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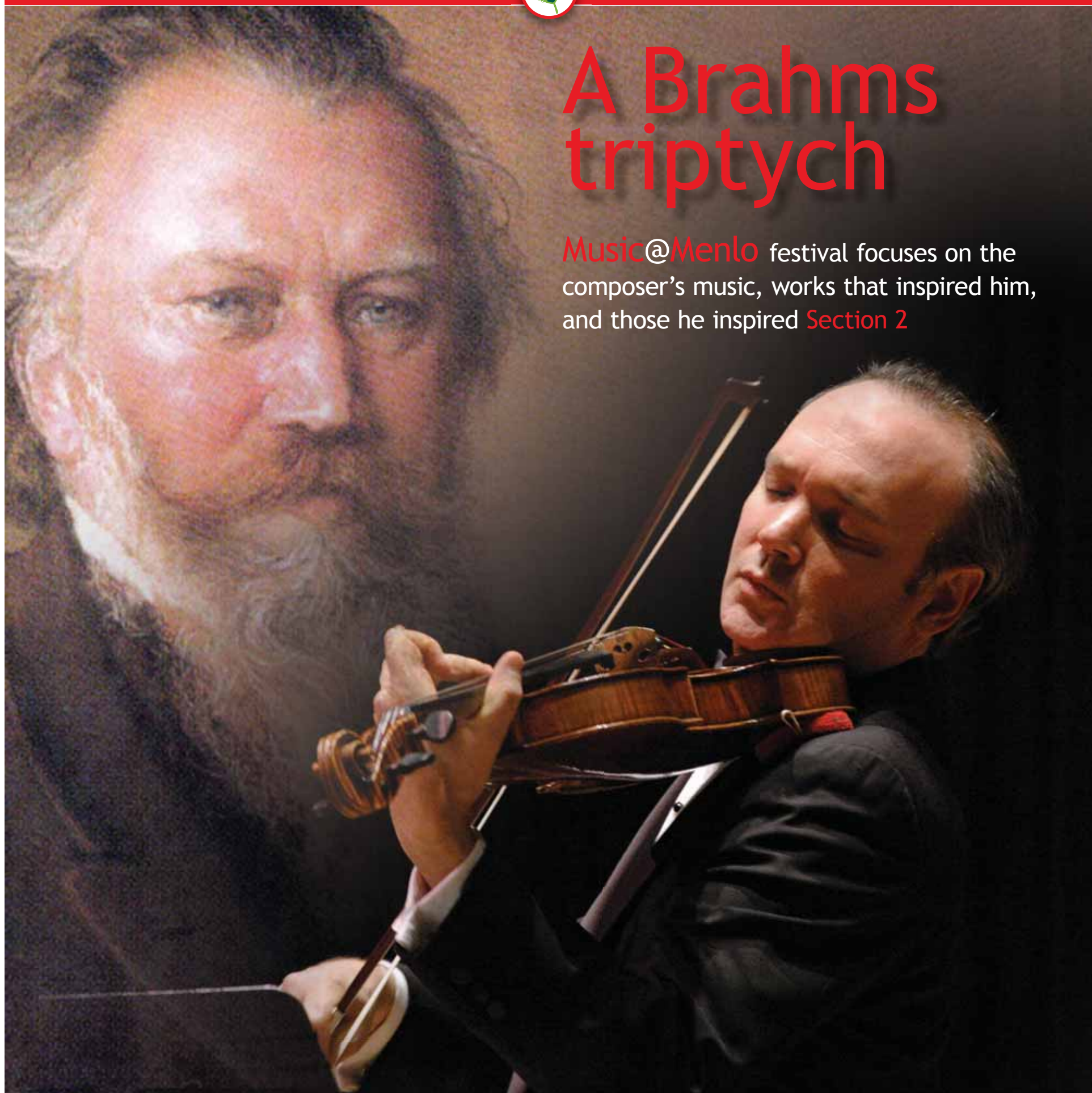
JULY 20, 2011 | VOL. 46 NO. 47



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Steve Toben won't seek another term

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Steve Toben, who has served on the Portola Valley Town Council since 2003, will not seek re-election this year, he announced July 13.

"I've deferred a lot of professional and family projects," Mr. Toben said by way of explaining his decision during the public comment period at the start of the council meeting.

Two of the five seats on the council are up for election in November. The other is occupied by Ann Wengert who has not announced yet whether she will run.

