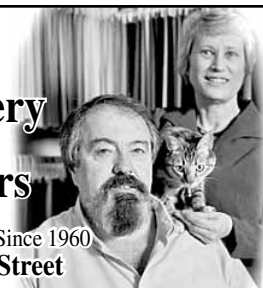
second book, "Death Spiral," in longhand one summer on the Menlo library patio.

Perseverance Press was honored May 2 with an Agatha Domestic Mystery Convention in Washington, D.C., for its non-fiction book "How to Write Killer Historical Mysteries" by Kathy Lynn Emerson.

The Mystery Readers Group meets at 7:15 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month in the downstairs library meeting room. The library is located at 800 Alma St. in Menlo Park. For more formation, call Jackie Drew at 325-4048.

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Team members, all fifth-graders at Encinal School, are: front row, from left, Kevin Conrad, Matthew Kenney and Jackson Goudey; and back row, from left, Kyle Kranen, Erik Muir, Thomas Fuller and Daniel Chaiken.

Fifth-graders score high in Tech Museum challenge

By Shari Conrad
Encinal volunteer

A team of 5th graders from Encinal School won second place for overall solution in their age group at the Tech Museum of Innovation 2009 Tech Challenge on April 25. The 2009 Tech Challenge was to design and build a device that could safely deliver a small payload to the top of a mock volcano.

The team of Encinal students created a clever solution using materials such as a red wagon, a drill motor, several feet of PVC

pipe, bubble wrap, wire, duct tape and a bungee cord.

The seven members worked together in their parents' garages for eight weeks prior to the competition.

"We tried a lot of ideas which didn't work, so it was really fascinating to zero in on a solution which finally worked on a consistent basis," says team member Kevin Conrad.

"We learned a lot about working together as a team," says Kyle Kranen. "Sometimes it can be hard getting seven people to all work together."

On the day of the competition, the boys presented their process and shared their design journal with a team of judges.

They had five minutes to show their machine in action. Two

minutes were allowed to set up the machine, followed by three minutes to "deliver the payload."

Eight weeks of effort culminated in five crucial minutes, during which their device put in a near-perfect performance.

This year's challenge drew a record number of participants. There were 250 teams and more than 1,000 students competing. There were 76 teams participating in the fifth- and sixth-grade age group.

"This was a really fun challenge that let you learn a lot about engineering and science," says Daniel Chaiken.

The team consisted of Daniel Chaiken, Kevin Conrad, Thomas Fuller, Jackson Goudey, Kyle Kranen, Matthew Kenney and Erik Muir. ■

Carolina Gambetta
Age 94 in 1985



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Remembering Carrie Gambetta

Editor:

I wish to respond to your article in the May 21 issue about the Woodside Priory contesting the last will of Mrs. Carrie Gambetta with the court argument that she "was no longer of sound mind when she left the property to her grandniece."

I wonder how that argument could have been used and if impartial character witnesses were called. I knew Mrs. Gambetta for the four and one-half years I lived on the property that was in dispute. I was very saddened by that line as I felt that she was of very sound mind.

I know because I was one of the very few outside of relatives and some old friends to pay her occasional visits. She was deaf and so I would write my questions on a board and she would respond after reading them.

We often talked about her memories of Switzerland which was her country of origin, her early days in Portola Valley running her dairy farm with her husband, and countless other topics. I always found her keen and alert, and I'll always remember Carrie Gambetta as a lively, interesting, and gracious elderly lady who should be remembered as such.

ELLEN SPENCER
Woodside

Originally published in the Almanac June 25, 1986

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Wins art award

Amanda Lee, a resident of Menlo Park and a senior at Menlo-Atherton High School, has won the Menlo Art League's scholarship, given annually to an outstanding student in the arts. The selection was made by the art staff at M-A. Each year since 1997, the league has given a \$500 award to a high school senior. Funds for the award were raised by a tour of five local gardens with Menlo Art League members painting in each garden. The event was chaired by Carol Morrow of Atherton. Amanda will attend UC Santa Cruz in the fall.



