



PATHBREAKING entrepreneur and lawyer,
Craig Johnson, dies at 62. Page 7

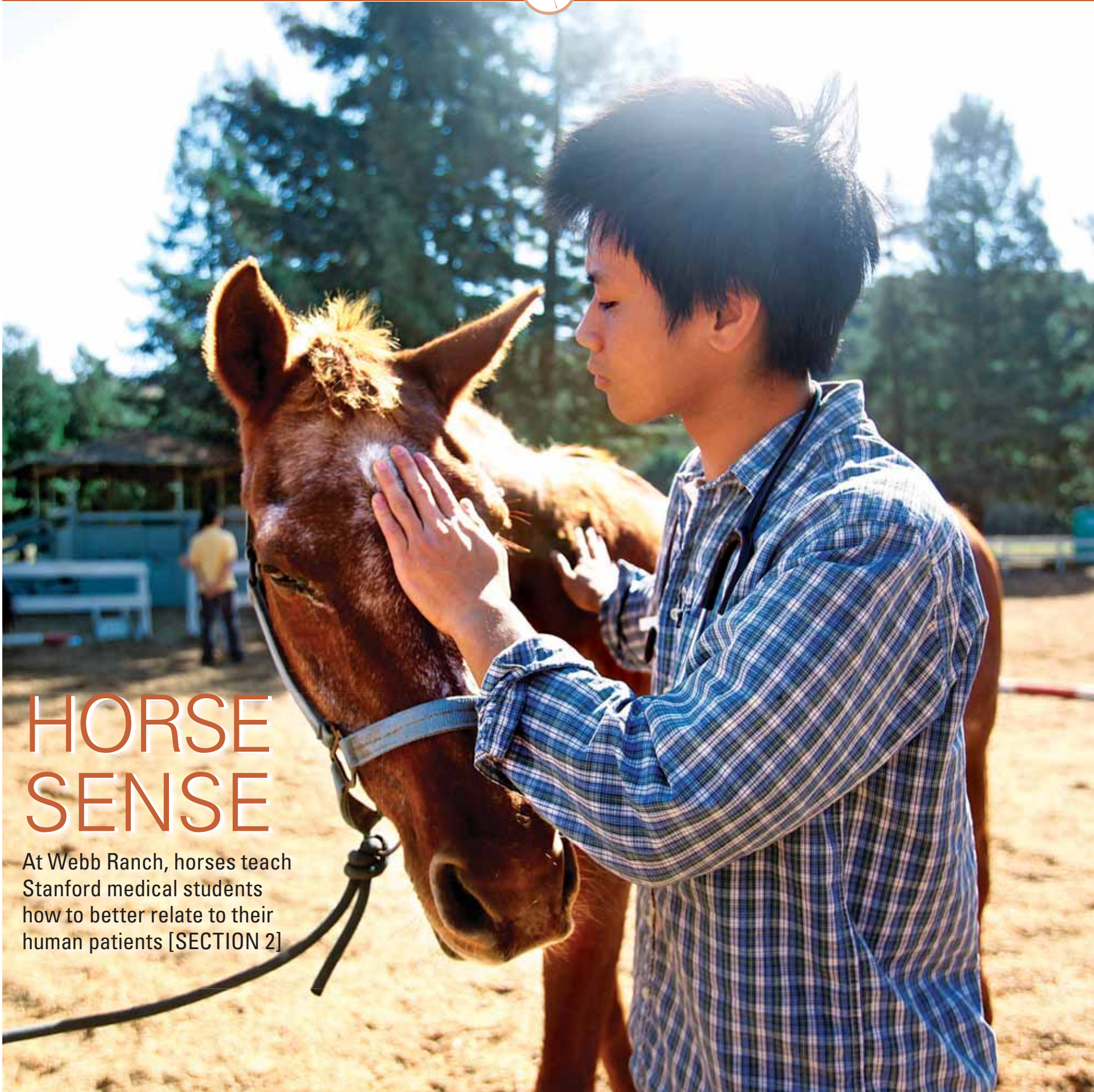
The Almanac

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

OCTOBER 14, 2009 | VOL. 45 NO. 7



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HORSE SENSE

At Webb Ranch, horses teach
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how to better relate to their
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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Local protest

Several people showed up outside the Stanford Park Hotel in Menlo Park Monday to protest a talk by House Minority Leader John Boehner, who was scheduled to speak at a Republican fundraiser at the hotel. The protestors rallied for Democratic health care reform proposals opposed by Republicans.

Atherton

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On the cover

Stanford medical student Shane Shucheng Wong reads the horse's body language during a class at Webb Ranch, conducted by Dr. Beverly Kane, program director for "Medicine & Hosemanship" at the Stanford School of Medicine. Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac. See story and more pictures in **Section 2**

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician

SCREEN (EYE) SAVER

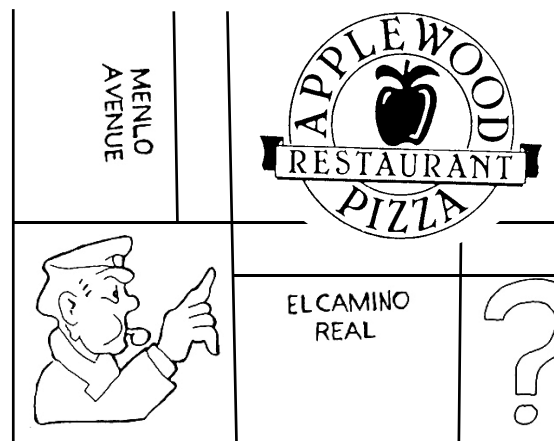
It is widely estimated that more than half of all computer users experience vision-compromising symptoms that detract from their comfort and productivity. To address this widespread problem, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that computer users undergo an annual comprehensive eye exam. Once the eye specialist is made aware of a person's computer work habits, it may be determined that he or she may benefit from customized eyeglasses that have a prescription for

working in front of a computer screen. So-called "computer eyewear" differs from reading glasses in that it is formulated for use at a distance that is greater than that at which newsprint is read. Special non-glare coatings and tints may also prove beneficial.

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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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WINE

Random Reds

It's fall! Time to segue into cool weather reds. Here are a few random reds we feel offer exceptional taste, at great price points.

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AWOL heirloom

The Woodside Village Church did its usual twice-yearly sleight-of-hand trick of taking the community's castoffs and sending them off as treasures to new owners in the most recent rummage sale on Oct. 1 and 2. But something that wasn't supposed to find a new home also disappeared during the sale, and workers are hoping to find or replace it.

On the last day of the sale, a volunteer brought in a treasured family heirloom for another volunteer to copy for Woodside Elementary School's historic archives. Before it made it to the scanner, it disappeared. The framed clipping from a May 1937 Redwood City Tribune featured a story about May Day in Woodside, including a photo of May Day Queen Esther Alice Lane (now Ekke Levy). The frame also contained three snapshots of the Lane children.

The framed clipping was last seen in a bag under a chair in the women's clothing section of the sale. Anyone who might have ended up with the treasure, or who has a copy of the article, is asked to call the church office at 851-1587.

Brewing up fun for the whole family

At Menlo Park's City Council meeting last week, Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson put in her two cents on the type of business she would like to see move into one of the abandoned auto dealerships on El Camino Real, once the site is developed.

"My husband would forgive all these long nights of meetings if a craft brew pub — not a chain — were to come to Menlo Park," she said, asserting that it could be the ideal hang-out spot for families.

"Nothing like 'family-friendly' and 'brew pub' in the same sentence," Mayor Heyward Robinson responded, to laughter from the audience.

Mr. Robinson's pie in the sky? An REI sporting good store.

Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Businesses, property owners organize to oppose Menlo Park downtown plan

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Leave downtown Menlo Park alone. That's the gist of a letter submitted to the city Thursday by a dentist who works out of an office downtown, and signed by 15 other downtown business and property owners, including Richard Draeger and Mark Flegel.

The letter comes as the city enters the final leg of a comprehensive planning process for downtown Menlo Park and El Camino Real, expected to result in proposed capital improvements and zoning changes.

The signees of the letter, sent by Gary Eggers, who runs a dental practice on Oak Grove Avenue, made it clear that they don't oppose all the changes outlined in preliminary plans by San Francisco-based consultant Perkins+Will. The consultant developed the plans with input from community members and stakeholders.

"We do ... feel that revisiting the beautification of the downtown area would be beneficial," the business and property owners

wrote in the letter.

But they said they are concerned by initial plans for a five-level parking structure in the parking plaza behind the post office, and a three-and-a-half-story structure with housing in the plaza behind Flegels Fine Furniture.

In addition, "the proposed building of mixed-

'The elements of the project now being proposed will dramatically alter the character of the downtown.'

LETTER FROM DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS

use structures, a boutique hotel, and a covered marketplace on the remaining surface parking plazas would be contrary to the interests of surrounding businesses who depend upon convenient access for both their customers and their suppliers," they wrote in the letter.

They also questioned the legality of building on the parking plazas, given that most of the

money used to acquire those plazas had come from property owners. (Many of those plazas would not be affected, according to the initial plans. The total number of parking places would increase.)

"The elements of the project now being proposed will dramatically alter the character of the downtown. If the residents are not fully informed and the current plan moves forward, we believe that there may follow a strong resistance from the community when they come to realize that the things they value about the downtown are threatened," they wrote.

"I'm really glad to see people engaged, and engaged now," said Councilman John Boyle, noting that there's still plenty of time to work out the details of the plans. "I wish (all the feedback) was positive, but I'm glad to see people engaged."

The City Council is currently scheduled to vote on the plan in October 2010. ■

LINKS

- Go to tinyurl.com/yzolc9r to view the letter.
- Go to menlopark.org/specificplan to see charts and maps on the "emerging plan."