The 20-day filing period to register as a candidate for public office began July 18 and ends

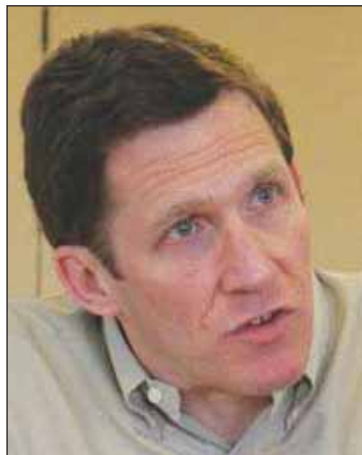


Photo by Dave Boyce/The Almanac

Steve Toben has been a Portola Valley councilman since 2003.

at 5 p.m. Friday, Aug. 12. The filing period is five days longer — to Aug. 17, this year — if an

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

incumbent chooses not to run for re-election.

Candidate filing papers are available at the Portola Valley Town Hall at 765 Portola Road. The Town Hall is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, with a two-hour break between 1 and 3 p.m.

To get your name on the ballot, you need at least 20 signatures of voters registered in the town, Town Clerk Sharon Hanlon told the Almanac. For more information, call Ms. Hanlon at 851-1700, ext. 210.

Visit shapethefuture.org for more information, or call the San Mateo County Elections Office at 312-5222. ■

Kent Steffens leaves top Menlo Park post

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park finds itself once again considering a question it's heard all too often in recent months — how to fill a vacancy in the upper echelon of city management. The imminent departure of Menlo Park Public Works Director Kent Steffens, who also serves as deputy city manager, for a position as public works director in Sunnyvale leaves his current employer scrambling for a replacement.

During his 12 years with Menlo Park, Mr. Steffens directed public works and served as interim city manager and interim assistant city manager. His last day with the city will be July 29.

City Manager Glen Rojas — who retired from his own position on July 15, but returns as a contractor for up to six months — said it's too soon to know whether the public works position will be filled internally or externally.

"My first order of business will be to determine how best to fill the position on an interim basis," he said. "We have very capable managers that could fill the posi-



Kent Steffens has served in multiple posts over 12 years in Menlo Park city government.

tion on an interim basis."

In addition to ongoing public works projects, the timing of when the city's new two-tier pension system takes effect following upcoming labor negotiations is another factor in how Menlo Park will fill the position, according to Mr. Rojas.

Describing Mr. Steffens as an "extremely talented manager," he praised his colleague's ability to balance engineering skills with the capacity to communicate that information to all levels of the organization and

■ MENLO PARK

community.

"(Kent) has a great opportunity going to Sunnyvale, which is a larger city with a great reputation, and I believe he will be very successful in his new position," said Mr. Rojas. "Our loss is Sunnyvale's gain."

Starting Aug. 1 in Sunnyvale, Mr. Steffens will oversee some 180 employees and have oversight of streets, engineering, and parks and project management, according to City Manager Gary Luebbers.

Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline echoed the praise of a man often caught in the middle of controversial issues such as traffic calming, park maintenance, and high-speed rail. The mayor noted that Mr. Steffens literally knew where all the bones were buried and the wires and the sewers and the pipes.

"I am one of his biggest fans," Mr. Cline said. "He caught a lot of heat, but he was always a professional. His knowledge of our city's infrastructure was second to none."

Mr. Steffens was not immediately available for comment. ■



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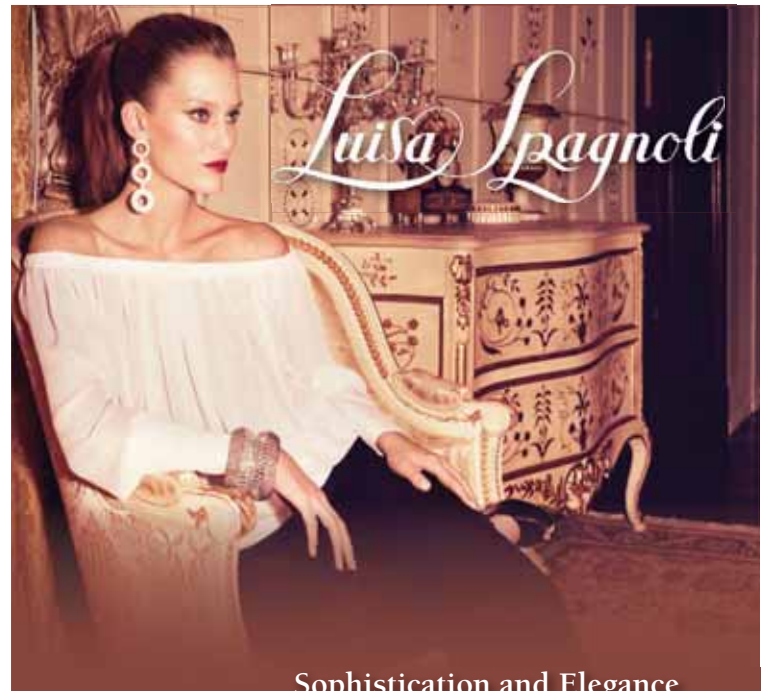
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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Mark Sweyer to open 25-seat cafe in Woodside

■ Gilberts oppose the plan, but council OKs permit.

