



**A matter of life
and death** *Section 2*

The Almanac

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

FEBRUARY 9, 2011

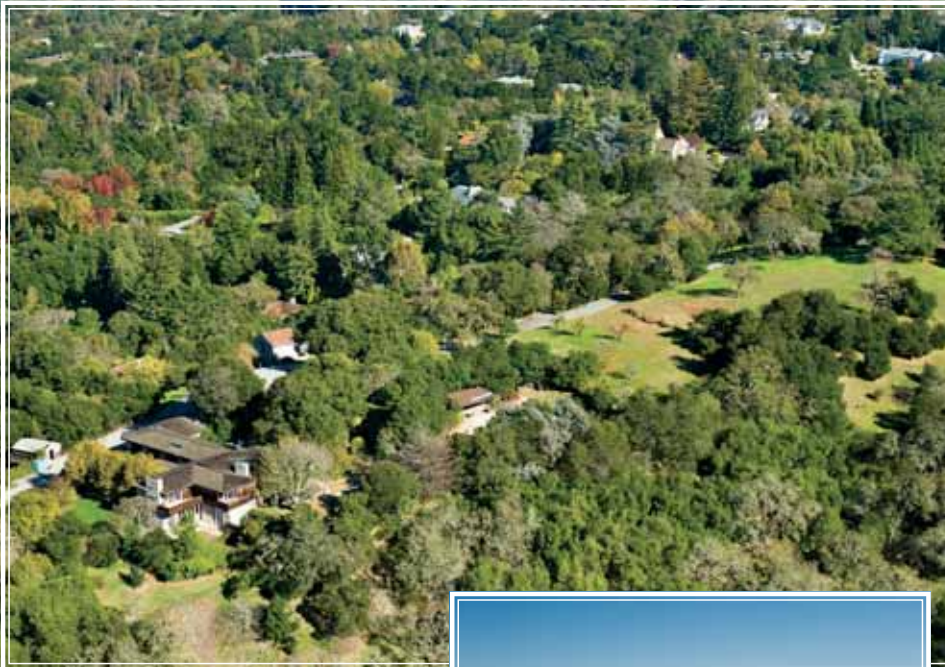
VOL. 46 NO. 24



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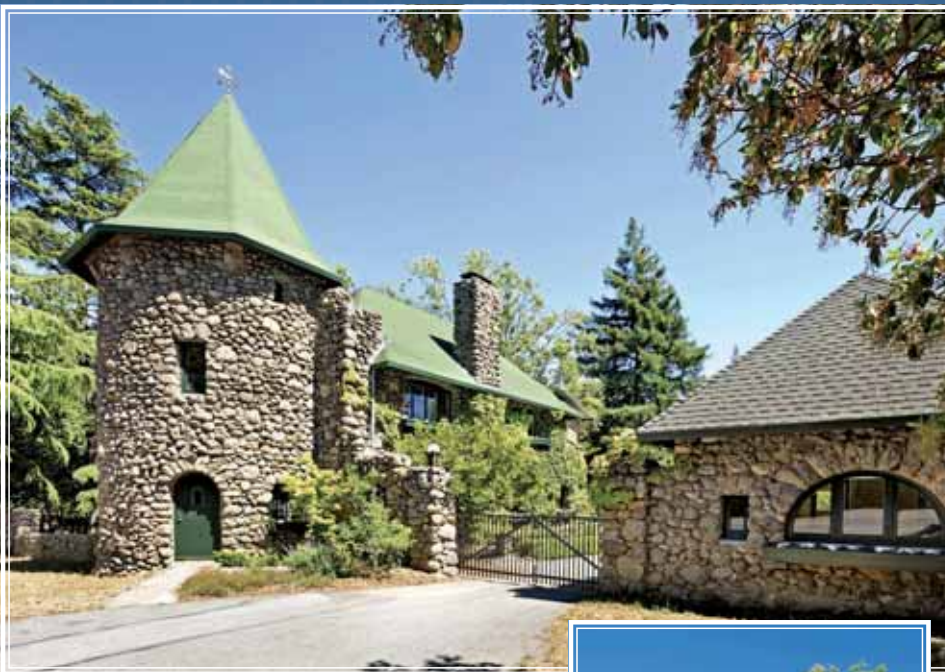


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South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project

The Ravenswood section of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project consists of several ponds covering 1,500 acres near the Dumbarton Bridge.

Wetlands restoration takes next step

■ Meeting in Menlo Park on Thursday will update the public on the project.

By Miranda Simon

Special to the Almanac

The project that aims to restore historic wetlands near Menlo Park is about to begin the second phase of a 50-year marathon, and the public has been invited to help plan this next step.

A public meeting will be held at the Menlo Park Library, from 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, to discuss updates on the \$1 billion project to revive 15,000 acres of wetlands around the South Bay. In particular, the meeting will focus on Phase 2 of the plan for the seven-pond Ravenswood complex, located near the Dumbarton Bridge.

Ravenswood, occupying about 1,500 acres, is one of three pond complexes to be restored as part of the project.

The South Bay salt ponds, long operated by Cargill Inc., a salt supplier based in Minneapolis, were purchased for \$100 million with federal and state funds in 2003. The 15,100-acre purchase was part of a larger effort to restore 40,000 acres of historic wetlands in the San Francisco Bay.

Cargill retained 9,000 acres in the East Bay for salt production and 2.2 square miles in Redwood City for development.

In 2008, after a four-year planning process, the restoration proj-

■ INFORMATION

The Ravenswood Working Group of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project will meet from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, at Menlo Park Library downstairs meeting room, 800 Alma St. in Menlo Park. The public is invited.

ect finally started rolling.

Pond SF2, part of the Ravenswood complex, was restored and a 0.7-mile trail was opened to the public.

Shorebirds, sandpipers and ducks are already leaving their footprints on the sand, said John Bourgeois, executive planner of the project. Snowy plovers, an endangered species, will be nesting on the dry, bare ground of the Ravenswood ponds in a few months, he said.

“In seven years we went from planning to putting the project on the ground — that’s very fast for a project this size,” Mr. Bourgeois said.

But several elements are impeding the project from rolling faster, the main one being lack of a completed flood-control plan, said Eric Mruz, of the project’s management team.

As engineers lower existing levees and let water flow into the dry salt ponds, they are wary of over-flood-

ing the area. New and costly levees need to be built further inland for the restoration of many of Ravenswood’s ponds, and planners are waiting for a study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be completed in 2015, Mr. Mruz said.

Highway 84, a PG&E substation and other nearby infrastructure may be at risk from flooding without appropriate flood control, Mr. Bourgeois said, so planners have to tread slowly.

“In restoration, you lower the levees. Marshes and wetlands develop through natural sediment creation. There is some ground-work to be done but it’s nothing” compared to the construction of levees, said Brenda Buxton, project manager with the California Coastal Conservancy, the lead coordinating agency.

Still, engineers are not too concerned with speed, or lack thereof. There are many benefits in dawdling.

Questions and uncertainties — which will be presented at the Feb. 10 meeting — have needed time and observation to surface.

