



**WOODSIDE** crowns king and queen for its  
May Day Parade on Saturday. Page 9

# The Almanac

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

APRIL 28, 2010 | VOL. 45 NO. 35



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fly a kite*

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See more pictures on Page 12.



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Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

**Retired dance instructor** Marianne Crowder, left, celebrates her 104th birthday with close friends, former students (including Betty Risser, shown here) and family at the Menlo Park Recreation Center.

## Marianne Crowder celebrates 104 years

By Jane Knoerle  
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

They came to wish their teacher “Happy Birthday,” bringing cards, flowers, even a box of homemade fudge. Marianne Crowder’s girls (and boys) were at the Menlo Park Recreation Center on April 23 to celebrate her 104th birthday.

The birthday party is a not-to-be missed annual event at Menlo Rec, where Ms. Crowder taught dancing and exercise for so many years. Daughter Sue Miller has been hosting the party since her mother reached 85.

Party-goers were students of Ms. Crowder, who first designed her exercise class in 1949 and taught it for 50 years.

First called “Mariantics,” then “Forever Fit,” the class has always emphasized a smoothly flowing set of exercises and stretches that work everything from the face to the feet.

When she retired, daughter Sue took over. Cyndi Jung now teaches “Forever Fit” on Monday mornings.

Nancy Schumacher of Menlo Park was among those who came to pay tribute. She took exercise classes 40 years ago, at the same time her daughter, Carol, enrolled in Ms. Crowder’s



Some of the many guests who showed up for Marianne Crowder’s 104th birthday.

dance class for children.

William Grindley of Atherton was a student with Ms. Crowder from 1974 to 1983. That’s nothing compared to his wife, Susan, who took lessons from the time she was a little girl.

“We have a relationship that goes back 57 years,” he said. “My wife and her five sisters all took classes from Marianne, as well as their mother, Helen. We’ve become good friends. We have her over to the house whenever we can.”

A native of Colorado, Ms. Crowder studied dance and theater arts for years, heading the dance department at Colorado College. After moving to Palo Alto, she started teaching dance

on the front lawn of the family home. Today she still lives in Palo Alto, in the same home she and her late husband, Paul, moved into in 1938.

Ms. Crowder’s two daughters, Sue Miller, and Anne Gully of Tempe, Arizona, were on hand for the party, along with Anne’s husband, Tommy, and two daughters, Emma and Megan. The next day, there was to be a family party with the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

On Friday, however, when nearly 100 guests crowded in for a hug or a chat with their beloved teacher, it was a time for Marianne’s former pupils to feel they were all in the family. ■

### CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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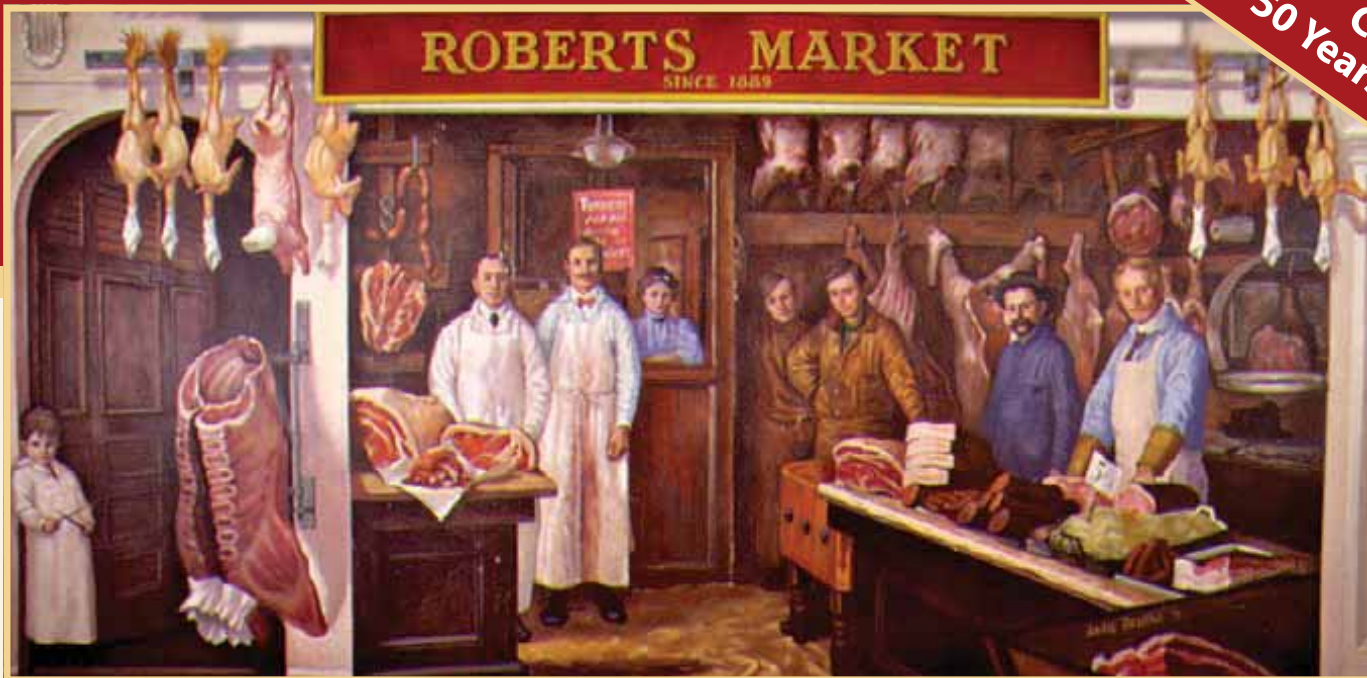
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George Roberts, left, and his son Brian pose in their Woodside grocery store, a community institution for 60 years.

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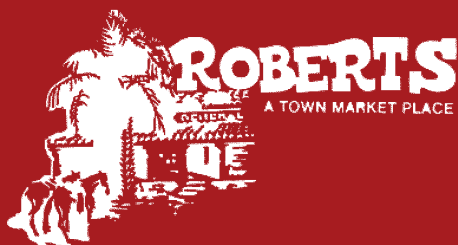
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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Service cuts ahead as city works to narrow deficit

■ Menlo Park is cutting hours at some city facilities, and more severe measures may be in store in coming years. Utility tax hike not likely, but council will debate hotel tax, future of child care program.

By Sean Howell  
Almanac Staff Writer

To date, the city of Menlo Park's paddle around the whirlpool of the global economic recession has been fairly graceful. Though tax receipts have sloughed since the fall of 2008, residents haven't seen much of a change in services, and the city hasn't been forced to dive, Scrooge McDuck-like, into its giant pile of general fund reserves to cover its losses very often.

That paddling is starting get a little choppy, however, as the city works to escape a projected \$1.3 million deficit in the fiscal year beginning July 1. Patrons of Menlo Park libraries, parks, and other facilities may start to notice the budget strain this year, with the city already stretched thin due to cutbacks over the past year-plus.

"I think we did a good job for the last two

years of holding the line on subsidized programs," Mayor Rich Cline said at the council's April 20 meeting, flipping through a list of recommendations from city management on reducing city services. "I remember going through these on some late nights, and avoiding a lot of these types of cuts. And I don't think we can do it again."

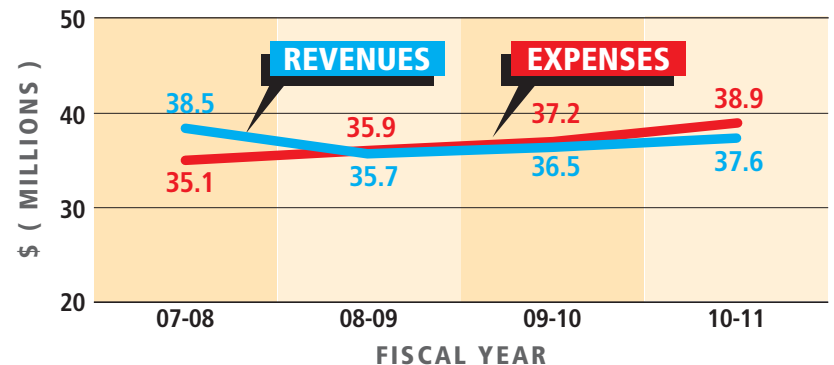
The city has deferred capital improvement projects in each of the past two years, when mid-year revenue came in below projections.

This year, the city's recommendations include a reduction of six-and-a-half full-time city positions, including a police officer, a librarian, and a teacher at the Belle Haven child care center. The city also plans to close the senior center and the underused Belle Haven library one day per week, to cut morning hours at the Onetta Harris Com-

See **BUDGET**, page 8

### Menlo Park's budget

Menlo Park is trying to narrow the gap between city revenues and expenses—a result of the global economic recession, and what the city describes as an ongoing, structural budget deficit.



