

READERS' CHOICE 2010
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The Almanac

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

JUNE 23, 2010 | VOL. 45 NO. 43



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{SEE SECTION 2}

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Ex-major leaguer helps keep softball team in top form

By Michael Abramson

Special to The Almanac

Eric Byrnes walked away from major league baseball, but not the game. While the Portola Valley resident no longer plays in the majors, he's still swinging the bat and knocking the ball around and out of the park.

The only real difference is that Byrnes no longer faces major league pitching, nor does he play in AT&T Park or Coors Field or Yankee Stadium.

These days, Byrnes, 34, is playing slow-pitch softball for the Dutch Goose. To no one's surprise, opposing pitchers have been no match for recently retired Byrnes, who was cut by the Arizona Diamondbacks in January and picked up by the Seattle Mariners. In May, he was cut by the Mariners two days after missing a suicide squeeze bunt in a 2-0 loss.

Byrnes announced at that time he was done with baseball after 11 years, but that he would be playing softball -- and get paid doing it. Byrnes reportedly will be paid \$11 million this season, \$10.6 million by the Diamondbacks and \$400,000 by the Mariners. That's not a bad retirement package.

Upon returning home, Byrnes decided to join the Dutch Goose



Photo by Michael Abramson

Eric Byrnes loads up before driving a ball off the center field fence for a double.

softball team and has been nearly non-stoppable since. He had three hits in his latest game, against the Barnes Brawlers, including a double off the wall and a towering three-run home run in the bottom

of the last inning to pull his team within one.

While one might have certain preconceived notions about the talent level and semi-competitive nature of slow-pitch softball,

watching the Dutch Goose team play quickly dismisses these stereotypes. Byrnes is joined by athletes such as Stanford grad John Gall,

See BYRNES, page 13

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 CITY PROJECT NUMBER 70-057**

The City of Menlo Park invites qualified contractors to submit sealed bid proposals for the construction of the PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE SAFE ROUTES TO LAUREL SCHOOL PROJECT. Work required as part of this project consists of, in general, installing electronic speed feedback displays, installing traffic signs, installing traffic striping and markings, constructing asphalt concrete pathways, constructing asphalt concrete dikes, constructing Portland cement concrete valley gutter, sidewalk, and handicapped ramp, installing in-pavement lighted crosswalk systems, installing street lights, and installing pedestrian countdown signal heads; and all appurtenant work in place and ready for use at various locations in the City of Menlo Park; all as shown on the plans and described in the specifications. Performance of this work requires a valid California Contractor's License Class A. The UDBE contract goal for the project is 3.8%. The DBE contract goal for the project is 9.2%. Project documents and copies of the prevailing rate of wages can be obtained from the Menlo Park Transportation Division, located in the Administrative Building at 701 Laurel St. Sealed bid proposals will be received at the Transportation Division office until 2 p.m. on THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2010, at which time they will be opened and publicly read. Additional information can be obtained on the City's website: www.menlopark.org/cip

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Big decision on Bohannon in hands of the voters

■ Menlo Park residents have been reading and hearing about the Bohannon Development Co.'s "Menlo Gateway" project for years. It isn't over yet, as the project heads to the November ballot.

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

Whether or not there's a contested City Council election this fall, Menlo Park voters can expect to be subjected to plenty of campaigning before then.

In part, they can thank the council itself, which at its June 15 meeting voted 4-1 to approve the Bohannon (Menlo Gateway) development project, subject to a citywide vote. A simple majority will be all that's required to grant the necessary approvals to the Bohannon Development

Co. for the office/hotel project, a nearly million-square-foot development near Bayfront Expressway and Marsh Road.

The project will join on the ballot a voter-led initiative aimed at scaling back public pension benefits for new city employees. The council is also considering asking residents to increase the city's tax rate on hotel guests.

The council made the decision on Menlo Gateway with the support of both the Bohannon Development Co. and several prominent opponents of the project, amid fears that

a voter-initiated referendum effort could put the project in limbo for up to a year. The council members did so despite concerns that failing to approve the project themselves would make them appear weak and exacerbate their reputation, deserved or not, for delay and indecision.

"I don't believe that every single thing should go on the ballot, nor do I think it makes you a 'weenie' if you put something on the ballot, knowing that you could be causing the city to lose the benefits of something that you would otherwise get," former council member Gail Slocum said at the meeting, warning that a drawn-out referendum campaign could somehow jeopardize the project. "It doesn't make any sense

for someone who supports this project to oppose something that could help save it."

Councilman John Boyle, the lone dissenter in the vote despite his avowed support for the project, said that putting it to a popular vote would turn a complicated land-use decision into a political campaign — one that could damage current council members in the upcoming election, where three of five seats will be up for grabs, including Mr. Boyle's.

"This will be spun as, 'The council was unsure of their decision, and wanted to send it to the public,'" Mr. Boyle said, adding that the decision put the council on a "slippery slope" in not asking residents to vote on other issues. "This will turn into a very political debate, with

lots of slogans and over-simplifications. The opportunity for oversimplification or confusion is enormous."

Mr. Boyle argued that the issue — the subject of hundreds of pages of studies and a slew of public meetings — was too complex for the average voter to grasp.

Councilman Heyward Robinson said he thought residents won't have any trouble grasping the basic issues in play, and said that it will be the city's job to help educate voters in the run-up to the election. He noted that the city will craft the pro-ballot argument, but said he doesn't think Mr. Boyle should be allowed input in writing it, because of his vote against send-

See **BOHANNON**, page 8

Woodside man arrested as murder suspect in wife's death

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Authorities have arrested and jailed Woodside resident Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh on suspicion of murder in the April 13 shooting death of his wife, Parima Parineh, in the couple's home at 50 Fox Hill Road.

Mr. Parineh, 64, was arrested in Sunnyvale at about 3 p.m. Thursday, June 17, and later booked into the Maguire Correctional Facility in Redwood City, according to a statement from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Parineh is the only suspect, Detective Sergeant Bryan Raffaelli told The Almanac.

Medics found Ms. Parineh dead in the couple's bedroom with no signs in the house of forced entry. She was 56 and had

been shot several times, Lt. Ray Lunny said. Mr. Parineh told authorities that his wife had shot herself, police said.

After an autopsy, investigators dismissed the suicide allegation and determined that Ms. Parineh had been murdered. The evidence and other information discovered in the investigation led to Mr. Parineh being a prime suspect, Lt. Lunny said.

Anyone with information about the case is asked to contact Detective Hector Acosta at 363-4084 or Detective Saul Lopez at 363-4347. To make an anonymous report, call (800) 547-2700. ■



Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh

Former Woodside resident killed

The man who was shot and killed in Hillsborough on June 15 has been identified by Hillsborough police as Christopher Calvache, 30, formerly of Woodside.

Mr. Calvache had at least one gunshot wound and was pronounced dead at the scene. A single handgun was found at the site, police said.

Hillsborough police received a 911 call reporting the shooting

just after 6 p.m. on June 15.

Bradley Kleiman, 30, was taken into custody following the incident. Mr. Calvache was visiting Mr. Kleiman, a long-time friend, at home when the shooting occurred, police said.

Mr. Calvache grew up in Woodside but was living in San Francisco, police said. He had a Woodside post office box number, according to the San Mateo County Coroner's Office.



Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

An employee at Cafe Silan at 867 Santa Cruz Ave. wipes up after water from a broken pipe caused extensive water damage to the restaurant and retailers on either side of it.