In order to protect the habitat of species that have adapted to the salt-scape, engineers will have to keep some ponds as “managed

See SALT PONDS, page 6

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ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Steve Lewis is President of Lewis & Mathews Investment Management in Menlo Park. He is a college professor, investment counselor, Value Line award winner, financial author and has appeared on national radio and television. He is a past officer of the S.C. International Association of Financial planners and served on the National Academy Advisory Board. He has written for Money magazine and Dow Jones’s Barron’s.



Jim Curran is a veteran of over 25 Years on Wall Street. He is President of Curran & Lewis Investment Management, Inc., in Menlo Park, a Wealth Manager Magazine top Wealth Management firm. He is Chief Portfolio Manager, and specializes in investment advice for individual investors, companies, and their officers. He is an accomplished and dynamic college and business lecturer.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Facebook moves operations to Menlo Park

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Facebook's plan to shift headquarters from Palo Alto to Menlo Park has possibly been the worst-kept secret of the past month. Now the social networking giant has confirmed that the former Sun/Oracle campus will be its new home.

In an Almanac interview, John Tenanes, Facebook's real estate director, said the company leased back the 1-million-square-foot, 11-building campus from real estate investment management firm RREEF. About a third of the campus will continue to host Oracle employees for up to a year, according to Mr. Tenanes. Sources familiar with the deal said RREEF paid about \$100 million.

"It's a great (lease) structure, in terms of rent," Mr. Tenanes said. "We don't have to write one big check." He cited Menlo Park's central location and proximity to Palo Alto, where many of its employees live, as two factors that set it apart from other sites Facebook considered along the Peninsula.

Recently valued at \$50 billion, thanks to investments by Goldman Sachs and others in anticipation of a public stock offering, Facebook has exploded since

founder Mark Zuckerberg started the company in 2004. Its assessed business personal property value skyrocketed to \$63.4 million by the end of 2009, according to Santa Clara County tax records, and there are more active users on Facebook than there are people in the United States.

The Facebook explosion explains why the company also bought two lots on Constitution Drive near the Sun campus in December. It was too good a deal to pass up, according to Mr. Tenanes, who described the buildings as a "safety valve" if the company needs even more elbow room before its new 15-year lease on the Sun campus expires.

Those lots, along with the 57-acre Sun campus, give Facebook enough space for 6,100 employees. The company said it currently has about 2,000 worldwide.

But there's more than space behind Facebook's buying spree: A tunnel under the Bayfront Expressway already links the 22-acre Constitution Drive lots to the Sun campus, Mayor Rich Cline explained.

Those three parcels originally belonged to Raychem, which planned to open adjoining east and west Menlo Park campuses. Facebook has now resurrected that



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

The former Sun/Oracle campus in Menlo Park, where Facebook plans to move its headquarters operations.

vision, according to city staff.

What's in it for Menlo Park?

Critics decried Facebook's lack of sales tax and property tax revenue, but proponents suggest the potential benefits outweigh instant cash prospects.

Comparing Facebook to Cisco in San Jose and Apple in Cupertino, Mayor Cline said, "Facebook's level of brand brings immediate marketability, and that brings investment. The potential for the Belle Haven neighborhood should not be

overlooked. We've been waiting forever for those opportunities."

The company might face community opposition on two fronts: traffic and housing. According to Mayor Cline, Facebook is scouting other sites to potentially build homes for its employees.

As for traffic, Mr. Tenanes said about 42 percent of Facebook's employees don't drive to work, instead relying on shuttles, car pools and public transit, and they want to increase that number.

The company also hopes to work with Menlo Park to open businesses such as dry cleaning or

coffee shops on campus, although it will keep the two employee cafeterias already located there. "We're excited to work with Menlo Park, they're excited about it. I think it's going to be a great partnership," said Mr. Tenanes.

Going forward

On March 5 the city will host a design charrette so residents can share their visions of what could be done with the remaining space on the Facebook properties.

"(Facebook) may see a need

See **FACEBOOK**, page 8

Lingering questions over violation of Brown Act

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Although the district attorney's office concluded Menlo Park Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson did not commit a misdemeanor by violating the Brown Act, her refusal to be interviewed by the investigator left lingering questions instead of wiping the slate clean.

Deputy District Attorney Albert Serrato said the investigator questioned council members Rich Cline, Peter Ohtaki, and Kirsten Keith, but that Ms. Fergusson declined a request for an interview. Reportedly not wanting to pay an attorney to oversee the interview, she instead provided copies of e-mails and public statements she made regarding the violation.

The Almanac broke the story of the violation in December.



Kelly Fergusson

The councilwoman solicited support to be chosen as mayor in one-on-one conversations with fellow council members Rich Cline and Peter Ohtaki. Both said they were unaware that she had spoken to a majority of the council.

She may also have asked a third party to approach Ms. Keith as an intermediary, but Mr. Serrato said the investigation didn't uncover that person's identity.

After the city attorney confirmed the violation, Ms. Fergusson stepped down as mayor on Dec. 10 and the council held another vote, this time choosing Mr. Cline.

See **FERGUSSON**, page 8

School district goes back to drawing board

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Faced with lukewarm support by residents for a possible parcel tax and new information showing a significantly higher-than-expected enrollment gain in the next few years, Las Lomas School District officials have gone back to the drawing board to determine how to meet the district's growing population and funding needs.

Although that means the school board is not actively pursuing a parcel tax measure now, it doesn't mean the district has ruled out asking voters to approve such a tax, or a bond measure for new-facilities construction to address the enrollment surge, according to Superintendent Eric Hartwig.

Mr. Hartwig said he hopes to report to the board in June with more information on new enrollment projections, the district's financial picture, and options for tackling looming

challenges resulting from those two factors.

Classroom space on the district's two campuses — Las Lomas (K-3) in Atherton and La Entrada (4-8) in Menlo Park — is growing ever tighter, thanks to an approximately 4 percent increase in enrollment in each of the last four years. Current enrollment is about 1,330 students district-wide.

Because a demographic study done a number of years ago projected a leveling off in enrollment by about 2015, and a possible decline after that, district officials considered adding a few portable buildings on both campuses a viable option for riding out the bubble.

But a new demographic study determined that the pre-2015 projections of the older study were far too low, and the "leveling off" prediction inaccurate. It projected that by 2016, there will be 148 more students than the earlier study predicted.

By 2017, that figure is expected

grow to 172, according to the new study.

"We're having more students come in faster than we predicted," Mr. Hartwig said. "We had a wait-and-see attitude before, but we now need to do something ... The new demographic report put in a higher place in the queue of our concerns the need to have our campuses ready for additional students."

Last summer, the school board voted to explore placing a parcel tax on the ballot to address the district's mounting budgetary problems, hoping voters would support a healthy boost to district property owners' current \$311 annual tax. With the more conservative enrollment-growth projections in place at that time, the board was hoping a tax increase would help restore some of the programs and positions that took a hit when the district found itself with a \$1.5 million shortfall last year.

See **SCHOOLS** page 8



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Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

Patient poultry

Kids flocked to the Atherton public library on Saturday morning, Feb. 5, to visit with, pet and feed a collection of well behaved hens, courtesy of Sacred Heart Preparatory School, St. Joseph's School and the San Carlos Eaton Hills 4H Club. The hens pecked at corn in outstretched hands, expressed themselves a bit with some energetic wing flapping and, on at least two occasions, showed their lack of housetraining.