Letters pushed board member to resign post

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Teachers' union letter-writing campaign to lobby Las Lomitas Elementary School District board members over stalled contract negotiations appears to have backfired.

Board member David Bailard resigned his post on Monday, Oct. 5, as a result of letters he received from the teachers. In the letters sent to Mr. Bailard and other board members, the teachers referred to members' children who are current and former students in the district, apparently hoping that personal relationships would help win support for a sticking point in the negotiations — raises.

"Unfortunately, because of recent tactics by the teachers' bargaining unit, aimed at influencing contract negotiations, it's become impossible to separate the relationship between my board service and my children's education," Mr. Bailard told The Almanac. "I have immense respect for the teaching staff, but I felt I needed to return to my role as a parent."

He had more than a year left

See **LETTERS**, page 8



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

People arrived in threes and fours to sign up for tours of the new \$32 million performing arts center at Menlo-Atherton High School on Saturday evening, Oct. 10. The guided tours, including talks by M-A Principal Matthew Zito and theater architects Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung, were to be followed by a performance on stage by the M-A jazz band under the direction of Frank Moura.

Menlo-Atherton theater opens in style

By Paul Bendix

Special to The Almanac

In weekend celebrations, audiences got their first look inside the architecturally bold new theater at Menlo-Atherton High School.

On Friday, the M-A community gathered for student performances. Saturday's grand opening featured the Menlo-Atherton Jazz Band and talks by M-A Principal Matthew Zito

and the husband-wife architectural team of Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung.

Sunday afternoon saw another husband-wife team, cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, artistic directors of the chamber music festival Music@Menlo, performing with Anthony McGill, principal clarinetist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

If weekend audiences were pleased by what they saw, they

were also impressed by what they heard. The theater's exquisite sound is the work of acoustical designer, Paul Scarbrough. According to Mr. Scarbrough, the hall is designed for fine tuning. Adjusting acoustical draperies adapts the theater's soaring interior to the resonant sounds of music or the drier tones of human speech.

"It's a wonderful space for

See **THEATER**, page 8

A decision, but little clarity on future of El Camino parcel

■ Proposal to develop site of defunct Cadillac dealership could move ahead without housing. Or not.

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

An 11th-hour letter and shifting political winds marked the latest — though perhaps not final — chapter in the history of a real estate development proposal that has seen its share of theatrics as it navigated the treacherous waters of Menlo Park's political scene.

Initially proposed at twice its current size, with 134 apartment units and 80,000 feet of commercial space, the plan for a retail/office building at the site of the defunct Cadillac dealership on El Camino Real cleared the City Council in a 4-1 vote on Oct. 6. The parcel sits at 1300 El Camino Real, between Glenwood and Oak Grove avenues.

Council members could have required the developer to build 36 condominium units. Instead, they elected to approve the project with no housing included, but hold out hope that the developer will return with a new proposal to build housing on the site.

If the four-year struggle to plan for one of the four abandoned auto dealerships along El Camino Real

didn't feature quite as many twists and turns as a Raymond Chandler novel, it had at least as much confusion.

What do community members want? Where do council members stand? What is the developer willing to build?

Those questions have dogged the project from the start, and the latest council meeting on the project didn't do much to answer any of them.

It did, however, raise a batch of new questions. Does the developer intend to build the project the council approved, or merely use the approval to secure retail tenants? Will the council's vote mean shutters for Draeger's market? (The owners of the market said they might close if the project is approved as is.)

And who sent the 29-page letter (plus hundreds of pages of other documents) that arrived at City Hall two hours before the council meeting began, urging the council to postpone a vote because the city's environmental review of the project had underestimated its potential effect on the ozone and climate change?

New proposal

At the council's Oct. 6 meeting, Jeff Warmoth of Sand Hill Property Co., which owns the site, offered to return to the council with a third proposal to develop the property — after previously telling The Almanac he would refuse any offer to make a new proposal, even if it

meant a bigger building.

"That's your own demise, in my opinion," Councilman Rich Cline told Mr. Warmoth. "I wouldn't do it." Earlier in the meeting, Mr. Cline had called Mr. Warmoth a victim in the city's process. "You've been ping-ponged around a little bit," he said.

Sand Hill Property Co. pulled its original proposal in the fall of 2006 when residents led a successful referendum drive to repeal council approval of the adjoining Derry project, which would have changed density allowances for the Cadillac site as well.

When Sand Hill returned to the council in early 2007, the city was in the early stages of developing new zoning rules for parcels along El Camino Real. The council, wanting to keep the community together, indicated that it wasn't willing to consider allowing anything beyond what the current general plan called for.

At last week's council meeting, however, council members suggested that they might be willing to consider a new proposal more in line with the guidelines of the "emerging plan" for El Camino Real and the downtown area, scheduled to be completed in October 2010. Mayor Heyward Robinson repeated an offer he had made to Mr. Warmoth in private, asking if he would return with a new proposal that would include high-density housing.

Happily, Mr. Warmoth said — if the city could process his plans in time for a council vote in six months.

City staff members said it would be a struggle to get the plans completed within a year, unless it shifts attention away from other major projects. Without asking Mr. Warmoth if the new time frame would work, or offering guidance on the type of project they would be willing to accept, council members invited him to return with a new plan.

In an interview, Mr. Warmoth said he intends to begin discussions with the city "in the next few weeks" on coming up with an expedited review process for a new application.

"Now we have an opportunity for a win-win project," Mr. Warmoth said. "Hopefully we'll come out with a project that gets the community more of what they want."

"I'd hate to give expectations we can't live by," said City Manager Glen Rojas.

Council discussion

Councilman John Boyle, who dissented in the council's 4-1 vote approving the project without housing, said he believed Mr. Robinson and Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson were only paying "lip service" to the prospect of the council hashing out a new deal with Mr. Warmoth. "I can't see that happening," he said, though he noted that he would support a plan for greater density at the site, if it included housing.

When it came to the project proposal on the table, Mr. Boyle and Ms. Fergusson seemed to switch positions, based on earlier com-

ments they had made.

After saying she would be reluctant to approve a project for the site that didn't include housing, Ms. Fergusson voted for a proposal that included no housing.

After saying that it wouldn't be fair to force the developer to add housing to the project while staying within the general plan, Mr. Boyle proposed that the council do just that.

"I think you caught me after I had talked to Warmoth, and I was feeling especially sympathetic for him," he told this reporter. "But as I continued to think about it and talk to more people, I think I came around to the conclusion that fundamentally, this is a location that begs for transit-oriented development. That's the real bottom line."

Ms. Fergusson said she was confident that housing will be part of the plans when the dust finally settles. "I don't think we had to condition that, it's simply a matter of market forces," she said. She was under the impression that Mr. Warmoth had been studying a dense housing proposal all along, she said, though that was not the case.

At the meeting, council members did not seriously weigh the possibility of approving the project with housing included. Asked why he didn't support requiring Mr. Warmoth to build housing, Mr. Robinson said, noting that the proposal fits within the general plan: "I'm not comfortable telling a private property owner what to build. ... It doesn't make any sense to me" to approve a project the developer has

See 1300 EL CAMINO, page 11

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Pathbreaking entrepreneur dies at 62

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Craig Winfield Johnson was a man attuned to his times. He signed up for the Peace Corps during its most charismatic decade. When the high-technology revolution got rolling, as a Stanford Law grad with a computer science degree, he got in on the ground floor at a premier Silicon Valley law firm. During the 1990s and the venture capital boom, he founded a law firm with a focus on startups. And as virtual-office technology continues to challenge traditions of work, he co-founded a firm in which lawyers work from home and keep more billable-hour revenue for themselves.

On Sept. 29, just home from a honeymoon celebrating his second marriage, Mr. Johnson died in Stanford Hospital from complications of a stroke. He was 62.

A memorial was held Sunday at the Frances C. Arrillaga Alumni Center at Stanford University.

A native of Pasadena, Mr. Johnson graduated in 1968 with a bachelor's degree from Yale University, where he majored in computer science and Russian history. His first career stop was Adwa, a small town in Ethiopia, Mr. Johnson's brother Brian told The Almanac.

His stay as a teacher there included getting malaria and, as an American, being the target of stone-throwing Marxists. "That led to his hasty departure," his brother said, but not without a stop in Addis Ababa, the capital, to marry Deborah Kendall, a Peace Corps co-worker.

Back in the states, he worked



Photo courtesy of the Johnson family

Craig Johnson, a force in the Silicon Valley law community, had just returned from his honeymoon.

briefly as a computer programmer, but the computer's charms faded as he considered a career that combined law with high technology and innovation. An uncle who taught at Stanford Law School encouraged him, his brother Brian said.

Craig graduated from Stanford Law School in 1974, his brother said, and was the 14th attorney hired at Wilson, Sonsini, Goodrich & Rosati, the Palo Alto firm commonly associated with high-tech entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley.

"He so enjoyed working with startup companies," his brother said.

Mr. Johnson left Wilson Sonsini in 1993 to found Venture Law Group, which was "instrumental" in the birth of companies such as Yahoo! and Hotmail, his brother said. He also co-founded Garage Technology Ventures, Concept2-Company and Financial Engines.

One of the concepts behind

Virtual Law Partners, the Palo Alto-based firm he co-founded in 2008, is sharing revenues more fairly with partners and junior partners, Brian said.

"He was everything about fairness (and) he was very good at articulating a vision that people would believe in," his brother said. At the time of his death, he added, Mr. Johnson was working on refining the business model of a virtual law firm.

Among his outside interests was riding a bike, which he'd done in France, Switzerland and, most recently, in the Slovenian Alps. "He loved cycling," his brother said. "That was one of his releases, to go cycling over the local hills with his great group of friends."

He also loved movies. A favorite was Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life."

Every Friday night, the brothers would take their father out for Mexican food, Brian said.