- The figures for 2007-08 and 2008-09 are actual revenues and expenses. The figures for 2009-10 are adjusted projections. The figures for 2010-11 are preliminary projections, and don't include possible expenditure cuts and revenue boosts.
- 2008-09 expenses reflect an \$800,000 decrease in funding of capital improvement projects.
- 2009-10 expenses reflect a \$245,000 decrease in funding of capital improvement projects.
- The expenses don't reflect funding for the \$1 million downtown/El Camino Real planning project.

## Woodside homicide victim an artist and native of Iran

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Parima Parineh, the 56-year-old Woodside woman found lying dead beside a semi-automatic pistol in her Fox Hill Road home on April 13, was a native of Teheran, Iran, and an accomplished visual artist, according to an online biography.

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office is calling Ms. Parineh's death a murder, based on evidence gathered at the scene and an autopsy. Investigators are interviewing anyone with a possible connection, sheriff's spokesman Lt. Ray Lunny told The Almanac.

Detectives have spoken with and want to re-interview Ms. Parineh's husband Peter and the couple's two adult children who also lived there, but the family members "are not making themselves available," Lt. Lunny said.

Though Mr. Parineh called his wife's death a suicide, the Sheriff's Office is calling it a murder, in part because the injury was inconsistent with a self-inflicted wound, Lt. Lunny said.

Deputies are not releasing information on the specific nature of the injury because "there's only one person who would know" such a detail, Lt. Lunny said.

Investigators have not found signs of forced entry and are looking into possible motives for the crime, but are not yet ready to say anything on that subject, he said.

Asked to comment on why he used the term murder to describe Ms. Parineh's death rather than the more open-ended homicide, which can include accidental death, Lt. Lunny replied by citing California's definition of murder: "The unlawful killing of a human

See **DEATH**, page 10



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

### Families move into rebuilt Belle Haven homes

Gloria Portillo, right, sits with her daughter Kayla McHenry and son Manuel Bernal in front of their new home, one of two dedicated by Habitat for Humanity in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood on April 6 as part of a city-funded program to buy and revamp foreclosed properties.

## Labor group invites council members to chat about two-tier pension

With government agencies throughout the state feeling the pinch budget-wise, talk of a two-tier pension plan for public employees is in the air, including along the Peninsula.

A discussion of the topic, hosted by the San Mateo County Central Labor Council, is set for

the morning of Saturday, May 8, at 1153 Chess Drive in Foster City. The two-hour meeting begins at 9:30 a.m.

The labor group has invited members of city and town councils, and the meeting is also open to the public. To reserve a seat, call 572-8848.

With the prospect of tight budgets on into the future, a two-tier system would institute a benefit program that is less generous for new employees.

City and town managers in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have agreed in principle on a two-tier program,

Portola Valley Town Manager Angie Howard has said. But it would require buy-in by all the communities so as to create a level playing field for recruiting and retaining employees, Woodside Town Manager Susan George has said.

Bob Brownstein, a spokesman

for labor's point of view, will be at the Foster City get-together. "Every working American should have the chance to enjoy retirement security after a lifetime on the job," Mr. Brownstein said in a recent guest opinion for the Silicon Valley/San Jose Business Journal.

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## Election could disrupt plan for city center

Menlo Park's City Council had been scheduled to vote on a long-term planning effort in the city center right before the November election. Now, it appears that the vote will be held after the election.

The delay was recommended by city staff, to allow the city to address an environmental review issue it hadn't anticipated it would need to. Not doing so could leave the city open to a lawsuit, City Attorney Bill McClure said in a staff report.

The scheduling change to the three-year-plus, nearly \$1 million plan could have a considerable impact on the election. While under the original schedule the election might have served as a referendum on the plan, it could now determine the outcome of that plan, if new

council members don't agree with its direction.

The plan, guided almost entirely by input from residents, has been the most significant undertaking of the council majority elected in 2006, with council members waiting until the end of the process to weigh in. It has elicited opposition from a group of downtown property and business owners, who say they fear the impact on local businesses.

The report said that Mayor Rich Cline and Councilman John Boyle, who sit on the subcommittee for the plan, were disappointed with the delay but agreed that it's warranted. The entire council will take up the matter at its meeting on Tuesday, April 27.

## Caltrain's survival: Is it high-speed rail or bust?

While Menlo Park and Atherton contest in court the state's decision to run its high-speed-rail system along the Caltrain corridor, Caltrain officials are claiming that high-speed-rail may be the only way to save the commuter rail system.

In exchange for use of the Caltrain right-of-way, the state would pay to run both high-speed-rail and Caltrain engines on an electrified system. The commuter rail agency maintains that a switch from diesel to electric would provide more revenue, and may be the only way to keep the system alive.

"Without an ability to expand capacity and attract new riders with improved service, the system's structural deficit will continue to increase and will eventually threaten the entire Caltrain system," the

agency wrote in a press release issued April 23 — three days after Menlo Park's City Council voted to join Atherton in petitioning to re-open a lawsuit over the planned high-speed-rail route.

With both the number of riders and the amount of contributions from regional governments dwindling, Caltrain is contemplating major service cuts, including the possible elimination of everything but commute-hour trains.

But even with electrification, Caltrain is projecting a \$26.5 million deficit within 10 years, a figure that represents about one-third of its projected annual operating budget in 10 years.

Caltrain estimates that electrification would cost over \$1.5 billion, a tab that the high-speed-rail authority would pick up.

## 'Pension reform' group raises \$6,500

A group advocating for pension reform in Menlo Park has raised more than \$6,500 since it formed in late January.

About 30 people have donated, many of them retirees, people who work in the financial sector, and local political players. The group is gathering signatures to put a voter initiative on the November 2010 ballot that would reduce pension payments to future non-police municipal employees.

According to a campaign finance statement filed April 20, the group had received about \$6,500 in monetary and other contributions, including a \$300 loan, as of March

31. It had spent about \$2,400 for fees, costs, and legal advice related to launching the initiative drive.

Roughly two-thirds of the donations were for \$100 or less, but there were several larger donations. The Tolles Family Trust gave \$1,000. Roy Thiele-Sardina, a venture capitalist and one of the leaders of the effort, gave \$500.

Lisa Whorton, also a venture capitalist, and John Berthold, a retiree, also gave \$500.

Lee Duboc and Mickie Winkler, former City Council members who helped to organize the initiative, have each spent about \$400 on supplies to help people gather signatures, according to the filing.

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## Divided council commends fired employee

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

The saga of John Johns vs. the town of Atherton has now ended with a \$225,000 pay-out by the town to the former finance director, but the City Council's position on the lawsuit settlement remained divided to the end.

At the April 21 council meeting, the letter of commendation promised in the settlement agreement to Mr. Johns, who was fired from his job in 2007, was approved by a 3-1-1 vote.

Councilman Charles Marsala, who voted against the settlement agreement in a March 29 closed-session meeting, voted against the commendation at last week's public meeting. Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis, who also opposed the settlement agreement, abstained from voting for the letter of commendation, saying she didn't have the "historical knowledge" of Mr. Johns' performance as a staff member because she wasn't on the council when he was employed.

Mr. Johns sued the town for wrongful termination in 2008, charging that his firing was the result of his work in auditing the town's finances and blowing the whistle on fiscal improprieties in the building and other

### ATHERTON



Photo by Michelle Le

**John Johns** sued the town of Atherton, claiming wrongful termination after he reported fiscal improprieties in a town audit.

departments. The letter of commendation was a provision of the settlement agreement, as was a condition requiring the town to rehire Mr. Johns and allow him to resign the same day.

#### Costs to town

The costs to the town to defend against the lawsuit haven't been calculated, although City Manager Jerry Gruber is working to tally the figures, according to Assistant City Manager Eileen

Wilkerson.

Mayor Kathy McKeithen, contacted by The Almanac early this week when she was on the East Coast, said that she didn't have her paperwork with her, but her calculations put the costs at "hundreds of thousands of dollars. ... At least approaching \$400,000, if not more at this point."

That estimate includes both legal fees and ancillary costs, such as the cost of an investigation of Mr. Johns the council authorized before his firing, she said.

The \$225,000 settlement included \$90,000 to be considered wages "subject to applicable payroll taxes and withholdings."

The town agreed to rehire Mr. Johns on April 19, although he assumed no active duties and didn't report for work. The brief reinstatement was conditioned on the agreement that Mr. Johns would not "make any claim for any benefits," including wages, worker's compensation, retirement benefits and health and welfare benefits.

A provision of the settlement also prohibits Mr. Johns from suing the town, council members, current and former employees, and contractors. ▀

## Planning Commission could vote on Bohannon project

Menlo Park's Planning Commission is expected to meet Monday, May 3, to make a recommendation to the City Council on whether to approve a sizable development project.