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Q. Do cyclists have to obey vehicle laws?

A. California Vehicle Code Section 21200(a) states, "Every person riding a bicycle upon a highway has all the rights and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle by this division. ..."

Cyclists must obey all of the rules of the road if they are riding on a road also occupied by vehicular traffic. They can be cited if they do not obey the rules.

The most common laws that come into play are: stopping at stop signs and red lights, signaling when turning, yielding to ascending traffic while going downhill on a narrow roadway, and laws regarding necessary equipment, such as lighting at night and helmets for juveniles.

CVC section 21202(a) also maintains that a cyclist traveling slower than vehicular traffic must ride as close to the right hand shoulder as possible.

Cyclists and motorists can absolutely get along by obeying all traffic laws, being courteous, and using common sense. The most important thing is everyone's safety. Please refer to www.dmv.ca.gov/about/bicycle for a complete listing of rules, regulations, and safety tips.



Three new Gold Award Scouts from Menlo Park are, from left, Kelsey Fowle, Erica Shepard and Julia Robinson. The photo was taken outside the Menlo Park City Council chambers.

Three local teens earn Girl Scout Gold Award

By Kris Olson
Girl Scout leader

Three members of Menlo Park Girl Scout Troop 2148 have earned the highest honor in Girl Scouts: the Girl Scout Gold Award.

Erica Shepard, Julia Robinson and Kelsey Fowle — all 2008 graduates of Menlo-Atherton High School and all residents of Menlo Park — received their awards at a ceremony in Menlo Park and were recognized by the Menlo Park City Council.

Any Girl Scout who is 14 to 18 years old and completes the rigorous requirements—which promote community service, career exploration, positive values, and leadership skills—may be eligible for the Gold Award.

Girls must meet requirements that help them prepare for and complete a community service project. The process for meeting all the requirements often takes three to four years.

After surveying community needs and talking to community leaders, Erica, Julia and Kelsey organized a literacy project for homeless families at the Haven Family House in Menlo Park, which provides transitional housing for families.

The teens cataloged the library and organized a book drive to provide new books. Then they conducted a reading program through the year with the children of Haven Family House, enlisting the assistance of other Menlo-Atherton High School students.

Girl Scouts of Northern California serves 54,000 girls of all ages. In 2007-2008, just 176 of the 2,500 girls in 10th through 12th grades earned their Gold Award.

At M-A High, Erica Shepard received the President's Education Award for outstanding academic excellence. A member of the varsity badminton team, she was an avid art student and competed in gymnastics at Burgess Recreation Center. Today, she is a freshman at the University of California, Santa Cruz, majoring in biochemistry. She is the daughter of Carrie Bildstein and Barry Shepard of Menlo Park.

Julia Robinson graduated from M-A as an AP Scholar with Distinction. She was on the varsity lacrosse team and was active in drama. A freshman at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she is majoring in psychology, she is the daughter of Starla and Peter Robinson of Menlo Park.

Kelsey Fowle graduated from M-A as an AP Scholar. She played soccer, participated in Show Biz Dance, and was a Girl Scout camp counselor. The daughter of Kris Olson and Mark Fowle of Menlo Park, Kelsey is now a freshman at the University of California at Davis, majoring in history.

All three girls started in Girl Scouts in kindergarten or first grade. They earned the Girl Scouts' Silver Award in ninth grade and participated in an international friendship program at the Girl Scout/Girl Guide World Center "Our Cabana" in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 2005. ▀

For more information about the girl scouting, go to www.girlscoutsnorcal.org.

About the author: *Kris Olson of Menlo Park is the Girl Scout leader of these three Gold Award winners.*

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Hearing on La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve plan

A public hearing on a master plan for the La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve is set for Tuesday, May 19, in the multipurpose room of Hatch Elementary School, 490 Miramontes Ave. in Half Moon Bay. The meeting is from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Board of Directors is set to consider adopting a master plan outlining use of the 5,759-acre preserve over

the next 30 years. The preserve consists of working ranch land, grasslands, and forests near the town of La Honda.