Downtown fire closes three businesses

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Fire investigators are looking at the area around an attic vent for a wood-burning pizza oven as the cause of a June 16 fire that has closed three retailers that shared a one-story building in downtown Menlo Park.

Santa Cruz Avenue retailers Cafe Silan, The Book Rack and

Posh Bagels have been shut by order of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, Chief Harold Schapelhouman said. Electric power to the building is off, he said.

The power outage also disrupted business at Kicks shoe store on Evelyn Street behind Posh Bagels, but Kicks may resume normal operations soon if its electric power can be isolated from the rest of the

building, Chief Schapelhouman said.

The 911 call came in at 5:07 p.m., a second alarm went out at 5:13 and the fire was under control by 5:47, Chief Schapelhouman said. The fire drew about 45 firefighters from Menlo Park, Woodside and Redwood City.

The fire is believed to have

See **DOWNTOWN FIRE**, page 8

Woodside celebrates with tradition

Eighth-graders at Woodside Elementary School kept the school's graduation tradition when all 37 took part in the school's 52nd annual eighth-grade operetta — this year, "Grease" — and received diplomas in the school's amphitheater June 11.

Commencement exercises began with the Woodside School Band, directed by Beth Dameron, playing the processional, and eighth-graders Teal Anne Kurnie and Austin Warren Robert Merrill giving the student addresses. Wesley Armand Miller and Gabrielle Adrienne Couch led the salute to the flag and the singing of the National Anthem.

Diana Abbati, superintendent/principal, welcomed

GRADUATION 2010

parents, guests and students before the eighth-grade speakers gave their talks.

Student speakers gave the following talks: Jennifer Marie Werner, "Woodside"; Heather Magrin, "Attitude"; Christine Ann Alftin, accompanied by Andrew Lawrence Wilkinson, "Where We Gonna Go From Here"; Annie McIntosh Kingman, "Accepting Yourself"; and Alanna Guillen McNaughton, "Good Choices."

The Class of 2010 chose as its class song and sang "On My Way," with music and lyrics by Phil Collins.

Charlene Douty gave the

commencement address.

Steve Frank, assistant principal, presented the Class of 2010 to Trustees Bettina Pike and Ellen Ablow, who awarded the diplomas.

Graduates

A-C Christine Ann Alftin, Eric Robert Arvisson, William Douglas Ballinger, Victor Baron, Matthew Ryan Bartels, Gabrielle Adrienne Couch

D-K Bradley James Degnan, Jordan Gomez, Tristan John Hanley, Trevor William Hernstadt, Abigail Halford Jorgensen, Jon Ignatius Kazanyian II, Annie McIntosh Kingman, Teal Anne Kurnie

L-M Colin Madden Lehr, Heather Magrin, Robert Magrin, Alanna Guillen McNaughton, Justin Daniel Mendes, Austin Warren Robert Merrill, Wesley Armand Miller

N-R Christina Lin Ngo, Christina Nicole Patton, James Eric Power, Vaughn Gerald Proctor IV, Spencer Jessie Reed, Gianna Gabrielle Rosati, John Sullivan Russell



Photo by Lori Wilkinson

All of Woodside's eighth-graders took part in staging the elementary school's 52nd annual eighth-grade operetta, "Grease," the week before graduation. They carried on the tradition started by the late George Sellman when he came to Woodside School in 1958 as the eighth-grade teacher.

S-W Benjamin James Smith, Sebastian Bai Yong Song, Olivia Mercedes De Nardi Stangvik, Aaron Jeffrey Taing, Alexander Tehin, Alexander Marcelo

Triveno, Jennifer Marie Werner, Andrew Lawrence Wilkinson

Marjorie Mader compiled these graduation stories.



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Atherton: Decision on management salaries delayed

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

The Atherton City Council has delayed a decision to adjust salaries for middle management staff under a proposal that would have fixed the salaries at the 70th percentile in relation to other specified towns and cities in the area.

The item was pulled from the June 16 council agenda, and the matter will return to the employee bargaining unit, said Mayor Kathy McKeithen. She said the council decided to pull the item from the agenda during

a closed session meeting before the regular meeting.

Ms. McKeithen said she couldn't discuss why the council delayed action on the proposal because labor negotiations are confidential.

The adjustments were scheduled to go into effect in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1. Employees affected by the proposed adjustment include the police chief, the assistant city manager, the public works director, the planning administrator and the building official.

The proposed agreement would have guaranteed salary adjustments

through 2012-13.

The cities and towns used to formulate the range of salaries to determine the 70 percentile target are: Menlo Park, Hillsborough, Millbrae, San Carlos, Los Gatos, Belmont, Brisbane, San Bruno, Los Altos, Woodside, and Saratoga.

The staff report did not include the fiscal impact of the proposed salary adjustments because the town won't be able to determine the specific salaries for several months, after other cities in the comparison group determine their managers' salaries, according to Ms. McKeithen.

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Atherton attorney: Lewis house not legally compliant, but no action needed

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

ATHERTON

The word from Atherton's town attorney is in: The size of Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis' house exceeds the town's zoning ordinance by about 129 square feet; she should not have been allowed to demolish and rebuild the portion of the house that was "nonconforming" because it was too close to the property lines under existing law; and the blame for those violations of the ordinance lies with the former building official, so no action by the town should be taken in the matter.

That summary by attorney Wynne Furth was submitted to the town June 15, ending a review of the question of whether the Lewis house at Alejandra and Emilie avenues was built lawfully, but not squelching criticism that the review was done internally rather than by an outside, independent investigator.

The summary is in the form of a four-page memorandum

with two lengthy attachments that include copies of permits; a Planning Commission approval for a project, dated June 2000, that did not include the demolition of the nonconforming portion of the house; and a June 14, 2010, memo from Deputy Planner Lisa Costa Sanders stating that, because the building department later approved the tear-down of that portion, the house construction was not in compliance "with the plans approved by the Planning Commission."

In her memo, Ms. Furth notes that the building official who approved the plans, Mike Hood, is no longer with the town, and building plans are now reviewed by the planning department for zoning compliance before they undergo plan check for building code compliance.

If the Lewis house plans had been reviewed by the planning department for zoning compliance in 2002, she wrote, a num-

ber of elements would not have been allowed, including allowing the portion of the house that was too close to the property lines to be rebuilt in the same footprint. Also, she said, the allowable area for building would have been calculated differently, and "a reduction in area required."

The Lewis house, which was signed off by the building department in March 2006, has been the subject of public criticism by some residents since Ms. Lewis launched her campaign for a council seat in 2008.

After a recent public renewal in the push for the town to act on the allegations that the house was too big for the property and that it violated building law, Mayor Kathy McKeithen requested that the town hire an independent investigator to settle the matter once and for all.

Ms. Furth and City Manager Jerry Gruber decided to conduct the review in-house instead.

John Beckett, former president of Transamerica Corp.

John R. (Jack) Beckett, president and chairman of the board of Transamerica Corp. from 1960 to 1983, died June 17. He was 92.

He resided in Atherton for 55 years.

Mr. Beckett was instrumental in choosing what was at the time a radical design for the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco, steering it through a controversial permitting process, and overseeing its construction, said his daughter Belinda Beckett.

During his tenure at Transamerica, the company owned motion picture distributor United Artists, Transamerica Airline, Budget Rent-a-Car Company and De Laval Turbine, in addition to Occidental Life Insurance and Transamerica's many other insurance and financial services.

A native of San Francisco, he received two degrees from Stanford University, a bachelor's

OBITUARY

degree in 1939 and a master's in economics in 1940.