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SALT PONDS

continued from page 3

ponds" — which means funneling water quickly through the ponds to inhibit salt production, Mr. Mruz said — but the ponds to be managed need to be selected.

According to a South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project draft agenda, the Feb. 10 meeting will discuss ways to facilitate public viewing of the wetlands — one of the pillars of the project.

A slow moving project will also help planners apply for more funding.

Ms. Buxton laughed at the prospect of figuring out where the restoration funds would come from in the next 43 years. Flood-control levees are not even on the horizon yet, said Ms. Buxton, who was busy applying for a grant during the time of the interview.

The levees will likely eat up 60 percent of the \$1 billion planned for the project, Mr. Bourgeois said.

"Especially with the state budget, it will be a constant struggle," he added.

The \$1 billion project, which is being lead by a myriad of state and local agencies as well as individual stakeholders, has many sources of funding.

According to Mr. Bourgeois, on top of the \$100 million needed to purchase the land from Cargill, the project has required \$15 million to \$20 million for early planning and design and \$25 million to \$30 million for Phase 1 construction.

Apart from a \$5 million stimulus from the federal government, agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (owner of the Ravenswood ponds), and the California Coastal Conservancy are funding different aspects of the projects, Mr. Bourgeois said. The city of Menlo Park contributed \$500,000. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

The extensive murals at Hillview Middle School will be lost to the campus rebuild.

School makes big changes in calendar

■ The changes are tied to plans to rebuild the Hillview campus.

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Kids at Hillview Middle School will have a longer summer vacation next year as the school district enters its final push to finish the massive campus renovation project by fall 2012, Superintendent Ken Ranella of the Menlo Park City School District announced on Feb. 2.

But before students start rejoicing, they should know that the longer summer holiday will mean there will be no February “break week” in 2012, and that the Thanksgiving break this and next year will be reduced from five days to two.

The district must meet the fall 2012 deadline for opening the new buildings at Hillview “in order to accommodate the projected 180 additional middle

school students” on the campus, located on Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park, Mr. Ranella said in a written statement to the community.

The school board approved the schedule last month, after the teachers’ union agreed to the changes to the traditional calendar.

The 2011-12 school year ends two weeks earlier than the current school year: on June 1, 2012. (The current school year ends on June 15, 2011.) School will open in 2012 after Labor Day, on Sept. 4.

In 2012, the traditional February break will be reduced to two days: Friday and Monday, Feb. 17 and 20.

With the extended summer break in 2012, the extra days in the classroom during the regular school year are required to fulfill state mandates spelling out minimum hours in a school year.

The district broke ground last July on its project to re-create the 9.36-acre Hillview campus — a

project that includes the building of 85,000 square feet of new facilities and the demolition of the old buildings. New construction is under way, and building demolition is scheduled for the expanded summer break next year.

New buildings will include a 400-seat performing arts-multi-purpose room. The existing gym will be modernized, and a new fitness room and kitchen facilities will be part of that project, according to the district’s website.

In his statement, Mr. Ranella wrote: “We recognize how the school calendar impacts the lives of our district families and regret any inconvenience these changes may produce. It is critical that the Hillview campus be fully operational for the first day of school in the fall of 2012. This calendar scenario will give us the time necessary to ensure for a smooth opening of the new school which will eventually serve students in all three elementary schools.” ■

Help pick a new Menlo Park schools superintendent

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Community members, teachers and staff are invited to a series of meetings, starting this week, to say what the Menlo Park City School District board should look for in a new superintendent.

The board will meet at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, with advisers from the executive search firm Leadership Associates, which was hired to help find a successor to Superintendent Ken Ranella. He is retiring at the end of the school year.

The meeting will be in the district office board room at 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.

Two community meetings are also set for Feb. 10: one at noon in the Oak Knoll School library, 1895 Oak Knoll Lane in Menlo Park; and one at 6:30 p.m. in the Encinal School library, 191 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.

Board President Maria Hilton encouraged community members to attend one of the meetings to comment “specifically about what personal and professional qualities an incoming superintendent would have to best serve” the district.

She said comments are also welcome by fax, letter, or e-mail to Leadership Associates advisers. They may be e-mailed to leadershipassociates@cox.net. The firm can also be reached at 949-461-9119 (phone and fax).

Leadership Associates advisers will also meet on Feb. 11 and 15 with parent groups such as the PTO Council and education foundation board, the District Advisory Council, union representatives, and district staff.

The advisers will then present the board with a report reflecting the input they receive during the series of meetings, Ms. Hilton said. ■

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Is That Our Fridge?

Dear Gloria,

We recently closed escrow on a new home in Menlo Park and in our offer we listed the refrigerator as an item we wanted included in the sale. We took possession last week and to our surprise there was no refrigerator. Our agent contacted the seller’s agent and they claim they never listed it on MLS. Is that our fridge?

Donnie Wilson, Palo Alto

Dear Donnie Wilson,

Even though something may be listed on the MLS, the sales agreement should specify appliances are included with the property unless it is specifically listed as being excluded. Therefore, it is customary that all built-in appliances stay with the property

while portable appliances often do not. Certainly, buyers shouldn’t expect to see gaping holes where the oven used to be or the dishwasher once stood. Your realtor did the right thing by stating that the home was being purchased with the condition that the seller must include the refrigerator. It should’ve remained in the property regardless if it was not listed in MLS. By the way, this is just one of many reasons that you should always insist upon a walk-through inspection just prior to closing. I assume the listing agent can assist your agent in locating the sellers so that either the refrigerator is returned to you or they replace it with a new one.

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

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T-Mobile plans six cell towers in Menlo Park

By Sandy Brundage
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park Planning Commission was scheduled to hear T-Mobile's request to mount a cellphone tower at 2400 Sand Hill Road on Feb. 7, a process which will be repeated at least five more times during the upcoming year.

T-Mobile spokesman Rod De La Rosa confirmed that the telecommunications company plans to add six towers to Menlo Park. Other proposed locations include Nealon Park and Seminary Oaks Park.

Some residents criticized way T-Mobile has publicized community outreach meetings held to discuss the towers. Mr. De La Rosa said notices are mailed to addresses within 500 feet of each site two weeks in advance of the meetings.

Council to weigh options for keeping RDA money

Menlo Park doesn't intend to lose \$17 million in redevelopment funds to the state without a fight. On Tuesday, Feb. 8, the City Council will consider how to move the money beyond the governor's reach.

According to staff reports, one option includes forming a housing authority that would take control of \$16.4 million currently set aside by the city's redevelopment agency to fund affordable housing programs, as well as 2.1 acres of land the city owns on Hamilton Avenue.

The council meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St.

Six run for county supervisor seat

Voters will have six candidates to choose from for the District 1 seat on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, formerly held by the county's new elections chief, Mark Church.

The candidates are: Burlingame Mayor Terry Nagel, a nonprofit organization manager; Millbrae City Councilwoman Gina Papan, a state deputy attorney general; retired aero-

Six seats open on three commissions

Applications are due April 1 for a total of six seats on three city commissions.

The Bicycle Commission has three upcoming vacancies; the Library Commission has two; and the Planning Commission has one, as Chairman Vincent Bressler's term expires. Once they are appointed by the City Council, the new commissioners will take their seats starting on May 1.