The proposal is for three eight-story office buildings and a 230-room hotel and sports club near Marsh Road and Bay-

front Expressway, totaling nearly 1 million square feet. Among other things, the commission is expected to discuss the environmental impact report and development agreement, as it weighs whether the city should amend its general plan and create a new zoning district.

Following the commission's

recommendation, the council is expected to hold a public hearing on the proposal May 25, followed by a June 15 meeting at which it could make a final decision.

The commission and the council both meet at 7 p.m. in the council chambers, in the Civic Center complex between Laurel and Alma streets.

## Menlo Park introduces revised landscaping ordinance

Menlo Park's City Council will take another crack at an ordinance requiring the use of water-efficient landscaping techniques on residential properties.

The ordinance is a modified version of one designed by the Bay Area Water and Conservation Agency to comply with a

state law that went into effect Jan. 1. The ordinance would apply only to new homes, or homes that undergo extensive renovations or landscaping overhauls.

The city will introduce the ordinance at the council meeting Tuesday, April 27. The meeting starts at 7

p.m. in the City Council chambers, located in the Civic Center complex between Laurel and Alma streets.

This is the third time the ordinance has appeared on the council agenda since December, as council members have grappled with the details and implications of the new law.

## Portola Valley council could set definition for open space

The Portola Valley Town Council will consider a definition of open space when it meets at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 28, at the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road.

The matter came up for discussion recently in light of the ongoing community conversation on how

to develop the six acres adjacent to Town Center that was once the Spring Down property and is now a meadow with a small pond on it.

Go to [is.gd/bIOmi](http://is.gd/bIOmi) (case sensitive) and turn to Page 30 for more.

The council is also set to consider going paperless for council meet-

ings, a move that could replace paper reports with laptop computers for the council members.

A representative from the Cultural Arts Committee is also set to present a proposal to mount a collection of ceramic tiles, prepared by children in the 1960, on the exterior of the community hall.

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman

### School Funding and Real Estate Values



#### VOTE YES ON MEASURE C

If you live in the Menlo Park School District you have a chance to vote to protect the schools, maintain small class sizes, keep high quality teachers, and preserve essential education programs. Even if you do not have school aged children now or in the future, if you are a Menlo Park homeowner you benefit from being in a good school district. As a real estate broker I am constantly reminded of this fact. Most of the buyers I work with only want to look at homes in top school districts and they are willing to pay more to live in these districts. Nothing enhances real estate values more than excellent schools.

A Yes vote on Measure C will extend the per parcel tax for another seven years. This gives stability to the budgeting process even as the state's financial situation is precarious. If you are 65 years of age or older you are allowed an exemption from this tax, even as your home enjoys the benefit of being in an excellent school district.

Your ballot must be received by May 4 and can be mailed to the County Elections Office, or dropped off at the Menlo Park City Hall, The San Mateo County Clerk's office, or the Elections Office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo. For more information go to [www.shapethefuture.org](http://www.shapethefuture.org)

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Presented by  
**Mark Schmidt**  
Licensed Optician

#### MAKING THE CASE FOR CLEANLINESS?

Even if contact lens wearers are scrupulous about cleaning their lenses properly, they may be vulnerable to bacterial infections. The reason for this is that nearly one-quarter of contact lens users never replace their lens cases, in which bacteria can breed in the nooks and

crannies and infect eyes. The American Optometric Association reports, in fact, that most serious contact-related eye infections can be traced back to wearers' lens cases. To guard against infections from this source, contact wearers are urged to switch out their cases at least every three months and observe proper care rules in between. Cases should be thoroughly cleaned with solution after each use, and then left open to dry.

P.S. Every year, about 1 out of every 20 contact lens wearers develops a contact lens-related complication.

*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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**Erica Pelavin, L.C.S.W., Ph.D.** is a family therapist and Organizational Psychologist specializing in relationship issues and work-life integration. A believer in individual and family resilience, she approaches her client's family and school challenges from a strength-based perspective. In addition to her work with families, she facilitates support groups in the areas of bereavement, chronic illness and learning differences.

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## BUDGET

continued from page 5

munity Center, and to decrease park maintenance, among other things.

Those measures are still relatively mild, and might only be temporary. But if things don't turn around, residents could see more drastic cuts in the future: the closure of the main library one day per week, the elimination of the city-run child care program in the Civic Center, and the shuttering of the Belle Haven library, which primarily serves students in the Ravenswood City School District.

"Those are the ideas we came up with this year because of what's going on in the organization," said City Manager Glen Rojas in an interview, stressing that the library and the child care program won't necessarily be the first city programs to fall under the budget ax, if it falls. "We were trying to get a handle on the areas we could cut that would have the least amount of impact on the general community. Next year, whether it's the same situation or whether it's worse, we may be in a different position."

Mr. Rojas' goal is for the city to reach long-term financial sustainability within five years. Though Menlo Park often ran surpluses before the recession, the city has long maintained that it has a structural budget deficit.

The first task is to determine how much of the city's deficit is the result of the recession, and how much of it can be attributed to structural issues, according to Mr. Rojas. He said he hopes to have an answer for the council this time next year, presenting council members with a baseline they can work from to winnow the long-term gap between revenue and expenses. Many of the city's cuts thus far have been reversible, so that the city is prepared for a recovery, if and when it comes.

In May, the council is scheduled to discuss the possibility of initiating a ballot measure to raise the tax on hotel guests. It is also set to debate the future of the Burgess child care center, which has been in limbo for the past year and a half, as the city gauges whether it can recoup enough of its costs to justify operating the program.

At the April 20 meeting, council members said they were not inclined to eliminate the \$100,000 or so the city gives annually to community groups, or to hike the utility tax.

"If we increase (the utility tax), I think it's going to feel like we're piling on," Councilman Heyward Robinson said, referring to the fact that water and garbage rates are increasing sharply due to factors outside

the city's control.

While many of the cuts seem to be centered in the Belle Haven neighborhood, Mr. Rojas pointed out that programs in that neighborhood receive the highest rate of subsidization from the city. Rather than increase fees for community members who may not be able to afford them, the city looked to trim services that were underutilized, he said.

"We agonized over these recommendations," he said at the council meeting. In the interview, he stressed that the city's still in decent shape, all things considered.

"We're not burning through our reserves, by any means," he said. "I think we've done a really good job, the council and the staff, of working together to adjust the budget each year. We're getting better at it, and we're shrinking the organization to what we believe is an ongoing, sustainable level."

Councilman Andy Cohen said that, while he supported management's decision to hold off on the more severe service reductions it had contemplated, the city appears to be headed for deeper cuts in the coming years. He hinted that next year he may press the City Council and executive management to take voluntary pay cuts, a suggestion he has been making in private since early 2009.

"This is not over yet, and we are not on the verge of anything like a recovery, but that's just my opinion," he said.

Noting that preliminary budgets for the past several years have shown expenses rising faster than revenue, Councilman John Boyle said the city's structural budget gap is "heading in the wrong direction."

Council members said they were reluctant to slash funding for programs used by people most in need of city services, but voiced general support for management's recommendations.

"After many cuts, here we are, left with the children and the seniors, and maybe that's just a regrettable situation in the cut cycle," Councilwoman Kelly Ferguson said.

The council will approve a final budget in June.

## CORRECTION

An article on Menlo Park's budget in last week's Almanac stated incorrectly that Menlo Park might consider asking voters whether to re-institute the city's utility tax. The tax is already set at 1 percent of utility rates, and the city would not have to send the issue to voters if it wanted to increase the rate — something that, in any event, it's not planning to do.



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

The Menlo Park City Council Chambers served as a venue on April 21 for 16 civic-minded volunteers who are reviewing election procedures for San Mateo County supervisors. All of the 10 women committee members supported at-large elections, while four of the six men serving argued for by-district elections.

## Changing the way we elect county supes

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Unlike every other county in California, San Mateo County holds county-wide elections for supervisors. Though candidates must live in the district they would represent, they win the seat in a county-wide — not a district — election.

This system should not change, said a majority of volunteers on a committee that's been considering whether county supervisors should be elected by district.

Despite that opinion, the committee decided the question should be put to a vote of the people in November.

The group met on April 21 in the Menlo Park City Council chambers and its conclusions will be forwarded in June to the Board of Supervisors, which will decide whether to put the proposal on the November 2010 ballot.

The committee's mission arose from complaints in a 2008-09 grand jury report critical of the electoral advantages enjoyed by candidates appointed to the Board of Supervisors after a sitting supervisor vacates a seat.

Go to [is.gd/bDWUI](http://is.gd/bDWUI) (case-sensitive) to read the report.

Asked to go on the record with their opinions, 11 members expressed support for the current "at large" elections, four supported "by district" elections, and one gave no opinion. The committee voted 14 to 2 to recommend that the question be put on the ballot in November.