"He loved to play and compose music for the piano and liked nothing better than to end each day 'tinkling the ivories' with lovely music," she said. "He was an avid tennis player and a voracious reader."

He served on the boards of many civic organizations, including the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the Museum of Modern Art and the San Francisco Symphony. He served as president of the board of the Crystal Springs Uplands School, and served a year as chairman of the San Francisco



John Beckett

Bay Area United Crusade.

He was chairman and a member of the U.S. State Department's Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee on International Business Problems from 1968 to 1974.

Mr. Beckett was preceded in death by his first wife, Dian Calkin Beckett.

He is survived by his wife of 41 years, Marjorie Beckett of Atherton; daughters Brenda Beckett of Friday Harbor, Washington, and Belinda Beckett of Sacramento; stepsons Ted of Los Angeles and Donald Abenheim of Menlo Park; and granddaughters Diana Beckett-Hile of Mill Valley and Sarah Beckett-Hile of San Francisco.

No services are planned.

The family suggests gifts in his memory be made to Dr. Michael Fowler's Heart Failure Research at Stanford University, Salk Building Room 295, 300 Pasteur Drive, Stanford, CA 94305.

Two BBC employees arrested for allegedly groping customers

Two employees of the British Bankers Club, a restaurant/bar on El Camino Real in Menlo Park, have been arrested on suspicion of sexual assault.

Moises Rojas, 26, of Sunnyvale and Juan Gustavo Robles-

Alejo, 29, of Redwood City, are accused of groping two inebriated women at the restaurant on June 15, Menlo Park police said. The incident was caught on video surveillance, police said.

Police ask anyone who has

observed or been a victim of similar incidents at the BBC, or anyone who witnessed this incident, to call detective Ed Soares at 799-9459.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Back-Up Offers

Q: The perfect house came on the market but went into contract before I had a chance to make an offer. Do you think it would be a good idea to make a back-up offer?

A: It is always disappointing when a property you really like sells before you have a chance to submit an offer. If there are contingencies with the accepted or primary offer, such as for inspections and financing, there is a chance that these contingencies will not be removed and the property will be available again. If you are in a back-up contract, this means that the seller has accepted your offer in second position and will be obligated to sell to you if the primary contract falls through. Being

in back-up position means that you are assured of being the buyer if the first buyer backs out. You can also cancel the contract if another property comes on the market that you want to buy.

Once in awhile it happens that knowing there is back-up contract makes the primary contract buyer stay in contract when he/she might otherwise have not removed contingencies. The psychology is that if a buyer knows that someone else really wants the property, it becomes even more attractive. This would certainly work against you if it happened. However, if this is the property you really want, a back-up contract seems the best way for you to get it under the circumstances.

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. www.MonicaCorman.com

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Bohannon project decision now in hands of the voters

BOHANNON

continued from page 5

ing it to the ballot.

"I hope we get a very clear and very clear vote that really is on the merits of this, and less on the personalities and politics," he said in an interview. "Let's focus on the known impacts, and the known benefits."

Representatives of the development company feel confident their campaign will prevail. A poll the company commissioned showed that 64 percent of "likely voters" in the November election would support it. If the company saturated the city enough with its message that the project will bring in money for the city and schools (never mind that much of the money would go to school districts outside Menlo Park), its passage would be a "slam dunk," according to the pollster.

Of course, the marketing campaign has already been on for months. The Bohannon company has run a website for the project, sent out periodical "e-newsletters," and placed several full-page newspaper ads in *The Almanac*. The development company has retained Public Affairs, a marketing firm helmed by Ed McGovern, to spread its message.

"We don't have details about

specific tactics, but we do fully intend to continue getting our message out to the community," said Patrick Corman, who handles the company's public relations efforts. Mr. Corman and developer David Bohannon have defended the company's communication work in general, saying it was aimed at stimulating thoughtful dialogue about the project. Project opponents have derided those efforts as a big-money marketing campaign.

Some of those opponents said they would welcome the council placing the project on the ballot.

"There are times when popular democracy is not a dereliction of duty or a weakness," Chuck Bernstein wrote in an e-mail to the council. "This is one of them."

Still, "campaign fatigue" is a concern, Mr. Robinson said.

"I was totally burned out by the June election," he said. I was sitting (at the council meeting) going, 'God, do I want to contribute to that?'"

But he argued that placing the project on the November ballot was better than the alternative of an even more drawn-out campaign, in the event of a referendum vote.

"We need to make a decision and be done with it, one way or the other," he said at the meeting. ■

DOWNTOWN FIRE

continued from page 5

started around Cafe Silan's vent/flue as it passed through the attic. The flue may have partially blocked a 12-inch-to-18-inch area from the effect of the sprinkler water and allowed the fire to get a bit bigger, the chief said. Further inspection is coming.

There were no injuries and about \$100,000 in property damage, most of it from water cascading down and behind the walls of the three stores that front Santa Cruz Avenue, he said.

Fire inspectors removed part of the roof the next day and found that things could have been much worse. "We opened the patient, we took a look, we (found) a lot more problems that we thought," the chief said.

Hidden under the roof was a bowstring truss, an unreliable wooden-beam support structure that was out of sprinkler range and that the fire had "significantly damaged," he said.

A bow truss, as it's called, is "very unforgiving (and) can

collapse without warning and collapse catastrophically," Chief Schapelhouman said. "This type of construction has killed a lot of firefighters over the years."

Sprinklers, he added, are instrumental in protecting firefighters by protecting the supporting structures. "That's my biggest fear, losing a firefighter," he said.

This building dates from the middle of the last century, the chief said, and so its age and the damaged truss will complicate its return to service. It will need new sheetrock on the walls and ceilings and new wiring.

The truss will also require an exam by a professional engineer, he said. It may need to be replaced, which would trigger building permits. The three retailers "will be closed for an extensive period of time," he said.

Although Kicks was not damaged, people came in off the street and from neighboring stores to help owner Lee Murphy move her goods out.

"When you see strangers helping each other, that reconstitutes your faith in humanity," the



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Daniel Collins follows dance instructor Monica Mark during a dance class at Studio Rincon in West Menlo Park.

Fitness and dancing star at Studio Rincon

By Jane Knoerle

Almanac Lifestyles Editor

Their own children were the inspiration for Studio Rincon, the new yoga, dance and fitness studio, which opened recently at 3536 Alameda de las Pulgas in Menlo Park, say Bill and Kathy Petrin.

"Our inspiration derived from the passion our three boys have towards music, dancing and performing," says Mr. Petrin. The boys, Logan 10, Dylan 5, and Kalin 2, love to "put on a show," right down to making the tickets, say their parents. Logan has been taking dance since he was 4, Dylan since he was 2.

"We found our children gain confidence, have better focus in school, and have such a great overall time on the dance floor," says Mr. Petrin, whose children are in the Las Lomas School District.

Studio Rincon offers much

more than dance for kids. It features a packed schedule of classes for adults and children, ranging from Anusara yoga to hip hop for all ages, adult core and cardio fitness, and ballet.

Highlight classes at the studio include: "YogaRok," "Zumba," "TapHop," and "Drench" cardio hip hop. For those of us hopelessly out of touch, "YogaRok" is traditional yoga poses combined with music from the hip hop, rock and pop worlds. "Zumba" fuses Latin rhythms with easy-to-follow moves and is offered at the studio three times a week.

