



Maurice Ghysels named superintendent of Menlo Park City School District. *Page 3*

The Almanac

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

MAY 11, 2011 | VOL. 46 NO. 37



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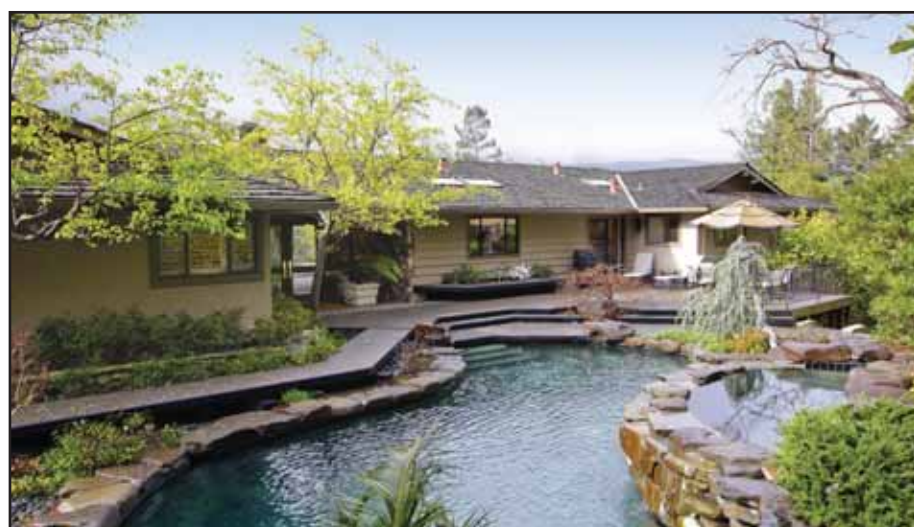
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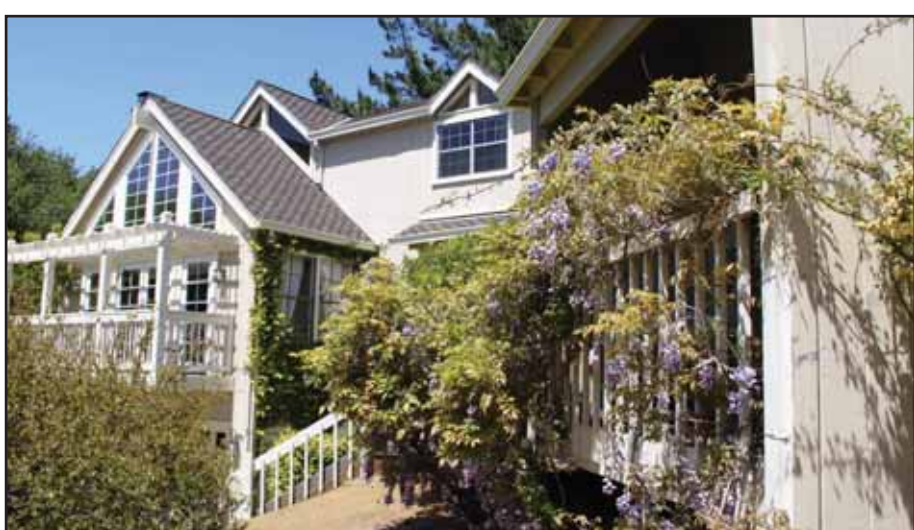
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Ghysels named schools superintendent

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Maurice Ghysels, the superintendent of the elementary school district in Mountain View for five years and, for the last 10 months, an administrator in the Santa Clara County Office of Education, has been named the new superintendent of the Menlo Park City School District, effective July 1.

School board President Maria Hilton announced the appointment in an email to district families on May 6, saying Mr. Ghysels “possesses an impressive depth of educational and business leadership experience and a demonstrated passion for excellence.”

Mr. Ghysels will replace Ken Ranella, who began his tenure as district superintendent in 2002 and announced his retirement, effective June 30, in January.

The board still must ratify the contract — and is set to do so on May 10 — but until that happens, the district won’t disclose Mr. Ghysels’ salary and benefits, Mr. Ranella said.

Mr. Ghysels, who was one of six finalists for the position, has since last July served as the chief schools officer for the Office of Education in Santa Clara County, managing a staff of 1,400 providing services to about 50,000 students in 32 districts, according to Ms. Hilton’s prepared statement.

Before taking that position, he was superintendent of the Mountain View Whisman School District, beginning that job in 2005. The end of his tenure there was overshadowed by a controversy that brewed over his romantic relationship with a principal of one of the schools he oversaw. He and the principal, Carmen Mizell, were married to other people and were in the process of filing for divorce when they informed the school board of their relationship.

The announcement in 2009 caused an outcry by some members of the school community, some of whom complained that

a conflict of interest existed, particularly in light of Ms. Mizell’s transfer in 2008 to a high-performing school, according to an Oct. 26, 2009, article in the

Maurice Ghysels is expected to take over as superintendent of the Menlo Park City School District in July.



Mountain View Voice. Other parents and community members stated their continuing support for both the superintendent and the principal, the Voice reported.

After informing the school board of the relationship, Mr.

gating Mr. Ghysels’ work history, board members “conducted extensive on-site interviews at both the Mountain View Whisman District and the (county office of education), which included many staff, administrators, parents and community members,” she said in the prepared statement.

“These individuals consistently described Dr. Ghysels as a dynamic and collaborative leader who always puts the needs of students first.”

Ms. Hilton also said that the relationship with a subordinate wasn’t the reason Mr. Ghysels left his post in Mountain View. “It’s my understanding that Dr. Ghysels had made a personal commitment to serve (the Mountain View district) for five years,” she said. During that time, she added, Mr. Ghysels created a transitional plan, grooming Craig Goldman, a principal promoted to an assistant superintendent post, to take over when he left.

Mr. Ghysels began his career as a high school teacher and principal, according to Ms. Hilton’s written statement. He went on to serve as a middle school principal, then was appointed deputy superintendent/chief operations officer of the Campbell Union School District.

His career also includes a five-year stint at Citibank, Ms. Hilton said, adding that during his years in the business world, “his responsibilities included training and professional development in executive coaching, communication skills and project management.”

Review of the superintendent appointment is on the agenda for a Tuesday, May 10, closed-session meeting. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m., and soon after the board is expected to ratify the contract with Mr. Ghysels in a public session.

At 6 p.m., the board will host a “welcome reception” for Mr. Ghysels before its regular 7 p.m. meeting. The meetings and the reception will be in the district office at 181 Encinal Ave. in Menlo Park. ■

His Mountain View tenure was overshadowed by a controversy involving a romantic relationship with a principal he supervised.

Ghysels changed district protocol to allow Ms. Mizell to report to the assistant superintendent rather than him as a way to avoid a conflict of interest, the Voice reported.

In November 2009, Mr. Ghysels informed the school board that he was looking for work outside the district, and the board publicly announced soon after that “our team has been discussing an internal succession plan for quite some time,” according to a Nov. 11 article in the Voice.

Mr. Ghysels could not be reached for comment for this story.

Ms. Hilton early this week said board members “knew about (the relationship with the principal) even prior to interviewing him,” and after “doing our due diligence” were satisfied that Mr. Ghysels’ conduct in Mountain View shouldn’t disqualify him for the Menlo Park position.

During the course of investi-

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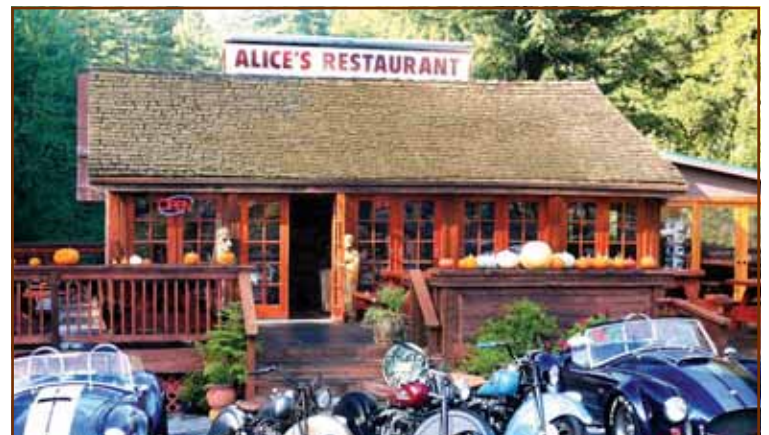
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

TOWN OF ATHERTON
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TOWN OF ATHERTON JANITORIAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES PROJECT NO. 59-55010

Notice is hereby given that proposals will be received at the office of the City Clerk, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, California 94027, until 3:00 p.m. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2011. Competitive scoring of these proposals will take place over the next week with a ranking being posted June, 9, 2011.

Janitorial maintenance services at Atherton Town Center to include the Library, City Council Chambers, Police Department, Town Administration offices, Permit Center and Public Works Corporation office per specifications.

Proposals must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "PROPOSAL of (Contractor) for TOWN OF ATHERTON JANITORIAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES, Project No. 59-55010", along with date and time of proposal due date.