The plan aims to balance the preservation of viable grazing, ranching history, and the natural environment with public education and low-intensity recreation, according to the open space district.

For information, call 691-1200 or go to www.openspace.org.

Citibank donates to Trees for Menlo

Trees for Menlo has received a \$2,500 donation from Citibank, according to Chuck Kinney, the group's president.

The donation "demonstrates the depth of your bank's earnestness" in supporting important community organizations,

Mr. Kinney wrote in a letter to the bank.

Citibank has a branch in downtown Menlo Park.

Trees for Menlo is a nonprofit that raises money for trees to plant along the city's stretch of El Camino Real.

Cost of a stamp goes up to 44 cents

The price of a first-class stamp went up to 44 cents on Monday, May 11, an increase of two cents.

Anyone with the foresight to have laid in a supply of the U.S. Postal Service's "forever" stamps

can keep using them, even if they were originally purchased at the lower price.

For a full list of the new cost of sending letters, printed material and packages, go to <http://www.USPS.com>.

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Members of the championship team are, top row, from left, Teal Kurnie, Jenny Werner, Alanna McNaughton, Christine Alftin and Gianna Rosati; bottom row, from left, Olivia Stangvik, Chrstina Ngo, Coach John Fitzpatrick, Abby Jorgenson and Annie Kingman. Not pictured: Morgan Dressel.

The Woodside 'Wild'cats are champs

The Woodside Elementary seventh-grade girls basketball team recently won the 2009 Burgess league Youth Basketball Championship.

They finished with a 8-1 record and beat a tough La Entrada Middle School team in the finals, 28 to 22.

The game was a seesaw bat-

tle with several lead changes.

The Woodside ladies overcame much adversity this season as they had several multiple sport athletes and were able to field their entire team in only three of their nine games.

The team consisted of Morgan Dressel, Christine Alftin,

Teal Kurnie, Olivia Stangvik, Abby Jorgensen, Annie Kingman, Gianna Rosotti, Alanna McNaughton, Christina Ngo and Jennie Werner.

The team was coached by John Fitzpatrick, a 1973 graduate of Woodside Elementary, who submitted this report.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS BID PROPOSALS SOUGHT FOR CITYWIDE SIDEWALK REPAIR PROJECT

The City of Menlo Park invites qualified contractors to submit sealed bid proposals for the construction of the CITYWIDE SIDEWALK REPAIR PROJECT. Work required as part of this project consists of, in general, removing and replacing portions of concrete sidewalk, curb and gutter, handicap ramp, driveway, valley gutter, asphalt parking strip, deeplifting asphalt concrete pavement, and tree root pruning at various locations in the City of Menlo Park; all as shown on the plans and described in the specifications. Performance of this work requires a valid California Contractor's License Class A or C8. Tree root pruning work shall be performed by a Class D49 contractor, or class "A" and "C8" under supervision of a licensed arborist. Project documents and copies of the prevailing rate of wages can be obtained from the Menlo Park Engineering Division, located in the Administrative Building at 701 Laurel St. Sealed bid proposals will be received at the Engineering Division office until 10 a.m. on WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2009, at which time they will be opened and publicly read. Additional information can be obtained on the City's website: www.menlopark.org/cip

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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

Grand theft reports:

- Laptop computer stolen, Menlo College at 1000 El Camino Real, May 1.
- Cell phone stolen from vice-principal's office, Menlo-Atherton High School, 555 Middlefield Road, May 5.
- Two boxes stolen from driveway, Greenoaks Drive, May 7.

Stolen vehicle report: Menlo-Atherton High School, 555 Middlefield Road, May 7.

MENLO PARK

Commercial burglary report: Window broken and laptop computer stolen, The Psychic Shop at 1706 El Camino Real, May 3.