"TapHop" classes for all ages begin with choreographed hip hop dancing, followed by tap lessons to hip hop music. "Drench" cardio hip hop is a workout with hip hop dance steps.

No previous dance experience is necessary to join the classes. While the ages of 5 to 8 are consid-

ered ideal for children to try new things, there are "Mommy & Me" dance and yoga classes with toddlers as young as 18 months. Yoga, ladies jazz night, cardio workouts, and salsa night appeal to a variety of adult interests.

The Petrins say they have wanted a business close to home and, since both are into fitness and their kids are into dance, an exercise and dance studio seemed a natural fit. They haven't quit their day jobs, however. He is a software engineer. She is co-owner of Kingfish restaurant in San Mateo, with her brother, Robert Kirkbride.

The Petrins like the idea of being part of the growing number of local businesses in the West Menlo Park community, including Lulu's on the Alameda and The Mix frozen yogurt shop. "We live just a mile from the studio. This (The Alameda) is our route," says Cathy Petrin. ■

chief said.

A lot of water

The Santa Cruz Avenue businesses had puddles on the floors. In The Book Rack, firefighters had covered bookshelves with thick plastic sheeting to protect them from the cascading water. Initially, firefighters thought that the attic sprinklers had not shut off for unknown reasons.

The next day's inspection revealed that the sprinklers had shut off correctly but that the fire, in an area not sprinkled, had heated a copper water pipe and melted a solder joint, the chief said. The pipe separated and the water inside then poured out and went on to soak the first floors. ■

Mike's Cafe wins Little League city championship game

Jackson Salabert's run-scoring single in the bottom of the fifth inning held up for the deciding tally as Mike's Cafe posted a 2-1 victory over Partners in the Menlo Park Little League City Championships game on a cold Friday evening June 18 at Burgess Park.

The victory ended a four-year run by Alpine/West Menlo teams in the finals.

Both Salabert and Kodiak Conrad of Partners struck out 10. Conrad was staked to a 1-0 lead when Andrew Cox walked and took second on a wild pitch. Max Gardiner then doubled home Cox.

Conrad kept Mike's Cafe off the

board the first three innings as he struck out seven. He gave up just an infield single during that time.

Mike's finally broke through in the fourth when Jack Gray homered over the fence in left field. Reed Fratt hit a ground-rule double over the fence in center field later in the inning but was stranded.

Mike's Cafe got two runners on in the fifth via walks, setting up Salabert's game-winning single. It was one of only four hits by Mike's, winner of the Menlo-Atherton Little League title. Partners managed just three hits off Salabert. Neither team committed an error.

— Palo Alto Weekly



Photo by Marjorie Mader/The Almanac

Hillview eighth-graders overwhelmingly chose their former principal, Mike Moore, second from right, to be the adult speaker at their graduation June 11. From left are eighth-graders Pauli King, Jack Ferguson, Josh Weiner, Royce Branning, Maddie Rostami and Hannah Mazonson.

Hillview graduates move on to high school

Hillview Middle School's 226 eighth-graders graduated June 11 with traditional pomp, ceremony, and rousing applause from the families, teachers and guests seated on the Menlo Park school's blacktop.

Former principal Mike Moore, who retired last year, was the overwhelming choice of the Class of 2010 for the adult speaker.

Principal Mike Melton, new to Hillview this year, spoke, then presented the eighth-graders to their core teachers, who presented the diplomas.

The four students chosen as graduation speakers to represent their class were Evelyn Vaughan, Kindle Van Linge, Scott Crowe and Annalise Deal.

The Hillview Concert Band, directed by Richard Vaughan, performed a pre-ceremony concert and the traditional processional, "Pomp and Circumstance," and the recessional, "Legacy March."

For the 24th consecutive year, the Jeff Sorrells Memorial Award, a \$2,000 scholarship, was presented to an eighth-grader. Mathew Gichane-Bell, the winner this year, will use the college scholarship in four years upon graduation from high school. This award was established by the Sorrells family in honor of their son, who was a student at Hillview.

A reception for graduates and guests was hosted by the seventh-grade parents immediately after

GRADUATION

the ceremony, then the graduates celebrated at the traditional grad night party, sponsored by their parents and held in the school's multi-use room.

Graduates

A LucyAron, Rebecca Abramowitz, Anne Albright, Rosa Alcazar, Kailin Ambwani, Erik Amundson, Anthony Andrighetto, Wesley Arrington, Andrew Aufdemberge

B Forrest Baffico, Veronica Barraza, Jake Barry, Toni Marie Battaglia, Matthew Bercow, Leo Berez, Thomas Berquist, Manojna Bhamidi, Christopher Blank, Michael Boggs, Christopher Bower, Coral Brady, Royce Branning, Hans Brouwer, Oliver Bucka

C Leland Callahan, Murphy Callender, Samuel Calvert, William Carhart, Ernesto Carriel, Marcos Casillas, Sarina Chaiken, Samuel Crookston Herschlag, Scott Crowe, Caroline Cummings

D Samson Dark, Rory Davidson, William Davis, Annalise Deal, Lauren Delgado, Tess Dignum, Olivia Dobberstein, Maxwell Dobson

E-F Kelley Eason, Dylan Esperance, Mark Evans, Jesse Fajardo, Nicholas Fantuzzi, Jack Ferguson, Tameem Fezzani, Sarah Fishback, Salvatore Florese, Connor Foody, Nicholas Fratt, Rachel Freed

G Rico Garcia, Eleanor Geballe, Mathew Gichane-Bell, Maxwell Goldman, Robert Gordan, Samantha Gottuso, Nikhil Goyle, Jenna Griffin, Emily Grose, Ismael Guerrero, Rose Gurman, Michael Guthrie

H Thomas Hallesy, Michael Hansen, Emma Heath, Zachary Heatley, Helmi Henkin, Samantha Henze, Dimitri Herr, Yuri Hesselink, Nicholas Hidalgo, Christopher Hinrichs, Jonathan Hirsch, Alyssa Holman, Meghan Hom, William Hooper, Lisanne Horwitz, Catalina Huerta, Scott Hurn, Amanda Hutchison

I-J Luis Ibarra, Nicholas Imbert, Elizabeth Inman, Nicholas Ivy, Paul Iwashita, Ben Jaitin, Alejandro Jimenez, Thomas Johnson, Ursula Jongebloed

K-L Lindsay Karle, Arian Kashani, Noah Kawasaki, Brian Keare, Katie Kelly, Megan Kilduff, Paulina King, Sabrina Kinney,

Cameron Kirkpatrick, Kimberly Klustner, Nathan Koeten, John Kremer, Brandon Kurtz, Megan Kurtz, Marissa Lai, Jonathan Lam, Nicholas Landolfi, Virginia Lane, Mattias Lange-

McPherson, Alexander Lazich, Liviera, Leebong

M Christopher Macrae, Noah Malkary, Kevin Maravilla, Josue Marroquin, Hannah Mazonson, Duncan McGinnis, Iain McKelvey, Deverick Meacham, Linus Meyer-Teruel, Lauren Mohrman, Julio Montesinos, Sofia Montoya, Mariah Moore, Josue Moreno, Scott Morris, Cyrus Mostofi, Ryan Mostofi, Nicole Mouchawar, Amanda Muir

N-O Andrew Naclerio, Lauren Nathan, Josef Navigato, Andrew Nisbet, Michael Noel, Tera Noguchi, Caleb O'Neel, Elizabeth Ocon, Andrew Olson, Gregor Oppenheimer, Jonathan Oppenheimer, Stephanie Ossesia