It would not be the first time. Voters rejected by-district elections in 1978 and 1980 by majori-

ties of 52 and 57 percent, respectively.

Go to [is.gd/bDWkf](http://is.gd/bDWkf) (case-sensitive) for brief descriptions of committee members and how they came to be members.

This was the committee's eighth meeting, with five more ahead. They will have more to say, including on how to fill a vacant seat.

### Need a silver bullet

In support of keeping the elections county-wide, advocates focused in part on what by-district elections would not accomplish.

Ethnic diversity is a concern, but by-district elections "won't guarantee that minorities would win," San Mateo resident Carol Boes said. Besides, she added, supervisors need a regional outlook.

Campaigning is expensive and open to the well-connected, but a by-district election "does not guarantee" that qualified candidates would be elected, Daly City resident Dolores "Dee" Canepa said.

The county should provide matching funds, Ms. Canepa said, adding that candidates today can campaign inexpensively via Facebook and Twitter.

By-district elections might add local focus to a supervisor's attention, but voters already have such focus in city councils and commissions, "places where you get more bang for the buck," said San Mateo resident Kathy Everitt.

To diversify the board, San Mateo resident Shelley Kessler said, candidates from under-represented communities might be recruited, and well-connected

candidates might be persuaded not to run.

Complaints about under-representation "kind of saddened" Cary Wiest, an unincorporated community resident who said he thinks such critiques do not reflect the larger reality.

### More is better

Woodside Mayor Dave Burow, who said he prefers a proportional system in which voters get one vote for each candidate running and can use the votes as they choose, also said he would support district elections even though they may not actually result in more diversity on the board or more competitive elections.

Henry Organ of Menlo Park, the only non-white committee member, also supported by-district elections.

Had the committee been more ethnically diverse, its conclusions might have been different, he said.

Also supporting by-district elections was Dave Pine, board president of the San Mateo High School District. "To my mind, there's no question that by-district elections move the ball forward," he said. "More elections mean more dialog and that's fundamental. That's what democracy is about."

Would such elections push a supervisor away from regional interests? Occasionally, Mr. Pine admitted. If someone is proposing a jail be built in a district, the supervisor for that district would likely fight it but, he told the committee, "that's not parochialism, that's representation." ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

## Courtly kids

The Royal Court for the Woodside May Day Parade pose with the parade's grand marshal, Cherie van Der Molen. The kindergartners are, from left, Diego Jimenez, Kelly McKaige, Soren Ryan-Jensen (the king), Ariena Pillitteri (the queen), Krista Drako, and Sydney Schwach. The parade begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 1, with registration beginning at 9 a.m. at Woodside School, 3195 Woodside Road. The annual event includes a "Fun Run" that begins at 7:30 a.m., a pancake breakfast and a barbecue lunch, a carnival that begins at noon, a May Pole dance, and an awards presentation for the Citizen of the Year. Contact vedayonehiro@yahoo.com for more information.

# Atherton strongly opposes Cargill plan

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

After debating at length how strong a statement to send to the town's neighbors to the north, the Atherton City Council unanimously voted April 21 to oppose Cargill's plan to intensively develop its salt lands with residential and commercial buildings, and to support restoration of the 1,436-acre property on the Bay in Redwood City.

The council passed a resolution expressing its position at its Wednesday meeting after hearing from dozens of residents from Atherton and nearby communities, who were divided as to whether the town should hold off from commenting on the controversial project until an environmental impact study is completed.

Cargill and developer DMB Associates want to build a community of up to 12,000 homes, commercial space, playing fields and several hundred acres of restored wetlands on the property, located in the northeastern portion of Redwood City, east U.S. 101 and just south of Seaport Boulevard.

Atherton joins Menlo Park and Belmont in strongly opposing the project. In April, Woodside took a milder approach, passing a resolution to convey the Town Council's "serious concerns" about the project and indicating the town's "intention to closely monitor the

pending environmental review."

Although Atherton council members were concerned that too strong a statement could backfire, closing the door on the town in terms of influencing the Redwood City Council as it proceeds with the approval process, they ultimately took a firm stand. The approved resolution supports "the full restoration of the Cargill salt ponds and inclusion of the salt ponds in the Don Edwards National Wildlife refuge."

The council also voted to include with the resolution a cover letter acknowledging the near certainty that the environmental review process for the proposed project will go forward, and stating Atherton's desire to be part of the decision-making process.

A number of Redwood City residents, as well as representatives of a Sequoia high school district youth athletic group, packed the council chambers, some praising the proposed project for allowing people to live closer to where they work, and for providing more amenities such as parks and playing fields.

DMB consultant Tim Frank characterized the planned community as one that would be both "walk-able" and transit-oriented, reducing the amount of traffic in the region. The project, he said, would have "tremendous benefits for the entire area."

Several proponents of the proj-

ect urged the council to hold judgment, saying that the process is important and public officials shouldn't try to derail it.

But Atherton residents who spoke weren't buying it; several noted that they, not Cargill or Redwood City residents, are the council's constituents.

Calling the proposed project an "environmental disaster," Atherton resident Sam Bronfman said, "Process is an important part of government, (but) so is judgment and leadership."

From the start, council members appeared ready to pass some sort of resolution urging Redwood City to kill or curtail the proposed project, with Councilman Jim Dobbie stating that he is "totally opposed."

Councilman Charles Marsala noted that, even if the project did result in regional benefits because of reduced long-distance traffic, Atherton was sure to be negatively affected by increased traffic.

Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis said she was more comfortable with the language Woodside used in its resolution. She favors restoring the Bay lands, she said, but "economic drivers" will determine if restoration is financially feasible, and the money might not be available.

All council members ultimately signed off on the recommended resolution before them after Mayor Kathy McKeithen came up with language for a cover letter they could all agree with. ▀

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## Las Lomas, Ormondale named distinguished schools

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Ormondale School in Portola Valley and Las Lomas School in Atherton have made the list of California Distinguished Schools for 2010 — the fifth such honor for Ormondale and the fourth for Las Lomas.

The two schools were among 484 public elementary schools in the state to receive the honor, awarded by the California Department of Education based on the schools' "academic excellence and for narrowing achievement gaps," according to a written statement from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

"These schools have persevered despite state budget cutbacks that have cut deeply into the budgets of local school districts," he said.

Schools were identified for eligibility for the award based on the results of their Academic Performance Index and Adequate Yearly Progress tests, according to a press release from the state Department of Education. The

program examines applications that were voluntarily submitted by schools across the state.

"All applicants underwent a stringent selection process" conducted by the Department of Education, the press release said.

In applying for the honor, schools agree to "share their signature practices with other schools and serve as a mentor to other educators who want to replicate the work," according to the release.

Ormondale, whose principal is Jennifer Warren, was previously named a distinguished school in 1987, 1997, 2000, and 2006, according to the school.

Las Lomas, whose principal Gerald Traynor is retiring in June, was previously honored in 1997, 2002, and 2006, according to the school.

Both schools serve children in kindergarten through third grade.

Winners of the distinguished schools award will be honored June 4 during a ceremony and dinner at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim.

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### DEATH

continued from page 5

being, or a fetus, with malice aforethought."

"Obviously, this was not an accident," he added. "It's obvious that this is murder."

The gun lying next to her was a semi-automatic pistol, Lt. Lunny said. A ballistics test is under way to determine whether the four shell casings found in the bedroom match the characteristics of having been fired from that gun.

The couple were apparently having money troubles. Their house was in foreclosure, Lt.

Lunny said.

Ms. Parineh, who received a bachelor of arts degree from Teheran University, had a studio at home and was a member of the Pastel Society of the West Coast, the Western Society of Artists, and an associate member of the Pastel Society of America, according to her online bio.

Go to [www.parimaneh.com](http://www.parimaneh.com) to see examples of her work.

Deputies are asking that anyone with information call Detective Hector Acosta or Detective Saul Lopez at the Sheriff's Office at 363-4911, or call the anonymous witness line at 800-547-2700. ■



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 The Cravery



Photos here and on cover by Michelle Le

**Gentaro King**, 7, flies his kite at Bedwell-Bayfront Park. He bought the kite, made of more than 30 pieces of paper, while he was on vacation in China.

**H**undreds of kids and other family members gathered Sunday at Bedwell-Bayfront Park in Menlo Park for one of the community's most popular attractions, Kite Day.

The weather was warm but that didn't stunt the fun as kids flew their own kites or ones bought at the site, where you could buy a kite, a hot dog and a drink — all for \$6.

Kite Day is an annual event sponsored by the city of Menlo Park.



A Kite Day participant swings his flame-designed kite into the air. **Right:** People could buy or bring their own kites to fly at Kite Day, an annual event sponsored by the city of Menlo Park and held at Bedwell-Bayfront Park.