Request for Proposal may be obtained at the Town of Atherton's website at www.ci.atherton.ca.us under Bid Solicitation at no cost. Additional important information is contained in Town of Atherton Standard Specifications, which are available on line at www.ci.atherton.ca.us/publicworks.html. Contractor shall be responsible for any addendums that may be posted on the Town's website. No Planholders list shall be available.

The Town of Atherton reserves the right to refuse any or all proposals.

A mandatory pre-proposal meeting and walkthrough will be held Wednesday, 10:00 a.m., May 25, 2011, in the Town Hall Council Chambers, located at 94 Ashfield Road in Atherton. The meeting will consist of two parts, first an oral presentation discussing the request for proposal and its contents and second, a walkthrough of the Town facilities reviewing the various components and janitorial needs. Failure to attend this meeting will result in a disqualification of proposal for that company.

Proposing companies are hereby notified that provisions of California Labor Code regarding prevailing wages are applicable to the work to be performed under this contract. Pursuant to Section 1773 et seq. the general prevailing wage rates have been determined by the Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations and appear in the California Prevailing Wage Rates. Copies are on file at the office of the City Engineer and are available to interested parties upon request. The successful proposal shall post a copy of the wage rates at the job site.

The successful proposer must be licensed under the provisions of Chapter 9, Division 3, of the California Business and Professions Code to do the type of work contemplated in the project at the time the contract is awarded and shall be skilled and regularly engaged in the general class or type of work called for under the Contract.

Each proposer shall submit a statement setting forth his/her/its experience and qualifications.

By submitting a proposal in response to this advertisement, the proposer shall be conclusively deemed to have read, understood and agreed with all of the information and materials contained in the request for proposal documents, including but not limited to the REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL, SAMPLE SERVICE AGREEMENT AND THE ATTACHED EXHIBITS.

Any questions regarding the project should be directed to Steve Tyler, Public Works Superintendent, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0541, preferably no later than five days before PROPOSAL due date. Requests for Information may be faxed to (650) 752-0591.

By: _____
Mike Kashiwagi, P.E. City Engineer

Date: _____

Notification of Cost of Capital (COC) Filing by California Water Service Company – Bear Gulch Service Area

On May 2, 2011, California Water Service Company (Cal Water) filed Application Error! Not a valid link. with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) asking for authority to increase its authorized Cost of Capital (COC) for the period from January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2014. If approved by the CPUC, Cal Water's authorized revenue requirement would increase by \$4,278,200, or 0.87%, company-wide. However, Cal Water is proposing that any increased revenue requirement authorized in this proceeding not be included in rates, but be used to offset savings from the 2010 Tax Act, which are being tracked in a memorandum account. The purpose of this notice is to provide information about the filing and instructions for providing input.

Cal Water's Request

Cal Water anticipates that if its proposal were adopted, revenue requirements in your service area would increase by 1.07%. However, Cal Water is not proposing to increase rates. Instead, Cal Water requests including any increased cost to offset balances in its Tax Act Memorandum Account (TAMA). The TAMA, effective April 14, 2011, tracks reduced COC due to federal tax law changes enacted in 2010. Cal Water anticipates the TAMA will be trued-up with the 2012 General Rate Case, which would change rates in 2014. The reduced cost from federal tax deductions is expected to be greater than the increase requested in the Cost of Capital Proceeding. The expected net effect is a rate decrease.

Why is Cal Water requesting an increase in authorized COC?

Cal Water believes approval of this request is necessary in order to attract the capital from investors that is needed to make investments in infrastructure that are required to provide a safe, reliable water supply.

What is COC?

The COC is the amount that Cal Water is allowed to include in rates to cover the return to stockholders for their investment in infrastructure and the long-term cost of debt.

How does the CPUC determine the appropriate COC?

The CPUC will assess the market to determine the level of returns that stockholders expect on investment in water system infrastructure and the amount of interest banks and other bondholders expect on debt. The CPUC will also determine what the appropriate mix of stocks and bonds should be.

Also, Cal Water's COC proposal is necessary in order to maintain an investment-grade rating, thereby reducing overall financing costs and better enabling Cal Water to sell bonds necessary to finance water system improvements.

Why is Cal Water doing this now?

The CPUC requires Cal Water to follow the CPUC's Rate Case Plan. The schedule in this plan requires Cal Water to file a COC application every three years.

For Further Information

Additional information may be obtained from the company's local office by calling (650) 367-6800. You may also contact the company's headquarters at 1720 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95112-4598, or by calling (408) 367-8200.

The CPUC's Process

The CPUC's Division of Ratepayer Advocates (DRA) will review the application and submit its independent analysis and recommendations in written reports for the CPUC's consideration. Other parties may also participate.

Evidentiary hearings may be held, whereby parties of record will present their testimony and be subject to cross-examination before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). These evidentiary hearings are open to the public, but only those who are parties of record can present evidence or cross-examine witnesses during evidentiary hearings.

After considering all proposals and evidence presented during the formal hearing process, the assigned ALJ will issue a proposed decision. When the CPUC issues a final decision on this application, it may adopt all or part of the ALJ's proposed decision as written, amend or modify it, or deny the Application. The CPUC's final decision may be different from Cal Water's proposal.

You may also contact the CPUC's Public Advisor's Office with comments or questions at (866) 849-8390 (toll-free) or (415) 703-2074, by e-mail at public_advisor@cpuc.ca.gov, or by mail at 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102. All comments received will be circulated to the assigned ALJ, appropriate CPUC staff, and five Commissioners. If you are writing to the CPUC, please refer to Application A. 11-05-001.

Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Trying Menlo's downtown plan on for size

■ Menlo Park to consider trial installations.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

An environmental impact report revisits an idea for the development of Menlo Park's downtown and El Camino Real that was first floated in the draft specific plan — testing proposed changes with trial installations.

The report suggests the Santa Cruz Avenue central plaza as a potential test area. Associate Planner Thomas Rogers, who oversees the specific plan process, pointed to others, including the downtown pocket parks and sidewalk extensions along Santa Cruz Avenue.

He said San Francisco and Mountain View have already put trial installations into practice, and San Carlos plans to follow suit.

The idea became so popular in San Francisco that the city created a formal permitting process to allow the community to create its own trial "parklets," as part of its Pavement to Parks program, according to the city's website. So far, they've built nine, with more to come. The city estimated the cost at \$5,000 to \$10,000 per 20-foot segment.

"I've personally checked out

several of them, and I can confirm they're pretty neat — extending a sidewalk even just a few feet can really open up the pedestrian space and create a warm, comfortable atmosphere, without significantly disrupting overall parking behavior," Mr. Rogers said in an email.

On Castro Street in Mountain View, he continued, the parallel parking spaces were designed to be level, so that restaurants could easily add outdoor seating. "I think many are more or less permanent at this point, but if a restaurant closes down and is replaced by some other retail, the planters can be removed very easily and the space used for parking again."

The idea met with approval from an unlikely source — Nancy Couperus, otherwise known as the driving force behind the Menlo Park Downtown Alliance, a group of around 118 merchants and property owners concerned about the specific plan.

"I would like to see this considered for all of the changes being proposed because it would allow the public and businesses to judge whether or not these changes actually are 'improve-



Photo courtesy of the city of Menlo Park

A trial sidewalk expansion in San Francisco's Noe Valley neighborhood is an example of what might be tried in Menlo Park as part of its downtown plan.

ments' before they are made permanent," Ms. Couperus said.

Since the environmental impact report is just now circulating in public, it could be years before the city implements the specific plan. Mr. Rogers predicted that testing proposed changes would wait

until the council takes action on the final report. He said that San Francisco's experience indicates that trial installations don't require full California Environmental Quality Act certification at first, because they can feasibly be dismantled to return the site to its original

state.

If Menlo Park decides to leave them in place, they would ultimately need review, although that could be as simple as a negative declaration stating there's no evidence the installation has a significant environmental impact, he explained. ■

Stanford offers Menlo more money for hospital expansion

■ Menlo Park must promise not to sue Stanford.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Stanford and Menlo Park continue to negotiate how much the university should pay to ease traffic snarls induced by its proposed hospital expansion.

The \$3.5 billion project would bring about 1.3 million square feet of new development and more than 2,200 new employees to Palo Alto by 2025. But it could also add an estimated 10,000 new daily car trips to the area, with 51 percent of the traffic passing through Menlo Park.

The university initially offered \$312,000 as a one-time payment to Menlo Park as a "fair share contribution" toward traffic mitigation. That figure has now risen

to \$3.7 million, which includes \$2.4 million with the flexibility to be used for infrastructure and community improvements instead of just traffic solutions.

Instead of paying a lump sum, Stanford agreed to disperse the money in three payouts — one third after final project approval, and the remaining amounts estimated to arrive in 2013 and 2018, respectively, as triggered by permit issuances.

In exchange, Menlo Park would agree to spend \$290,000 before 2018 to install adaptive traffic signals at the intersection of Middlefield Road with Willow Road and also Ravenswood Avenue. Another \$1 million would fund traffic improvements

See STANFORD, page 8

Dave Pine has been around the block

■ New supervisor is old hand at politics.

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Dave Pine, a former corporate attorney and a longtime part-time politician — he held elected office at age 19 — beat out five other candidates for a seat on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in the May 3 election, but it was not a walk in the park.