P Jordan Packer, Spiro Papadakis, Anton Paquin, Katherine Patch, Justin Paulin, Jorge Peraza, David Perez, Naria Perez, Kendall Peters, Amanda Plante, Zachary Plante, Daniel Propp

R Havens Ratchye Cybele Reed, Margot Richard, Ryan Roberts, David Robinson, Kennyetta Robinson, Brenda Rodriguez, Annika Roise, Madeleine Rostami, Robert Roth

S Jonathan Sandoval, Tori Scherba, Nicholas Schlein, Noah Schneider, Neil Schott, Harrison Shane, Elizabeth Shelton, Jonathan Simonian, Komal Singh, Aditya Sinha, Kori Smith, Morgan Smith-Boeck, Eric Snyder, Kurt Songer, Lisa Sorlie, Sophia Spurlock, Cayla Stillman, Julia Stoner, Samuel Stroud, Eve Sutton, Beatrice Suveica

T-V Christopher Tam, Patrick Tam, Arianna Tamaddon, Jesse Taylor, Valerie Taylor, Natavia Thomas, Rachel Thurber, Eric Timmerman, Karina Torres, Naomi Tovar, Alexander Valiante, Samantha Van Dyke, Kindle Van Linge, Michael Vann, Evelyn Vaughan, Thomas Veenhuyzen, Megan Vu-Phan

W-Z William Walecka, Nathaniel Walker, Anders Ward, Hailey Warren, Griffin Waymire, Joshua Weiner, Austin Wensko, Nathaniel Westfield, Nora Wijmans, Jackson Williams, Sabrina Williams, Lisa Willis, Austin Wilson, Kenneth Wright, Jaden Yamasaki, Ryan Young, Ellie Zales, Nicole Zanolli, Jacob Zarling, Capri Zelaya, Jordan Zuk

— Marjorie Mader.

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Deirdre Clark and Steve Marra, co-chairs of the town's sponsoring Cultural Arts Committee, invite people to bring a picnic supper, beverage of choice, blanket and lawn chair.

'Music Night' Friday in Portola Valley

Music lovers are invited to come to Portola Valley Town Center at 765 Portola Road on Friday, June 25, for "Music Night" on the town's green from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

This free event features a

17-piece big band playing instrumental and vocal arrangements by Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Cole Porter, and Ira and George Gershwin. Vocalist Paige Fulkerson, a Portola Valley resident,

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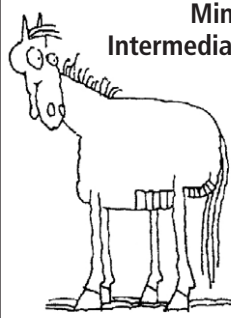
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Where will your kids be this summer?



Photo by Dave Boyce

The top of this SUV on Alpine Road is at the level of the elevated trail that runs under the tree and alongside the fence.

Impasse brewing over Alpine Road trail

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The scene is the Alpine Trail, a high, narrow, rocky path running along the south side of Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

Heading east on bicycles are a couple of students from Corte Madera Middle School. They're on their way to the Alpine Hills Swim & Tennis Club for after-school lessons and are using the trail to avoid the heavy and dangerous vehicle traffic on the road, which is a few feet to the left and steeply lower by as much as 10 or 12 feet.

Heading west on the trail are two people on horses.

The cyclists and equestrians meet. A dicey situation at best. Unpleasantness may follow.

The uphill side of this 0.9-mile stretch of trail is fenced pasture; the other side is unfenced with near vertical drops to the road. If a horse spooks, there's nowhere for it to go, said equestrian Ellie Ferrari, who recently walked this trail with her fellow Trails Committee members.

To prevent such scenarios, a majority on the Trails Committee does not want to see bicycles on this trail. "We suggested that it was not the right mix," Ms. Ferrari said in an interview.

But a coalition of town residents interested in "safe routes to school" want bikes and kids on this trail. Students cross just one street — Los Trancos Road — to get to the club to be

picked-up or to have a snack or a lesson.

Kids are taking that route already, but they're using the bike lane rather than the trail, perhaps because the small rocks interfere with the wheels on their book bags, Councilman Ted Driscoll said recently.

When asked to comment on a spooked horse having nowhere to go, Mr. Driscoll said in an interview: "I guess that's true. In the end, there's

Can students on bikes co-exist with equestrians?

going to be a conflict if we end up using our trails as a commute opportunity for our kids" and for equestrian recreation. "That's a problem we're going to face in the future and I'm not sure what the solution is," he said.

At the June 9 Town Council meeting, Mr. Driscoll recommended giving the Trails Committee some attention to "see if that advisory body is giving us the advice we need."

There may be 100 horses in town, Mr. Driscoll told The Almanac, but there are 1,000 kids. (For the record, Portola Valley has 740 enrolled students and 249 registered horses, according to officials.)

Biking students, Ms. Ferrari pointed out, can use the paved trail on the north side of Alpine Road. But that route has them crossing Alpine Road twice, Councilwoman Maryann Derwin said in an interview.

Equestrians should simply avoid the south-side trail during times when students are likely to be on it, Ms. Derwin said.

Since August, a task force has met four times to explore ways to get families to stop driving kids to school and have them bike or walk instead. It would also help the town toward its stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Members of the Trails and Traffic committees were invited to the task force meetings, and two Trails members came to one, Planning Manager Leslie Lambert told The Almanac. Chris Buja, the Traffic Committee chair, said he has been too busy starting a company to attend.

The tentative plan is to have a "safe routes" program ready by September, Ms. Lambert said.

An ad hoc committee composed of a broad cross-section of town residents will work toward that goal.

The town has turned to six such committees in the last five years, according to Assistant Town Manager Janet McDougall. The groups have addressed matters such as dogs on the Coalmine Ridge trail system, an upgrade to Triangle Park, and the best use of the Spring Down property. ■

Explosive device detonated behind school

A "homemade explosive device" was detonated at around 10 p.m. Wednesday, June 16, in a grass field directly behind La Entrada Middle School at 2200 Sharon Road in Menlo Park, Sgt. William A. Dixon of the Menlo Park Police Department reported.

"There were no reported injuries or substantial property damage resulting from the detonation of the device," Sgt. Dixon said in a statement.

A 17-year-old juvenile, a resident of unincorporated Menlo Park, admitted to detonating the device in the grass field, police said. The juvenile, whose name was not released, was charged with possession and detonation of an explosive device.

Police and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office bomb squad searched the juvenile's home and found no other explosive devices or materials used to

make such devices, police said. The San Mateo County Crime Laboratory helped gather evidence at the scene.

Police ask anyone with information about this incident to call Officer Swanson at 330-6300 or the anonymous tip line, 330-6395.

Boxer 'office hours' in Portola Valley

Anyone with a problem associated with a federal agency will have an opportunity to discuss it in Portola Valley on Friday, June 25, with a staff member from the office of U.S. Senator

Barbara Boxer, D-California. The staff member will be in the Buckeye Room at Town Center, 765 Portola Road, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. according to Ms. Boxer's office.

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Portola Valley, Woodside pay \$216,000 each for second patrol by deputy sheriff

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The cost to the town of Portola Valley of sharing with Woodside a second daytime patrol by a deputy sheriff — about \$216,000 per town per year — is perplexing to one volunteer on Portola Valley's Finance Committee, and now the Town Council and town manager are curious about it, too.