## Menlo Park joins Atherton in asking to reopen rail suit

By Sean Howell  
Almanac Staff Writer

Never one to be left behind when it comes to high-speed-rail advocacy, the city of Menlo Park is joining several other plaintiffs, including the town of Atherton, in asking a judge to reopen a lawsuit against the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

The suit, alleging that the rail agency did not adequately review the environmental impacts the system could have on the Peninsula as it passes along the Caltrain corridor, was originally decided in August 2009 by Sacramento Superior Court Judge Michael Kenny. Judge Kenny's ruling de-certified the environmental analysis document, but did not by and large fault the agency's environmental review of the Peninsula segment of the route, and did not order work on the project to stop.

Stuart Flashman, the attorney who filed the original lawsuit, began looking into the possibility of re-opening the suit in February, contending that the rail agency had withheld crucial information about how it arrived at an estimate of how many people would ride the train. That estimate, which rail critics have said shows a strangely high number of boardings in Gilroy, might have provided the rationale to send high-speed trains shooting along the Caltrain corridor, rather than the Altamont Pass, according to Mr. Flashman.

Menlo Park's City Council agreed with Mr. Flashman's assessment that ridership information had been "improperly withheld from the petitioners, the public, and the court," voting 4-0 in closed session to join the suit at its April 20 meeting, with Andy Cohen recused.

Councilman John Boyle, who dissented in the council's original decision to join the suit, voted to join this time around. He said his fundamental stance that high-speed rail might be a good thing for city because it would improve grade crossings hasn't changed. But he'd like to know whether the route selection would have been different, had the correct information been used to generate the ridership model.

"It does go, potentially, to the heart of the whole model: Did they pick the right route?" he said. "The public has a right to know how material this would have been."

Of the environmental and rail advocacy nonprofit groups that spearheaded the original lawsuit, all but the BayRail Alliance have decided to re-up, according to Mr. Flashman.

He intends to file a writ of error coram nobis in Sacramento County Superior Court early this week, asking Judge Kenny to revisit the suit based on the new information.

The rail agency first attributed the variance in the numbers to an immaterial typographical error, and later released a statement maintaining that all pertinent ridership information has been publicly available since 2007.

Also at its April 20 meeting, Menlo Park's council unanimously approved the wording of a comment letter to the rail agency on the environmental review process. The agency is re-circulating the initial environmental review, to comply with Judge Kenny's ruling.

Atherton's City Council unanimously approved the wording of its letter to the rail agency at its April 21 meeting. ■

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## Talk: How to deal with foreclosures

A Menlo Park lawyer who helps people fight foreclosure proceedings will give a presentation on the issue Wednesday, May 5, at 2 p.m. in the Menlo Park City Council chambers.

The presentation by Robert Spanner of the Trial & Technology Law Group is free, and open to the public. According to Mr. Spanner, the issues to be covered include negotiating with lenders, an overview of successful lawsuits against predatory lending, and government initiatives to help people

facing foreclosure.

The presentation is geared for people who may be at risk of foreclosure, as well as people who have a general interest in the topic. Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood has been especially hard-hit by foreclosures during the recession.

E-mail [ras@techtriallaw.com](mailto:ras@techtriallaw.com) for more information or to register.

The council chambers are located in the Civic Center complex, between Laurel and Alma streets.



## STANFORD HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN PUBLIC MEETINGS

### Official Public Comment Meeting

Sponsored by USFWS and NOAA Fisheries

May 25, 2010

7:00 - 8:30 pm

Tresidder Memorial Union  
Oak West Room  
459 Lagunita Drive, Stanford

### Informational Meetings

Sponsored by Stanford University

May 6, 2010

7:00 - 8:30 pm

Portola Valley Town Center  
Buckeye Room  
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley

May 13, 2010

6:30 - 8:00 pm

Palo Alto Art Center, Meeting Room  
1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto

Stanford University, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries), has developed a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Stanford lands. The primary goals of the plan are to stabilize or increase the populations of covered species and to enhance and protect their habitat, including riparian vegetation, creeks and grassland and seasonal wetlands.

The Federal Agencies' Notice of Availability of the HCP and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) can be found at

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-8300.htm>

For more information please visit

<http://hcp.stanford.edu>,

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## Office space may be next plan for Park Theatre

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

The Park Theater in Menlo Park has been vacant for going on eight years, but owner Howard Crittenden hasn't stopped looking for new tenants.

At the April 20 City Council meeting, Mr. Crittenden spoke to keep the council in the loop on his latest attempt to find a new use for the building, saying he has spent about a year developing a plan to convert the theater to a commercial use.

The planning firm working for Mr. Crittenden has told him that converting the theater to

office space would be a better investment than making way for a retail tenant, but that even then the deal probably would not be profitable to an investor after the economy recovers, Mr. Crittenden said. He said he plans to test that assessment by presenting the plans to commercial real estate brokers.

"At this moment I don't have an answer" on whether the plan would work, he said. "Hopefully soon I will."

Mr. Crittenden said he believed the plans would maintain the building's character and would not trigger a historical assessment under state law.

The theater, on El Camino Real between Valparaiso and Oak Grove avenues, has been empty since Mr. Crittenden evicted Landmark Theatres in 2002, saying the company was unable to pay the "market rent." Finding a new tenant has been an ongoing concern for both Mr. Crittenden and the city, with council members generally unwilling to commit public funds to the site.

A proposal for the city to subsidize restoring the theater to a movie-house operation didn't work out. Neither did a proposal for the city to subsidize the operation of a dance studio. At one point Mr. Crittenden applied for a demolition permit, but withdrew it shortly thereafter, according to Community Development Director Arlinda Heineck. ■

## New health education, dental clinic opens in East Palo Alto

*This information was submitted by Kathleen Alexander, director of communications for the Ravenswood Family Health Center, which serves residents in East Palo Alto, the Belle Haven area of Menlo Park, and east Redwood City.*

Ravenswood Family Health Center is hosting a dual celebration April 29 with the opening of

its Center for Health Promotion and its Ravenswood Family Dentistry clinic.

The two facilities are conjoined, sharing a common reception area that features a video display for educational videos and five smaller displays for kid video games, a diversion that works when kids feel anxious about going to the dentist.

The idea for the health education center came from Ravenswood board member Gordon Russell of Portola Valley. Hearing that the education and insurance enrollment staff were packed into a "warren" of little cubicles, he proposed building a new site. Within a few months, the idea was on the drawing board, and Mr. Russell himself, who has a long history of support for nonprofit projects, committed a major gift to underwrite the lion's share for internal construction of the building.

With 4,000 square feet, the center has room for the entire health education team, plus a classroom and space for retinopathy screening. Another section accommodates insurance enrollment specialists who meet with families to determine their eligibility for public health coverage.

As the site was being constructed, Sharon Keating Beaugard, director of community partnerships, said Stanford Hospital & Clinics wanted to put in a health library extension at the center, making it the fifth in its network of health libraries. The library is open to residents of the community. With the assistance of a bilingual librarian, people will have access to one of the most extensive online bilingual health information systems in the region.

To the right of the center is the Ravenswood Family Dentistry clinic, a full-service, safety-net dental clinic, with 10 dental chairs, a pediatric unit, a surgery unit, and advanced digital dental technology.

Access to dental care has been a major concern. "Our patients have significant dental health problems," says CEO Luisa

*Continued on next page*



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To Register E-mail: [ras@techtriallaw.com](mailto:ras@techtriallaw.com)

(Events held in the Council are only sponsored by the organization indicated and are not sponsored by the City of Menlo Park)



Photo by Brandi de Garneau

### It's the latest thing

Leslie Lambert, in a "bag monster" outfit at Portola Valley's Earth Day fair on April 17, depicts a typical year's accumulation of plastic shopping bags, an item that can kill marine animals, which see it as food, and that embodies a significant worldwide greenhouse-gas footprint. With Ms. Lambert is Bobby Markowitz, a landscape designer from Santa Cruz.

Continued from previous page

Buada. "The extent of the problem was confirmed when our staff screened Ravenswood City School District kindergarteners and second-graders several years ago and found that 32 percent had visible dental caries."

An estimated 40 percent of adults need immediate access to oral health services, particularly those suffering from a chronic disease such as diabetes.

The biggest problem has always been a lack of dentists in the Ravenswood Family Health Center's primary service area — East Palo Alto, Belle Haven in Menlo Park and east Redwood City.

According to the U.S. Health & Human Services Administration criteria, RFHC serves a "Dental Professional Shortage Area," which means the ratio of low-income population to dentists has to be greater than 3,000 to 1. In RFHC's service area, the ratio is actually a stunning 81,521:1.