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Woodside has no traffic signals, but Mark Sweyer, co-owner of the Woodside Bakery & Cafe, did get a green light on his plans to convert a nearby one-story office building at 2989 Woodside Road to a 25-seat cafe that will feature cooking classes, banquet space and coffee roasted on site and brewed by the cup.

In the July 12 ruling, a unanimous Town Council — absent members Peter Mason and Dave Tanner — denied an appeal by William and Lee Ann Gilbert, who own the adjacent property and the Pioneer Hotel saloon. The Gilberts wanted the project scaled back, saying that its scope of activities was too ambitious for the close quarters

and the perennially tight parking situation downtown.

The 1,278-square-foot future cafe is nestled in the row of one-story buildings across Woodside Road from the bronze horses on Village Hill.

The council's action affirms the Planning Commission's granting to Mr. Sweyer a conditional use permit. The permit will allow the sale of beer and wine (with a state license) and no more than three cooking classes per month for no more than 10 students per class, during which time the cafe will be closed, according to a staff report.

Mr. Sweyer must also install an outdoor hitching post and re-stripe the parking lot. He is dedicating one parking space to bicycles. The bike racks will be two steel cables stretched tight the length

of the space and meant for around 20 bikes. The bikes hang on the cable and allow compact security without paint damage, architect Stevan Patrick, the project designer and a principal at Midglen Studio Associates in Woodside, told the Almanac.

Mr. Patrick said the idea came to him after talking with people who've been to bike races, where impromptu bike racks made from tightly stretched spans of rope are common.

Lovable ideas

"I think what's happening here with this project and how it's gotten so far in this process is because there are so many lovable ideas," Ms. Gilbert told the council. "What is not lovable to my husband and me ... is what we believe



Almanac photo by Michelle Le

Mark Sweyer

will surely be an assault on our parking."

The new cafe will sit next to the commercial Gilbert Center, which has private parking. Mr. and Ms. Gilbert expressed concern that cafe parking will almost certainly overflow its allotted 10 spaces, and that employees will park in the public lot in back.

The public parking lot is of interest to the Gilberts because they contributed some \$800,000 over 25 years in a partnership to help convert dusty and/or muddy fields into paved parking for about the same number of vehicles that patronize the three partners, Town Manager Susan George said in an email. The other partners in the parking assessment district were the town and the Village Pub.

The proposed cafe parking

"looks like a disaster" and "is unfair to those who paid into the district," Ms. Gilbert told the council. "Parking is a big deal," she added. "We do battle out there every day."

And bike racks, though rare in a town visited by scores of cyclists every day, should not be concentrated at the cafe but distributed, including at Roberts market and Mr. Sweyer's bakery, Ms. Gilbert said.

"I, for one, don't want to attract more bicyclists here until people figure out how to accommodate them," she added. "The intent of this applicant is to attract that kind of patronage."

Mr. Sweyer let Mr. Patrick respond to the complaints. Support for the cafe came from an audience that filled the council

See **CAFE**, page 8

Felled buckeye tree costs Woodside resident \$5,000

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The Woodside Town Council, echoing a 2009 decision, dramatically reduced a resident's fine for felling major trees without a permit.

A unanimous council — absent Peter Mason — agreed on July 12 to reduce to \$5,000 a \$72,500 fine against resident Gregory Wimmer of Patrol Road for the loss of eight trees: seven bay laurels, which can carry sudden oak death (SOD) spores, and one buckeye.

(In October 2009 after a searching discussion, the council lowered a fine to \$10,000 from \$92,500 for a resident's felling of 10 coast live oaks.)

The \$5,000 fine this time was for

the buckeye, the standard penalty for cutting one tree with at least a 9.5-inch diameter at 4 feet above the ground. Violators are supposed to pay \$7,500 for the second tree and \$10,000 for each one after that, but the council zeroed out the fines for the bay laurels, given the circumstances, including the SOD risk.

In a February 2011 letter to the town, Mr. Wimmer had written that he had told the La Canada Tree Service at least three times to obtain a permit before cutting any major trees. "It's strictly by the book with me for any work done," he wrote.

A tree service representative tried to acquire a permit the day after the tree cutting but was refused, according to a staff

See **TREE**, page 8



Photo by Nick Gonzales for the Almanac

Summer silhouette

Kathy Jaraczewski has competed in just enough competitions with 7-year-old Wallander to qualify for the Woodside Summer Dressage at the Horse Park at Woodside. She takes a ride to warm Wallander and herself up for the competition.