"It just seems exorbitantly expensive. It's hard to understand this kind of expense," volunteer William Urban told the council at a 2010-11 budget review on June 9. (Mr. Urban is a co-principal with the Bay Area wealth management firm Bingham, Osborn & Scarborough, LLC.)

The net cost this year per town for the second patrol from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office is about \$116,000; an annual state grant covers the other \$100,000, town managers from both towns have said.

Portola Valley is entering its second year of a three-year public safety contract, and paying a total of \$764,000 for 2010-11, an increase of

10 percent over last year's \$697,000, according to the budget. The contract includes another 10 percent raise for 2011-12.

"The (extra patrol) numbers do raise a question," Mayor Steve Toben said. "We need to give it a hard look."

Portola Valley's balanced general fund budget is \$3.8 million, with a reserve of about \$2.6 million. The council will likely hold a public hearing and vote on the budget at its June 23 meeting.

Revenues include \$591,000 from Stanford University, part of a \$2.8 million outlay from Stanford for redoing the roadside trail that runs for 1.2 miles along Alpine Road from the Ladera Oaks Swim and Tennis Club to Arastradero Road.

The trail work is part of an agreement Stanford has with Santa Clara County to offset the environmental impact of about 5 million square feet of planned new construction on campus.

Significant expenses for Portola Valley's next 12 months include \$700,000 from dedicated reserves to resurface streets, \$70,000 from the Open Space Fund to start improvements at the Spring Down open

space, \$170,000 to start a five-phase program to replace and repair the town's storm drains, and \$40,000 to improve lighting at Town Center.

"Modest" salary increases are coming to employees who have been there for a couple of years with no raises, Town Manager Angela Howard said.

Town revenues are expected to rise a bit. The council in December — citing the high quality of the soccer and baseball fields, steadily increasing irrigation costs, and unusually low fees to begin with — increased user fees. The budget shows a projected \$5,000 in revenues, a 150 percent rise from the \$2,000 in 2009-10.

Projected building permit revenues are up 22 percent. "Building activity has been very robust in the last couple of months," Ms. Howard told the Finance Committee. "That looks pretty good right now, but I don't know how long that will last."

The budget predicts flat property tax revenues, unlike expected decreases elsewhere in the county. "Property values are much more stable" in Portola Valley, Ms. Howard remarked. ■

North Fair Oaks meets on state high-speed rail project

By Josh Falk
Special to The Almanac

Representatives from the California High-Speed Rail Authority addressed residents' concerns at a North Fair Oaks Council meeting Thursday, June 17.

"What we're here to talk about tonight is what is important for North Fair Oaks," said Dominic Spaethling, a regional manager for the California High-Speed Rail Authority responsible for the San Francisco to San Jose corridor.

The high-speed rail system is planned to run along the Caltrain right-of-way and will "try to use existing infrastructure to the greatest extent possible," Mr. Spaethling said.

Mr. Spaethling addressed several local issues, including the noise and visual impact of the high-speed rail system, cyclist and pedestrian safety along the route, and the potential economic impact of the rail system on businesses and homes along the

San Francisco-San Jose corridor.

Many residents at the meeting expressed concern about the potential impact of the high-speed rail system on North Fair Oaks and the greater Peninsula.

"What's in it for us?" asked Morton Frank, who suggested the High-Speed Rail Authority take a closer look at the eventual impact of the rail system on the local community. "How do you plan to integrate local public transportation?"

Mr. Frank said he thought the wealthy would benefit most from the implementation of a high-speed rail system at the expense of those with more modest incomes.

"The high-speed train seems to be totally oblivious to the needs of ordinary people," Mr. Frank said.

Laura Caplan, a member of the North Fair Oaks Council, responded more positively to the rail authority's proposals.

"I was very pleased that the high-speed rail folks seemed to really have listened to our concerns the last time they were here," Ms.

Caplan said. She emphasized it would be important to integrate the high-speed rail system with other public transportation on the Peninsula, however.

Another member of the council, Juan de Leon, expressed concern that residents of North Fair Oaks do not turn out for these kinds of meetings in as great a number as in more wealthy communities. He said he attended a meeting in Atherton where the turnout was three times that of Thursday's North Fair Oaks meeting.

"This is a community that doesn't get out and isn't vocal," Mr. de Leon said.

John Maulbetsch, an Atherton resident at the North Fair Oaks meeting, was firmly opposed to building the high-speed rail line along the Peninsula.

"I think it doesn't belong on the Caltrain corridor," Mr. Maulbetsch said. "The benefits are overstated and the costs are understated."

"I think it's a colossally bad idea for the Peninsula," he said. ■

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT



The Menlo Park Municipal Water District (MPMWD) is beginning the process of developing an emergency water supply project for the eastern service area of the district. The eastern service area includes properties in the Belle Haven, Willows, Flood Park and Burgess Park areas that receive water from the City of Menlo Park.

The eastern service area is entirely dependent on the availability of water from the Hetch Hetchy water system operated by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC). The City of Menlo Park is planning to construct a network of 3-4 groundwater wells to act as a back-up emergency water supply in the event of a disruption of service from the Hetch Hetchy system.

The purpose of the Community Workshop is to provide residents and businesses with information about the City's project and to afford interested residents the opportunity to participate in developing criteria for prioritizing future well sites.

The meeting will take place:

Wednesday, June 30, 2010, 6:30 p.m.
City of Menlo Park Recreation Center
700 Alma St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

For more information, contact the City's Engineering Services Division at (650) 330-6740 or visit our website at www.menlopark.org (follow the links to the City's Capital Improvement Project page and look for Emergency Water Supply Project).

Ice cream vendor punched, robbed

Four men punched and robbed an ice cream vendor in the 1100 block of Madera Avenue in Menlo Park on Sunday, June 6, Menlo Park police report.

The men stole \$16 worth of ice cream and fled on bicycles toward Newbridge Street, police said.

The assailants, described by

police as black and between the ages of 15 and 20, were wearing black shoes and pants, Sgt. Matthew Ortega said.

The victim, who sustained minor lacerations and nose injuries, called 911 after the robbery, Sgt. Ortega said.

Crash takes out fence, sign, vehicles

Police arrested a 23-year-old East Palo Alto man Sunday, June 20, after he drove his car in a wild ride in the Willows area of Menlo Park.

The car drove over a lawn, through a fence, into and over a street sign, and into three parked vehicles, before it rolled over and came to rest against a tree in the 300 block of Chester Street, police said.

David Ortega was arrested

around 8:50 p.m. Sunday on suspicion of hit-and-run and driving under the influence, both misdemeanors.

Mr. Ortega, who was uninjured, was driving a green Honda Civic when he sideswiped a white pickup truck, a silver van, and a red compact car, Menlo Park police spokeswoman Nicole Acker said.

A squad car rolled up as Mr. Ortega was trying to leave the

scene, Ms. Acker said, adding that one of the witnesses had tried to talk Mr. Ortega out of leaving.

Police booked Mr. Ortega into San Mateo County jail. The District Attorney's Office is investigating whether to file charges.

In the case of traffic accidents, the police department does not release details such as the exact nature of the damage and what it might cost to repair or replace the property, Ms. Acker said.

OBITUARIES

Parker Morrill Robinson Jr.

Retired water company employee

Lifelong Peninsula resident Parker Morrill Robinson Jr. died June 2 in Portola Valley of cancer. He was 88.

Mr. Robinson was a graduate of Menlo School and Stanford University, where he received a degree in engineering. He worked at California Water Service Co., in San Jose for more than 40 years

and was a pioneer in his field, say family members.