Auto burglary reports:

- Break-in to vehicle, and stereo system and bag of clothing stolen, 400 block of Glenwood Ave., May 1.
- Window smashed and GPS unit stolen, 300 block of O'Connor St., May 6.
- Break-in to vehicle, but nothing stolen, 2300 block of Branner Lane, May 7.

Grand theft report: Camera stolen out of vehicle, 200 block of Ivy Drive, May 7.

Fraud reports:

- Checks forged and cashed for loss valued at \$800, reported at main police station at 701 Laurel St., May 1.
- Credit card fraud with loss of \$364, in 300 block of Middlefield Road, May 1.
- Two bank-reported cases of credit card fraud with losses of \$3,000 and \$2,800, First Republic Bank, 1215 El Camino Real, and Bank of America, 633 Santa Cruz Ave., May 5.

WOODSIDE

Fraud report: Resident gave \$100 to clean-cut, tall white male claiming to be raising money for college baseball tournament in Hawaii, 100 block of Alta Mesa Road, April 29.

LADERA

Auto burglary report: Purse stolen from vehicle and victim's debit card used at fast-food restaurant in San Mateo, 300 block of Conil Way, April 30.

Grand theft reports:

- Two pairs of sunglasses, check book and iPhone charger stolen from vehicle, 200 block of Mimosa Way, April 29.
- Package delivered to front porch stolen, 200 block of W. Florest Way, April 30.

■ BIRTHS

Menlo Park

■ Sara Fernandez and Jose Angel Martinez-Rodriguez, a daughter, April 27, at Sequoia Hospital.

Portola Valley

■ Erin and Joshua McClenahan, a daughter, May 1, at Sequoia Hospital.

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@paweeekly.com or call 326-8210, ext. 221.



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

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



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

TOWN SQUARE FORUM

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

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

MAIL or deliver to:

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

CALL the Viewpoint desk at

854-2690, ext. 222.

Woodside confronts the Jobs mess again

It is remarkable that saner heads have not prevailed in resolving the head-butting issue of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs' attempt to tear down a historic home on Mountain Home Road in Woodside.

For some eight years, Mr. Jobs has tried unsuccessfully to tear down the historic 17,250-square-foot Jackling house and build a 6,000-square-foot contemporary home on the property.

But Mr. Jobs has found that his genius for creating some of world's most popular electronic products has not helped him obtain a simple demolition permit for this Woodside mansion, which is just down Mountain Home Road from the gated estate of Oracle founder Larry Ellison.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

The irony is that just about any other structure in Woodside would routinely be granted a demolition permit, provided the owner had good cause. But the Jackling house, designed by noted architect George Washington Smith in 1925 for copper baron Daniel C. Jackling, is a truly historic building, as defined by the state Environmental Quality Act.

Now, after Mr. Jobs' failed attempts to challenge the court decision blocking the demolition, he has decided to start over again at the Woodside Town Council and seek a new demolition permit. The case harkens back to 2001, when this long-haul battle began.

This time around, Mr. Jobs and his attorneys are providing the missing details that courts said invalidated the demolition permit that he received from the town in 2004 — and lost through the

courts. That missing information included the estimated cost of renovating the house today — \$13 million — compared with the cost of demolishing it and building a 6,000-square-foot custom home — \$8 million.

Obviously, Mr. Jobs believes the \$5 million savings makes it clear that demolition is the way to go.

But not so fast. When the town did grant a demolition permit in 2004, it required Mr. Jobs to try to find someone to disassemble the home and rebuild it at another site. A preservation group called Uphold Our Heritage says there has been no good-faith effort by Mr. Jobs to find a taker. They say that at least two serious offers have been rebuffed.

All of this may be moot, as Mr. Jobs has made clear that he will let the Jackling house fall apart rather than preserve it if he is not granted a permit. He stuck to his word, leaving windows and doors open and doing nothing to protect the historic home from the elements until the town stepped in and required him to board it up.

That is his right. But in our opinion, after refusing to pursue the very viable solution of disassembling the home and relocating it, while leaving it open to deteriorate, Mr. Jobs should not be granted a demolition permit.