Go to menlopark.org/city_commissions.html or go to the city clerk's office at 701 Laurel St. to find applications.

Free yogurt

The Mix will celebrate its first year in Menlo Park on Saturday, Feb. 12, with free yogurt, prizes, tastings, and face painting. The festivities take place from noon to 5 p.m. at 3536 Alameda de las Pulgas.

Allied Arts Guild plays Texas Hold 'Em

Prepare your best poker face: the Allied Arts Guild will hold its third annual Texas Hold 'Em Poker Tournament on Saturday, Feb. 12, to benefit the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital.

The games begin at 5 p.m. at 75 Arbor Road in Menlo Park. Anyone over 21 years old can play. The \$75 admission fee includes chips, food, beverages, and one raffle ticket. Additional raffle tickets are \$5 each.

Go to alliedartsguild.org or call 322-2405 for more information.

SCHOOLS

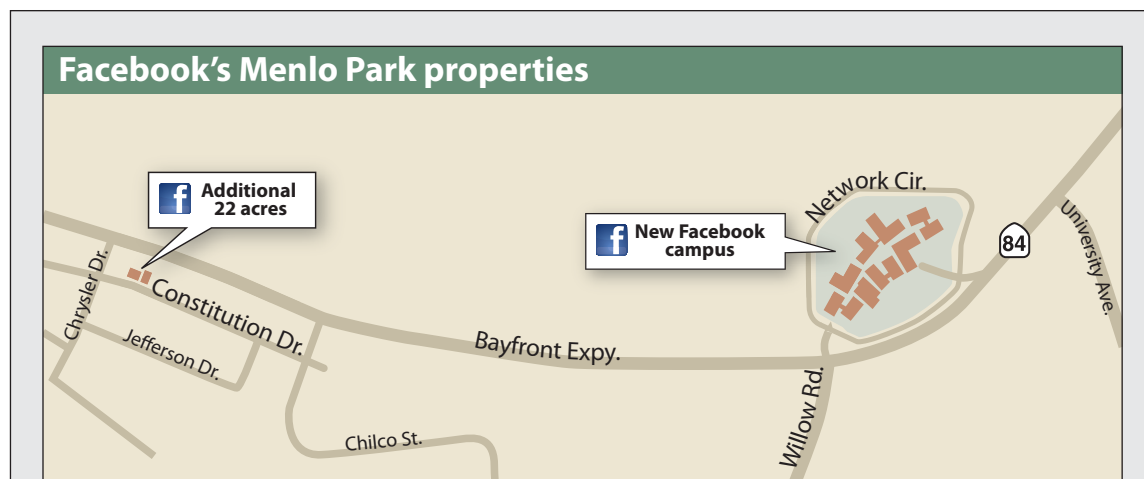
continued from page 5

But a survey last fall of 309 district voters found that far fewer than the required two-thirds of voters were likely to support a tax increase on the scale of what district officials determined would be needed: between \$300 and \$420. ■

FERGUSON

continued from page 5

The DA then opened an investigation at the request of local Brown Act watchdog Peter Carpenter. Although the investigator confirmed the serial meeting, Mr. Serrato said no collective decision or commitment was reached, so the crimi-



Map by Shannon Corey

In addition to the former Sun/Oracle campus at 14 Network Circle on the right, Facebook has acquired 22 acres on Constitution Drive. The two properties are connected by a tunnel under the Bayfront Expressway.

Facebook moves its headquarters to Menlo Park

FACEBOOK

continued from page 5

for more growth, they may need more offices. There's potential housing and potential retail. It would be nice to have retail that services the whole community," Mayor Cline said. "Belle Haven needs their own services that they can walk to."

He found the timing of Facebook's move interesting in light of the governor's proposal to shut down redevelopment agencies across the state, since the Belle Haven neighborhood lies within the city's redevelopment boundary.

"This goes to the heart of helping people that aren't in the upper economic classes. They need support," said the mayor. "This is an

opportunity perhaps for us to do this, or be able to have other ways to think about the area."

There remain walls to knock down Facebook intends to keep its 'no cubicle' work environment and permits to sign, but if all goes smoothly, the company plans to move the first 500 employees to Menlo Park by mid-June. The rest should arrive by the end of the year. ■

'No spray' zone sprayed with pesticide

■ City staff unclear as to how or why this happened.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

The patch of roadside scrub that was supposed to be set aside as a pilot "no spray" zone this winter in Menlo Park was in fact sprayed with pesticide.

City staff had no explanation. "My staff was onboard with this area as a no pesticide use zone so we're unclear who or why anyone would want to spray there," Dave Mooney, who supervises park and tree maintenance, wrote in response to questions residents raised about the project.

He added that staff is now looking at a patch along Chilco Street in Belle Haven as an alternate test site.

The experiment was meant to see whether Menlo Park could skip the pesticides in favor of alternate, non-toxic mainte-

■ MENLO PARK

nance as Portola Valley and Woodside do.

Mr. Mooney scheduled the pilot project for the intersection of Oak Ave and Sand Hill Road, according to Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) minutes from Oct. 6, 2010.

Last spring, former mayor Steve Schmidt asked the City Council to stop the spraying in accordance with the city's policy of minimal or no use of pesticides. He also made a presentation to the EQC that led to the pilot project.

Saying he thought Menlo Park residents would rather see signs of spring instead of "scorched roadsides looking like Death Valley," Mr. Schmidt suggested mowing the vegetation instead.

"Dave Mooney and all his predecessors don't understand how it's done or just won't do it because they've never done it before. And because neither the Council nor the City Manager cares enough to

give the maintenance staff direction to do the right thing," said Mr. Schmidt.

Howard Young, director of Public Works for Portola Valley, said the town has spent about \$10,000 a year for the past four years to maintain roadside shrubbery with weed-whacking crews instead of pesticides.

"We still do use low toxicity chemicals in other places, but not the road shoulders," Mr. Young said. "Weed whacking is more expensive but provides a better product, so one really cannot compare the two fairly. Weed whacking also lets us selectively avoid killing native wildflowers."

Cost may be an issue for Menlo Park, according to Mr. Schmidt. "However, the timing of the spraying deprives road users of one of the few seasonal pleasures we Californians enjoy. They also have sprayed over running water that is destined for the creek, a big no-no for using Round-up and other herbicides." ■

nal provision of the Brown Act wasn't violated.

"Mr. Ohtaki did not vote for Ms. Ferguson, but more relevant here, he did not agree or commit to voting for her in his discussions with her," the attorney told The Almanac.

The district attorney's office considers the investigation closed after announcing its findings on

Feb. 1. Does Mr. Carpenter? He told several newspapers, including The Almanac, "If I, as a public official, felt compelled to exercise my Fifth Amendment rights against self incrimination when asked about my behavior in office then I would also feel compelled to resign my public office."

Ms. Ferguson issued a state-

ment thanking the district attorney's office for its thorough investigation. She again described the Brown Act violation as an "inadvertent mistake," although as former Councilman John Boyle pointed out in December, the council had received specific training on the issue of serial meetings during the previous year. ■

Menlo woman heads Shelter Network

■ Harvard Business School grad has a business background.