He is survived by his daughters, Ronya Robinson and Wendy Robinson. He was preceded in death by his wives, Byrona Dell Robinson and Alice Anderson Robinson.

Mr. Robinson was a resident of The Sequoias, where a memorial service was held June 19.

Joseph E.A. Sauer

A funeral Mass will be celebrat-

ed at 10 a.m. Friday, June 25, at St. Pius Church, 1100 Woodside Road, Redwood City, for Joseph E.A. Sauer of Woodside, who died June 19. He was 92.

Interment will follow at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Menlo Park. A visitation is set for 5 p.m. Thursday, June 24, and a Rosary at 7 p.m. at Crippen and Flynn, Woodside Chapel, 400 Woodside Road, Redwood City. An obituary will appear in a future issue of The Almanac.

BYRNES

continued from page 3

another former major leaguer, and other players with pasts in minor league and Division 1 baseball.

Many of the players have long histories with each other, playing together as early as their days with the Alpine/West Menlo

Little League.

Byrnes describes the play as "real competitive, you play hard." But at the same time, "win or lose, it's not the end of the world."

The Dutch Goose has dominated thus far, compiling an 8-0 record on the season. Still, the players make it interesting, with four of their eight wins coming on walk-off hits, according to a Dutch Goose player.

The Dutch Goose next plays on Wednesday, June 23, at 7:30 p.m., against the Big Stix, and again June 30 (at 6:30 p.m.) against Vintage Construction.

The playoffs begin on Wednes-

day, July 7. All games are played at Frank Sequiera Jr. Field, located in Nealon Park at 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park. Games are seven innings and are held to a one-hour time limit.

Baseball or softball, the love of the game is still there for Byrnes. And while it's not the A's or the Giants, the Dutch Goose puts on as good a show as a slow-pitch softball team can. For now, Byrnes seems pretty happy with the team.

"It's all about coming out here, having fun, and playing some competitive ball with my buddies," he says. ■

POLICE CALLS

MENLO PARK

Theft reports:

■ Purse valued at \$100 and containing \$100 in cash and \$400 cell phone stolen, Nativity Carnival at Nativity School at 210 Oak Grove Ave., June 12.

■ Video game player and camera with total value of \$725 stolen in transit from Philadelphia, street address information not available, June 15.

■ GPS and FasTrak automatic toll payment device stolen from unlocked vehicle, reported at main police station at 700 Laurel St., June 14.

Auto burglary report: Window smashed and stereo speakers stolen, 1200 block of Willow Road, June 14.

Fraud report: Unauthorized use of Social Security number in filing electronic tax return but no loss, Pineview Ave., June 14.

Spousal abuse report: 1100 block of Madiera Ave., June 13.

WOODSIDE

Residential burglary report: Window to guest bedroom smashed and goods valued at \$31,000 stolen, including TV, computer and jewelry, 900 block of High Road, June 12.

Commercial burglary report: Envelope containing \$800 in cash stolen from unlocked storage room during wedding reception, Mountain Terrace restaurant in 17000 block of Skyline Boulevard, June 11.

Theft report: Unassembled tent-style carport and garden hose stolen from front of recently foreclosed home, 100 block of Woodside Drive, June 12.

Accident report: Bicyclist in solo bicycle accident taken to Stanford Hospital, Maybury Place and Woodside Drive, June 15.

WEST MENLO PARK

Theft report: Three males seen stowing barbecue grill and other backyard items into black Ford 150 pickup truck, 2100 block of Oakley Ave., June 12.

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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

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

EMAIL your views to:

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.

Busy ballot for Menlo voters

Deciding between Jerry Brown or Meg Whitman will not be the only tough choice for Menlo Park voters when they go to the polls in November.

Along with a lengthy ballot listing statewide candidates and propositions, Menlo Park voters will decide two very important local issues:

■ Whether the city should approve Menlo Gateway, the Bohannon Development Co.'s proposal to build three eight-story office towers and a hotel at Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway.

■ Whether to offer lower pension benefits to some future city workers.

The Bohannon proposal was added to the ballot last week in a

4-1 vote by a strangely conflicted City Council. One member who opposed the project voted yes to put it on the ballot, and a strong supporter of the project, John Boyle, voted no, arguing that the council should make the decision on its own.

Mayor Rich Cline and council members Heyward Robinson and Andy Cohen voted yes, as did Kelly Fergusson, who said she changed her mind after the company agreed to add \$500,000 in landscaping to the site.

But regardless of how the council arrived at its decision, it is absolutely correct to give Menlo Park residents the final say on this project, which at an estimated cost of \$363 million would be one of the largest in the city's history.

The Bohannon Co. favored going to the ballot, no doubt because polling by the company shows solid support from up to 64 percent of local voters. A simple majority is all that is needed for voters to approve the project.

During extended bargaining sessions in the last few months, Bohannon

Co. officials agreed to make substantial environmental and monetary commitments at the city's request, and a few weeks ago believed they had a deal with the City Council. But at the 11th hour, a discussion of whether the city could extract a profit-sharing arrangement from the company split the council and seemed close to scuttling the project just a few days before a scheduled up-or-down vote June 15.

Then Mr. Cohen announced that he would oppose the entire package until the city developed a new zoning plan for the area around Menlo Gateway known as the M2. But when it was time to decide whether to put the question on the ballot, Mr. Cohen said he would agree even though he opposed the project.

Making Gateway a ballot issue will give supporters and detractors plenty of time to make their case with Menlo Park voters. And a vote of the electorate will make it much more difficult for the losing side to criticize how the decision was made.

In November, residents also will be asked to vote on a measure to create a two-tier pension system for city employees, providing lower benefits for some future city employees and raising the retirement age to 60 from 55 for these employees. The controversy about the lucrative retirement benefits of public employees gave plenty of momentum to a group of local residents who went door-to-door getting signatures on a petition calling for a vote on the November ballot.

The vote on this question is sure to bring out a strong response from the SEIU, the city's largest union, which is expected to mount a vigorous opposition campaign.

Both Menlo Gateway and the pension initiative will have a far-reaching impact on Menlo Park and in the case of Gateway, several nearby communities as well.

It is entirely appropriate that these important questions will be decided by the voters.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

A sad performance from Menlo council

Editor:

Asking Menlo Park voters to bless the council's approval of a development agreement between the city and the Bohannon Co.'s Menlo Gateway project is another sad example of our City Council's inability to make decisions.

Over the years a small, energetic and fearful group of residents, and even former residents, has intimidated and influenced our council and developers, alike. Although not elected, these negative groups have had remarkable success acting as kitchen cabinets for council members.

In addition, there have been threats of withholding election-year support from incumbents, conducting referendums or merely threatening referendums against actions taken by the council. Now we have witnessed Mayor Rich Cline and council members Heyward Robinson, Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen, in anticipation of a referendum against the Menlo



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

Workers who had laid out the subdivision of Portola Valley Ranch gathered in celebration when lots were ready for sale in the mid-1970s. Although approvals for the cluster-style development were controversial, the ranch became an award-winner and a popular neighborhood.

Gateway development, place this matter on the November ballot.

In my eight years on the City Council, several controversial projects came before us. I had to analyze

each project on its merits and after careful consideration, I was willing to vote yea or nay. I took responsibility and the heat for votes both to approve and votes to deny.

The current council seems consistently unable or unwilling to withstand the buffeting of nega-

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

tive pressure from these few loud voices and to stand up for their beliefs and a public process, which ends with decisive action.