This is a problem entirely created by Mr. Jobs. The town of Woodside has acted in good faith by laying out a process for Mr. Jobs to sweep his property clean while preserving the historic home. Clearly the only middle ground here is for Mr. Jobs to allow someone to dismantle the Jackling house and rebuild it on another site. That will satisfy all parties, and allow him to move on to better things.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Rail tunnel fantasy should be discarded

Editor:

Peninsula leaders need to give up their fantasy of a 30-mile tunnel for high-speed rail. This proposal is extremely fiscally irresponsible, and neither the state nor the federal government will spend billions of dollars extra for a Peninsula "Big Dig."

Peninsula leaders should instead focus on creating innovative and cost-effective ways to integrate high-speed rail into their communities, rather than clinging to the "tunnel or nothing" mindset which will ultimately limit the community planning process and delay the much-needed project at California's expense.

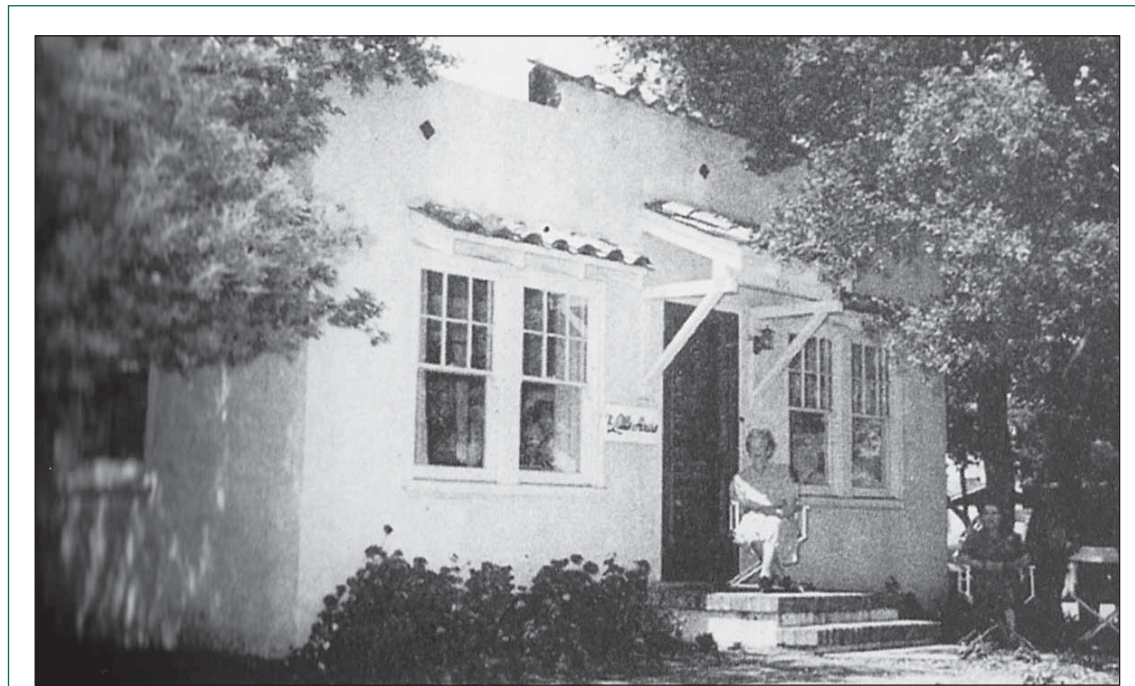
Daniel Jacobson
Stanford University

Hard to buy American goods at Wal-Mart

Editor:

I am responding to Warren Cain's article, "Some stark truths about our country," in last week's Almanac.

I couldn't agree more about how our economy is bogged down by the high costs of keeping U.S. troops in foreign countries. What



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

At the urging of Dr. Russell Lee of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, Menlo Park women known as Peninsula Volunteers opened Little House 60 years ago, on April 1, 1949, to serve the growing population of senior citizens. The first Little House was located on Menlo Avenue and offered craft classes and a meeting place.

countries are about to invade us? We must know by now that our mighty armed forces cannot invade other countries successfully — witness Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Yes, let's bring our troops home and save billions and billions of dollars yearly.