Mr. Johnson is survived by his wife and Virtual Law Firm co-founder, RoseAnn Rotandaro; sons Matt of Seattle, Scott of Minneapolis, and stepson Noah Rogers. His son Erik preceded him in death.

In lieu of flowers, relatives are asking that donations be made to the Craig Winfield Johnson Foundation. Make checks payable to Silicon Valley Community Foundation for the Benefit of the Craig Winfield Johnson Memorial Fund. Send checks to 2440 W. El Camino Real, Ste 300, Mountain View, CA 94040.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Is Your Home A Sieve?

Q: The first cooler days of fall have arrived and suddenly my house feels very cold and draughty. Do you have any recommendations about how to improve the energy efficiency of my home?

A: Many homeowners are looking for ways to improve their use and consumption of energy. There are many new energy management products and companies in the marketplace. At the highest level, the goal is to have net-zero energy consumption. To achieve this homeowners are switching to renewable energy generated on site or purchased such as solar power; insulating the building envelope; and installing very energy efficient appliances. Many are

installing software to visually see how much energy is being used and where it is being wasted.

There are firms that will come to your house and provide an energy audit with a complete list of recommendations to improve conditions. Many older houses lose much of their heat and allow cold outside air to come into the living area. Crawl spaces of older houses are frequently un-insulated and when the temperature drops the cold air comes up through the floor. Your home should be well-ventilated but not too hot or too cold.

This is the time of year to do as much as you can to improve conditions before the rainy season begins.

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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Yes on Q – approves revenue for police services, roads, fields & trails

Yes on R – approves revenue for purchase and preservation of open space

Committee to Preserve Portola Valley
Ed Davis, Chair Gary Nielsen, Treasurer
148 Pinon Drive
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YesPreservePV@gmail.com
851-7519/851-1698

New Fadiman film focuses on Native American vote

"Reclaiming their Voices: the Native American Vote in New Mexico" is the title of Menlo Park filmmaker Dorothy Fadiman's latest film, which will premiere in Palo Alto on Monday, Oct. 19, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Aquarius Theatre, 430 Emerson St. in Palo Alto.

Ms. Fadiman documents ways that Native Americans in New Mexico have not only suffered discrimination, but political disenfranchisement.

Two additional short films, "Woman by Woman" and Academy Award-nominated "When Abortion was Illegal," will also be shown.

The screenings are presented by the United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF). During the evening, UNAFF

BRIEFS

director Jasmina Bojic will host a discussion with Ms. Fadiman on issues addressed in the films.

Since 1976, Dorothy Fadiman has produced more than 20 films. She has received some 30 awards and honors, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting gold medal.

Tickets for the screening are \$10. To reserve tickets, send an e-mail to info@concentric.org or purchase tickets online at dorothyfadiman.com.

Hewlett Foundation names new officer

Helena Choi, an expert in health policy issues in the

developing world, will join the population program of the Menlo Park-based William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a foundation spokesman announced Sept. 23.

As a program officer for the foundation, Ms. Choi will focus mainly on grantmaking for research that explores the relationships among population dynamics, reproductive health, and economic growth, and that helps sub-Saharan Africans overcome problems of access to timely, accurate information on population science.

For the past five years, she has served as a project program officer with Public Health Watch, a project of the Open Society Institute in New York City.

Teachers' letters pushed board member to resign

LETTERS

continued from page 5

on his second four-year term.

The district's contract with the teachers' union expired in June 2008, and no agreement has yet been reached between district management and union representatives. Teachers sent dozens of letters, dated Sept. 30, to the homes of board members, urging them to intervene in contract negotiations on the teachers' behalf.

The letters warned of low morale, bigger class sizes and more difficult teaching conditions. Some of the letters, according to Superintendent Eric Hartwig, revealed confidential information about the ongoing contract negotiations.

Brenda Nixon, president of the teachers' union, said in a prepared statement that the teachers "respectfully acknowledge" the enormous contributions Mr. Bailard has made to the district.

"He has been a tireless advocate for children and we wish him the very best," she said.

But while Mr. Bailard declined to tell *The Almanac* what, specifically, prompted him to resign, it's clear from an e-mail he sent to Mr. Hartwig on Oct. 2 that he was troubled by letters that referred to his children.

In the e-mail, he outlined the main points of the letters he received. Mr. Bailard wrote: "Some of our favorite teachers, who we have supported so much. All ones we have had or have now. Most with personal notes and specifics about our children."

He closed by saying, "Very disappointing. My wife is sick (about it)."

"I think it was a question of him wanting to finish out his child's school year without being under any kind of a watch from some of the teachers," said Mr. Hartwig.

Mr. Bailard threw out the letters he received, not realizing they were public documents, Mr. Hartwig said. However, *The Almanac* reviewed letters that were sent to the other board members, and several made specific mention of personal relationships with board members and their children.

"Why am I working without a contract after 14 years of dedicated, effective service to your children and the Las Lomitas School District?" wrote La Entrada teacher Patrick Kelly to a board member.

In speaking with *The Almanac*, Mr. Bailard downplayed the incident.

"There's no huge scandal. I don't want to get into details, but a mistake was made," he said. "It's important to keep the supportive relationship my family has built with the teaching

staff over the years. I have one child in the district and another who's a graduate, and they've had wonderful educations."

Contract talks stalled

Las Lomitas recently celebrated the release of the latest Academic Performance Index (API) results, with a score that put the district at No. 1 in the state for the second year in a row. The high achievement is in stark contrast to the low morale teachers said they were feeling.

"Instead of celebrating our API ranking, our teachers have been frankly quite depressed about starting another school year without a contract," Las Lomitas teacher Noreen Chin wrote to board member Leslie Airola-Murvet.

A recurrent theme in the letters was the district's large reserves of \$4.4 million, or 26 percent. Despite what Mr. Hartwig says is a difficult budget year for the district, teachers said in their letters that there is enough money to give them a cost-of-living raise.

"With only \$118,000 between each side's offer, I encourage you to authorize Eric (Hartwig) to acknowledge the dedication and success of our teachers," wrote Claire Abrams, a district curriculum adviser, to Ms. Airola-Murvet.

Mr. Hartwig said that while the district's reserves are unusually high at the moment, five-year projections show it dwindling to less than 10 percent by the 2013-14 school year — and that's without including salary adjustments for teachers.

With the state budget cuts, flat property tax revenues, growing student enrollment and investment losses from the collapse of Lehman Brothers, Mr. Hartwig said, the district is already facing the specter of deficit spending, even without salary increases for teachers.

Confidentiality requirements prevented him from discussing the amount of money separating the two sides in the contract negotiations, he said. "We're not that far apart, but it's not a trivial amount," Mr. Hartwig said.

Contract negotiations have been going on for a year, he said.

"We absolutely want to do right by our teachers and help them as much as we can every year — this is just a tougher year," he said. "It's probably the toughest challenge we faced in many years."

He pointed out that the district has avoided program cuts and layoffs, despite budget cuts.

"Conservative and diligent planning allowed us to do that, and that is the best way to respect our staff," Mr. Hartwig said. "Our salaries are at the very, very top of the county and state." ■



On the second floor of the new Science and Student Life Center at Sacred Heart Preparatory, students can be seen at the end of the hall, studying on the floor.

Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Sacred Heart dedicates green building

Sacred Heart Schools showed off its new science and student life building with tours and a dedication ceremony on Sunday, Oct. 4, at its Atherton campus.

The Homer Center is the first commercial building in Atherton to meet LEED Platinum standards for environmentally friendly design, according to school officials.

The building is named for

the late Michael J. Homer, a Sacred Heart Schools trustee and Silicon Valley technology executive. The new center features a plant-covered living roof, a 40-kilowatt photovoltaic system to generate solar power, and many recycled materials.

The 44,000 square foot Homer Center was designed by Leddy Matum Stacy Architects to take advantage of natural light and

prevailing winds, in order to reduce energy costs for heating and lighting, school officials said. Drought-tolerant landscaping will reduce water use.

The building includes science classrooms upstairs, and a cafeteria and the Harman Family Assembly Hall downstairs. Students can monitor the building's energy consumption in real time.

'Horse Boy' author visits Woodside

Rupert Isaacson will attend a book signing and read from his bestseller, "The Horse Boy," from noon to 1:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, at the Mounted Patrol grounds, 521 Kings Mountain Road in Woodside. The event is presented by the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy (NCEFT) of Woodside.

The book relates how Mr. Isaacson, a former horse trainer, and his wife, Kristin Neff, a psychology professor, sought treatment for their autistic son, Rowan. When they discovered the

■ BRIEFS

boy had an affinity for animals, particularly horses, the family set off on a quest that included riding horseback through Outer Mongolia, according to Stacy Guthmann, development director of the NCEFT.

The book has also been made into a documentary film, "The Horse Boy."

For more information, call Stacy Guthmann at 851-2271, ext. 7, or go to www.nceft.org.

Fall arts festival on Santa Cruz Avenue

Some 90 artists and crafts makers will display their wares on Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park from Friday through Sunday, Oct. 16-18.

The art will be on display from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, according to the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, sponsor of the Menlo Park Fine Arts and Crafts Fall Fest.

For more information, contact the Chamber of Commerce at 325-2818 or online at MenloParkChamber.com.

THEATER

continued from page 5

professional ensembles and will help students grow and develop as performers," he said.

Mr. Scarbrough added that the Sequoia Union High School District "committed to making acoustics a top priority and never wavered."

On Saturday M-A's Jazz Band gave a spirited performance, decibels boosted by the hall's natural amplification. Frank Moura, M-A's director of instrumental music, said that after 39 years on campus he finally has a space where "everyone can hear and the sound is clean." His jazz ensemble has won many awards and launched several musical careers.