Commission examines downtown plan sans fiscal impact analysis

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

When the Menlo Park Planning Commission commenced its multi-session review of the proposed downtown/El Camino Real specific plan on July 11, it quickly pointed out there wasn't quite enough paper on the dais.

The fiscal impact analysis (FIA), initially intended to be released before the commission

started its review, was missing in action. According to Thomas Rogers, project manager, the delay came when staff decided to add analyses of the plan's impact on school and fire districts, which weren't included when the city determined the scope of the FIA three years ago.

Commissioner Henry Riggs asked staff whether the analysis, prepared by consultant Strategic Economics, would be done by

■ MENLO PARK

the July 21 meeting, and learned that it would not be. Mr. Rogers indicated that the FIA would be available before the commission makes its final recommendations sometime next month.

"It is disappointing that we should volunteer to have the three specific meetings and not benefit from this. There are statements and assumptions

that are made in the draft plan, which, lacking the FIA, are simply not backed up," Mr. Riggs commented.

The effect, he said, is that the commission can't accurately assess whether the net impact to areas like the sewer district will be positive or negative, or how much more revenue Menlo Park could gain by allowing higher density development.

He'd also like to study whether the new regulations might

encourage property owners to invest.

"Older buildings may not justify an infusion of capital if you can't increase the square footage. As a friend says, if you put a million into a 3,000 square foot commercial building and end up with a 3,000-square-foot building, you have to double the rent just to break even. No one wins," he explained. "With

See **PLAN**, page 8

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Menlo Park teen dies after shooting in East Palo Alto

■ BRIEFS

A 19-year-old Menlo Park woman, who was shot early Wednesday morning, July 13, in East Palo Alto, has died, East Palo Alto police said.

Catherine Fisher was shot while sitting in a vehicle with a man and another woman at 2:12 a.m. in the 2500 block of Annapolis Street between Michigan and Notre Dame avenues east of Bay Road.

Ms. Fisher was transported to Stanford Hospital where she died from her injuries. The vehicle's other occupants were unharmed, police said.

Investigators are working to develop suspect information and a possible motive for the shooting.

Acting Capt. Jeff Liu said police have not yet determined if the shooting was gang related. It is the city's fourth homicide this year, he said.

Police are asking anyone who has information or might have witnessed the shooting to contact the East Palo Alto Police Department by email to epa@tipnow.org, or leave an anonymous voicemail or text message to 650-409-6792.

— By Sue Dremann and
 Bay City News Service

Robbers snatch necklace, iPhone

An unidentified assailant punched a Menlo Park man, then yanked a gold chain off his neck as the victim walked near the intersection of Hamilton and Carlton Avenues around 8 p.m. Tuesday, July 12.

A second suspect then grabbed the victim's iPhone. The robbers were described as two slender young Hispanic

— Bay City News Service

men. One sported a white shirt with dark pants and black shoes with red and white trim, the other a black hoodie.

The victim recovered the necklace at the scene. He had non-life-threatening injuries, police said, and declined medical care.

The pair fled south on Hamilton Avenue in a silver Ford pickup truck, according to Menlo Park police spokeswoman Nicole Acker.

— Sandy Brundage

Squatters in home arrested in La Honda

Three men found unlawfully occupying a home in unincorporated La Honda on July 15 have been arrested, and a fourth remains at large, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office said.

The men were reported in a residence on Starwood Drive, according to a countywide alert. They ran from deputies and were the subject of a search in the area.

While three men were arrested, a fourth man remains at large. He is described as a heavyset Hispanic man, approximately 30 years of age with a round face and short hair, and wearing a gray and white T-shirt and blue jeans.

Anyone who spots a man matching this description in the area is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at (650) 363-4911. People are advised to use caution, however, and should not approach or attempt to apprehend him.

— Bay City News Service

Menlo police agree to freeze pay

When the eight Menlo Park police sergeants agreed to a two-year pay freeze, along with other concessions, it seemed to set the tone for negotiations with the union representing the city's 36 line officers.

The new contract that goes before the City Council on July 26 contains almost identical terms. It freezes pay for two years; reduces the work schedule 100 hours per year, equivalent to a 4.8 percent salary cut for patrol officers; removes automatic health benefit increases; cuts sick leave from 10 to eight hours a month; and eliminates a bonus for using less than three

shifts of sick leave per year. The officers would also contribute 3 percent more toward the state pension fund, yielding approximately \$148,500 in savings for Menlo Park.

Tuition, child care, and recreation reimbursement will be cut in half, from \$1,000 per officer to \$500, which the city estimates will save an additional \$18,000.

See tinyurl.com/64conxk to review the proposed terms. As with newly hired sergeants, line officers hired after July 1 would have a "3 percent at 55" pension structure if the council approves the contract.

Layoffs delayed at last minute

■ Judge issues temporary restraining order.