Necessity, in this case, became the mother of intention. CEO Luisa Buada went to David and Lucile Packard Foundation with a proposal to build a dental clinic. The Foundation agreed and with a grant of \$1.5 million, the plans were drawn up. With additional funding from Bothin Foundation, Baxter

International, California Dental Association and others, RFHC has been able to build a first class dental clinic that rivals the best in the county.

RFHC's Dental Director Jack Luomanen, who has set up many community dentistry clinics over the past 30 years, is incorporating best practices for early detection and prevention into the dental program including a method designed at UCSF to detect bacterial condition in the month in young children under the age of 3, treat it, and thereby reduce and prevent future caries.

Given limited staffing, Ravenswood will only be able to accept its registered medical patients. It expects to see 1,800 patients in 4,500 visits, expanding to 3,000 patients in 8,500 visits in year two. At full capacity, the 10-operatory clinic will be able to see 6,000 to 8,000 unique patients annually.

#### INFORMATION

Ravenswood Family Health Center invites the public to celebrate the grand opening of its new facilities on Thursday, April 29, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at 1807 Bay Road in East Palo Alto. For directions, go to [www.ravenswoodfhc.org](http://www.ravenswoodfhc.org).

Alex Sepkus and Pedro Boregaard  
Friday, April 30, 12-6 and Saturday, May 1, 11-4



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**Barbara McKee**

*Longtime Woodside resident*

Barbara H. McKee, a resident of Woodside since 1957, died at home April 19. She was 77.

Ms. McKee was born in Berkeley and graduated from UC Berkeley. While attending college, she met and married John Albert McKee, a student at Stanford University.

She enjoyed fishing, gardening, gourmet cooking, bridge, and gatherings in the family's redwood grove, say family members. Her home and related property has belonged to the McKee/Hooper family since the mid-1800s.



**Barbara H. McKee**

**OBITUARIES**

Ms. McKee is survived by her companion of 17 years, Gene Doucette; children John Hooper McKee of Emerald Hills and Paul Jean Aerts of Flagstaff, Arizona; and three grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, John Albert McKee, and son Robert Paul McKee.

**Billie Hammond**

*Resident of Portola Valley, Menlo Park*

Billie Hammond, a longtime resident of Portola Valley and Menlo Park, died peacefully on April 17 after a long and courageous battle with Alzheimer's disease. She was 78.

Born in San Francisco, Ms. Hammond attended local schools and graduated from Stanford University in 1953.

In 1952 she married Peter Hammond and is survived by their three children: Lynn Hammond of Palm Springs, Karen Quattromani of Providence, Rhode Island, and Rob Hammond of Redwood City. There are five grandchildren.



**Billie Hammond**

Ms. Hammond was an avid gardener, golfer and skier, and loved flower arranging and sewing, say family members. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date.

The family prefers a donation be made to a favorite charity and wishes to thank Silver Senior Living in Belmont and Pathways Hospice for their love and care.

**Workshop: Creating nature-friendly backyard habitats**

Residents of Portola Valley and nearby communities hoping to nurture backyard habitats friendly to local wildlife will have a chance to hear and discuss informed opinions on the subject at a free workshop on the morning of Saturday, May 8.

The event, sponsored by the Conservation Committee, begins at 9 a.m. in the community hall at Portola Valley Town Center at 765 Portola Road. Mayor Steve Toben will open the proceedings, which

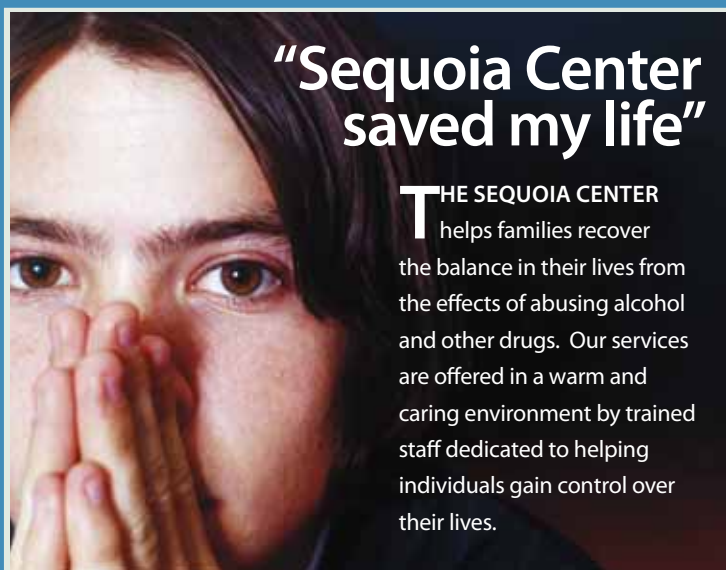
will include refreshments, living examples of native plants, and a guided wildflower walk along Sausal Creek at Town Center.

Vital habitats can help the fight against local extinction of plants and animals, committee Chair Marianne Plunder said in a statement. This presentation will include successful strategies for living with wildlife and guidance on how to keep gardens healthy and free of pest infestations.

The speaker on insects and

plants will be committee member and naturalist Paul Heiple. Bird habitats will be the topic for U.S. Department of Agriculture conservationist Jim Howard, and mammal habitats the topic for Mary A. Paglieri, the founder of Little Blue Society, a nonprofit based in Redwood City with a mission of "sustaining a healthy co-existence between humans and animals."

Call 521-1535 for more information.



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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.

## MENLO PARK

**Commercial burglary report:** Suspect caught on videotape stealing 12 packs of cigarettes, a value of \$72, Menlo Chevron gas station at 1200 El Camino Real, April 20.

**Residential burglary report:** Residence broken into but nothing missing, 1100 block of Windermere Ave., April 16.

## Auto burglary reports:

■ Window smashed and wallet and Apple iPod stolen, estimated loss of \$142, in 400 block of O'Connor St., April 17.

■ Rear view mirror stolen for loss estimated at \$60, 1300 block of Willow Road, April 19.

**Grand theft report:** GPS navigation device stolen from unlocked vehicle, 600 block of Sharon Park Drive, April 22.

## Stolen vehicle reports:

■ Three off-road motorcycles stolen and later recovered and two juvenile suspects in custody, 1200 block of Windermere Ave., April 18.

■ Vehicle stolen and later recovered with stereo system missing, O'Brien and Kavanaugh drives, April 20.

## Fraud reports:

■ Identity theft report: No loss, reported at main police station at 700 Laurel St., April 18.

■ Attempted use of expired credit card but no loss, 800 block of Live Oak Ave., April 22.

**Child protective services report:** 200 block of Van Buren Road, April 21.

## WOODSIDE

**Fraud report:** Charges of \$1,500 made to new and unauthorized Macy's account, 3000 block of Woodside Road, April 18.

## PORTOLA VALLEY

**Theft report:** Trumpet and case stolen, considered worth \$1,000 some 30 years ago, Alpine and Corte Madera roads, April 14.

**Residential burglary report:** Washing machine stolen from vacant garage with no signs of forced entry, 200 block of Portola Road, April 19.

## WEST MENLO PARK

## Theft reports:

■ Two audio speakers stolen from back seat of unlocked vehicle, 3600 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, April 19.

■ Man paid \$5,000 in apparent blackmailing incident after sending shirtless photo of himself to online interlocutor who he believed to be older than 18 but who later revealed herself to be 13 and child of police officer, 3600 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, April 19.

## CORA benefit at Menlo Circus Club

CORA (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse) will hold a fundraiser, "Spring Awakening," from 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, May 4, at the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton.

A cocktail reception will be followed by a program honoring state Sen. Leland Yee for his advocacy on behalf of domestic violence agencies. Andy Grove's family foundation, the Grove Foundation, will be honored for its investment in CORA's mission to end domestic violence.

Television personality Lloyd

LaCuesta will be master of ceremonies and Bay Area comedian and political satirist Will Durst will perform.

Tickets are \$150 per person. For more information, call Maria Stein, 652-0800, ext. 112.

## Ragazzi at Sequoias

The Ragazzi Boys Chorus will present "Songs from the Heart" at 7 p.m. Friday, May 7, in Hanson Hall at The Sequoias in Portola Valley.

The more than 60 Ragazzi

choristers will sing music from famous operas and Broadway musicals. They will be accompanied by soprano Jennifer Cowgill.

The concert is free and open to the public. The Sequoias is located at 501 Portola Road in Portola Valley. For more information, call 851-1501.

## BIRTHS

## Atherton

■ Stephanie and Peter Oshman, April 6, a son, Sequoia Hospital.

## BUSINESS

Ms. Antonacci founded her interior design company in 1983.

## Marilynne Pryor joins Coldwell Banker

Marilynne Pryor has joined Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage as a broker associate in the Menlo Park-El Camino office.

Ms. Pryor has had a long career in real estate, beginning as an agent with Sam Wright & Associates in Menlo Park.