In 2005, Music@Menlo's David Finckel and Wu Han met infor-

mally with the theater's planners. This July, touring the nearly completed facility, they were pleased to see ample sound-capturing space, acoustically isolated heating and cooling, and sightlines that provide a feeling of intimacy. The couple also direct the chamber music season at New York's Lincoln Center.

In Sunday's Music@Menlo concert, three unamplified soloists filled the theater with vivid sound. The program of Beethoven and Brahms, chosen for its range of musical timbres and dynamics, showed off the hall to full effect.

The concert sent the sold-out house to its feet for a standing ovation. Players responded with a short encore by Bruch, a rush of staccato and pizzicato, every note ringing with clarity.

Jack Phillips and Tenoch Esparza, regulars at Music@Menlo con-

certs, sat midway in the hall. They agreed that at first the theater's sound felt too crisp, overemphasizing individual instruments. But by concert's end, either they or the players had adjusted, producing a pleasing blend.

"This is as close as you can get to achieving chamber sound, without being in a true chamber," said Mr. Phillips. "The theater's rake is just right. No person can block your vision. Yet there's not the feel of stadium seating."

Mr. Esparza liked the decor. "There is a red, glowing feel to the space. It has a warmth."

The building's exterior seems cold and industrial, according to Mr. Phillips. "But when you go inside," he said, "the hall warms up." ■

Go to TheAlmanacOnline.com to see more photos.

Atherton fire leaves home unlivable

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Fire investigators are looking into the cause of a two-alarm fire in Atherton on Saturday, Oct. 10, that destroyed 60 percent of a 3,500-square-foot, single-story home and damaged the remaining 40 percent with heat and smoke, said Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

The 911 call for the home at 51 Hawthorne Drive came in at 10:24 a.m., firefighters arrived at 10:28 a.m., and at 10:36 a.m., a second alarm was called, he said. Firefighters had the situation under control by 11:05 a.m.

The damages include at least \$750,000 to the structure and between \$100,000 and \$200,000 to the contents, Chief Schapelhouman estimated. It was a licensed daycare facility, but is no longer habitable, he said. There were no injuries.

The home's Eichler style, with lots of windows and high ceilings, "makes the fire spread much more quickly," he said.

The residents, a couple and their



This photo of the fire at 51 Hawthorne Drive in the Lindenwood area of Atherton was taken by neighbor Bruce Deal. Go to TheAlmanacOnline.com to see more photos by Mr. Deal.

young daughter, were at home when the fire began. The woman tried calling 911 on the home's two landlines, but neither was working. She was successful with her daughter's cell phone, Chief Schapelhouman said.

When the home is remodeled or rebuilt, it will have residential sprinklers installed, as required by

Atherton's sprinkler law, he said.

Forty firefighters battled the blaze, including assistance from the Redwood City Fire Department, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the Woodside Fire Protection District, the chief said.

Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

High school, fire board election forums this week

Two local election forums, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County, are set for this week.

At 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15, candidates for two seats on the board of the Sequoia Union High School District meet in the district office board room at 480 James St. in Redwood City. Eight candidates are vying for these seats.

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, the candidates for three seats on the board of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District will meet in Classroom 1 at Fire Station 1 at 300 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park. Six candidates are running in this election.

A forum for the governing board of the Woodside Elementary School District was canceled because a candidate dropped out of the race, leaving only three candidates for three seats.

Eshoo town hall in Redwood City

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, is holding a town hall meeting on Monday, Oct. 19, in Redwood City. The meeting will be held in the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors Chambers at 400 County Center, located at the corner of Bradford and Hamilton streets. For more information, call 323-2984.

EVs need volunteers

The Environmental Volunteers organization is looking for adults who would like to help school

BRIEFS

children gain an appreciation for the great outdoors. A training program begins on Oct. 26.

Volunteers lead hands-on, small group activities for elementary and middle school students in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. A formal background in the natural sciences isn't necessary to volunteer, said Executive Director Allan Berkowitz.

"We simulate an earthquake in the classroom allowing students to understand the physics of earthquake waves. Students get to dig into a bucket of bay mud to explore the bay's food chain," Mr. Berkowitz said by way of example in a press release.

The Environmental Volunteers has been providing environmental education for 37 years. Last year, 11,000 students participated, but hundreds more had to be turned away for lack of volunteers.

For more information about the Environmental Volunteers, go to evols.org. For information on the training session, contact Brittany at (650) 961-0545 or Brittany@evols.org.

Cadet completes basic training at West Point

Cadet Matthew Fitzgerald, son of Sarah and Cliff of Menlo Park, has completed six weeks of cadet basic training at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Matthew, who entered West

Point June 29, received instruction in first aid, mountaineering, hand grenades, rifle marksmanship, and nuclear, biological and chemical training.

A graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School, he plans to graduate from West Point in 2013 and be commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

New conference room at Allied Arts Guild

Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park has opened a conference room designed for executive meetings.

The room is located in the Guild's main building, which also houses Cafe Primavera at Allied Arts. It has 750-square-feet of space, formerly used by the Traditional Shop, and includes a 106-inch projection screen with a built-in projector, BluRay DVD player, wireless microphone, high-speed Internet access, six lighting schemes, and conference seating for up to 24, with 20 additional upholstered side chairs available.

The outdoor garden court is available for team building activities or breakout sessions, the Guild said in an announcement. There is full catering service and an event director onsite.

For more information, call 322-2405. Allied Arts Guild is located at 75 Arbor Road in Menlo Park and is operated by Allied Arts Guild Auxiliary for the benefit of Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford.

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Mysterious letter challenges ECR project

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

In what one City Council member sardonically characterized as a terrorist/hostage situation, Menlo Park received a mysterious letter two hours before the start of last week's council meeting, challenging the legality of a development project the council was slated to consider.

Authored by a law firm representing a group calling itself "Concerned Citizens of Menlo Park," the letter addressed issues related to ozone damage, greenhouse gas emissions, traffic, and land use. It ran 29 pages, with 57 exhibits totaling "hundreds" of pages, according to Justin Murphy, the city's development services manager.

Despite the letter, the council approved the proposal for a 110,000-square-foot commercial development project at 1300 El Camino Real, the site of the

defunct Cadillac dealership.

"I'm very disturbed by a letter arriving at five o'clock that has this number of pages, this number of exhibits, that clearly has been extensively researched and worked through, and that is completely outside the deadlines available," said Mayor Heyward Robinson, noting that the council calendar is tight. "We've got other big projects looming. Is this what we're gonna get?"

To council members, the letter represented an attempt to circumvent the city's process. They said they had faith in the consulting firm that wrote the environmental impact report, noting that the city received the letter long after the official period to comment on that report had closed (on May 7).

By state law, challenges to the report must come within the comment period if they are to be considered in the environmental review process.

John Curran, an attorney with the firm that sent the letter (San Francisco-based Lippe Gaffney Wagner LLP), defended his client at the meeting.

"We came in late, but that's fairly typical when you have unincorporated groups like this," he said. He said his client wanted to see a project with dense housing — not the retail and office space that had been proposed.

Mr. Curran did not disclose his client's name, and did not return a call from The Almanac by our press deadline.

Richard Draeger said Draeger's market was not involved in sending the letter. Though he agreed with the sentiment it expressed, he knew nothing about it until the council meeting, he said.

The Draeger family has warned the city that it might be forced to close its market if a grocery store occupies the retail space at the site. ■

Draeger's raises questions about protecting local businesses

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

How far should Menlo Park's city government go to protect the local businesses that community members seem to value so much?

That's one of the questions that emerged from a challenge by Draeger's market to a new office/retail development project for El Camino Real that the City Council approved Oct. 6.

Richard Draeger, a co-owner of the market, said in an interview that a publicly owned grocer such as Whole Foods has greater access to capital, and could drive Draeger's out of business, if it should move

into the retail space.

While Draeger's representatives argue that the city should carefully regulate the types of businesses that move in as Menlo Park goes about the slow process of converting vacant auto dealerships to mixed-use structures, council members didn't discuss that possibility at the meeting. They have said they want to allow developers flexibility in recruiting retail tenants, and that they are wary of playing God when it comes to determining which businesses survive, and which fail.

Mr. Draeger said that the council should go further in prescribing and limiting uses of retail space.

"The council has always been very specific, as far as what uses are

allowed in certain areas — and for good reason," he said, noting that grocery stores tend to be "disruptive" because they generate a lot of traffic.

The idea that the council could prevent certain types of businesses from moving in "is not a new debate at all," he said. "This is not something that Draeger's conceived."

In a post on The Almanac's Web site, Clark Kepler warned of the threat chain retailers pose to independent businesses. "I encourage all residents of Menlo Park to consider what our town would 'live' like if we allow, through inaction, the loss of such a local treasure as Draeger's Market," Mr. Kepler wrote. ■

1300 EL CAMINO

continued from page 6

said he is reluctant to carry out.

Nor did they spend much time discussing the potential impacts of the project on Draeger's.

By the end of the meeting, council members were tired, and on to other concerns. Ms. Fergusson added a condition that the operation of the buildings emit no greenhouse gases. She later suggested that Mr. Warmoth consider renting space to a craft brew pub.

Mr. Robinson added a provision that the vacant dealership be torn down within 200 days, citing graffiti and feral cats. "They're an eyesore, they're graffiti magnets," he said. "Generally nothing good happens on those sites."

What's next?

The haggling and confusion over

how to proceed with developing the site has only served to underscore the city's need for a long-term plan, council members said, so it can avoid similar debates over other vacant parcels.

The council has been criticized for not taking the "long-term" view and pushing for a higher-density housing project near the train station, as environmental advocates have urged it to do.

But those who want the council to change the city's rules before the community-driven plan is complete haven't learned the lessons of the city's history, Councilman Cline said.