As far as jobs and Mr. Cain's request that we buy American,

that is more difficult. Many of our manufacturers have deserted us in favor of moving their plants overseas. I went to Macy's recently to buy a pair of socks. There was a wall covered with a wide variety of socks, and they were all made in China. I couldn't buy American.

I was a major appliance retailer

in Menlo Park for 30 years. Do you know where Maytag appliances are manufactured? Mexico. We used to sell RCA and Zenith TV receivers made in the U.S. They are both gone. Instead we have a good selection of quality television sets made in Japan.

See **LETTERS**, next page

Cities unite to address high-speed rail issues

By Kelly Fergusson and Yoriko Kishimoto

In November, Californians voted for Proposition 1A, High Speed Rail. Today, Peninsula communities are wrestling with the implications of this enormous project running through our downtowns and residential areas.

Yes, a majority voted for it. But no one gave up the right or responsibility to plan and control our future. We must ensure that community voices are represented. We need to think long-term — 100 years or more out into the future — and make sure this project is done right.

City council members from several Peninsula cities, including Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Burlingame, Belmont, Atherton, Mountain View and several others, have been meeting since February. These meetings have enabled dialogue with a variety of stakeholders, from High Speed Rail Authority staff to neighborhood groups to innovative and visionary urban-design professionals.

Working together, officials from some cities recently wrote a “mayor’s letter” to the authority. The letter captures the hopes and concerns cities’ elected officials hold in common. These include maintaining connectivity between areas on either side of the right-of-way, keeping local roads open, protecting the walkable and

bikeable nature of the communities, and a desire to work “collaboratively to develop optimal urban design alternatives.”

Cities want scenarios that address these concerns to be studied in the High Speed Rail Authority’s upcoming environmental impact report. Inclusion of agreed-upon alternatives is a prerequisite for balanced and credible analysis.

Cities “look forward to working together [with the High Speed Rail Authority] as partners for the duration of the process from design to construction,” says the letter.

In response, the authority has agreed to share a draft of the scoping report and early drafts of its impact report, important steps toward increasing transparency during the long, complex environmental-analysis period ahead.

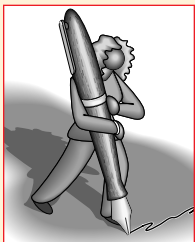
Some of the cities that have attended the meetings are now reviewing a “memorandum of understanding” to formalize the ad-hoc group. This will increase local transparency and provide a more structured decision-making framework. The Peninsula Cities Coalition will allow city

groupings from south Santa Clara County all the way up the Peninsula to work with their neighborhood groups, Chambers of Commerce and one another to pool and leverage our knowledge so we can have an effective voice with the new formal alliance between Caltrain and rail authority.

Now on our agenda is possibly proceeding with a “design charette” for participating coalition cities. With the contributions of world-renowned design professionals, project finance and technical experts, as well as neighborhood and commercial stakeholders, this will be an intensive effort to flesh out ideas for a future urban landscape that would include high-speed rail in various scenarios — including tunnel, trench, at-grade, and elevated options.

Please join us in this effort to bring our communities together to reassert our control over a future that could, if the project is built right, provide modern transportation without negatively impacting the quality of life we cherish.

Kelly Fergusson is a member of the Menlo Park City Council and Yoriko Kishimoto is a member of the Palo Alto City Council. Each was mayor in 2007. They can be e-mailed respectively at kjfergusson@menlopark.org and ykishimoto@earthlink.net.



GUEST OPINION

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Try shopping in Wal-Mart or Big 5 and buy anything made in the U.S. It’s almost impossible. I am just like Mr. Cain. I always try to buy American-made goods to keep our jobs at home for two main reasons: Every time one of us loses a job we go on unemployment insurance and we no longer pay taxes. It’s a double whammy.

Lee Boucher
Valencia Court, Portola Valley



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