Karae Lisle of Menlo Park, a Silicon Valley executive with 15 years of experience in both the private and nonprofit sectors, is the new executive director of Shelter Network, a nonprofit that provides shelter and services to homeless families and individuals.

Ms. Lisle succeeds Michele Jackson, who is retiring after 10 years in the post. Based in Burlingame, Shelter Network operates six shelters in San Mateo County, including Haven Family House in Menlo Park.

Ms. Lisle, a Harvard Business School graduate, was previously chief marketing officer at the Computer History Museum

in Mountain View.

Her professional career in the private sector began with a technical role at Burroughs Corporation, progressing to sales management positions in a variety of tech companies. She was a principal at Wellbourne International, providing consulting services for companies, and has led seminars and training for such companies as Microsoft, Silicon Valley Bank and Hewlett Packard.



Karae Lisle

Ms. Lisle's community service experience includes work with the Battered Women's Shelter in Atlanta and the Florida Special Olympics.

Due to the economic downturn, Shelter Network is receiving an average of 1,500 calls a week for services, compared to 100 a week three years ago, says spokesperson Maria Duzon. In the past year, the organization has provided shelter and support more than 4,000 people. It is the primary provider of temporary housing and support services in San Mateo County.

Visit shelternetwork.org for more information about Shelter Network.

Priory proposes synthetic grass for fields

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

In its bid to resurface three athletic fields with synthetic grass, Woodside Priory, the private Portola Valley Catholic school for grades 6-12, hosted a joint onsite meeting of the town's Planning and Architecture & Site Control commissions to discuss the matter on Tuesday, Feb. 1.

The school is proposing the plastic surface for the soccer field, the softball field and the volleyball court, a total of about 3 acres, according to a staff report by Town Planner Tom Vlastic. The commissions will formally review the proposal in the coming months.

Synthetic fields don't need irrigation and are reportedly more durable, can be played on sooner after a rain, and give athletes improved

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

traction and athletic performance. About half the fields in the National Football League use synthetic grass, according to a Wikipedia entry.

While the technology is continuously evolving, reported downsides to synthetic grass have included rug burns, harder falls, a rubber-tire smell when the weather is hot, and the unintentional dispersal of the tiny rubber pellets that make up the "soil" of the field.

In the report, Mr. Vlastic cites a report by a state-funded study on air quality above the field and infection risks. "The studies referenced suggest that there may be some air quality considerations with artificial turf in an enclosed environment, but that inhalation

health risks are unlikely, especially for persons using artificial surfaces outdoors," Mr. Vlastic said.

As for bacteria, the synthetic grass reportedly had fewer than natural grass, Mr. Vlastic said, citing the state report.

A 2010 study of college football injuries over three years compared rates of injury on natural grass versus the artificial surface being considered for this field. The synthetic grass yielded a lower rate of injuries but they were more severe, Mr. Vlastic said.

Go to is.gd/OuhYt4 and turn to Page 9 to read the staff report.

Go to is.gd/4pLHA0 for the state report on air quality and infection rates.

Go to is.gd/OOFGFv for the report on college football injuries. ■

Creek not damaged by spill, official says

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A milky white substance discovered in Los Trancos Creek on the evening of Tuesday, Feb. 1, did not significantly infiltrate the creek, did not appear hazardous in a field test, and seems not to have killed any aquatic or riparian creatures, said Waymond Wong, supervisor of the San Mateo County Hazardous Materials and Pollution Prevention Program.

"Technically, we could consider it a toxic substance," but to be certain would require several thousand dollars in further testing, Mr. Wong told the Almanac.

A call came in at about 5:45 p.m. to the Environmental Health offices about a possible release of hazardous material near the intersection of Alpine Road and Interstate 280.

Firefighters from the Woodside Fire Protection District were already on the scene when he got the call, Mr. Wong said.

Onsite testing showed the substance to be a water-based aqueous solution that was also present in the drain across Alpine Road, inferring that someone had poured it into the drain and that it had traveled through the culvert under the road to the creek, he said.

Debris in the culvert outlet slowed the flow and substantially reduced creek infiltration, Mr. Wong said.

There were no reports of dead or injured creatures, he added.

The West Bay Sanitary District responded and pumped out the drain, flushed the culvert and attended to the creek, Mr. Wong said. The next day showed no evidence of the incident, he added.

While the aftereffects of this inci-

dent appear to have been relatively benign, whoever did it violated several laws, including the federal Clean Water Act, Mr. Wong said. "You're not supposed to be (dumping) any type of hazardous substance into the storm drains," he said.

The law applies to restaurants using a parking lot to wash out oil-soaked mats or dump mop water, and auto body shops washing cars on the street.

While the county does not regulate residents' washing of cars or rinsing of oily mats, they, too, should not be doing it on impervious surfaces that can lead to storm drains, Mr. Wong said. Choose a location that can absorb the water, such as grass, he said. Soil microbes are proficient at detoxifying substances that may be toxic to aquatic creatures. ■

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Narcotics team arrests four on drug charges

By Miranda Simon

Special to the Almanac

Menlo Park police arrested four men last week in two separate incidents on drug-related charges in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. Three were arrested on suspicion of possessing narcotics for sale and a fourth on suspicion of possessing narcotics paraphernalia.

The Menlo Park arrests were made Feb. 2 after officers with the Narcotics Enforcement Team, responding to complaints of drug dealing in the 1200 block of Windermere Avenue in Belle Haven, found four men standing next to a parked car containing over a pound and a half of marijuana, a small portion in plain view. The drug's street value was about \$6,000, said Sgt. Eric Cowans of the Menlo Park Police Department.

Manuare Hernandez, 26, of Menlo Park was arrested on charges of possession and transportation of marijuana for sale, Sgt. Cowans said. Israel Mora, 35, of Menlo Park, who was on probation, was arrested on suspicion of possessing narcotic paraphernalia, police said.

Sgt. Cowans said they may make more arrests in relation to this case.

"Generally when somebody is in possession of that much marijuana, it is definitely going to be connected to a much larger operation because he has to have purchased it from someone else," he said, adding that complaints of drug trafficking in the Belle Haven area — though ongoing — has increased in the past three weeks.

East Palo Alto

Arresting the two men in Menlo Park was simple compared to one of the arrests in East Palo Alto, Sgt. Cowans said. In Menlo Park, he said, "We pulled up, we made contact. The marijuana

was pretty much in plain view. Nobody gave us a hard time."

East Palo Alto was a different story.

Officers with the Menlo Park Narcotics Enforcement Team had been patrolling in the area on Feb. 1 when they attempted to make contact with a man who was on probation, Sgt. Cowan said.

"When we tried to contact him, he was on a bicycle, committing a vehicle code violation — riding on the wrong side of the street," Sgt. Cowans said.

When police approached him, he fled on foot, pushing over a small child standing in the driveway of a nearby home, Sgt. Cowans said.

The man led police in a chase

through several backyards before he was caught in the 1100 block of O'Connor Street in East Palo Alto, he said.

Jeffery Hamilton, 24, of San Leandro was arrested on charges of possession and transportation of cocaine base for sale, and resisting arrest, police said. He was booked into San Mateo County jail.

Following up on the arrest of Mr. Hamilton, police returned to the same location on Feb. 2 and arrested Gary Gates, 49, of East Palo Alto on charges of probation violation and possession of cocaine base for sale, police said.