People "believe so much in the cause that they want you to jump the process," he said. "I think that's poor planning, it's misdirected. People in Menlo Park are tired of that approach to government, and their trust in the council will be

broken in one vote on a Tuesday night that way. ... Abiding by the current policy is the right thing to do," even if that policy is outdated.

Several council members offered a gentle reminder that this is only one of many sites for possible development, saying that each site doesn't necessarily call for housing.

What's next? Will Mr. Warmoth be able to steer a new development proposal through city bureaucracy in a reasonable amount of time? Will he wait for the city to come up with new zoning guidelines, lining up tenants and resolving various utility and right of way issues in the meantime? Will he simply proceed with the project he has already been cleared to build?

It would probably take a detective of Phillip Marlowe's caliber to figure that one out. ■

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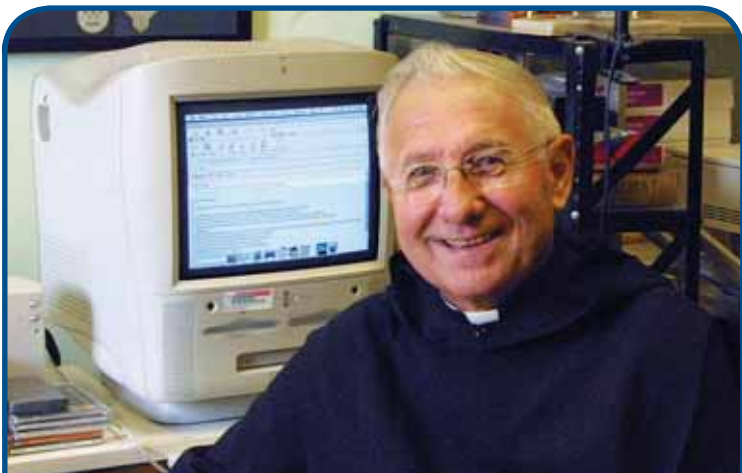
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He received "The Knight of Golden Cross Award" from the President of the Republic of Hungary in June 2009 as an acknowledgment of his work as an educator and as a leader working with the Hungarian Community in California.

Before he came to the Priory, he worked as a Lumberjack in Canada, has three Citizenships and has a great love for horticulture and all living things. His favorite quote is: "My son, Work as if you would live on this Earth for ever and Pray as if this hour would be your last" — Fr. Maurus' Mother (Translated from Hungarian).

He's taught for more than 40 years and wants his students to realize "that knowledge is very important, but life is greater than knowledge and to realize that, requires wisdom."

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Here comes the sun: Schools go solar

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Solar power has a bright future at Portola Valley schools, with a newly approved plan to install photovoltaic systems at the Corte Madera and Ormondale campuses.

The project, which has a total cost of approximately \$2.5 million, is possible thanks to a federal stimulus windfall that the district recently received.

Over the next 25 years, the solar panel system is expected to save the district more than \$4 million in electricity costs, according to an analysis presented to the school board on Sept. 30 by Green Resource Network.

Last year, the district's annual electric bill was about \$130,000.

The board unanimously approved the project, with board member Steve Humphreys absent.

The rooftop systems at the two schools are designed to produce 90 percent of the electricity that's currently used each year, said Rashmi Menon of Green Resources Network. Current regulations allow Pacific Gas & Electric customers to zero-out their electricity bills at the end of the year — any excess electricity flowing back into the

power grid is basically a freebie for PG&E.

That 10-percent gap allows the school to make future improvements in energy efficiency, without producing excess electricity, Ms. Menon told the board.

The project would install a 150-kilowatt system of grid-tied solar panels at Corte Madera and a 130-kilowatt system at Ormondale.

Portola Valley certainly isn't the only local school district looking to install solar power. The Menlo Park City School District is embarking on a fundraising campaign to install a system at Hillview Middle School, and looking at the district's elementary school campuses as well.

But Portola Valley has one big advantage. It was one of only two San Mateo County school districts to hit the jackpot in the recent lottery for Qualified School Construction Bonds, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that was signed into law in February.

As a result, the district is eligible for \$2.85 million in tax credits. The tax credits cover the interest payments on school construction bonds, and are intended to free up school district money for additional construction or facility rehabilitation projects.

While the district is moving quickly on the solar project to meet the deadline for the stimulus tax credit bonds, it's also pursuing another source of financing.

The district could qualify for a low-cost California Energy Commission loan that carries a 1 percent interest rate, a type of financing that may ultimately prove cheaper than the stimulus bonds.

"The loan terms are so attractive, we should proceed with this project," said board member Bill Youstra.

Board members voted to apply for the state's low-cost loan program after learning from the district's bond financial adviser Tony Hsieh of Keygent that the market for the tax-credit bonds is very small, and that falling interest rates paid to investors are making the bonds less attractive.

But whichever type of financing it uses, the district is likely to benefit from softening prices for solar panel systems.

"It's amazing how much prices have decreased from when we asked in April compared to now," said Ms. Menon.

Rebates from the California Solar Initiative sweeten the deal even further, to the tune of an estimated \$587,000 over five years. ■

After \$400K accounting error, Menlo Park revisits budget

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

In May, members of Menlo Park's City Council commended the city for being one of the few in the region to balance its budget in the midst of a recession.

At last week's council meeting, however, they learned that the city has more in common with its peers than it thought, when city management disclosed a major accounting error in the budget for the current fiscal year.

As a result, it underestimated its general fund expenses by \$320,000 — nearly 1 percent of the \$38 million budget — and its expenses

from other funds by \$80,000.

"Even though this is disappointing, I want to emphasize that our confidence in the finance department and in our budgeting process is extremely high," City Manager Glen Rojas told the council on Oct. 6.

"Our finance director has a real good handle on the finances of the city, on putting together a budget," he said in an interview. "If this were a continual problem, I wouldn't say (that I have confidence in the process.)."

The error came in accounting for accrued-leave time, a process by which retired employees are paid for compensation or vacation time they were owed but did not take, according to Mr. Rojas. A total of 95 line items from all the city's departments were mistakenly not entered into the final budget picture, he said.

Because the error came in the personnel department, the city will look to compensate for it

through cuts in employee costs.

"We gave them a balanced budget in June, and I think it's our responsibility to make every effort to keep it that way," Mr. Rojas said.

The error added an additional degree of shakiness to an always-uncertain budgeting process. In 2006, residents voted to approve a utility tax hike to help cover a projected \$1.8 million deficit — only to find that the city had all but covered the deficit by year's end, without the benefit of the tax.

"I certainly don't want to have one mistake taint the whole budget process," Mr. Rojas said, arguing that the budgeting process is inherently difficult, given the lack of a crystal ball at City Hall.

"A few people out there have conspiracy theories, and there will probably be some swirling around this incident, but it was an honest mistake," Mayor Heyward Robinson said at the meeting. ■



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SRI gets \$6.3 million mental health grant

Menlo Park-based SRI International has received a \$6.3 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to study a new product involved in brain imaging and the treatment of mental disorders, the company announced Oct. 5.

Among other things, the company will determine whether a new type of binding molecule can be administered to people for use in positron emission topography (PET), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and other types of brain scans, it said in a press release.

Judge won't halt work on high-speed rail

By Andrea Gemmet
Almanac Staff Writer

Sacramento County Superior Court judge Michael Kenny ruled on Friday, Oct. 9, that he would allow planning work to proceed on the California high-speed rail project, in spite of flaws the court found in the rail agency's environmental review process.

Menlo Park and Atherton had joined several environmental groups as plaintiffs in the lawsuit that brought the issue before the court.

Though Mr. Kenny had previously found flaws in parts of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's environmental review process, the deficiencies were not significant enough to force the agency to halt work on the project, he said.

A hearing was held Friday afternoon to give plaintiffs one last chance to try to sway the judge, asking him to halt planning work while the flawed parts of the environmental impact report (EIR) are redone. However, Judge Kenny stuck with his tentative ruling, issued on Thursday, said Stuart Flashman, the Oakland-based attorney representing the plaintiffs.

Mr. Flashman said he didn't yet know if his clients would appeal the decision. They include the Planning and Conservation League, the Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund, the California Rail Foundation and the Bay Rail Alliance, along with Menlo Park and Atherton.

High-speed rail authority spokeswoman Kris Deutschman said Thursday that authority officials are happy with the direction of the judge's ruling.

The lawsuit challenged the selection of the Caltrain corridor as the route for trains to access the Bay Area from the Central Valley. The group that filed the lawsuit contended that the rail authority made the decision to run trains up the Peninsula, rather than in the East Bay through the Altamont Pass, without adequately reviewing the environmental implications of that decision.

The Pacheco Pass route currently proposed runs through Menlo Park and Atherton, and would use the existing Caltrain right of way.

Mr. Flashman said he argued that the rail authority would be conducting \$35 million worth of planning and engineering work over the next several years based on a flawed environmental impact report. With that kind of investment, it's not likely that the revised environmental report would sway the authority away from the Pacheco Pass route, he said.

"Are they going to flush all that money down the drain? No, I don't think so," Mr. Flashman said.

Judge Kenny, however, thought otherwise. He said he trusted the rail authority to do its duty under the California Environmental Quality Act, regardless of how much money may have been spent, according to Mr. Flashman.

After reviewing environmental impact reports for the project, Mr. Kenny ruled in August that more information is needed for the section between San Jose and Gilroy. As a result, the authority has to rescind its adoption of the EIR, and conduct additional studies before it can be re-adopted.

*Bay City News Service
contributed to this report.*

'Horse Boy' author visits Woodside

Rupert Isaacson will attend a book signing and read from his bestseller, "The Horse Boy," from noon to 1:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, at the Mounted Patrol grounds, 521 Kings Mountain Road in Woodside. The event is presented by the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy (NCEFT) of Woodside.