By Renee Batti
and Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writers

A judge temporarily stopped Atherton from laying off six city employees at the last minute on Friday, July 15, after hearing arguments in a lawsuit filed in San Mateo Superior Court by union representatives.

A follow-up court hearing on the issue is set for Aug. 11.

In a closed-session meeting on July 12, the Atherton City Council had "affirmed the actions of the City Manager in effecting layoffs of personnel," according to a statement issued by Deputy City Clerk Theresa DellaSanta. No formal vote was taken, she said.

The council support frustrated the hope for a negoti-

ated agreement between the town and the union trying to save jobs. The six employees who received pink slips include three from the building department, one from finance, one from administration, and one pending retirement, also from building, according to Interim City Manager John Danielson. The town had one other retirement and one resignation in recent months. Finally, five public works maintenance employees received job extensions through Aug. 31.

But the union representing the staff fought back. Peter Finn, a Teamsters Union Local 856 representative, said the union filed a lawsuit in San Mateo County Superior Court based on a section of the state government code the union claims makes it illegal for the town to outsource the jobs it has targeted.

The union, he said, asked the court for a restraining order to prevent the layoffs and the outsourcing of services. A similar case in Orange County Superior Court led to a preliminary injunction earlier this month against outsourcing of city services in Costa Mesa. According to the firm representing the employee union in that case, the lawsuit cited California Government Codes 37103 and 53060, which it interprets as prohibiting the use of private contractors for general services performed satisfactorily by city employees.

Atherton has received bids from private firms to provide the services traditionally provided by town staff. The council will be asked to approve contracts for the outsourced services as early as July 20 during its regular meeting, Mr. Danielson said.

In light of the judge's "incred-

■ ATHERTON

ibly disappointing" ruling, however, Mayor Jim Dobbie said that agenda will change. While he still expects the council to vote on the contracts, with the understanding that they won't be implemented until the lawsuit is settled, the agenda item calling for a formal vote to eliminate the city positions will be postponed until at least Aug. 11, he said.

Union representatives continue to press the town to reconsider the move toward outsourcing services, and employees have

than outsourcing the services, the management of the department needs fixing to keep it on track to pay for itself.

At the July 12 council meeting, several residents spoke before the closed session. Melinda Tevis and Jon Buckheit questioned the choice of jobs eliminated, noting that many if not most of the employees being axed make in the neighborhood of \$60,000 annually. Police officers, on the other hand, make more than \$100,000 a year, yet their jobs appear to be secure, they said.

"That doesn't seem fair," Ms. Tevis said. "Was fairness considered?"

Mr. Buckheit noted that employees being laid off offered some \$300,000 in concessions, while the police officers will be asked to make only

\$200,000. He was referring to Mr. Danielson's statement, quoted in the Almanac, that he intends to ask the union representing police officers to reopen contract talks, and will seek concessions that will save the town about \$200,000 annually.

Resident Anne Anderson said she felt "blindsided" by the move to outsource. Noting that the plan moved forward with no public discussion, she said that the elimination of in-house services and use of private contractors to provide the services "is a philosophical decision, and the town's residents

See LAYOFFS, page 12

Atherton Mayor Jim Dobbie called the judge's ruling 'incredibly disappointing.'

offered concessions in compensation that would save the town at least \$300,000, according to Mr. Finn.

Mr. Danielson said his decision to eliminate the in-house jobs and hire private firms to provide the services stems from the need to erase an \$856,000 structural budget deficit. Outsourcing, according to a staff report, saves the town approximately \$760,635.

Opponents of outsourcing note that the building department is supposed to be self-funded through fees charged for permits, inspections and other services. They argue that rather

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REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



To Bid or Not to Bid

Dear Monica: I have seen the perfect house but at the price it is listed, it will be a short sale. The seller is not in arrears on his loan but if the property sells at the list price, the lender will have to accept a lesser price in order for the sale to close. Do you think I should pursue this?

Les G.

Dear Les: It is not always easy to know whether it is prudent to pursue a property in a "short sale". The fact that the seller is not in arrears is a good thing because if you

try to buy the property, you will not be racing against a pending foreclosure. However, a buyer in a short sale never really knows whether the lender will be reasonable and swift in the decision process, or whether the seller's contract will be accepted if it means that the lender will have to take a lowered payoff amount. However if all parties seem competent and you have the time to wait, you may be rewarded. The bank may approve the loan in a reasonable time and the house will be yours.

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Fire causes major damage to Atherton home, kills cats

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

For reasons still unknown, as many as eight smoke detectors failed to alert the occupants of an Atherton house to a fire early Wednesday morning, July 13, that appears to have started on the first floor and spread to the attic.

The fire caused major damage to the one-story, 5,225-square-foot home at 80 Mount Vernon Lane in Atherton, authorities said.