"It certainly doesn't get much tougher than this one. I feel very fortunate," Mr. Pine told the Almanac, referring to the narrow margins by which he bested candidates Richard Holober and Gina Papan.

The month-long, all-mail election ended May 3. The turnout for the county-wide election was 26 percent of the 341,303 registered voters.

Mr. Pine received 23,856 votes, or 27.8 percent of the total, followed closely by Richard Holober with



22,300 and Gina Papan with 21,796. Because it is a special election, there is no runoff.

Of the other candidates, Terry Nagel ended up with 8,683, Michael Stogner with 6,269, and Demetrios Nikas with 2,870.

The supervisor's seat for District 1, the northern part of the county, was vacated by Mark Church, who in November 2010 was elected chief elections officer, assessor and recorder.

Mr. Pine's annual salary will be around \$130,000, he said. He will finish the 19 months left in Mr. Church's four-year term. The next election for District 1 is a primary in June 2012. Will he run again?

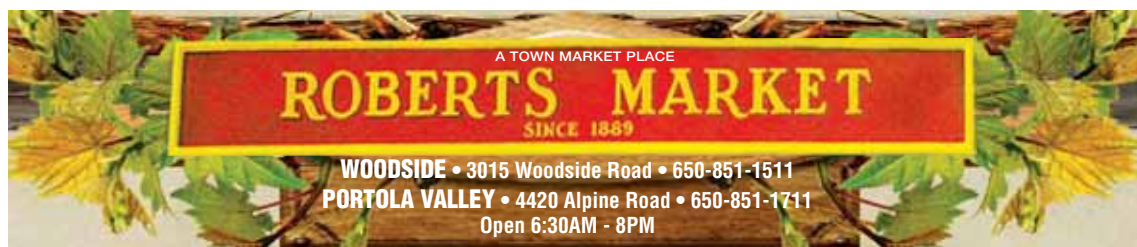
"I think this is really one of the best elected positions you can hold," Mr. Pine said. "It's very, very important work for an awful lot of people and it's very challenging. ... I feel strongly about and very committed to spending the next 12 years working to make a difference."

Who is Dave Pine?

At the age of 52, Mr. Pine's career can be summed up as 18 years as a corporate attorney sandwiched in between stints in elected office.

At 19, he began a two-year term in the New Hampshire House of Representatives. A small fish in a big legislative pond in a small state, he said. New Hampshire today has a population of 1.3 million and a House of 400 members — one for every 3,250 people, according to the secretary of state's office. In the California state Assembly, the ratio

See PINE, page 8



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Proposal: Freeze pay for police sergeants

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

It's hard to think of a more hot-button topic in Menlo Park right now than public employee pensions. As the result of a new dedication to transparent labor negotiations, the city released a memo outlining proposed terms for a renewed contract with the Menlo Park Police Sergeants Association two weeks in advance of the contract going before the council for approval on May 24.

The proposal would freeze the salaries of Menlo Park's eight sergeants for two years. The previous contract provided an average 3 percent pay raise every six months since January 2009.

Four sergeants who work patrol shifts would see their annual patrol hours cut by 104, which the staff report estimates would save \$36,000. Automatic health benefit increases, where the city would pay 85 percent of any increase, also got the ax.

For new hires, the union agreed to provide pension benefits using a “3 percent at 55” formula based on the average of the highest three years' salary. The staff report notes that as many as six new sergeants may be hired by 2012 as older officers retire. According to the police department, all eight of the current sergeants were promoted from within the organization, and have served six to 30 years in Menlo Park, with an average of 18 years.

Do the changes represent actual savings? Ed Moritz, one of the driving forces behind the pension reform initiative passed in November, isn't sure. Describing the staff report as deficient in several critical areas, he asked the city to provide a comparison of pay levels between the sergeants and FBI employees. “The Council asked for this in the opening discussion in early April. It's disappointing the staff seemed to have ignored this direct Council request,” he said in an email. “It's the only way the public will know what pay level is reasonable and competitive.”

Other areas he'd like to see explored are reducing the percent value between pay steps — currently at 5 percent — or a promise to take no steps for the duration of the two-year contract; increasing employee pension contributions; and discussing sick leave, which the report fails to include.

The proposal does increase employee pension contributions from 9 to 12 percent, with an estimated annual savings of \$39,000. Mr. Moritz suggested that should be even larger, saying that the sergeants are among the highest paid employees and will receive the highest retirement benefits. “At the same time the city portion will be 21% and is projected to rise to over 30% in the next several years,” he wrote, based on CalPERS projections for police employees.

Go to tinyurl.com/4xtj9q3 to read the proposed agreement and staff report. ▀

Resident foils burglar with yells, claps

A resident of West Atherton responded to a suspicious noise and apparently foiled a burglary by yelling and clapping her hands after she discovered a man trying to push in the window screen in a spare bedroom at about 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 4, police said.

Looking out the window after the man, the resident told the Atherton Police Department that she saw two men, one of whom

was standing under a tree and both of whom she described as Hispanic and in their 20s. Both ran to a white truck parked near her driveway on Callado Way.

The resident watched the truck back out to the Alameda de las Pulgas, but did not see in which direction they headed, police said.

The suspect pushing in the screen was short and had an average build, police said.

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Council greenlights staff, spending cuts

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

ATHERTON

Major staffing and spending cuts are likely to be made soon in Atherton City Hall after the City Council, in a special meeting on Monday, May 9, gave the town's interim manager the support he was seeking to begin the difficult process.

A presentation by finance director Louise Ho early in the 8 a.m. meeting revealed sobering budgetary figures that project deficit spending of about \$856,000 in the 2011-12 fiscal year budget, assuming no salary increases and no capital improvement spending. This deficit would amount to about 8 percent of the current fiscal year's budget of \$10.6 million.

Ms. Ho also projected that the town's reserves, which have been tapped into in recent years to balance the budget, will be exhausted by 2015, offering no bail-out of the town's projected \$1.2 million deficit in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

"This is the picture of a structurally insolvent (entity)," interim City Manager John Danielson told grim-faced council members after Ms. Ho's presentation.

Noting that 80 percent of the town's costs are for labor, he said there is no way to solve the problem that could lead to bankruptcy without cutting staff. And, he said, he must do it soon to complete the 2011-12 budget, "although I don't have a final tally" on which services and employees will be affected.

Council members Jerry Carlson and Kathy McKeithen, and Mayor Jim Dobbie, told Mr. Danielson that they would support whatever cuts he felt he must make, noting that he was hired to tackle the town's growing fiscal crisis. "John, whatever you need to do, you have my support," Ms. McKeithen said. "Good luck to you and good luck to the town."

Praising Mr. Danielson's job performance and judgment since his hiring in January, Mayor Dobbie said: "He'll be

using a scalpel, not an ax. Therefore, he has my support."

Councilman Bill Widmer acknowledged that the town must take "a hard look at how we're providing services," but added that caution must be taken to retain the "institutional knowledge" that many staff members provide. "I offer my support and expertise to (help) decide what to outsource," he said.

Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis complained that the public was informed about the special meeting only days before. "I know a number of people who would have liked to be here," she said, adding that the majority of residents "have no idea" the meeting was being held. "We are remiss in the outreach" needed to inform residents, she said.

Ms. Lewis also said Ms. Ho's presentation of budget projections was "the first I've seen of these numbers."

After the meeting, Mayor Dobbie defended the schedul-

There is no way to solve the problem without cutting staff, the interim manager said.

ing of the meeting, saying that the town announced it well in advance of the 24 hours required for a special meeting. The agenda was posted and notices sent out on Thursday, May 5.

On May 5, Mr. Danielson told the Almanac the meeting had been scheduled for 8 a.m. Monday morning because of scheduling conflicts among council members. Time to complete the budget is running short, he said, so it was necessary to call a special meeting quickly to give the council "one last opportunity to say I'm on the right track" with his strategy for addressing the budget shortfall.

In addition to outright spending and staff cuts, the town also will pursue employee conces-

sions in contract talks, according to Mr. Danielson and Mayor Dobbie. All contracts, except for the police officers association's agreement, expire June 30.

But it's possible, if not likely, that the police officers' contract will be reopened. Current contract terms allow that to happen if the rate of property tax revenue-increase falls below 2 percent from the previous year — which is already the case — and the town publicly declares a fiscal crisis, Mayor Dobbie said and Ms. Ho confirmed.

A Ducky sighting

Because Monday's special meeting is certain to be followed by layoffs and spending cuts, one town resident who has followed the town's budget woes was stunned to see a police car in the detail area of Ducky's Car Wash in Menlo Park shortly after the meeting.

The resident, who asked that his name not be used, was there to get a price on having his own car detailed — which at \$180 he determined to be too much. He asked staff at the carwash what it will cost the police department for detailing the patrol car, and was told \$200 to \$250, he told the Almanac. "I couldn't believe it," he said.

The resident soon after called Mayor Dobbie, who then put a call in to the interim city manager, Mr. Dobbie told the Almanac. The mayor said he's reserving judgment until he learns more, but his initial reaction was: "It's absolutely unbelievable to me. You can get your car washed on Marsh Road for \$6."

After checking out the situation, Mr. Danielson, who has been on the job only since January, said he learned that each of the police department's patrol cars gets detail service once a year, at a cost of only \$150. The cars are driven 24 hours a day, he said, and "they get a lot of dings and scratches." The detail work helps prevent rusting and other problems.