"A lot of times we like to go back after the arrest to find things that were out there that we might have missed. You might find a witness," Sgt. Cowans said. "In this case, we wanted to make more photographs of the location, and, when we were pulling up to the location, (the suspect) was standing outside."

The arrest of Mr. Gates is unrelated to the arrest of Mr. Hamilton, Sgt. Cowans said. ▀

Report of mountain lion sighting

A mountain lion was spotted near a golf course in unincorporated San Mateo County near Woodside on Friday afternoon, Feb. 4, according to San Mateo County officials.

The animal was spotted at about 1:25 p.m. near the Elks Lodge at the Emerald Hills Golf Course at 938 Wilmington Way, officials said.

People who see a mountain lion are advised to not approach it, especially if the cat is feeding or with offspring.

County officials recommend that people keep a close watch on small children and avoid hiking or jogging at dawn, dusk or night.

Go to keepmewild.org for more information about mountain lions.

Ungainly device protects water supply

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Compared to its cousins the fire hydrant and the garden faucet, the waterline backflow preventer is ungainly and unfortunately named, but what's in a name? The backflow preventer guards the public's drinking water from contamination from homes, businesses and institutions.

Reverse flow is the problem. In a serious house fire, for example, firefighters could draw so much water out of the water main that stagnant water in residential wells or sprinkler and irrigation systems might be sucked into the public main. Enter the backflow preventer, a pipe with one or more check valves that prevent flow reversal.

But do the preventers with their prominent pipes and valves need to stand out so in the natural landscape, the Woodside Town Council wanted to know. The council at its Jan. 25 meeting discussed a zoning code amendment to allow them in setbacks. Representatives from the California Water Service Corp. and the Woodside Fire Prevention District attended.

"There are some ugly ones in the town," Denise Enea, fire marshal for the district, admitted.

Because they have such a vital role, the law requires that preven-



Photo by Neal Wilcomer

This residential backflow preventer, with a three-quarter-inch pipe, "is at the top of the backflow field right now," said Neal Wilcomer, who owns No Irritation Irrigation Landscape in Palo Alto.

ters be above ground, near the road and inspected annually. Proximity to the road allows the public to see leaks and call the water company, said Tony Carrasco, manager of Cal Water's Bear Gulch district, which provides drinking water to Woodside, Portola Valley, Atherton and Menlo Park.

Cal Water prefers that the devices be as close to the main as possible, which means at or near the property line, Mr. Carrasco said. The preventers can be moved further in but only if the buried water line connecting to the main is made inaccessible with a thick jacket of concrete or

a sturdy metal or PVC sleeve.

Such protection discourages ambitious plumbers looking for a place, any place, to tap in — a nagging problem, apparently. "Maybe that would deter them," Mr. Carrasco said in an aside. "Maybe they would communicate with the homeowner a little bit more."

Roads with a view

Opinions differed as to the impression made by backflow preventers from the perspective of a passing vehicle.

"These things are not that big," said Councilman Dave Tanner, a builder.

"They are. They're huge," said Councilman Peter Mason, an architect.

Ninety percent of Woodside homes use water lines of 2 inch diameter or less, said Cal Water Assistant District Manager Paul Molder, but there are estates that need larger pipes. Shielding options include landscaping, fabric jackets and fake rocks.

In considering the appropriate setback, the council discussed linking the maximum distance from the road to the size of the water line. Pipes of up to 2 inches in diameter could have up to 10 feet, while larger ones could be allowed 25 feet to 30 feet.

"The key thing here is we don't want them right on the road," Councilman Dave Burow said.

Which houses will require one? Cal Water tends to want them on sites that can expose water to contaminants. Examples include an unapproved well or any container in which water can become stagnant, including swimming pools and fire sprinkler and irrigation systems, Mr. Carrasco said.

"Nothing from the (state) Department of Health indicates that every property will need one," he told the council. "If we see somebody that has a well and no device, we will contact them and work with them and educate them." ▀

Portola Valley planning manager recovering from serious head injury

Leslie Lambert, the planning manager for the town of Portola Valley, is on extended medical leave to recover from a serious head injury that came as a result of a fall at home in Mountain View on Jan. 21, Town Manager Angie Howard told The Almanac today (Feb. 1).

No bones were broken but she suffered a serious concussion, Ms. Howard said. "Her prognosis is good," she added. "They expect her to recover fully, but they have no idea how long it's

going to take."

"Her smile (and attitude) is what makes her the heart of Town Hall," Mayor Ted Driscoll said in a call informing the Almanac of Ms. Lambert's situation. "She is friends with every person in town. We want people to know why she is not returning their calls."

— Dave Boyce


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Emmett John Murphy

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In loving memory of Emmett John Murphy, born January 25, 1922 in San Francisco, CA and entered the House of the Lord on February 3, 2011 at the age of 89.

He was pre-deceased by his wife of 40 years, Helen Kirkish Murphy and is survived by their three sons, Emmett, Richard, and David, their three wives, Lila, Mimi, and June, and six grandchildren, Kevan, Samuel, Marshall, Ellen, Kaitlyn, and Garrett, and his loving life partner of 14 years, Erna Daley.

A peninsula resident for 75 years, Emmett was a graduate of Sequoia High School in Redwood City and the University of California at Berkeley in 1947. He served in the US Army Air Corp during WW II (1942 – 1945) and was imprisoned for 14 months in a German POW camp.

Emmett was a professional engineer for 40 years, working for a number of companies which took him to many countries throughout his career.

He was an avid fisherman, loved the outdoors, enjoyed travel, and a reader of military history.

A funeral service was held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church located at 178 Clinton Street in Redwood City, CA on February 7th. In lieu of flowers, Emmett has requested donations be made to the Living Memorial Fund of St. Peter's Church or charity of your choice.

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'Conservation speaks to our soul'

Mark Plotkin speaks to Woodside-Atherton Garden Club

By Kate Daly
Special to the Almanac

Conservationist Mark Plotkin came to Portola Valley recently to share his message with several hundred women from garden clubs all over the Bay Area. As an ethnobotanist who makes a living out of studying cultures, plants and their relationship, he acknowledged, "You're my kind of people ... conservation is something that speaks to our soul."

The Woodside-Atherton Garden Club hosted his talk and invited five other clubs to join at Woodside Priory in Portola Valley on Jan. 18.

Mr. Plotkin has studied at Harvard, Yale and Tufts, earned a Ph.D., and worked in the past for the World Wildlife Fund and Smithsonian Institution. In 1996, he co-founded Amazon Conservation Team, a nonprofit based outside of Washington, D.C., with field offices in Brazil, Columbia and Suriname.

The organization's goal is to

preserve the Amazon by working with indigenous people. One of ACT's major thrusts is to focus on the plants in the rain forest because they are such a valuable source of medicine and food. Mr. Plotkin pointed out how popular items such a coffee and chocolate originated in the tropics, and stated, "Eighty percent of our antibiotics come from nature."

ACT is involved in many different projects. In Brazil, Mr. Plotkin said, his group is trying "to protect the plants by working with the Indians; these are your park guards, the people who know the plants. They have extensive ecological knowledge."

ACT is helping train the locals to be park guards.