The couple residing there awoke to a popping sound, smelled smoke, went outside, saw smoke rising and called 911 at 2:55 a.m., Chief Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District said in a phone interview. The couple was uninjured but their two cats succumbed, probably to smoke inhalation, the chief said.

The fire destroyed about 75 percent of the attic, part of which collapsed — an indication that the fire got a good start before being detected, he said. The fire may have started in a closet on the first floor, he noted.

The house was in the final weeks of a remodel, but the fire

has left it uninhabitable, the chief said.

A second alarm went out at 3:19 a.m. and firefighters had the fire under control at 3:33 a.m., Chief Schapelhouman said.

Having soaked the attic, firefighters quickly began a salvage operation of personal goods to avoid damage due to falling wet sheet rock, he said.

An initial estimate put the damage to the structure and personal belongings at \$350,000, he said. Building officials with the town will be called in to further evaluate the damage to the house, Chief Schapelhouman said.

The fire district will investigate why the smoke detectors, which are powered by batteries, did not work.

When they arrived, firefighters had to break through the electrically powered front gate. The investigation will include why the gate malfunctioned, the chief said.

A detached garage of 1,000 square feet was not damaged, nor was there any significant damage to trees or other vegetation, Chief Schapelhouman said. ■

PLAN

continued from page 5

added density or additional height allowing the building to grow, such a project should be more efficient, more viable.”

That would be good to know quantitatively, he said, but that won't be included in the scope of even the expanded FIA.

Mr. Riggs didn't think lack of an FIA was reason enough to postpone the commission's study, though. “Whether the FIA confirms we get 3 percent more net revenue, or 5 percent or 1 percent, there are better reasons to support renewal of downtown and ECR; if it shows we lose revenue, we will

recommend that fees be adjusted,” he said.

City staff agreed. “Fiscal impacts are definitely part of the story, but they aren't the whole story,” Mr. Rogers said. “The Planning Commission's review will rely on a wide range of factors, including project goals, community values, and individual preferences.” He added that fiscal issues can be folded into the commission's final recommendation.

The next sessions of the Planning Commission review are scheduled for Thursday, July 21; Thursday, July 28; and Thursday, Aug. 4.

See tinyurl.com/Plan-711 to examine the proposed specific plan. ■

TREE

continued from page 5

report.

Attempts by the Almanac to contact a La Canada Tree Service based in Fremont via phone, voice mail and email were unsuccessful, as were attempts to contact Mr. Wimmer, who said he works in Southern California.

“La Canada has stopped returning (my) phone calls and emails,” Mr. Wimmer told the council.

Assistant Town Manager Kevin Bryant told the council he was unable to confirm that La Cana-

da was licensed to do business in Woodside.

While Mr. Wimmer must pay the fine, various state agencies, including the Contractors State License Board, are available to help recoup costs, Councilman Dave Tanner said.

Asked in a phone interview about contractor behavior in general, Mr. Tanner, a builder, talked of an underground economy and contractors who “will do anything” to avoid extra costs. “It's just non-stop,” he said. “It's really a crime what happens to people on this.” ■



‘Bye Bye Birdie’

Teens in Sweet Apple, Ohio — played by, from left, Lexi Wilson, Anna Dailey of Menlo Park, and Rachel Fosnaugh — flip when Conrad Birdie (Austin Bowie) comes to town in the Peninsula Youth Theatre's production of “Bye Bye Birdie” running July 30 to Aug. 7 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts. Visit pyt.net or call 903-6000 for information and tickets (\$10-\$20).

Hospital project wins final approval

By Gennady Sheyner

Embarcadero Media

After an unexpected last-minute delay, Stanford University Medical Center's bid to dramatically expand its hospital facilities surged past the finish line July 11 when the Palo Alto City Council gave the \$5 billion project its final approval.

The council's vote came a week after Stanford agreed to relocate a day care center at one of the construction sites, thereby resolving an 11th-hour dispute with the parents whose children attend the Stanford Arboretum Children's Center.

Stanford earned the city's initial approval June 6 after nearly 100

public hearings. But the hospital was forced to halt its celebrations a week later because of protests from dozens of parents whose children attend the day care center near the Hoover Pavilion.

The parents, many of them Stanford University professors, argued that the project's environmental analysis failed to adequately consider the impact of construction on the day care center. After hearing these objections, Stanford asked the council to delay its “second reading” of the approval — a largely procedural vote that would have made its earlier approval final.

The city's approval of the massive project, nearly four years in the making, became official July 11. As part of its settlement with

the parents, Stanford agreed to move the day care center and to postpone construction on the parking garage near Hoover Pavilion until the center is relocated. After hearing about the deal, the council voted 7-0, with Gail Price absent and Larry Klein abstaining, to give Project Renewal the final go-ahead.