That Dave Bohannon wanted the fate of his project to be decided by the voters speaks volumes about the poor business and political climate in Menlo Park. What is a man to do with a few sour residents lurking behind closed curtains ready to file a referendum application?

Our elected council members need to make decisions and be prepared to defend a voting record every four years.

Steve Schmidt
Former Mayor, Menlo Park

Cargill should find a location zoned for housing

Editor:

As the house-building boom and subsequent mortgage-foreclosure disaster have shown, an economy cannot be built on construction alone.

Several towns in the Central Valley had what appeared to be booming economies for several years, only to find it was all a mirage when the housing bubble burst.

A serious discussion of any possible economic benefits of Cargill's proposed Redwood City Saltworks construction has to include the costs of the demand for city services created by the residents of that construction. I seriously doubt if Cargill's project would attract as many upscale residents to high-density housing in that relatively remote location as Cargill would have us believe.

Residential development in ordinary circumstances seldom pays in taxes what it creates in demands for city services. Car-

Time for residents to step up in Atherton

By Scott Barnum

I am writing to extend the public dialogue on getting to a balanced budget in Atherton.

I am amazed (but not surprised) that in this environment our collective efforts as one of America's most affluent and highly educated towns cannot find a clear and swift path to a balanced budget — one of the most important success factors in managing an entity of any kind.

On the surface, it would seem our town is generally blessed with successful, highly educated and action-oriented people who have plenty of "school of hard knocks" scars to prove their experience. Many of our residents run or have run businesses, are or have been a board director of at least one organization and have been managing/overseeing budgets for their long and storied careers.

In addition, you'd have to live on Mars not to see, hear or read all the press about the critical condition of our federal and state budgets and the current and impending consequences of running budget deficits for many years. Why then have we not been able to get to a balanced budget right here in our own backyard, where we arguably have more control, more insight as to what is going on, and more to win/lose?

In my view, many of us choose not to give a damn, until there is a crisis when it is generally too late to do much but damage control. We've become either too apathetic or too "over-scheduled" to get involved.

Why is it that parents of school-age kids are fanatical about what is going on in their schools (including their school budget) but somehow can't find the time to know what is going in their local government (yet the buildings and people involved are less than a mile apart)? Why can Athertonians be so giving and committed to their favorite causes, yet don't really know the true state of the union regarding their home town?

In business, accountability is a fundamental principal for success. Knowing who is doing what, by when and for how much, and then holding the person or group accountable for delivering the what, when and how much is critical to getting stuff done and done right. If things get done as planned there are rewards; and if they don't, there are consequences.

This principle should be similarly applied to government.

Simply stated then, we (the voters) need to hold our elected officials more accountable. We, the residents, citizens and voters need to get more involved and spend some more time — quality time — researching, going to council meetings, and providing feedback to

our town leaders. We have to make the time and make it a priority. Generally speaking, apathy leads to tragedy and an uninformed and or apathetic electorate gets what it deserves.

As is often the case with groups and organizations, a few do the work for the many. There are a few concerned and conscientious Athertonians who are and have been asking the tough questions of our elected officials on all sorts of important subjects, like balancing the budget. But with government, the squeaky wheels get the grease.

More important, we need to push our officials to balance our city budget and take significant corrective actions now before it is too late, when we will be forced to take disastrous, draconian measures. It may not be pleasant or easy now but it will be a lot more difficult and more unpleasant the longer we wait.

Balancing a budget is a very fundamental and very basic aspect of management and leadership. In addition to integrity and commitment, a balanced budget should be one of the very core things we demand of our elected officials. There is no left or right — the budget is either balanced or it's not.

Collectively, we need to press Atherton to get its fiscal house in order and do it as soon as possible. I encourage all of us to spend a little more time and energy ensuring that our town's finances are being properly managed and planned.

Scott Barnum lives on Leon Way in Atherton.



gill's difficult and isolated site threatens to be a fiscal disaster to the city even during development and for long after Cargill has walked away with their profits.

If Minneapolis-based Cargill and Phoenix-based DMB were truly interested in the economics and environment of Redwood City, they would be proposing projects such as developing the old Dodge dealership site on Veterans Boulevard, a site already zoned for the high-density use

they are proposing to build in the Bay, and which has the urban infrastructure in place.

Bryan Beck
Redwood City

A referendum on Downtown Visioning project?

Editor:

Although my home is in Portola Valley, its ZIP code is considered to be Menlo Park.

More important, my wife and I

do most of our regular shopping in downtown Menlo Park. We also spend around \$3,000 annually at the farmers' market.

I wish to add my voice to those who are upset, disappointed and borderline furious that special interests once again are "in process" to ram ill-conceived and self-serving developments like the Menlo Park Visioning Project down our throats.

Especially in these trying times, when alliances between govern-

ments and corporations are under increasing scrutiny, it is extremely important that a true, open and transparent review of this project (including sufficient time for the public's comments) be mandatory.

I am sure there are other solutions to the needs that the Menlo Park City Council may believe this project is to address. Perhaps a city referendum is needed.

Arthur Jonath
Golden Oak Drive, Portola Valley

City needs a rail commission

By Martin Engel

The city of Menlo Park website lists 11 city commissions, covering subjects such as parks and recreation, transportation (actually traffic), bicycles, environmental quality, housing and libraries. It lists an arts commission, which was disbanded a number of years ago, but appears to remain on the books. The most important of the commissions, which is state-mandated, is the Planning Commission, pertaining to city development.

We can gather that matters of great and continued concern to the city obtain greater citizen participation in planning and providing guidance and advice to

the City Council with the formation of a standing citizen advisory commission.

One of the most significant issues to appear on the city's doorstep is the advent of high-speed rail on the Caltrain corridor. Its importance grows daily. The city will be profoundly impacted. There may be obligatory costs to the city, accrued well beyond the city's means.

At the current time, and unique to Menlo Park among all the Peninsula cities, is a two-council member subcommittee dedicated to high-speed rail, that

meets privately with no public announcement or disclosure. No minutes, no schedule, no agenda. Participants include one or two senior city staff. Reports of this subcommittee's proceedings are provided orally at the end of city council meetings, usually after 11 p.m.

Inasmuch as the destinies of the high-speed train and Caltrain are now so intertwined, they can no longer be considered separately, as has been made clear by executives of both organizations.

There can be no further doubt that a new commission must be established in Menlo Park. This commission would exist to advise

the City Council, and particularly the high-speed rail subcommittee, on all matters pertaining to Caltrain and the high-speed rail.

Like all other commissions, it would comply fully with all Brown Act requirements and would be fully endorsed and supported by the City Council.

A mission statement would identify areas appropriate for advising the City Council on anticipated and unanticipated actions, including lawsuits, resolutions, membership in the Peninsula Coalition of Cities (PCC), activities on neighboring cities, legislation in Sacramento that directly affects or can affect Menlo Park, construction impacts along the 8,500 feet of Caltrain corridor within city borders, and possible other litigation pertaining to eminent domain

and inverse condemnation.

It should be stressed that this commission would not be a partisan advocacy group. The proposed high-speed rail project and activities in the Caltrain corridor could impact the city's finances, coffers, streets, utilities, staffing, businesses, and resident areas. The commission should be empowered to research, study and comment on the potential impact this 10-year construction project will have on the city. This responsibility cannot be left exclusively to two council members, who are not required to follow Brown Act procedures.

Martin Engel lives on Stone Pine Lane in Menlo Park. He said he submitted this opinion as a private citizen, not in his capacity as a member of the Transportation Commission.



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