"We keep those cars a long time, too," he 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.

MENLO PARK

Grand theft reports:

■ Loss estimated at \$5,000 in theft of three gold rings from room safe, Rosewood Hotel at 2825 Sand Hill Road, May 4.

■ Loss estimated at \$1,300 in theft of nine boxes containing iPhone, Black-

berry and Nokia cell phones, UPS Customer Center at 1355 Adams Court, May 3.

Commercial burglary report: Arrest made in thwarted attempt at shoplifting, 1010 University Drive, April 30.

Auto burglary report: Loss estimated at \$500 in break-in and theft of two Apple iPods, 500 block of Middle Court, May 5.

Spousal abuse report: Carlton Avenue, May 2.

Child protective services report: Hedge Road, May 3.

WOODSIDE

Assault report: Three victims taken to hospitals and loss estimated at \$1,500 after fight with uninvited guests at party broke two windows and other furnishings, 500 block of Kings Mountain Road, April 30.

WEST MENLO PARK

Auto burglary report: Loss estimated at \$250 in break-in and theft of GPS device from under front passenger seat, 1000 block of Valparaiso Ave., May 3.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Renting vs. Buying

Dear Monica: I am deciding whether to rent or to buy a property. My price range is in the range of \$1 million. Do you have any advice on this?

Carol B.

Dear Carol: There are several key factors that go into making this determination of whether it is better to rent or to buy. There are even calculators that you can use to analyze the pluses and minuses. These programs, many of which can be found online, will give you a good idea of when you will reach a point when buying is a better financial decision than renting. Being conservative in your assumptions is wise when doing this.

This analysis works best if you

live in an area where there is a good supply of attractive rental units and especially units that will always be available as rentals. The part of the analysis that becomes more complicated is if there is a small supply of rental units and no guarantees that you will be able to stay in a particular property indefinitely. If you have to move one or more times because the property is sold or stops being a rental, this is costly. It is also disruptive whereas if you are in a property you own, you don't have to move.

At the moment rents are rising strongly in this area while home prices and interest rates have yet to rise. If you plan to live in the area for at least five years, you should lean towards buying.

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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VERONICA TINCHER

Call (650) 289-5445 or visit
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Where age is just a number

Design upgrade coming to Woodside's website

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A makeover is coming to improve information access on the town of Woodside's website. At a cost not to exceed \$32,500, a contractor will upgrade the appearances and usability of the web pages, town staff told the Town Council recently.

The design of the current website is, at the very least, old, and can be hard to use, particularly for first-time visitors. Within background shades of dark green, for example, are links of deep blue that turn deep purple and all but disappear when they're clicked on.

Such awkwardness will be gone, Assistant Town Manager Kevin Bryant assured Mayor Ron Romines.

Heading up the redesign will be aHa! Consulting Inc. of Lake Oswego, Oregon, the vendor recommended by an ad hoc subcommittee and approved by the council in 5-0 vote April 27. Councilwomen Anne Kasten and Deborah Gordon were absent.

The redesign and launch are expected to take three to four months. The project will include a four-hour design workshop for a volunteer advisory team from the community to "ensure that users of the website are represented," Mr. Bryant said.

There will be limits. While changes may be extensive, they will be cosmetic. The depth and breath of the website's information is and will remain a responsibility of Town Hall staff, but without the now-needed assistance of an Internet technology consultant, Mr. Bryant said.

But the changes should be empowering. The new design should make finding information easier for visitors and updating the information easier for town staff, he said.

Twenty-one design firms with estimates ranging from \$6,000 to \$88,000 responded to the town's request for proposals, Mr. Bryant said in a staff report. The winner was chosen in part because the website will be rebuilt using a foundation of open-source software.

This is advantageous because an open-source foundation tends to be more stable and have fewer bugs than what brand-name corporations sell. Why? Because it's supported on a master website by what is usually a wide base of programmers who tend to a) be enthusiastic and talented, b) work well in groups, c) give willingly of their time, and d) work for free.

If a subsequent maintenance contract with aHa! or some other vendor were to go south, it should be no problem finding another contractor familiar with the foundation software. "Within 50 miles, there (will be) probably 100,000 people" who know the software, said Councilman Dave Burow, an entrepreneur and member of the ad hoc subcommittee.

The clients of and references for aHa! were uniformly positive in complimenting the company on its performance both before and after the launch of the clients' websites, Mr. Bryant said in the report. ■

Links

- Go to woodsidetown.org to see the website as it is now.
- Go to tinyurl.com/WS-website and turn to Page 73 to view the staff report and the winning proposal.

STANFORD

continued from page 5

throughout the city, not limited to those spelled out in the hospital's environmental impact report.

Money-back guarantee

Toward the end of the agreement, a clause asks Menlo Park to promise not to sue. If it does, all payments stop — and the city would have to refund any money already received. That also applies in the event of a third party filing a lawsuit against the project's environmental impact report.

"The idea is that the hospital doesn't want to pay all this money irrevocably, if project can't get built," said Jean McCown, Stanford Director of Community Relations.

She said that since there's only a 30-day window to file a legal

challenge, odds are the university will find out before any money is disbursed.

If the City Council approves the agreement at its meeting Tuesday, May 10., the Palo Alto Planning Commission will consider it as part of the project's entire package at its meeting the following night, and make a recommendation to present to its council in early June. ■

MEETING

The Menlo Park City Council is scheduled to discuss the new proposal on the Stanford Medical Center expansion during its meeting on Tuesday, May 10, in council chambers at the Civic Center, 701 Laurel St. The meeting starts at 7 p.m.

- Visit tinyurl.com/StanfordMP-MOU to read the proposal.



Helping hands

Volunteers spread bark and set protective netting around seedling oak trees at Sharon Hills Park in Menlo Park as part of the Mormon Helping Hands program April 30. Thousands of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout California participated in community service projects on that day, said spokesman Bryant McOmber. On the Midpeninsula, some 400 volunteers donned yellow vests to give back to their communities, he said.

PINE

continued from page 5

is 1:400,000.

Mr. Pine's legal career started with five years as a corporate attorney for Palo Alto-based Fenwick & West, an online biography says. His next three positions were as vice president and general counsel: at Radius Inc., Excite@Home and Handspring Inc., all located in the Bay Area.

Stock options allowed him to retire in 2003, when he was elected to the board of the Burlingame School District. In 2007, he ran for and won a seat on the board of the San Mateo Union High School district.

Independent voice

San Mateo County is facing a deficit of as much as \$80 million for the budget year that begins July 1. Mr. Pine's admits that his influence may be marginal this time around, but he is maintaining assertions that change must come to county government.

Among his concerns: the ratio of county managers to employees, said to be higher than in neighboring counties, and the comparatively generous use of county vehicles by employees.

(Go to davepine.com to examine Mr. Pine's position papers.)

County management defends the management-employee ratio as not as out of balance as it seems, Mr. Pine said. "I will spend quite a bit of

time to get a complete understanding of this," he said. "There seems to be some strong evidence that the management (population) is too big."

As for county vehicles, a 2010 grand jury report said that spending should be cut. County Manager David Boesch, in a December 2010 memo to the Board of Supervisors, wrote that such cuts are "not the

Belt-tightening would send a 'powerful message' to county employees 'that we are in very different times,' says Dave Pine.



answer to solving the structural budget deficit problem."

The savings may be modest, Mr. Pine told the Almanac, but belt-tightening of this kind would send a "powerful message to the entire organization to make sure people realize that we are in very different times."

The priorities need to be examined, he said, if sheriff's deputies are due for a raise while spending on youths are in line for cuts. "I'm the new guy on the block (but) I want to challenge that," he said. "My record in public service is very much one of an independent voice."

Independent financing

In claiming an independent voice and trying to get the atten-

tion of 341,000 voters, it helps to have one's own resources. Mr. Pine said he spent \$565,000 on his campaign, supported in large part by corporate stock options that allowed him to use \$435,000 of his own money.

The other \$130,000 came from 400 donors, Mr. Pine said, including \$2,200 from unions representing electricians and the building trades.

In 57 of California's 58 counties, supervisors are elected by residents of their districts. San Mateo County is alone in requiring supervisors to run county-wide. Such at-large elections inculcate a broad perspective, its defenders say.

In 2010, a committee of volunteers reviewing the county's charter recommended that voters weigh in on at-large elections, but in July, four of the five supervisors chose to not put the question on the ballot.

Mr. Pine, a member of the review committee, voted not only to give voters a voice in this but recommended switching to by-district elections.

"I'm probably the most outspoken advocate for by-district elections in the county," he said, but added that he would need two more supervisors to agree with him.

A lawsuit to overturn the board's decision was filed by the Bay Area chapter of the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights. ■

Arrested development on Terminal Avenue

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

School or homes? The Menlo Park City Council revisits that question on Tuesday, May 10, when it's scheduled to discuss whether to let Beechwood School, a private Belle Haven facility for K-8, buy a 1.5-acre parcel on Terminal Avenue.