So far, Mr. Plotkin said ACT has worked with 32 tribes covering



Mark Plotkin

over 70 million acres of rain forest. In one project ACT is teaching the locals how to use computers to map their land to help establish boundaries and keep track of natural resources. Google Earth Outreach is involved, too.

In another project, ACT is seeking to support shamans and their traditions of using healing plants. "Shamans are the glue that hold the culture together," Mr. Plotkin said.

He spoke about his own mother's experience with pain and seeing a shaman. After the shaman touched her, he promised to mix a potion. A little while later she had her blood pressure measured and it had dropped and the pain had subsided. "The healing is about plants and magic and the spiritual world and placebos."

Mr. Plotkin's books include "Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice" and "Medicine Quest: In Search of Nature's Healing Secrets." ■

Visit amazonteam.org for more information about ACT.

Menlo Park Rotary announces grants

A program for training service dogs for veterans and a system for providing academic skills to foster children have received grants from the Rotary Club of Menlo Park.

Two grants of \$5,000 each will go to Paws for Purple Hearts and CASA, the Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children of San Mateo County.

"We are extremely pleased to support these two projects, which were selected after considerable due diligence by our members," says Eric Hartwig, Rotary Club president.

Paws for Purple Hearts began two years ago at the trauma recovery program at the Veterans Affairs medical center in Menlo Park. It provides service dogs to veterans with mobility impairments and also creates a learning opportunity for veterans to address post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms by training a service dog.

The Rotary grant to CASA will target its Academic Success project, which focuses on helping

foster children counter the long odds against them in the education system.

Between one-fourth to one-half of foster children are placed in special education programs, compared to about 10 percent of the general population, according to the Rotary. About one-third of foster children have five or more mid-year school changes, which typically costs a child four to six months of progress, according to the Rotary report.

The CASA program covers many of the same communities served by the Rotary Club of Menlo Park: Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, Atherton, and Redwood City.



John Ragosta accepted the check for CASA.

Deadline for property tax reduction

Property owners in San Mateo County have until Feb. 15 to apply for a property review through the county's "Decline in Value" program, says county assessor Mark Church. If a property's market value is less than its assessed value, the property is eligible for temporary tax relief.

To apply for a review, property owners may complete the online

request form on the assessor's website, download and print the request form on the website, call the office and ask for a form by mail, or visit the office. The review is free of charge.

Go to smcare.org for more information. The telephone is 363-4500. The office of Mark Church is at 555 County Center in Redwood City.

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Dr. Bortz speaks on 'New Medicine'

Dr. Walter Bortz of Portola Valley will speak on his new book, "New Medicine: The Science and Civics of Health," at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 9, at Kepler's bookstore, 1010 El Camino Real in Menlo Park.

In the book, Dr. Bortz focuses on why he thinks American medicine is spiraling toward disaster. He argues that the financial interests of biotech and drug companies have distorted the healthcare system. Thanks to them, he says, medicine today is economically motivated to treat disease rather than to prevent it.



Dr. Bortz

Dr. Bortz is a clinical associate professor of medicine at the Stanford University School of Medicine and a graduate of Williams College and the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He has written extensively on the

AROUND TOWN

importance of physical exercise in promoting longevity.

'Community conversation' on foster youth

"A Night for Abigail," a "community conversation" about foster youth, will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 16, at the Menlo-Atherton Center for the Performing Arts.

Carrie Du Bois and Charlene Margot are co-chairs of the event, which will highlight the challenges facing foster children. The program will include presentations from Pat Mijanich and John Ragosta of CASA of San Mateo County (formerly Advocates for Children), Susan Herman of Help One Child, Bonnie Hansen, principal of Sequoia High School, and a panel of emancipated foster youth.

The evening is sponsored by CASA, Help One Child, Sequoia

Union High School District, and the 17th District PTA. The event is free and open to the public.

"Abigail" refers to a ward of the California Courts who was taken from her meth addict mother at birth and put into foster care. "Tonight is a tribute to Abigail and all the children like her. We hope to make these kids visible to you," says Ms. Margot.

Contact Charlene Margot at cmargot@csmcconsulting.net for more information.

'County Creations' at history museum

Visitors are encouraged to design their own game or create a robot at "County Creations" from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 12, at the San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway in Redwood City. The museum will showcase inventions by San Mateo County residents.

Craft activities are included in the admission fee of \$5 for adults and \$3 for seniors and students.

Go to historysmc.org or call 299-0104 for more information.

Visit AlmanacNews.com/calendar to see all Calendar listings.

Man robbed on Willow Road

A strong-arm robbery in a carport in the 1300 block of Willow Road in Menlo Park on Friday, Feb. 4, left a visitor from Richmond poorer by \$300 after two men held him down on the ground and stole his wallet and car keys, police said.

The victim, 24, was talking with another person when two men approached. The victim tried to run away, but one of the men tripped him and held him down while the other brandished a gun, said Menlo Park Police Department spokeswoman Nicole Acker.

They took his wallet and keys, police said. The victim suffered

cuts to his arms, police said. The men fled on foot.

Police are looking for a mustachioed 20- to 21-year-old Hispanic man about 5 feet 7 inches tall and 150 pounds. At the time of the robbery, he was wearing dark pants and a black hooded sweatshirt with a red beanie over the hood, police said.

The other suspect was described as having the same height and wearing the same type of clothing, but was thin and of unknown race, police said. This suspect had the hood of his sweatshirt drawn tightly to conceal his face, police said.

POLICE CALLS

This information is from the Atherton and Menlo Park police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

ATHERTON

Auto burglary report: 200 block of Greenoaks Drive, Jan. 30.

Fraud report: Identity theft, first block of Patricia Drive, Jan. 31.

MENLO PARK

Robbery report: Pedestrian robbed at gunpoint, no injuries, value of cash stolen is unknown, 1100 block of Willow Road, Jan. 31.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Blue bicycle valued at \$1,300 stolen, 100 block of Pine St., Jan. 31.
■ Two empty piggy banks valued at \$7 stolen, 1200 block of Carlton Ave., Jan. 29.

Grand theft report: Cell phone valued at \$400 stolen from backpack, 600 block of Willow Road, Feb. 1.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Loss estimated at \$800 in break-in and

theft of purse and cell phone, 1400 block of El Camino Real, Feb. 2.

■ Loss estimated at \$500 in break-in and theft of Apple iPod and watch, 1200 block of Madera Ave., Jan. 31.

■ Loss estimated at \$485 in break-in and theft of sunglasses and Apple iPod, 1300 block of Elder Ave., Feb. 1.

■ Loss estimated at \$280 in break-in and theft of cell phone and glasses, 2100 block of Santa Cruz Ave., Jan. 29.

WOODSIDE

Aggressive action report: Loss estimated at \$200 in vituperative exchange at tennis court in which man hitting balls to his son happened to hit and crack racket of interlocutor, 3000 block of Woodside Road, Feb. 2.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Fraud report: Loss of \$177 in unauthorized opening of cell phone account discovered while victim was applying for mortgage, 100 block of Alhambra Court, Jan. 28.

WEST MENLO PARK

Fraud report: Unauthorized attempt to open new credit card account, 1000 block of Bellair Way, Jan. 28.

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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.

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Editor at the Almanac,
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CALL the Viewpoint desk at 223-6507.