The expansion project, which city officials often call the largest in Palo Alto's history, would add about 1.3 million square feet of development to the city. It includes reconstruction of Stanford Hospital & Clinics, an expansion of the Lucile Packard Children's Center and renovations to various Stanford University School of Medicine buildings. ■

CAFE

continued from page 5

chambers.

“The proposed cycle storage is a very welcome thing,” said former resident and History Committee member Keith Simon.

“We all need to learn to share, share the roads, share the space,” said resident Pat Del Gavio.

“There needs to be controls on a phenomenon that has gone too far,” Mr. Gilbert responded, alleging that he has seen cyclists sprawled on horse trails having picnics and, at times, urinating in inappropriate places.

Council comments

Council members found the cafe proposal to be within the rules set for commercial establishments, though Councilwoman Anne Kasten did call the parking space alignment “jaw-droppingly horrible,” suggesting that it echoed the lot at Draeger's Supermarket in Menlo Park, which she said she finds inconveniently angled.

The turning ratios are accurate, Mr. Patrick said. “It does work.”

“It works on paper,” Ms. Kasten replied. “I'm asking for something functional. I see a lot of problems.

... It seems to be a lot of stuff going on in a not very big space.”

“That's true,” Mr. Patrick said.

“It's a big venture and there's going to be a lot of pressure on the business owner to get it right, to do it right,” Councilwoman Sue Boynton said. She added that while she was not concerned with overflow parking “at this point,” the cafe could be a trigger for a future discussion of the issue in general, an idea that the council seemed to like.

Go to tinyurl.com/WS-cafe and turn to Page 57 for more on this topic. ■

Church continues priest investigation

■ San Francisco DA closes case against priest.

By Sandy Brundage
Almanac Staff Writer

The San Francisco District Attorney's Office has decided not to press charges against Father William Myers, pastor of St. Raymond Catholic Church in Menlo Park, in connection with an incident involving a 17-year-old boy in San Francisco.

As the Almanac first reported, Assistant District Attorney Seth Steward said on July 12 that the decision was made for "a number of reasons, primarily lack of corroboration." He then declined to discuss specifics of the investigation.

Father Myers was put on administrative leave in May after the church learned about an incident a month earlier in San Francisco. The father of a 17-year-old boy asked for police

after the priest followed his son into a dressing room at a Ross Dress for Less, according to a spokesman for the San Francisco archdiocese.

Describing the encounter as a "boundary violation," the spokesman said no physical contact occurred.

Director of Communications George Wesolek said a source notified the archdiocese of the San Francisco incident on May 26. When confronted by church officials, the pastor admitted struggling with a sexual addiction to adults and receiving therapy for sexual identity issues while serving in Stockton.

Church assignment records show that Father Myers was on leave from the Diocese of Stockton for approximately four years from 1996 to 2000, but don't indicate why.

Bishop Stephen Blaire said that while the Stockton diocese knew Father Myers had undergone therapy, "at no time was it suggested or otherwise reported to the Diocese that the therapy was in any way related to sexual conduct with minors." In June the diocese notified its 34 parishes about the store incident.

Ordained in 1988, Father Myers joined St. Raymond four years ago, transferring from St. Brendan Church in San Francisco. The San Francisco archdiocese repeatedly refused to confirm whether he kept an apartment in San Francisco in addition to his parish lodgings in Menlo Park. He is reportedly in treatment while on leave.

Mr. Wesolek said the church's institutional review board met around July 15 to discuss the case, without reaching any conclusions, and will convene again in August. ■

Walgreens appeals denial of permit to sell alcohol

By Sandy Brundage
Almanac Staff Writer

Walgreens has filed an appeal of the Menlo Park Planning Commission's 4-3 denial of its request to sell beer and wine at its Santa Cruz Avenue store.

At the June 27 meeting, Planning Commissioners Katie Ferrick, Peipei Yu, Jack O'Malley, and Ben Eiref voted against granting the permit, arguing that allowing the downtown drugstore to sell alcohol for off-premise consumption was inappropriate and detrimental to Menlo Park's welfare.

The final outcome now rests with the City Council, which is expected to hear the issue on Aug. 23, according to the city clerk's office. Earlier this year the council members voted to allow Beverages & More to open a store on El Camino Real after that franchise lost a bid to open a smaller shop on Santa Cruz Avenue.

Walgreens representatives were not immediately available for comment.

Green building code, Habitat parcel on tap

Returning after a hiatus, the Menlo Park City Council faces a full agenda that nevertheless appears free of controversial items — a little school route planning, a couple responses to grand jury reports, updating the city's green building ordinance, and possibly buying back a

BRIEFS

Terminal Avenue parcel from Habitat for Humanity.