For the past nine years, Habitat for Humanity had wanted to build 12 to 22 affordable homes on the site, but community opposition stalled development until the nonprofit finally pulled the plug, according to a letter sent to the city on April 29. Even without construction, the project has run up a tab: Menlo Park has already spent \$998,000 on environmental remediation to prepare the site for housing, while the nonprofit paid \$481,590 to buy an adjacent parcel to get access to the building site.

Money remains an issue — to date Beechwood hasn't offered what the council considers a fair

■ MENLO BRIEFS

price. Another problem is the scarcity of sites for affordable housing in Menlo Park, making the city reluctant to sell.

The council meeting starts at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St.

Housing and more housing

After studying the city's below-market-rate housing guidelines at the request of the council, the Menlo Park Housing Commission decided nothing needed to change, according to a staff report.

The study came after the Beltramos won approval to build 16 townhomes and an office complex at 1460 El Camino Real, in exchange for one below-market-rate (BMR) unit and a stack of fees. The city and developer haggled for months over the number of below-market-rate townhomes to be included on

the 1.54 acre site. The original plan, first approved in 2006, followed city policy by setting aside three units, but the Beltramos asked to include only one in light of declining real estate values.

The council will consider the Housing Commission's conclusions at its meeting on Tuesday, May 10, which starts at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St.

Bike to Work Day set for Thursday

To the joy of bikers and chagrin of drivers, Thursday, May 12, marks the 17th annual Bike to Work Day in the Bay Area.

From 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. local bikers will find "energizer" stations at the Willow Place, Pierce Street, and San Mateo bike bridges and the Menlo Park Caltrain station. Bike bags, brochures, and other freebies will be handed out to all riders who stop by. ■

Portola Valley: Arson suspected in SUV fire

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Emergency crews shut down a section of Alpine Road near Arastradero Road in Portola Valley late in the evening of Tuesday, May 3, to extinguish a fire inside a blue 2006 Dodge Durango.

Authorities are attributing the incident to arson after an analysis showed indications of gasoline inside the SUV, according to the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Firefighters, medics and the county's hazardous materials team were called in after Deputy Stephen Duvall, in his approach to the parked SUV at 11:40 p.m., noticed a chemical smell and saw a thick plume of smoke inside, so thick that it concealed what was going on in there, the Sheriff's Office said.

Deputy Duvall quickly backed

■ BRIEFS

away from the vehicle to avoid inhaling the fumes, but medics took him to San Mateo County General Hospital anyway as a precaution, the Sheriff's Office said. The vehicle was unoccupied and there were no injuries reported.

Deputies closed the section of Alpine Road between Westridge Drive and Arastradero Road for about two and a half hours while the crews dealt with the fire and its aftermath.

The vehicle was towed and normal traffic resumed at 2:20 a.m., the Sheriff's Office said. Authorities were unable to reach the vehicle's owner.

Deputies are asking anyone with information about this incident to call Sheriff's Office Detective Marcus Gathright at 363-7823 or the anonymous tip

line at (800) 547-2700.

Talk: Learning from failure

Looking for lessons in failure has a long history and scientist Donald Shockey will discuss this topic in the context of recent notable failures of man-made structures. This Cafe Scientifique talk for May begins at 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 10, at SRI International headquarters at Middlefield Road and Ringwood Avenue in Menlo Park.

Mr. Shockey, who is the director of the Center for Fracture Physics at SRI, will discuss projects at SRI concerned with an understanding of structural failure and how it plays into the design of better structures. His examples will range from medical devices to components for space missions.

Go to cafescisv.org for directions, information on parking, and other details. ■

Fast and furious in Menlo Park: Cops pursue stolen vehicle

A stolen car caught the attention of a Menlo Park police officer during the wee hours of Friday morning, May 6. Instead of pulling over, the driver reportedly decided to channel his inner racecar driver, with the police in pursuit until speeds over 80 mph made the officer think twice.

Once the 2004 white GMC Sierra crossed into East Palo Alto, local officers picked up the trail until finally the car crashed

into a tree in the 1700 block of University Avenue, according to police spokeswoman Nicole Acker.

A passenger ditched the car and driver, who found himself taken into custody. Gabriel Hernandez, 19, was booked into county jail for allegedly receiving stolen property, driving recklessly to escape pursuit, misdemeanor hit-and-run with property damage, resisting arrest, and driving on a sus-

pending license.

— Sandy Brundage

Correction

An incorrect telephone number was published last week in an institutional advertisement for St. Francis Center in Redwood City. The correct number for the center is 365-7829. The Almanac regrets the error.

We're Moving

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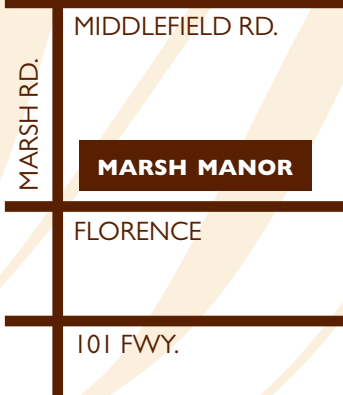
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Residents transfer from Ravenswood to Menlo Park school district

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Residents of 25 townhouses at 600 Willow Road in Menlo Park will be able to send their children to Menlo Park City School District schools after approving a ballot measure transferring their parcels from the Ravenswood City School District — a development that is “not a good financial deal” for the Menlo Park district, according to its superintendent.

The mail-in ballot was counted on May 3. Out of 35 voters, only one was opposed to the school district transfer. There are only 36 registered voters on the parcels, known as Pacific Parc.

The ballot measure — Measure D — was the last step in a four-and-a-half-year effort by Pacific Parc residents. Both the Menlo

Park and Ravenswood school districts opposed the transfer, but the state Board of Education cleared the way for it in June 2010, pending approval of voters in the small area affected, according to Peter Burchyns, special adviser to the San Mateo County Board of Education and superintendent.

With the transfer, Pacific Parc residents are getting more than access to schools with far more modern facilities and an academic program that produces significantly higher test scores and other measures of achievement. They're also getting higher tax bills. Annual parcel taxes in the Menlo Park district total nearly \$753 per parcel, compared with \$196 in the Ravenswood district — a difference of \$557. They also will pay an additional \$28 toward general obligation bonds.

Superintendent Ken Ranella of

■ SCHOOLS

the Menlo Park City School District noted that while his district will receive an additional \$18,818 per year from parcel taxes, revenue from the transfer won't begin to cover the cost of educating the additional students. That's due in part to the fact that all property tax revenue generated by Pacific Parc goes into Menlo Park's redevelopment district rather than other agencies, such as school districts, that normally benefit from property taxes.

“This is not a good financial deal for the Menlo Park City School District,” he said. “It's not like funding is coming with these children.”

Although the transfer won't take effect until July 2012, Mr. Ranella said that four children

from the transfer area are likely to be enrolled in his district's schools this August through interdistrict transfers, which parents of the children have already applied for.

He said he believes all four children will be in kindergarten in the fall, and “now that the decision (to transfer the parcels) into the district has been made, we welcome the children and families to our district.”

The Menlo Park and Ravenswood districts had convinced the San Mateo County Committee on School District Organization to reject the transfer application submitted by Pacific Parc residents in September 2006. The residents successfully appealed the decision to the state Board of Education.

In addition to the financial factor, the district opposed the transfer because it “wasn't interested in (further) increasing enrollment”

at a time enrollment was already skyrocketing with children living within the district's existing boundaries, Mr. Ranella said. Although there will be only four additional students next school year, that number is likely to grow in the future. He acknowledged, however, that the increase “is not going to be the straw that breaks the camel's back” in terms of overcrowded classrooms and campuses.

Another factor in the district's opposition was the fact that the Pacific Parc townhouses are adjacent to Willow School, which, although located in Menlo Park, is part of the Ravenswood district. The children will now have to be transported to school rather than attend classes within walking distance, Mr. Ranella noted.

Mr. Ranella also noted that the transfer further exacerbates the imbalance in “the racial distribution of the children as a whole.” The children in the transfer area are likely to be Caucasian, while “Ravenswood is pretty much a district of color,” he said. The great majority of students in the Ravenswood district are Hispanic, and the district serves many low-income and poverty-level families.

The lead petitioners for the transfer were Maria Kaval, Rob Ultan, and Kelly Blythe, according to Mr. Burchyns. The Almanac was unable to reach any of them by deadline. ■

Spring Sidewalk Sale

Saturday, May 14

10am - 6pm



Great Savings from
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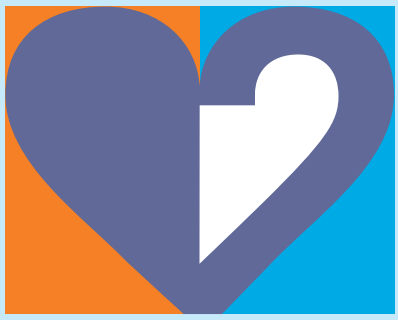
EVs receives challenge grant

Environmental Volunteers has received a \$600,000 challenge grant to support completion of its capital campaign. The grant, from a family foundation choosing to remain anonymous, will match gifts of at least \$5,000 made until Dec. 31 toward restoring the former Sea Scout building in the Palo Alto Baylands.

“Meeting the challenge will complete our capital campaign by the end of the year,” says executive director Allan Berkowitz. “The EV can be in the building in the first half of 2012.”