The book relates how Mr. Isaacson, a former horse trainer, and his wife, Kristin Neff, a psychology professor, sought treatment for their autistic son, Rowan. When they discovered the boy had an affinity for animals, particularly horses, the family set off on a quest that included riding horseback through Outer Mongolia, according to Stacy Guthmann, development director of the NCEFT.

The book has also been made into a documentary film, "The

■ BRIEFS

Horse Boy."

For more information, call Stacy Guthmann at 851-2271, ext. 7, or go to www.nceft.org.

Fall arts festival on Santa Cruz Avenue

Some 90 artists and crafts makers will display their wares on Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park from Friday through Sunday, Oct. 16-18.

The art will be on display from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, according to the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, sponsor of the Menlo Park Fine Arts and Crafts Fall Fest.

For more information, contact the Chamber of Commerce at 325-2818 or online at MenloParkChamber.com.

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Council may re-examine penalties for those who illegally cut down trees

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

WOODSIDE

Trees are valued in Woodside, as demonstrated by the ordinance that protects them, adopted in December 2006 after months of deliberation. The first un-permitted felling of a significant tree triggers a fine of \$5,000; the second, \$7,500; and \$10,000 for each one after that.

But for residents who run afoul of this law — two, so far — the Town Council has shown that it also values mercy.

In 2007, the council suspended the fine for a resident who dug up and moved three oaks to Atherton. On Sept. 8, the council could have levied a \$112,500 fine on Dr. Eric and Jacquie Weiss over the felling of 12 trees, but reduced it to \$92,500 for 10 trees, then settled, uncomfortably, on \$10,000.

At its meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13, in Independence Hall, the council will have a look

at penalties in similar Bay Area communities, based on a survey by town staff, and may vote on a resolution that would confirm the \$10,000 fine against the Weisses.

The staff report, which includes the survey, is in response to at least one council member expressing concern about Woodside's fine structure, Town Manager Susan George said via e-mail. A resolution to levy the \$10,000 fine had been set for the Sept. 22 meeting, but Ms. George delayed it, citing the concerns she'd heard.

Two council members were absent for the unanimous vote on Sept. 8. Mayor Peter Mason was away and Councilwoman Deborah Gordon recused herself since she is an employee of Stanford University, which leases the property to the Weisses.

The report said that Woodside and many of the communities

surveyed have the option of considering ordinance violations as misdemeanors, which typically include fines and/or jail time.

A significant tree in Woodside is one that measures greater than 9.5 inches in diameter at 4 feet above ground.

Specific penalties for cutting such trees vary, though none approached Woodside's penalties, the report said. In Portola Valley, the tree must be replaced with a native variety with a minimum 15-gallon root ball.

In Atherton, the law is being updated but is likely to require a violator to contribute \$500 to a fund for planting and maintaining community trees. The town may also require replacement of the tree, the report said.

Los Altos Hills can require a violator to plant five substantial trees for every one removed, at locations determined by the town, and pay into a multi-year bond to maintain the new trees, the report said. ■

Atherton holds workshop on sudden oak death

BRIEFS

The virulent pathogen that strikes down oak trees is the topic of a workshop to be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 17, at the carriage house at Holbrook-Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Ave in Atherton.

The featured speaker is Matteo Garbelotto, the University of California, Berkeley researcher who has done extensive work on sudden oak death. He will discuss the latest in prevention, detection, research and treatment.

To attend the workshop, make reservations by calling Atherton town arborist Kathy Hughes Anderson at 752-0526 or via e-mail to kanderson@ci.atherton.ca.us.

Stanford professor on sleep disorders

For many Americans, sleeping is a disorderly affair, says Dr. William C. Dement, a professor at Stanford University's School of Medicine. Bad things can happen, he says, when sleep is elusive, including chronic exhaustion and death by traffic accident.

Dr. Dement, who founded the sleep research laboratory at Stanford in 1970 and who has been called the Father of Sleep Medicine, teaches a popular undergraduate class on sleep and dreams.

At a Cafe Scientifique event set for 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13, at SRI, Dr. Dement will speak

about sleep disorders, what sleep is, its relation to your biological clock, and what can happen when you don't get enough of it. Doors open at 5:15 p.m.

The public is invited to this free event. Use the SRI entrance at Middlefield Road and Ringwood Avenue in Menlo Park. The event includes a drawing for a \$30 gift certificate from Kepler's Books.

Cafe Scientifique, sponsored by the pharmaceutical firm ROXRO PHARMA and SRI, is a monthly meeting where the public can explore and debate scientific and technological issues in a non-academic setting. For more information, go to www.cafescisv.org.

Philippine Madrigal Singers at St. Patrick's

The Philippine Madrigal Singers will present a concert at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 25, in the Main Chapel of St. Patrick's Seminary, 320 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park.

Made up of students, faculty and alumni from the University of the Philippines, the Madrigal Singers will perform in their trademark style of singing in a semi-circle without a conductor.

Proceeds from the concert will be used toward creating a Meditation Garden with the Stations

of the Cross at the seminary.

Tickets are \$40 before Oct. 15 and \$50 after. All reservations will be held at the door. For more information, call Pedro Castaneda at 289-3320 or send an e-mail to Pedro.Castaneda@stpatrikssseminary.org.

March marks HIV awareness

An HIV Awareness March will begin at 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, in East Palo Alto. Participants will march from Jones Mortuary at 660 Donohoe St. to East Palo Alto City Hall at 2415 University Ave., where community members will have a chance to speak at 6 p.m.

The march is sponsored by the San Mateo County Health System's STD/HIV Program. The first HIV Awareness March was held in 1996.

Half of new HIV infections in the United States are among the African American community, according to the San Mateo County Health System. In San Mateo County, 3 percent of the population is African American, with 23 percent living in East Palo Alto.

For more information, call Danielle Castro, program supervisor for the STD/HIV Education and Prevention Program of San Mateo County, at 573-2898 or e-mail dacastro@co.sanmateo.ca.us.



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Banks help Habitat in Menlo Park

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO WATCH

Banks' lending practices have been blamed in many quarters for sparking the national foreclosure crisis that began in 2007. Now, some banks are trying to help rehabilitate a few of the homes that went vacant during that crisis.

Wells Fargo, Bank of America, and the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco have agreed to contribute a combined \$275,000 to a Habitat for Humanity program to buy and rehabilitate foreclosed homes in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood, the housing nonprofit has announced.

The city of Menlo Park has pledged to contribute \$500,000 to the program from its below-market-rate housing fund. As of September, nearly 147 Menlo Park homes were in some state of foreclosure, the vast majority in the Belle Haven neighborhood, according to the city.

Within a year, Habitat expects to have purchased 10 homes through the program.

City aims to prevent foreclosures

Menlo Park will proceed with a separate program designed to keep homeowners in the Belle Haven neighborhood from being foreclosed upon, now that the city has worked out the details involved.

Under the plan approved unanimously by the City Council at its Oct. 6 meeting, the city would allocate \$1 million contributed by developers for below-market-rate housing — not from the city's general operating fund — to invest equity in homes in danger of being foreclosed upon. The city would use the money to invest in 10 to 12 homes over the next five years, accord-

ing to Housing Manager Doug Frederick.

"Of particular concern for this program are those homeowners who were victims of predatory lenders," Mr. Frederick wrote in the staff report. "These homeowners were persuaded that they could afford to own their own home using mortgage instruments that, in the end, wound up putting them in a tenuous financial position."

The program is legal, and consistent with the tenets of the city's below-market-rate housing policies, according to Mr. Frederick and City Attorney Bill McClure. Critics have argued that keeping people in their homes isn't an appropriate role for the city to take on, while city officials counter that they are stepping up to fill an unmet need.

The city expects that one of the developers who contributed to the below-market-rate fund will consent to removing resale restrictions on homes the city invests in. ■

Honor roll

K. Mai Kristofferson of Emerald Hills, class of 2009, was named to the honor roll for the spring term at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. Honor roll students must maintain at least a 5-point grade average on a 6-point scale. Phillips Academy, also known as Andover, is a private high school of 1,100 students.

■ BRIEFS

Girls golf

The Menlo-Atherton High School Girls Golf Team played Aragon High School and Mills High School on Sept. 23 in a three-way match at Palo Alto Municipal Golf Course. While losing by 6 points to Aragon, the M-A Girls beat Mills by 11 points. Low scorer for the M-A Bears was Freshman Xin Fang

with a 46 followed by Keiko Wolff with a 48.

— Submitted by Nancy Chillag, parent of a team member.

Summer intern

Karina Mudd of Woodside, spent the summer interning for Care2 Inc. (care2.com) in Redwood City, an internship set up through Connecticut College's career and life skills program.

Vikings Pop Warner football report: week six

This report is from Adam Greenlow of Menlo Park, a player on the Pee Wee Vikings team. He is a seventh-grader at St. Raymond School. All players named are with the Vikings.

The Menlo-Atherton Vikings of the Pop Warner football league played in various places in the sixth week of the season. The games took place Oct. 10 and 11. The Tiny Mites played Morgan Hill at Saratoga High School. The Mitey Mites and the Pee Wees played San Lorenzo Valley at San Lorenzo Valley High School. The Junior Pee Wees played Hollister at San Lorenzo Valley High School.

The Junior Midgets played Santa Cruz at Harvey West Park.

Following are the game summaries:

Tiny Mites: In a game where you don't keep score of the points, Justin Sinclair crossed the goal line twice. In the first half, Joe Posthauer scored on a great long run. The Vikings stout defense held Morgan Hill from getting a touchdown in the game. This defense held the opponents when they were inside the 5-yard line. Nick Andrighetto, DiAnthony Huston, Ian Collins, Andrew Gordon, and Braden Fitzgerald all had great games.

Mitey Mites: The Mitey Mites have not been beaten all season.