She developed and marketed more than 200 townhouses and condominiums in the Bay Area, according to Michelle Payne, a spokesperson for Coldwell Banker. Ms. Pryor has managed a portfolio of privately owned commercial and residential properties in San Francisco, San Diego and Denver.



Loren Dakin

## Loren Dakin joins Coldwell Banker

Realtor Loren Dakin has joined Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage as a sales associate in its Menlo Park office at 930 Santa Cruz Ave.

Mr. Dakin previously worked for Alain Pinel Realtors. For the past nine years, he has earned top sales achievement awards. He recently was a guest speaker at a real estate sales seminar in Southern California for top-producing agents in California.

## Jane Antonacci Interior Design moves

Jane Antonacci of Menlo Park has re-located her firm, Jane Antonacci Interior Design, from Menlo Park to 450 Geary St. in San Francisco. Ms. Antonacci says she moved to be more centrally located.

"Now it has easier access to clients, design talent, and design resources in San Francisco, Marin and Napa, while it still can easily connect with clients in the Peninsula," she says.



Marilynne Pryor



The Aesthetics Research Center is participating in a research study for crow's feet and forehead lines.

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ALICE LEE (GURLEY) WEBB  
OCTOBER 9, 1924-MARCH 29, 2010

It is with warm memories and deep sorrow the family of Alice Lee (Gurley) Webb announce her peaceful passing, with her family and loving husband at her side. Born in Alameda Ca, Alice lived her life in the San Francisco Bay Area, attending Palo Alto High School and was a graduate of Stanford University. She married and remained a devoted wife to Stanley Webb, and was supportive in the management of the Webb Ranch family business. They celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary in Nov of 2009.

Alice was an avid fan of Stanford University and member of the Chi Omega Sorority. After graduating, she worked in SF as a Physical Therapist. She was a member of the woman's group, PEO, and a member of a local bible study group. She spent time assisting at the Children's Health Council of Stanford, realizing her love of working with children. She enjoyed hosting

many a haunted house; she always dressed in elaborate costumes, complete with full face makeup, warts and all and would sit quietly with each and every child, reading their fortunes, to the delight of all.

The past decade for Alice was especially peaceful and happy for her, as she and Stan enjoyed their mutual retirement and participated in casual activities together. With the help of her loving husband, she overcame late adult onset diabetes by means of adjusting her life style and diet, being fortunate to have enjoyed good health throughout most of her 85 years. She delighted in the company of her friends and family and was fondly known for her special prayers, given at eventful dinner gatherings throughout the years.

She is survived by her husband Stanley, her three children Lyndal, Sharon, Gary, and their spouses; ten grandchildren, three great grandchildren, her brother Richard Gurley, and many loved nieces and nephews. Alice is predeceased by her sister, Janet Gurley Taggart.

The family will hold a private celebration of her life.

PAID OBITUARY

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**Lifestyles Editor** Jane Knoerle

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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.

Subscriptions are \$60 for one year and \$100 for two years.



**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

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

**TOWN SQUARE FORUM**

POST your views on the Town Square forum at [www.TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://www.TheAlmanacOnline.com)

**EMAIL** your views to:

[letters@almanacnews.com](mailto:letters@almanacnews.com) and note this it is a letter to the editor in the subject line.

**MAIL** or deliver to:

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

**CALL** the Viewpoint desk at 854-2690, ext. 222.

## Atherton pays off another employee

The lingering legal dispute over whether Atherton had a legitimate reason to terminate finance director John Johns in 2007 finally ended last week on a 3-2 City Council vote that does little to explain the facts of the case.

As the clear winner, Mr. Johns receives \$225,000, of which \$90,000 is deemed back pay subject to payroll taxes. In addition, Mr. Johns extracted a supposed face-saving commendation that was presented last week, after he was briefly rehired and then immediately resigned, which will show as a resignation, rather than a dismissal, on his record.

In return, Mr. Johns forfeited the right to sue the town and its agents, including Councilman Charles Marsala, who made numerous public statements criticizing Mr. Johns' conduct. But as he pointedly makes clear, Mr. Johns did not give up his right to speak publicly about his experiences, which he has continued to do in public and on The Almanac's Town Square Web site.

Unfortunately, the settlement offers no definitive statement or finding of fact about why the town agreed to pay such a significant sum of money to Mr. Johns in 2010 after its own attorney, brought in specifically to investigate and recommend a course of action on Mr. Johns, advised that he should be let go.

As readers may recall, Mr. Johns was directed by the City Council in 2006 to investigate allegations of improprieties in the building department, including whether employees received gifts or other enticements to issue construction permits that did not fully comply with city code. The investigation was hampered when building department manager Mike Hood suddenly resigned and left the state, although eventually one employee was reassigned to another department.

In his audits, Mr. Johns did find improprieties, and he now claims his

exposure of them was the cause of a concerted campaign against him by his enemies in town and on the council, in particular Charles Marsala, to force him from his job.

Mr. Johns claims that evidence dug up by then police chief Bob Brennan, including allegations that he had downloaded pornography on his city-issued laptop computer and acted like a bully in the office, were all faked to build the evidence for his dismissal. No one at the city has bothered to respond to Mr. Johns, and his efforts to get the District Attorney's Office to file charges against the town have been unsuccessful.

Mr. Brennan, who retired as Atherton police chief in 2008, has not commented on the settlement or any other aspects of the case.

Regardless of Mr. Johns' guilt or innocence, his lawsuit was a costly one for the city, which paid out \$225,000 to settle the case, but undoubtedly paid much, much more to its own attorneys who worked on the case.

All of this comes about six months after the town paid \$230,000 to former police officer Pilar Ortiz-Buckley after she charged she was sexually harassed by another employee of the town.

And that is not all. In recent postings on The Almanac's Town Square forum, Mr. Johns has alleged that council member Elizabeth Lewis broke the rules when building a home several years ago. So far, there is no indication that the town or the district attorney are planning to investigate the matter.

Finally, looming on the horizon is another potential large payout if the town loses a federal lawsuit filed by resident Jon Buckheit, who alleges that a town police officer falsified a report filed about his 2008 arrest. Charges were never filed, and the question of the police report's falsification came to light in testimony during a court case in which he won a declaration of factual innocence. If his lawsuit is successful, the town's out of pocket legal expenses in the three cases could easily exceed \$1 million.

**EDITORIAL**

*The opinion of The Almanac*

**LETTERS**

*Our readers write*

### City plan would impact Farmers' Market

*Editor:*

Back in the 1990s the economy was in the doldrums and the city of Menlo Park decided it needed to do something to revitalize downtown. So, it proposed to build four parking garages in the downtown area. The idea was rejected by the community and downtown businesses.

Soon after this, five women (four of them local residents and one a downtown property owner) approached the Downtown Study Group and the city to ask for permission to create a farmers' market. The idea was to attract shoppers to the downtown area on Sundays, to shop at the Farmers' Market, then stop for a cup of coffee, a pastry, lunch, to buy groceries, visit the stationary store, and so on. In other words, encourage people to shop downtown while they are there for the Farmers' Market. It has worked.

From the very beginning the Menlo Park Live Oak Lions Club has sponsored the Farmers' Market. We were anxious to ensure we did not compete with existing downtown businesses. This is why we have always stayed away from providing food to eat at the market,



Portola Valley Archives

### Our Regional Heritage

Ohlone expert Mark Hylkema dated this beautiful lance point from 2000 to 800 BC. Found during the excavation of a driveway on Naranja in Portola Valley in the 1970s, an Ohlone would have attached it to a spear and used it for hunting large animals such as tule elk.

as well as other perishable foods such as cheeses and breads.

Now the city again wants to expand building downtown, despite many concerns that reducing available convenient parking will hurt existing businesses and particularly the Sunday Farmers' Market. Who wants the covered market? It will clearly impinge on the Farmers' Market by reducing parking space and making it difficult for the farmers to get in and out of the plaza. Also, the covered market would compete with existing businesses. Is that what Menlo Park residents

want? I think not.

**John Hickson, past president  
Menlo Park Live Oak  
Lions Club and  
active Farmers' Market volunteer**

### Grateful is not the word used here

*Editor:*

I'm responding to the grateful (April 7) letter about Congresswoman Anna Eshoo's vote on health care, a letter that was so full of hot air that it just as well could have come from Rep.

Eshoo's office.

Rep. Eshoo is an elected servant who voted for a bill that a majority of the Americans didn't like. As of right now, only 39 percent of the people like what they see. She and all the Democrats had to use the reconciliation process to vote this bill into being. Special interest groups and lawyers put this 2,000-page mess together. And whatever happened to President Obama's posting of bills on the Internet 48 hours before a vote? A good health-

See **LETTERS**, next page

care bill would sell itself.