The boat-shaped building was designed by renowned architect Birge Clark in 1941. The building will be renamed “The EcoCenter” and become the EV's new headquarters.

Founded in 1972, Environmental Volunteers is dedicated to promoting understanding of the environment through hands-on science education.



As we celebrate two decades of care, we have two words to say: **thank you.**



Anniversaries are all about people. Pictured here are some of the employees, medical staff and volunteers who've made our 20th anniversary possible. During National Hospital Week, we salute the men and women who bring their dedication, compassion and skill to work at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital every day of the year. Their contributions are invaluable and we are grateful beyond measure.

PVs hold 'Western Bonanza' May 21

By Jane Knoerle
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

The Peninsula Volunteers, known for their spectacular parties, are heading west for "Horsin' Around," a benefit to be held Saturday, May 21, at the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy, 880 Runnymede Road in Woodside.

Along with dancing, drinking, and dining, there will be casino events and a special appearance by Krandel Lee Newton of Dallas, who is known as the original "Butt Sketcher." Since 1987, the artist has specialized in drawing folks from a rear view. There are now several "Butt Sketchers" in Dallas and, altogether, they have created 400,000 sketches, appearing at conventions, trade shows, even weddings, according to the "Butt Sketchers" website. The black and white

AROUND TOWN

sketches are created in about three minutes, says the site.

Mr. Newton is being flown in from Texas by Joe and Nancy Greenbach of Atherton. Ms. Greenbach, a past president of the PVs, hails from Dallas.

"Horsin' Around" starts at 4 p.m. with cocktails and appetizers, and then proceeds to music by the Dick Green Band, line dancing, gaming and performances by the San Mateo County Horsemen's Association Senior Color Guard, the Pacific Coast Vaulting Club, and trick roper Chryle Bacon.

After dinner, Frank Bizzarro will lead the Fund-A-Need charity auction.

Co-chairs Kimber Sturm and Terri Carville urge guests to

dress casually in jeans, sundresses, or as a famous western character. Tickets are \$175 and may be purchased by calling Cathy Duhring of Peninsula Volunteers at 326-0665, ext. 238.

Peninsula Volunteers is a pioneer in senior services and the first volunteer organization in the United States to receive a HUD grant to build low-income senior housing.

Summer concert in Portola Valley

The first Portola Valley summer concert of the season will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 12, with music by the six-piece band, A Thousand Lovers.

Residents should arrive early to find a picnic spot on the grass adjacent to the library at the

Town Center, 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley.

The free concert is sponsored by the Portola Valley Cultural Arts Committee and the town of Portola Valley.

Relay for Life in Menlo Park

The Menlo Park Relay for Life for the American Cancer Society kicks off at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 14, at Burgess Park in Menlo Park. The relay begins with the official Survivors Lap, then the rest of the participants join in.

A luminaria ceremony, remembering those lost to cancer, will be held at 8 p.m. that evening at Burgess Park. The luminaria candles are \$10 each.

Information about making a luminaria donation or walking in the Survivors Lap is available by calling 477-8879.

Woodside High dance show

Woodside High School's Dance Team, coached by Kim Harvath, will present "Le Cirque," a carnival-themed show, at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 14, and 3 p.m. Sunday, May 15, in Woodside High's Performing Arts Center, 199 Churchill Ave.

Through dance, "Le Cirque" tells the story of a controlling ringmaster and his performers as they try to escape from him and his circus. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for students and children.

Visit woodsideshs.org and enter "dance team" in search box for ticket information.

The Woodside High School Dance Team won last year's High School Dance-Off.

Mystery author at library

Janet Dawson will discuss her latest novel, "Bit Player," at a meeting of the Mystery Readers Group at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday, May 18, in the downstairs meeting room of the Menlo Park Public Library.

"Bit Player," published by Perverserance Press, is Ms. Dawson's latest P.I. Jeri Howard mystery. In flashbacks, it deals with the lives of young "bit players" in 1940s' Hollywood and with the collectors of movie memorabilia in the Bay Area.

Ms. Dawson is the author of 10 Jeri Howard mysteries.

Family Day at Hidden Villa

Visitors may try barn dancing, ride a pony, or make a cornhusk doll an "Duvneck Day" to be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 21, at Hidden Villa,

26870 Moody Road, in Los Altos Hills.

There will also be gunny sack races, crafts, live music by the County Line Pickers, and a barbecue lunch for purchase. Cost is \$10 per person.

Visit hiddenvilla.org for more information.

Conference on aging at Little House

Dr. Walter Bortz of Portola Valley will be one of five speakers at the third annual Vital Aging Conference to be held Sunday, May 22, at Little House, 800 Middle Ave., in Menlo Park.

Dr. Bortz will speak about his new book, "Next Medicine: The Science and Civics of Health."

Dr. Eric Shapira, who practiced dentistry in Half Moon Bay for more than 30 years, will be the keynote speaker. He is an educator and author of "A New Wrinkle: What I Learned from Older People Who Never Acted Their Age."

Also speaking are Dr. Moira Fordyce, a geriatrician; Kathy Berra, a specialist in cardiovascular medicine; and chef Laura Stec, who will speak about "Feeding the Mind and Soul."

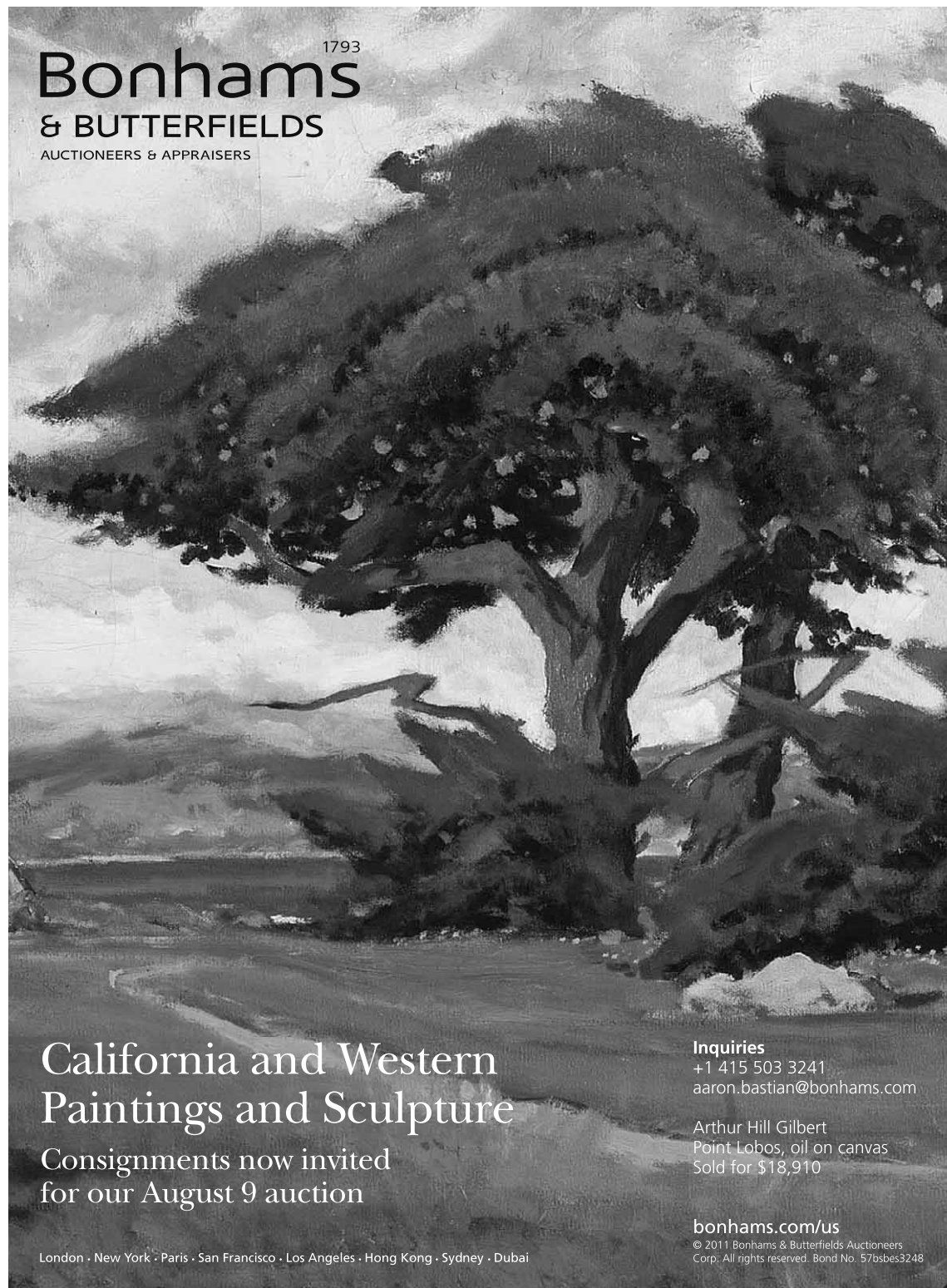
The public is invited to the conference. There is a \$5 fee for those who pre-register; \$10 at the door. The conference begins at 10 a.m. The Little House Cafe will be open for lunch, serving a fixed-price meal for \$9. To pre-register, call 326-2025.