The final score of their winning game was 24-0. The stout defensive line stopped San Lorenzo Valley from scoring. The defense was lead by Alejandro Ross, Kahari Williams, Owen Mullenieux, and Thomas Stanbach. Two spectacular passes were thrown by Blake Stenstrom. These two passes were caught by Dylan Williams, who ran in to score.

Junior Pee Wees: The JPW team played the Hollister Vikings and lost 19-6. The score at halftime was 12-6. The defense played an outstanding game lead by Nick Becker. When the opponents got inside of the 5-yard line, the defense stopped

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them. Lavell Gates scored on an amazing, long run.

Pee Wees: The Pee Wees beat San Lorenzo Valley 26-0. This game was a defensive shutout and an explosive start on offense. Memo Teu scored three spectacular touchdowns. One for 50-yards on the first play, one for 55-yards, and one for 60-yards. Jose Varela scored on a three-yard run. On defense, Theo Chatman had two interceptions and Will Richey had one interception. Charlie Roth had many defensive sacks. Adam Greenlow had a safety.

Junior Midgets: The Junior Midgets lost 22-26 against San-

ta Cruz. The Vikings went down early with a 14-0 score. After a 60-yard drive, Keesean Johnson put some points on the board with an impressive 30-yard touchdown reception from Royce Branning. This touchdown made the score 14-6 at halftime. Matt Odell had two outstanding pass receptions from Royce Branning; one for 50-yards and one for 60-yards. Zhiir James, Aji Akinola, and Jayshawn Puckett all had great games all around. The Junior Midgets had six outstanding drives to get the ball into the red zone but three of the drives ended up in turnovers.

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■ OBITUARIES

Edna Schreyer

Artist and antique dealer

Edna Murray Schreyer of Menlo Park died Oct. 1, one week after her 91st birthday, surrounded by family and friends.

Ms. Schreyer was born in Des Moines, Iowa. At age 18 she traveled to Hollywood to pursue a modeling career. She soon married her high school sweetheart, Milton Schreyer, an officer in the U.S. Army. Together they shared a life of military service, living throughout the world.

For the past 30 years, Ms. Schreyer lived in Menlo Park, where she was active in the community. Not only was she a well-known artist and antique dealer, but a dedicated mother and grandmother who supported each of her grandchildren's activities, say family members.

Ms. Schreyer is survived by her daughters, Jan Mitchell and Carol Moran; six grandchildren;



Edna Schreyer

and three great grandchildren. Her husband, Milton, and son, Michael, preceded her in death.

The family prefers memorials in her memory be made to the Children's Health Council, 650 Clark Way, Palo Alto, CA 94304.

Michael V. Parsells

Founder of ExecutiveWorld

Services will be held at 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, for Michael V. Parsells of Menlo Park who died of natural causes Sept. 16. He was 64.

Mr. Parsells was born and raised in New Jersey, where he attended Catholic schools and Bloomfield College, before joining the U.S. Marines. He began his career working for Flying Tigers Airlines, then moved to California in 1970. In 1971 he started his own executive search firm in Silicon Valley. Thirty years later, he launched ExecutiveWorld, a professional networking group for high-tech executives.

Active in the Menlo Park community, Mr. Parsells was a board member of the Child and Family Institute, a leader of career ministries at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, and a basketball coach at Hillview School. He was an avid golfer and loyal Giants and 49er fan, say family members.

He is survived by his daughter Ashleigh Bennett; his son, Mike Parsells; and two grandsons, all living in Kauai. Other survivors include his sister Ruth Ferderoff of New Jersey, and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Jennifer Parsells.

A memorial fund has been established in Mr. Parsells's honor. Contributions may be sent to Michael Parsells Memorial Fund, c/o Mike Davison, 507 Beresford Ave., Redwood City, CA 94061.



Michael Parsells

■ 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@pawebweekly.com or call (650) 326-8210, ext. 6596.

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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

Auto burglary report: Truck window smashed and camera stolen, first block of Rittenhouse Ave., Oct. 5.

Grand theft report: Backpack containing camera equipment valued between \$2,500 and \$3,500 stolen, Encinal School at 195 Encinal Ave., Oct. 5.

MENLO PARK**Grand theft reports:**

■ Two bicycles valued at \$3,300 stolen from porch area, 800 block of Fremont St., Oct. 2.

■ Locked bike valued at \$550 stolen from bike rack, 400 block of Oak Grove Ave., Oct. 2.

■ Laptop computer and docking station stolen, 1000 block of E Camino Real, Oct. 2.

■ Two pairs of sunglasses valued at \$500 stolen from unlocked vehicle, 3500 block of Haven Ave., Oct. 2.

■ Wallet with credit cards and \$420 in cash stolen, first block of Willow Road, Oct. 3.

■ Mini-bike valued at \$450 stolen, 800 block of Coleman Ave., Oct. 4.

■ Laptop computer stolen, 1600 block of Adams Drive, Oct. 5.

■ Laptop computer stolen, 1000 block of El Camino Real, Oct. 8.

Fraud reports:

■ Bad check for \$794 written, Beltramo's Wines and Liquors at 1540 El Camino Real, Oct. 2.

■ Unauthorized use of Social Security

card, 1200 block of Sevier Ave., Oct. 7.

Commercial burglary reports:

■ Break-in through vent in back door and \$250 stolen from register, Sultana Restaurant at 1119 El Camino Real, Oct. 5.

■ Break-in through water heater room, then cut hole in wall and stole \$300 from register, Cafe Del Sol Restaurant at 1010 Doyle St., Oct. 5.

Adult protective services report: 1100 block of Sevier Ave., Oct. 6.

Spousal abuse report: 200 block of Ivy Drive, Oct. 2.

Stolen vehicle report: 100 block of El Camino Real, Oct. 6.

WOODSIDE

Stolen vehicle report: Car and trailer stolen from unoccupied home, 100 block of Phillip Road, Oct. 1.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Wallet stolen and purchases made with check card with total loss estimated at \$510, 300 block of Portola Road, Oct. 5.

■ BIRTHS

Menlo Park

■ Adrienne Altman and Andrew Saletta, a son, Sept. 9, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Alicia and Samuel Brasch, a son, Sept. 11, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Kathleen and Eric Carr, a daughter, Sept. 12, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Erika and Matthew Gaetano, a son, Sept. 14, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Stacie and Brad Ciraulo, a daughter, Sept. 17, Sequoia Hospital.

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DOLLY DUPRAU



Dolly DuPrau died at Channing House in Palo Alto on September 27th at the age of 97. She lived in Palo Alto and Atherton for over sixty years.

She was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and came to the Bay Area in 1937, after earning a degree at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie-Mellon University). She met her husband, James Bernard DuPrau, in San Francisco, and they married in 1940.

Mrs. DuPrau was a member of Palo Alto's First Congregational Church for many years. She worked with special devotion for the cause of peace, taking part in anti-nuclear demonstrations

and lending her efforts to peace activist groups. She was also a long-time member of the League of Women Voters. She will be remembered by these organizations for her intelligence and dedication.

After her children grew up, she became a painter. She took classes at the Palo Alto Art Club and exhibited paintings in many Bay Area locations, often winning awards. She loved reading, gardening, and music, passions she shared with her children. She was also an excellent writer. After her husband died in 1989, she researched and wrote family history, and in 1992, after moving to Channing House, she became the editor of the Channing House newsletter.

She is survived by three daughters, Jeanne DuPrau of Menlo Park, Suzanne Rogers of Tiburon, and Sarah Schwartz of Mill Valley, as well as three grandchildren. A small family gathering will be held.

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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.

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■ **WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

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

TOWN SQUARE FORUM

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Viewpoint

Ideas, thoughts and opinions about local issues from people in our community. Edited by Tom Gibboney.

Las Lomitas teachers out of line

Teachers at Las Lomitas schools stepped out of character last week in an apparent effort to convince board members to give ground in the stalled negotiations over a pay and benefit increase.

A group of teachers sent letters to the home of each board member pushing their contract demands and reminding recipients of their current or former association with the board member's children in the classroom.

Although four of the five board members apparently shrugged

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

the incident off, Dave Bailard felt strongly enough about the letters' contents that he immediately resigned from the board, apparently upset about the letters' mentioning his children. He told The Almanac that "Öit's become impossible to separate the relationship between my board service and my children's education."

His sudden decision struck a nerve in the district and sparked posts on the Town Square forum on The Almanac's Web site, bemoaning the resignation and noting that he and his wife were tireless volunteers in the district. Mr. Bailard was also a financial expert who has helped the board navigate through the current thicket of bad economic news that has plagued the district.

The teachers' letter-writing tactics hit a new low and stands out in their ongoing dispute with Superintendent Eric Hartwig and the board over a new contract. The district has maintained that after absorbing losses in the collapse of Lehman Brothers and being forced to give back more than \$700,000 to the state, there simply is nothing left for salary increases this year.

In one letter to a board member, which is public record, a

teacher argues that unlike the time she had (student's name) in class, there are more students in larger classes, which amounts to a pay cut. The letter also says morale is terrible, despite the district achieving the highest API test scores in the state.

Although neither side is permitted to discuss the negotiations, which started more than a year ago, it is not lost on district parents that the teachers' earnings are second only to Hillsborough among county schools, with starting salaries at \$50,000-plus a year and topping out at over \$100,000. We expect the district simply wants to maintain this schedule.

Teachers in the Menlo Park City district agreed this spring to accept a no-increase contract, a phenomenon that is spreading through public employee unions during the economic downturn. School districts and most other government agencies are suffering from loss of income, and while many have healthy reserves, governing boards are not going to fund ongoing costs from this safety net.

The Las Lomitas teachers lost much of their credibility by mounting this personal letter-writing campaign and mentioning board members' children by name. The action stunned many parents, who contributed \$1.4 million last year to support lower class sizes and provide teachers with the very best tools to do their job.