Welcome, Facebook

Menlo Park has a new friend on Facebook this week — namely founder Mark Zuckerberg and the 1,400 or so employees who will move to the former Sun Microsystems campus at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road.

The transaction is a tremendous coup for the city's business development team, which has been working with Facebook for several months to put the deal together. And even before Facebook signed a 15-year lease for the property, the city guided the company through the purchase of two buildings on Constitution Avenue a few blocks away from the 1-million-square-foot Sun property, which was purchased by Oracle when it acquired Sun in April 2009.

With more than 500 million users around the world, it is difficult to estimate how much higher Facebook's incredible trajectory can go. At this stage, the company operates with relatively few employees, about 1,400 in Palo Alto and a few hundred others at locations around the world, but real estate manager John Tenanes said that if more employees are needed, the company could fit up to 3,500 on the Sun campus and add nearly as many on Constitution Drive if necessary.

But such numbers are likely years away. For now, the company said it is looking forward to working with city officials to allevi-

ate as much traffic to the campus as possible. Using shuttles, bikes and buses, the Palo Alto campus has been able to take 42 percent of its workers out of single- occupancy vehicles and plans to do the same or better in Menlo Park.

And even before employees move over from Palo Alto, Facebook will host a design charette March 5 to hear ideas about what could be done with the unused space at the two properties. Housing, retail and more company offices are all possibilities, Mr. Cline said, noting that Belle Haven "needs their own services that they can walk to."

A tax assessment of the property is under way but not complete, according to county officials, although the prior value of \$355.4 million is likely to drop substantially, given that the deal is said to be \$100 million. Facebook will pay taxes to the county on personal property like computers, office furniture and other equipment, although the amount should not be appreciably different from what was paid by Sun.

Looking ahead, Facebook will attract other companies to settle in Menlo Park, perhaps at sites on Constitution Drive. And as the premier social networking company in the world, Facebook is likely to launch an initial public offering for stock in the not too distant future. After a recent deal with Goldman Sachs, the company was said to be valued at \$50 billion or more, so if there is a stock sale, it is likely to make many of its employees very wealthy — and perhaps interested in moving to Menlo Park.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac



Atherton Heritage Association

Our Regional Heritage

This 1955 aerial view shows the recently completed Menlo-Atherton High School campus amid a forest of trees on the old Donohoe Estate known as Holm Grove. Middlefield Road extends left to right at center, with Ravenswood entering from below and Ringwood skirting the campus at right.

Manager: City staff aims to inform public

By Glen Rojas

In reading last week's Viewpoint I thought it important to clarify a few points in order to clearly identify the intent of our remarks during the recent study session referenced in the editorial.

The Viewpoint concludes that "rather than look for ways to reduce communication with the media, we urge the City Council and administration to brainstorm ways to be more forthcoming with those who are simply doing their job by informing the public about their city government."

My comments and those of staff during the budget meeting were part of a dialog with the council regarding our desire to be more focused and efficient with our time and not to hold back information from the media or the public. My choice of examples to demonstrate this

effort could have been better. I was attempting to make the point that if we stay focused on the priority issues, we can be more effective and efficient with all interested parties with the resources we have.

We work hard to keep communication lines open with the public through our Menlo FocusNewsletter, the City Council e-mail distribution list, press releases, public notices, individual e-mails and responses to press inquiries.

Please keep in mind that the discussion during the study session was not about how we can avoid communicating with the public, but about how we

can become more efficient and focused so we can better serve the public, which includes keeping them informed.

An example of our need to focus is one that you cite in the Viewpoint. Cherise Brandell was originally hired by the city to head up our community engagement process, but due to reduced staffing levels she has now taken on the role of community services director. In an effort to make sure we don't lose our ability to implement community engagement practices, it is imperative that she stay focused on the priority services, programs and projects.

My hope with this note is to emphasize that city staff highly respects the public's right to know what is going on with their government and we take our responsibility to be responsive very seriously.

Glen Rojas is city manager of Menlo Park.



GUEST
OPINION

regret not having made it clear that my comments on the Saltworks project were strictly personal and did not imply endorsement by the South Skyline Association.

Kenneth R. Broome P.E.
Rocky Creek Road, Woodside

Valley meadow is no place for a barn

Editor:

Last week's photo and article on "no" to barn in Portola Valley meadow was a real shock to see and I am so glad you alerted valley residents of one couple's desire to build something where it shouldn't be built.

I have lived in the valley for 42 wonderful years and every time I drive or ride my bike around the curve on Portola Road going northwest and see the meadow I smile and feel a sense of pride that no one has felt a need to build anything on that property and have left it the gorgeous icon it is and, hopefully forever will be.

Commissioner Alexandra Von Feldt expressed my feelings, and I'm sure those of most other Valley resident, when she stated, "I don't think I'll ever be satisfied with a building in the meadow," noting its conflicts with the "scenic corridor citation in the general plan and its proximity to an earthquake fault."

If someone has enough money to own 229 acres in Portola Valley they can certainly build on a piece of that property that will hide their barn, cabana, greenhouse, etc., from the public eye and preserve the meadow for all posterity. There is so little open space left in the valley and we must fight to save it. Please keep

us informed.

Ron Wilson
Bear Paw, Portola Valley

Tough year for meat, dairy and egg industries

Editor:

This has not been a good year for the meat, dairy, and egg industries.

In January, ABC News provided extensive coverage of cow abuse by the dairy industry. The BP oil spill in April called attention to an even larger Gulf "dead zone" caused by the massive amounts of animal waste dumped every day by the Mississippi River. A month later, a U.N. report urged a global shift toward a vegan diet to reduce world hunger and climate change.

In June, the FDA asked factory farms to stop routine use of antibiotics that lead to drug-resistant bacterial infections in humans. August witnessed the largest ever recall of more than half a billion eggs harboring Salmonella.

Finally, this month, President Obama signed into law the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act to replace fatty animal products and other junk foods in school lunches and vending machines. According to the School Nutrition Association, 65 percent of U.S. schools now offer vegetarian lunch options.

Make a delayed New Year's resolution and follow suit. I found a great website at LiveVegan.org with recipes and tons of other useful info.

Malcolm Davidson
Encinal Avenue, Menlo Park

LETTERS

Our readers write

Saltworks comments are not association's position

Editor:

I wish to clarify my presentation to the Woodside Town Council on Jan. 25 as reported by Dave Boyce in The Almanac.

My comments regarding the Cargill Saltworks project in Redwood City were strictly personal and had not been discussed with the board of directors of the South Skyline Association. At the council meeting I introduced myself as a member of the South Skyline board but said I was attending primarily to request the inclusion of traffic safety issues on Highway 84 in the revision to the town's General Plan, which was also on the agenda and was strongly supported by the SSA.

Since I had personally been discussing the Saltworks project with the developer and with the Redwood City Planning Commission, I thought it would be of interest to the Woodside Council to hear about my suggestions to use the berm needed to prevent flooding from rising sea levels as a roadbed for the proposed high-speed train.

In such an arrangement, high-speed trains could avoid using the Caltrain tracks and move away from present population centers. New residents of the Saltworks development would already be aware of the proximity of the high-speed train and might even appreciate a nearby station. I

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