Collectible book sale at Menlo library

A first edition of Bret Harte's "In a Hallow of the Hills," published in 1895, will be among the featured items in a collectible and special book sale, sponsored by Friends of the Menlo Park Library, to be held from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 22, at the library on Alma Street.

The sale includes books of many categories, including art, biography, history, mystery, science, children's, and more. "Book lovers will find treasures at reasonable prices, with some items as low as \$3," says Michelle Burnham of the Menlo Park Library.

The sale will be held in the library's downstairs meeting room. The library is located at 800 Alma St. in Menlo Park.



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BIRTH

Menlo Park

■ Perla GarciaPrado and Daniel Villarreal, a son, April 11, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Lori and Douglas Willbanks, a daughter, April 19, Sequoia Hospital.

Colin Charles Eldridge*Bechtel transportation engineer*

Colin Charles Eldridge, a 56-year resident of Menlo Park, died at home on April 19 after a seven year battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 91.

A graduate of Cornell University, Mr. Eldridge worked for the Burlington and Western Pacific Railroads and retired as chief transportation engineer for the Bechtel Corp.

Although he worked as a mechanical engineer, he was a practitioner of "people engineering," say family members, "helping all with his integrity and attention to detail, building friendships all over the world." He lives on in the railroads and trains he helped build and the people he befriended worldwide, they say.

Mr. Eldridge is survived by his children, Mary Joy Parker, Carol Root, Marjorie Eldridge, and David and John Eldridge; his sister, Anne Strickland Longman of Aptos, California; 13 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marian Edgar Eldridge, and eldest daughter, Wendy Eldridge Gansereit.

Lois R. Blackmarr*Music teacher*

Lois R. Blackmarr, a longtime Menlo Park resident, died April 26 of congestive heart failure. She was 93.

Ms. Blackmarr grew up in Burlingame and graduated from Burlingame High School. She received both bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Mills College.

In 1941 she married Donald D. Blackmarr, moving to Mobile, Alabama, where he served in the Coast Guard. In 1952 they moved to Menlo Park.

In addition to raising her four children, Ms. Blackmarr gave piano lessons and worked as an elementary school teacher's aide. She belonged to numerous orga-

■ OBITUARIES

nizations, including the Stanford Music Guild, the Stanford Music Library, and the Palo Alto Area Mills College Club.

She and her husband also played musical duets in local churches and senior centers. In 1975 she earned a master's degree in library science from San Jose State University. An active member of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, she volunteered in the church library for many years.

Ms. Blackmarr is survived by her children, Anatta Blackmarr Riddle, Gail Blackmarr Heim, and Philip and Richard Blackmarr; brother Atherton Mitchell, sister Alison Thompson; and five grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, Donald D. Blackmarr, who died in 2001.

Jack Ruetz*Electrical engineer*

Jack Ruetz died at his home in Woodside April 1 from prostate cancer. Mr. Ruetz, who held a doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University, had a long career at Varian Associates, where he developed microwave amplifiers for radar systems, electronic countermea-

sure and communications applications.

Mr. Ruetz was born on a farm in Remus, Michigan, in 1926. After graduating from high school in 1943, he entered the U.S. Navy, where he worked as a radar specialist in post-war Japan.

After his discharge, he attended the University of Michigan, earning bachelor and master's degrees in electrical engineering. For several years he worked at RCA in Princeton, New Jersey, before attending Stanford, where he met his future wife, Dolores.

After retiring from Varian in 1995, Mr. Ruetz spent leisure time at his house on the lake at Lake Tahoe, skiing, kayaking and enjoying his love of music, say family members.

He is survived by his wife, Dolores; sons Eric, Peter, and Matthew Ruetz; daughter Renee Stockwell; and four grandchildren.

Flight night in Portola Valley

Fans of powered flight may want to attend a celebration of model airplanes as they gracefully and quietly navigate the indoor air of Portola Valley's Community Hall at Town Center on Thursday night, May 19.

Before and after the indoor flights will be outdoor activities at the soccer field, where model planes designed for rougher outside airs will be flying. These planes, too, will be powered by batteries; planes that run on anything else are not welcome.

The outdoor activities start at 6 p.m. and adjourn to the Community Hall at 7:20 p.m. The outdoor activities resume at 8:40 p.m. and continue until 10 p.m.

Town Center is at 765 Portola

Road.

The town's Nature & Science Committee has invited several experienced indoor pilots to demonstrate their planes in flight and assist visitors of all ages in trying their hands at flying them. The event

is free and open to everyone, though children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

The press release for this event mentions "fire-

flies," apparently planes adapted for flying and being seen flying in the dark.

The Nature & Science Committee intends this event to be an educational eye-opener with respect to careers in high technology mixed in with the seeming magic of flight.

Go to tinyurl.com/PV-flight for more information.

The Nature & Science Committee intends this to be an educational eye-opener.**Leonard W. Ely**

Leonard W. Ely, a man who will be remembered for his passion for family, community, and his alma mater, Stanford University, died at 87 on April 29 in Palo Alto.

A true local, Leonard was born in Palo Alto in 1923, the son of Dr. Leonard Ely and Jessica Wilbur Ely and grandson of the University's third president, Ray Lyman Wilbur. He graduated from Palo Alto High School and flew B-24s as an Air Force pilot in the Pacific during World War II before returning to Stanford, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1948 and an MBA in 1950.

It was there that he met Shirley, who would become his wife of 63 years. The two were married in 1947 and raised two children in the house in which Mr. Ely grew up on Bryant Street.

While Leonard was a successful businessman and ran several car dealerships, it is his service to his community where he truly made an impact. A living example of one of his favorite quotes, "We make a living out of what we earn, but a life out of what we give," Leonard served on the boards of more than 30 organizations, including the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Castilleja School Foundation, Peninsula Stroke Association, and the Mid-Peninsula High School. He was repeatedly honored for his service, notably with the Palo Alto Tall Tree Award and the Spirit of Philanthropy Award from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Perhaps the honor of which Leonard was most proud, was receiving the Gold Spike Award, Stanford's highest honor for volunteer leadership service. His continuing commitment to the University is evident in the generous support he and Shirley give to the Hoover Institution and the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR). Beyond Stanford, his belief in the importance of education led him to support numerous students in various educational pursuits.

Leonard was a member of the Bohemian Club, the Menlo Country Club, and the Palo Alto Club where he enjoyed sharing his famous stories. An avid fisherman, he loved the outdoors, especially



the Sierras, where he spent time every summer throughout his life. He and Shirley also enjoyed traveling the world.

Leonard's greatest joy, as he told them often, was his family. He is survived by his wife Shirley, his son Leonard Ely III, daughter Margaret Ely Pringle, daughter-in-law Mary Ely, grandchildren Abby Pringle, David Pringle, Will Pringle and David Ely, and his twin sister Jessica Ely Hart. Leonard was preceded in death by a son David Dwight Wilbur Ely. The family is grateful to Karen EATINGER, Leonard's devoted office assistant and to Monte Fau for the outstanding care he provided over the past few years.

Leonard was surrounded by his family at Stanford Hospital in his final moments. A few hours before he passed, Mr. Ely opened his eyes and told his family, "It's been a lot of fun." That is the way he lived his life.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 2440 West El Camino Real, Suite 300, Mountain View, CA 94040, or to the charity of your choice.

A memorial service will be held at the Stanford Memorial Church on Thursday, May 26th at 4pm. Parking and shuttles will be available at Galvez Field on the corner of Galvez Street and Campus Drive.

PAID OBITUARY

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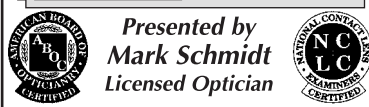
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schedule a comprehensive eye exam with an eye professional. While many schools use the Snellen eye chart (the "E" chart) to test school children's eyes, this test does little to reveal the vast majority of eye problems.

Children who wear glasses need frames and lenses that are durable and that stay in place. You can rely on MENLO OPTICAL for all your family eyewear needs. We understand the special needs of children and take the time to make sure frames are suitable to their activities and fit properly. When you visit us, you will find our prices to be most competitive to others in our community while at the same time finding our services to be excellent. Call us at 322-3900, or visit us at 1166 University Drive, on the corner of Oak Grove Avenue and University Drive.

P.S. Parents should look for squinting, short attention spans, headaches, and avoidance of close work as potential signs of vision problems among their school-aged children.

Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California. He can be easily reached at Menlo Optical, 1166 University Drive, Menlo Park. 650-322-3900.

**EYE CARE NEWS**

Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician

LOOKING FORWARD TO BETTER GRADES

When school-aged children are diagnosed as having learning disabilities, their parents should make every effort to find out if the problem is vision-related. All too often, so-called "slow learners" are unable to read words or numbers because of blurred vision or some other symptoms of poor vision. Moreover, because a child knows of nothing else with which to compare his or her vision, he or she is unaware that a problem exists. Thus, it is the responsibility of the parent to

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

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



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the web site, www.TheAlmanacOnline.com, 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 223-6507.

Downtown between a rock and hard place

Menlo Park's already controversial downtown plan got even more so with the recent release of the draft environmental impact report on the project.