The Las Lomitas teachers should drop their contract demands and move on. Withholding a salary increase this year in no way means that the board and district officials think less of the teachers. Instead, it is a prudent management decision that is not out of step with other local basic-aid districts. By getting this stand-off behind them, the teachers will soon see an improvement in morale as parents and administrators join them to provide the best education possible for district students.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Portola Valley measures support vital services

Editor:

In 1964 the forbearers of Portola Valley incorporated our Town. They did this so that we, local residents, could exercise local, democratic control over the fate of our community.

Their vision has been remarkably successful for the succeeding 45 years. Portola Valley's bucolic natural environment endures, largely unblemished by the excessive and unwise development that has ravaged so many other local areas. This environment likewise has continued to nurture the small-town community character which our town's people hold so dear.

In addition, Portola Valley's town government has been a model of frugal and effective administration. Developed around a core of diligent volunteers, the town has been particularly responsive and forward-looking. It is no small achievement that Portola Valley still maintains the lowest per capita expenditure of any municipality in San Mateo County.

Portola Valley voters face a critical choice this November



Jac Audiffred Collection

Our Regional Heritage

This is all that remains of a miniature golf course that flourished in the 1920s at 3270 Woodside Road. Built by contractor Frank Mowee on half of his one-acre property, the course ultimately became so successful that electric lights were installed so play could continue into the evening. The course closed during the Depression and the ninth hole, above, was found recently while poison oak was being removed from a corner of the property.

to support the continuation of these traditions. A "Yes" vote on Measures Q and R is necessary for the continued funding of essential town services and preservation of open space.

If Measure Q doesn't pass, Portola Valley will face draconian budget cuts. Measure R for open

space preservation can only succeed if there is a "Yes" vote on Measure Q. Unless these measures pass, funding for Portola Valley's open space acquisition program would be gutted.

These measures are renewals of our existing utility tax and expenditure limit. They are not

new taxes, but ongoing support for what we hold dear. Maintaining and preserving open space has always been a cornerstone of what makes Portola Valley such a great place to live. So has been sensible support of essential town services.

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Let's continue with our strong community traditions that support vital services and open space preservation by voting "Yes" on Measures P, Q and R on Nov. 3.

Jon Silver, Former mayor and 2003 open space honoree

Information officer was doing her job

Editor:

I proudly serve as the Sequoia high school district's public information officer.

Given my profession, I am frequently asked, both professionally and personally, to lend a hand with the written expressions of others. I freely share of the skill I possess and, in the recent case of the district's board president, Don Gibson, I was pleased to assist him in expressing his opinion, as is his right as an American. There was nothing illegal or unethical about the assistance I provided him, nor was there a single mischaracterization or breach of confidentiality in his opinion piece.

Like our contemporaries in public education throughout the state, the Sequoia district is facing daunting challenges on multiple fronts. At the same time, every day in our district some incredibly interesting and amazing things are happening. The Everest charter school is not central to any of these challenges or achievements. It's disappointing that some community members who follow your coverage of the district would never know this.

In all the time I have worked for the district's superintendent, he has demonstrated, with courage and compassion, an uncompromising commitment to the success of all students — without regard for their enrollment in a traditional or alternative school.

Bettylu Smith, Sequoia Union High School District

City missed chance for housing near transit

By John Boyle

Last week, the Menlo Park City Council approved a major new development for the former Cadillac dealership site at 1300 El Camino Real. I was the dissenter in the 4-1 vote.

Despite my vote against this project, I agree that there were many supportive arguments:

■ This parcel has been empty for far too long.

■ The developer had worked hard over many years to produce a project that followed the general guidance he was given by the current council majority.

■ City staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval based on current council policy guidance.

■ The proposed project (110,000 square feet of office/retail space) is attractive and will contribute to our downtown in a number of positive ways.

However, I believe that this project was unacceptable. Despite being in a prime downtown location that was adjacent to the train station and other public transportation, it didn't include **any** housing. Locations like this are exactly the type of places that Peninsula cities are embracing what's known as Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

Such projects recognize the value in developments that include both jobs and

housing near public transportation. Appropriately-sized TOD projects can respect the "small town feel" of places like Menlo Park, while at the same time delivering the environmental, traffic, affordability, and downtown vitality benefits that come with downtown housing.

Projects that include housing inevitably run into opposition, usually from neighbors.

We've seen it with nearly every other housing-oriented project ranging from a previous apartment project at this same location to the recent Habitat for Humanity proposal in Belle Haven. The issues are real: traffic, school impacts, density and mass vs. small town feel, and more.

But the need is also indisputable. Without a growing housing supply, prices will continue to soar well beyond affordable levels for all but the very wealthy. And pushing housing to other regions simply exacerbates traffic, pollution, and CO2 issues.

In this case, the developer needed a zoning change to enable some small changes to height and parking density. As part of our agreement to make those changes, we should have insisted on the inclusion of housing. The developer outlined one alternative that included a modest housing element (36 units), but he clearly preferred the version without them. We should have required him

to choose the housing option.

As a compromise, I proposed we grant the developer an approval of the project "as is," but with a condition that he essentially delay it for up to a year, while he would work with the city to develop a new proposal that would leverage the evolving new Specific Area Plan for our downtown. We'd have benefited from this "test case" of a real development being defined in parallel with our proposed new downtown zoning and other guidelines.

The developer would benefit by being able to take advantage of what will likely be more generous zoning allowances vs. the current rules defined decades ago. If we were unable to work out a new plan that matched up well with the evolving Specific Area Plan, then the developer could simply reactivate the approval of the current project.

We missed an opportunity at 1300 El Camino, but we have an opportunity to improve the situation going forward. We are several years already into the process of creating a Specific Area Plan for our downtown. It is critical that we finish that work in a timely manner — and with full participation from everyone in our community. This week's council meeting will focus on this project. I invite you to join us and to share your views.

John Boyle is a member of the Menlo Park City Council.



Why commissioner voted for office, retail

Editor:

I voted as a planning commissioner for the office and retail option at 1300 El Camino Real (old Cadillac dealer site) without housing. Why?

First, I was reasonably convinced by the developer's suggestion that a pure retail/office mix at 1300 El Camino would motivate a new housing proposal at the neighboring Derry site. Instead of creating housing competition, office/retail at 1300 would complement the housing nearby. A larger office building could also be attractive

to a large anchor office tenant, a plus for Menlo Park downtown development.

What about the goal of transit-oriented housing along El Camino? Well, that doesn't mean housing on every single parcel. A great deal of free space is still available on El Camino for housing and will be developed through the new Specific Plan.

More importantly, my vision is for the Derry site and 1300 El Camino to be planned together as a unified neighborhood, especially along the "seam" connecting the two sites from El Camino back toward the train tracks. The goal is to facilitate

pedestrian traffic back toward the tracks, and to motivate walkers and bicyclists from the trackside to come over to the new development by avoiding El Camino.

I discussed this issue several times in Planning Commission meetings on 1300 El Camino. Unfortunately, with only the 1300 project up for review, little could be done to coordinate planning of the combined eight acres. There's now a narrow walkway planned between the two sites, the best possible option without a design for the Derry area. It's far from what's needed to make the overall plan a great one.

My conclusion, especially recognizing the developer's lack of motivation for creating a housing project, was to get their project going, and take a risk that the remaining Derry site will have a great deal of housing. Most of all, I wanted to set strong expectations for how the two projects are to be integrated into a well-designed urban neighborhood. This is our best shot at meeting goals of neighborhood design, vibrancy, and walkability for this area. I look forward to seeing a project meeting those goals proposed in the near future.

John Kadvan, Menlo Park planning commissioner

Menlo not sharing work on rail project

By Martin Engel

(Editor's Note: The following letter was submitted to the Menlo Park City Council.)

Menlo Park has been an active participant in the creation of the Peninsula Cities Coalition, whose aim is to speak with one voice in opposition to the intrusive intentions of the California High-Speed Rail Authority and Caltrain.

As far as I can detect, that voice has yet to be heard. While there is a growing groundswell of grass-roots protest in Menlo Park and our neighboring towns, our concerns are still

muted by a charade of mutual "outreach" and genteel communication. And, that's a problem.

The population of Palo Alto is about 60,000 people. The population of Menlo Park is about 30,000 people. The population of Atherton is about 7,000 people.

Palo Alto initiated the coalition and has strong administrative and City Council support for confronting the high-

speed rail authority and Caltrain about their intentions for the rail corridor. Residents and citizens of other cities have been and continue to be very much involved in this process.

Much smaller Atherton has had a standing rail committee of 12 members, including the mayor, which meets once a month. The members are very active, do a great deal of homework, and advise the City Council on critical decisions. I have attended these public meetings for over two years.

These two cities, one much smaller, the other larger than Menlo Park, conduct their high-speed rail and Caltrain interac-

tions in a public manner. Residents are very much engaged in this process.

This is not the case with Menlo Park. Our city has two council members who constitute the high-speed rail sub-committee. They meet secretly with select administration officials. No residents are involved in this process, nor are we allowed to attend these meetings. There are no minutes. The irony is that our council majority consists of members who, as candidates for council seats, ran on a policy of transparency.

This lack of participation in Menlo Park is intolerable. Menlo Park currently has no format for substantive community participation in this issue. If we are being assisted by our elected

representatives and city administration, it remains a mystery as to what such support might be.

I respectfully request that the council rail sub-committee be expanded to include a number of resident participants and that its meetings be open to the public. I also request that high-speed rail reports by this sub-committee be presented before 10 p.m. during council meetings, not after midnight.

This issue merits far greater emphasis by the Menlo Park City Council than it currently receives.

Martin Engel lives on Stone Pine Lane in Menlo Park and wrote this as a private citizen, not as a member of the Transportation Commission.



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