I'm also upset at this letter writer's use of the term "fringe elements," like who, the majority of the American people? I would have rather seen a fix of Medicare as a test of competence. Remember, big government makes small citizens.

**Paul Heinemann**  
Laurel Avenue, Menlo Park

### Downtown is just fine the way it is

*Editor:*

Menlo Park is a lovely town. It is why my husband and I have chosen to raise our son here. We enjoy the parks, downtown summer concerts, and street parties.

We love the Sunday morning Farmers' Market. It is our family tradition. We feel comfortable with the quiet and calm feeling as we walk down Santa Cruz Ave, do our shopping and eat at the various restaurants with sidewalk seating.

The city's specific plan that has emerged worries us. We understand change is necessary: upgrading facilities, parking and landscape. However, we feel the current ideas in place will change the feel of Menlo Park. If we wanted a vibrant nightlife and a three-story-plus community, we would have moved near the recently renovated downtown Redwood City. That does not appeal to us.

Our great uncle loves Ann's Coffee Shop. He comes to Menlo Park at lunchtime on Friday and never has trouble finding parking. Blocking off streets with promenades and covered market places will only hurt the evenly distributed parking that exists now.

A garage in the distance is not going to help a senior or mother

## A traffic nightmare for the Peninsula

**By Malcom Dudley**

Cargill's proposed development in Redwood City will have significant adverse impacts upon the Peninsula, both environmental and traffic.

For many years I have worked to insure smart transportation planning throughout the Peninsula, as past chairman of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, past chairman of the San Mateo Regional Planning Committee, and a former mayor of Atherton.

Cargill seeks to support its plan with an argument that it might lead to reduced traffic. They claim that building a new city of 30,000 people in these ponds will improve Bay Area traffic patterns, by comparison to an equivalent number of housing units built in the Central Valley. They point



to the fact that 40,000 people commute into Redwood City to work every day.

The choice for Bay Area and Penins-

ula leaders is not whether to put housing in the Central Valley or to fill the Bay, but whether to follow through on existing planning to encourage smart growth in our downtowns, near existing jobs and transit.

Cargill's developer, however, is being misleading. Few of those who commute into Redwood City are coming from anywhere close to the Central Valley. Most of

these 40,000 commuters are coming from Belmont, San Carlos and other nearby communities. As many as 84 percent of commuters are traveling 30 miles or less.

Cargill's developer fails to mention that, and they promise little more than shared ride-to-work vans as a solution. Instead, future residents of the proposed salt pond development would be driving, because the salt pond housing would be next to Highway 101 at Marsh and Woodside Roads, but well over a mile from Caltrain.

Redwood City staff has made clear that Cargill's proposal is not transit-oriented development, and raises questions about the veracity of the traffic-reduction claims and whether they could ever even be proved. Meanwhile, projections are for over 8,000 new

hourly car trips at rush hour.

At the same time, the Cargill development is a direct threat to the future of the Port of Redwood City, which could lead to many hundreds more trucks transporting material formerly taken off our freeways by ships.

Some people feel we need to build more housing, but this is the wrong location and would create 8,000 new rush hour auto trips on already congested roads and highways, with 85 percent going to destinations other than Redwood City. It would create a traffic nightmare for the Peninsula.

**Malcolm Dudley is a former mayor of Atherton and a former chairman of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority.**

carrying a young child to the one store they want to visit in the opposite direction. If our great uncle can find parking during the highest traffic time, than there is no problem.

We hope there is still time to rethink Menlo Park's future.

**Nora Singer**  
Sterling Avenue, Menlo Park

### No need to change downtown Menlo Park

*Editor:*

I attended the presentation to the Menlo Park Planning Commission by the consultants of the proposed specific plan for downtown Menlo Park on April 13.

While I am firmly against parking structures on our eight parking plazas because of the inconvenience to shoppers and the disruption of business for the retail stores, I was particularly annoyed by the inclusion of the two "covered markets" in the plan.

Why does downtown Menlo Park need more markets? We have the super Safeway on the El Camino, popular Trader Joe's, the firmly established deluxe Draeger's, Naks, the specialty store, the 7-11, and the busy Farmers' Market.

The recommended covered markets are not necessary for two reasons: They will take away business from the existing markets and eliminate 62 sur-

fact parking spaces.

Downtown Menlo Park is beautiful. It has the best selection of retail stores, banks and fine restaurants on the San Francisco Peninsula. Let it be.

**Lee Boucher**  
Downtown property owner

### Private school mom supports Measure C

*Editor:*

I'm a parent of an elementary-age daughter, and although she has always attended a private school, I will absolutely be voting yes on Measure C, the Menlo Park school district's parcel tax.

Providing quality public school education is not something we should be equivocal about: the foundation of a developed society is well-educated citizens. Just as police and fire services are seen as basic infrastructure, so should strong public schools.

The fact that our state government is such a mess that they can't provide this basic service, and that California ranks near the bottom of state spending per student nationwide, shouldn't prevent us from doing the right thing locally. We can provide high quality schools in Menlo Park, and passing this parcel tax will help us do so. Of course, strong schools are good for everyone's property values as well. So please vote yes on Measure C.

**Laura Steuer**  
Felton Drive, Menlo Park

### Measure C needed to maintain schools

*Editor:*

Though our children are in high school and college now, my husband and I maintain an avid interest in our K-8 schools.

We've been following the Mea-

sure C campaign and are endorsing it, yet we are struck by the difference between this measure to benefit local schools and those before it. In the past, we supported efforts to improve Laurel, Encinal, Oak Knoll and Hillview schools. Specifically, we passed taxes to fund smaller class sizes and technology upgrades, as well as dedicated science teachers and reading specialists to support the broad range of students enrolled in our public schools.

In 2010, there is no talk of improving our schools. Today's parents are fighting to preserve essential programs and valued teachers. Their school auctions and annual campaigns aren't raising nearly enough funds to offset the state budget cuts. These parents and other concerned residents have put Measure C before us in the hopes that if homeowners pay \$178 annually for seven years, the district can stop distributing pink slips to bright young teachers and reverse plans to slash art, P.E., library and science programs.

We will vote Yes on Measure C to preserve the gains our schools have made and to help ensure that private schools aren't the only places where local kids can get a first-rate education. It is very gratifying to live in a community where residents can step in to take care of their own when state coffers are inadequate.

**Kim Young and John Moragne**  
Santiago Avenue, Atherton

## City deserves portion of Gateway profits

**By Vincent Bressler**

The proposed Menlo Gateway development adjacent to Bayfront Park at the Bayfront Expressway and Marsh Road would be the largest commercial project in the history of Menlo Park. This proposal includes the creation of a new zoning district and a large increase in zoning entitlement.

As a member of the Planning Commission, I have been given thousands of pages to review for this project. Buried among those pages is a single page, a spreadsheet, from a financial consultant that Menlo Park paid to evaluate the project. This spreadsheet indicates that the Menlo Gateway project will be generating about \$50 million per year in net income starting in 2017, and that the project will be free and clear of debt by 2023.

Some simple calculations indi-



cate that the net income of the same area, fully developed in accordance with existing zoning rules, would be no more than about \$6 million per year. Therefore, the zoning entitlement that Menlo Park is considering for this project is worth \$44 million per year. According to the current term sheet for Menlo Gateway, in return for granting development rights worth \$44 million per year, Menlo Park would get about \$1.4 million per year and a few million in other one-time goodies.

As far as I am concerned, the best legacy that I can give to Menlo Park as a resident and a volunteer on the Planning

Commission is a fair share of the wealth created by the largest zoning action in the history of the city. In this case, I believe that the city is entitled to at least 25 percent of the windfall profits produced by its decision. This would be \$11 million per year, not \$1.4 million per year.

As I have stated in a previous guest opinion, I believe that it is best to structure the development agreement so that Menlo Park receives a share of the gross rents collected on the commercial properties in this development. This fair share could be negotiated so as not to add risk to the project or jeopardize financing. I am suggesting that when and if Mr. Bohannon enjoys his upside, the city of Menlo Park should get their share for making it possible.

**Vince Bressler is a member of the Menlo Park Planning Commission.**

### TOWN SQUARE

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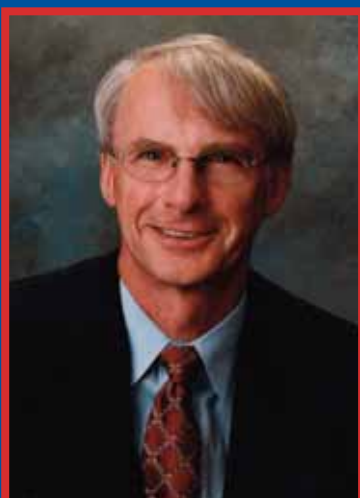
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