Traffic projections for El Camino Real must have surprised some project supporters, who may not have been prepared to see estimates of an additional 13,385 daily car trips, including 899 during the morning commute and

1,319 during the evening ride that came with the label "significant and unavoidable environmental impacts."

Menlo Park Transportation Commissioner Robert Mueller observed, "Our city streets are already quite congested" during commute time.

The trouble with this and other findings in the draft EIR is that the city is under pressure from many residents to "do something" about the blighted area where empty automobile dealerships now stand. The plan envisions mixed use commercial and residential development along El Camino and raising allowable building heights 8 feet. If the entire plan is thrown out, it would set resolution of this problem back years and at least a portion of the \$1 million fee paid to the consultants would be wasted.

When it comes to the areas of Santa Cruz Avenue and adjacent streets, projections of more traffic also threaten to stymie any decision-making about how to

balance plans for two parking garages and other amenities with the concerns of citizens, merchants and property owners who fear the city's downtown charm will be lost.

The plan envisions redesigned parking plazas and two new parking structures plus wider sidewalks and more trees, which only adds to the fear of some residents and merchants that the old ways will be sacrificed.

Residents have had plenty of opportunities to comment on the plan at numerous public hearings. Adjustments have been made to accommodate many of the hundreds of suggestions offered.

It is clear that not all of the proposed changes will be adopted, and more importantly, few, if any, changes will be made until a developer shows interest in a project that falls within the new guidelines. For example, work on a parking structure could not begin until a design has been approved by the city and a financing plan put in place.

It is our hope that everyone interested in improving the outlook for Menlo Park's downtown will approach this plan in the spirit of compromise. It would be a tremendous setback to see the entire plan scuttled, along with the \$1 million invested.

The first Planning Commission hearing will be held June 6 at City Hall, and the public review period of the impact report runs until June 20.

Visit tinyurl.com/plan-42911 to review the draft EIR.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

TownSquare

Join the conversation on
AlmanacNews.com/square

Environmental report predicts more traffic

Posted by Martin Engel, a resident of the Park Forest neighborhood in Menlo Park:

Several years ago, a large number of Menlo Park residents affiliated by calling themselves "Residentialists." That meant that the primacy of the quality of life of the city's residents should be the highest political priority of our elected officials.

Indeed, we voted for Kelly Ferguson, Andy Cohen and Rich Cline to help sustain those values. It also meant resisting development and the intense financial ambitions of those who sought high-density, high-rise residential increases; the pro-developer advocates. We now see how well that's turned out.

Since then, we have been relentlessly plagued by pro-growth politicians and their profit-seeking supporters in the developer community.

Perhaps it's a function of being an old codger, but "livability" does not have to mean growth. It can

also mean leaving things alone and fixing what we already have.

As Ray Mueller (a member of the city's Transportation Commission) puts it so clearly, we are on a path of being inundated with traffic like we've never seen before. We are surrounded by developers and massive development projects.

Our Regional Heritage

The 1903 wedding of dry goods heir Eugene Murphy to Frances Sherwood Hopkins was a major social event in Menlo Park. Guests from up and down the Peninsula attended the ceremony at the home of the bride's sister, Mrs. Warren G. Clark.

Menlo Park Historical Association



It would seem to me that the value of Menlo Park lies not in the intention of constant expansion, but of resisting that expansion, of inhibiting traffic rather than facilitating it, of keeping buildings at their current height rather than pursuing ever higher structures and its concomitant citification.

What's so wrong with keeping our city at 30,000 occupants rather than growing to 40,000? Why is that so inherently bad?

We're here, presumably, because this is the kind of city we want to live in. Why must growth be shoved

See **TOWN SQUARE**, next page

■ TOWN SQUARE

Continued from previous page

down our throats and against our will?

Posted by 'Here We Go Again,' a resident of the Central Menlo Park neighborhood:

I could leave this earth, return 100 years from now, and I believe I would see the same old argument, again, and again, and again. No, I am not a profit-seeking politician or a profit-seeking supporter. The majority of us are very, very, very tired of looking at the mess your group has left us, years and years of mess.

The Derry Project (still run-down stores and an abandoned car wash) is five years old now? The movie theater (abandoned, and from time to time graffiti-covered) for six-plus years. The Matteson property, empty lot for five-plus years. Downtown Santa Cruz Avenue, 14 or more vacant stores, car lots (abandoned and looking worse every day) five-plus years.

Why does this have to continue? Why, with a town of 30,000 inhabitants, many of whom pay very high taxes, should we continue to put up with this unsightly mess?

No one wants a huge development, with high rises and concrete structures and all the other stuff some have said would happen. We just want an improved commercial district without your ridiculous interferences, period.

Enough is enough. Please use some common sense and stop the roadblocks to improvement.

Posted by 'positive change,' a resident of the Menlo Park, Felton Gables neighborhood.

Unlike downtown Palo Alto, where a small number of local developers own almost all the property, there are many different owners in downtown Menlo Park. That makes it harder to agree on and implement a plan. From the research (local resident) Jennifer Bestor conducted, it seems that a significant percentage of the owners don't live in the area and pay very low property taxes. They have little incentive to renovate. Some of them may be letting their property remain vacant in hopes that they can rent it for more money in six months rather than accept a lower rent now.

No one, not residentialists or anyone else, wants to see a downtown with a lot of vacant storefronts. But I am not sure that any plan will remedy that. We just have to wait for the economy to pick up a little more and make sure we provide a hospitable environment (for example, the Planning Department shouldn't force would-be store owners to jump through too many hoops). Meanwhile, I think we should try to maintain a vision of what we want

our downtown to be, rather than affecting an attitude of "we're so desperate for business that we don't care what anyone does as long as it involves a wrecking ball."

Posted by 'gunste,' a resident of the Portola Valley, Ladera neighborhood.

In the 45 years I have lived in the area, I have seen downtown Menlo Park "remodeled" several times. It always cost a lot of money and rarely improved anything, except the consultants and contractors pocket books. Trees were demolished and replanted, parking rejiggered, then there was the disaster of the islands sticking into Santa Cruz, which had to be removed.

Now, Menlo Park frequently lacks adequate parking, though when I go there, I can usually find a spot and walk a block or two, if required. I have not seen the new plans, but someone has already cashed in on their development.

Improvement? A reason to raise the rents and lose some attractive businesses for more "upscale" and unaffordable stores. There is very serious doubt that anything will result except inconvenience, unavailability of parking during construction, and a good reason to go elsewhere.

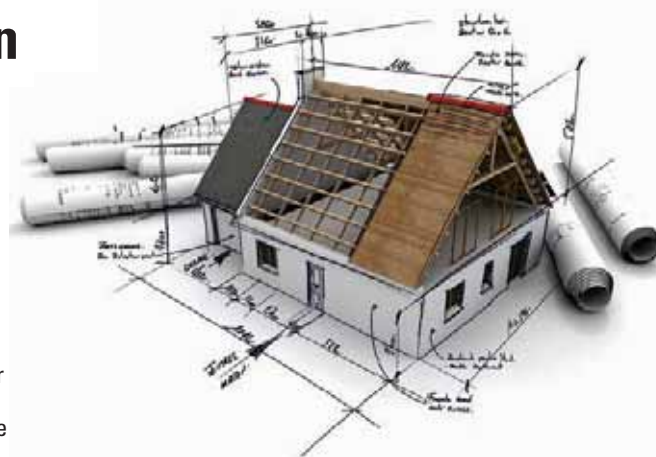
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NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Notice is hereby given that the Las Lomas School District of San Mateo County, California, acting by and through its Governing Board, will receive sealed bids at the District Office, 1011 Altschul Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025, up to and including dates and times listed below for the furnishing of all labor, equipment and services required for the following referenced project:

Las Lomas School District Portable Addition

Bid Opening: May 31, 2011 at 3:00 P.M.

Plans and specifications may be obtained from Sugimura Finney Architects, 2155 South Bascom Ave., Ste. 200, Campbell, CA 95008 (408.879.0600) attn: Mark Finney. Construction documents will be made available at the mandatory walk-through. A maximum of one full set of construction documents will be given to each eligible bidder at no cost to the Bidder. The bidder may purchase additional sets from South Bay Reprographics, 1370 Tully Road #504, San Jose, CA (408) 291-0455.

A mandatory walk-through will be held on May 18, 2011 @ 3:30 p.m. at La Entrada Middle School at 2200 Sharon Road, Menlo Park, CA. The group will then depart to Las Lomas elementary school at 4:00 pm. at the front of each school. Bidders are required to attend and sign in at the walk-through. Bidders who are late and/or bidders that do not sign in at the mandatory walk-through will not be allowed to bid on this project.

The Governing Board of the Las Lomas School District reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids and to act as sole judge of the merit and qualifications of the proposals offered.

Kristin Cashin

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KCG Market Trend REPORT

	ATHERTON	MENLO PARK	PORTOLA VALLEY	PALO ALTO
	AVERAGE PRICE	AVERAGE PRICE	AVERAGE PRICE	AVERAGE PRICE
5/6/11	\$3,395,067	\$1,339,684	\$2,179,040	\$1,776,724
5/6/10	\$3,817,819	\$1,180,989	\$1,583,320	\$1,587,372

Data provided from MLS; information deemed reliable, but not guaranteed.

650-319-1270

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Kristin Cashin

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