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

Go to menlopark.org and click on "City Council" to view the agenda and related staff reports.

Parks and Rec meets at library

Taking a change of scenery, the Menlo Park Parks and Recreation Commission meets Wednesday, July 20, in the multipurpose room of the library at 800 Alma St. The agenda lists the election of a vice chair, the approval of a work plan for communicating with community user groups, and updates as the main items. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. ■



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Fire board: 'Huge shift' in compensation policy?

Are firefighters overpaid? In negotiating pay packages, should fire districts consider only what other fire departments are paying, or the pay and employment levels in the general economy as well?

The Board of Directors of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District is weighing these questions as it prepares to adopt what a fire board member calls a "huge shift" in its employee compensation policy and philosophy.

Under the proposed policy, the board might survey both private and public employers and take into consideration "the perspectives of the community" — as well as labor and management — in evaluating pay fairness.

"The District shall consider the overall economic climate and condition affecting the District and its constituents when setting compensation levels, including regional economic indicators such as the rate of unemployment, inflation, current and projected revenues, and the District's anticipated ability to pay in

the long term."

Board member Peter Carpenter is urging the public to participate in discussions on changing the district's compensation philosophy. He encourages people to come to the board meeting Tuesday night, July 19, when the board will discuss and may adopt the policy.

The public session is expected to start about 7 p.m. at the Station 1 classroom at 300 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park.

Negotiations between the board and the union representing the firefighters have been contentious since the contract expired in 2008. In April, the board imposed terms on the union, and is getting ready for another round of negotiations.

Go to tinyurl.com/pay-163 to see the text of the proposed and existing policies, and posts on the Town Square forum.

Public comments on this proposal may be emailed to the clerk of the board, Deanna Riding, at Deannar@MenloFire.org.




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Seats on local town councils, school boards up for election

■ Filing period opens for candidates.

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The filing period has begun for the Nov. 8 election, when voters will decide the makeup of the Woodside and Portola town councils, plus the governing boards of several school districts and special districts.

The candidate filing period started July 18 and ends at 5 p.m. Friday, Aug. 12. If an incumbent chooses not to run, the filing period is extended five days — to Aug. 17, this year.

In Portola Valley, Town Councilman Steve Toben announced July 13 that he will not run for re-election when his second term ends in November. The council seat of his colleague on the council, Ann Wengert, is also up election, but she has not yet announced her intentions.

In Woodside, the terms of four council members are ending in November: Dave Burow, Peter Mason, Ron Romines (the current mayor), and Sue Boynton, who said she is not running again.

School districts

The board seats of Steven Humphreys and Jocelyn Swisher in the Portola Valley School District, and Ellen Ablow and Ginger Bamford in the Woodside Elementary School District, are up for election.

In the Sequoia Union High School District, which includes Menlo-Atherton and Woodside high schools, the three board members whose terms expire this year are Don Gibson, Olivia Martinez and Lorraine Rumley.

In the San Mateo County Community College District, the seats of Dave Mandelkern, Patricia Miljanich and Karen Schwarz are up for election.

Special districts

In the Menlo Park Fire Protection District — which encompasses Atherton, Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and unincorporated areas — the board terms of Peter Carpenter and Bart Spencer are up this year.

In the Woodside Fire Protection District — which covers Woodside, Portola Valley and unincorporated areas — board seats of Patrick Cain and John Gardner are up for election. Both Mr. Cain and Mr. Gardner are running for re-election, Woodside district Fire Chief Dan Ghiorso told the Almanac.

The board seats of Ronald Shepherd, David Walker and Fran Dehn in the West Bay Sanitary District are up for election. West Bay collects and disposes of wastewater from Menlo Park, Atherton and Portola Valley, as well as parts of Woodside and unincorporated San Mateo County.

In the Ladera Recreation District, the two board seats up for election are occupied by Peter Caryotakis and Karen Fryling. The recreation district's amenities include swimming pools, a play area, tennis courts, and classes in physical activities, such as yoga and aerobics.

In the Los Trancos County Water District, the board terms of Charlie Krenz and Mike Ward expire this year. The district sold its water system to the California Water Service Co. in 2005, but the district still collects taxes and performs services such as encouraging efficient use of water, maintaining open space, and supporting emergency preparedness, according to its website. ■

■ INFORMATION

Go to shapethefuture.org for more information, or call the San Mateo County Elections Office at 312-5222.

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Halcott (Hal) Moreno Jr. aged 92, passed away on Thursday, July 7, at the Stanford University Medical Center following a brief illness.

Hal was a member of the American Legion, the Palo Alto Host Lions Club where he served as president, the Palo Alto Elks Lodge where he was the organist for 30 years and Sons In Retirement (SIRS) where he held the office of Big SIR in 1999. He also served as the current SIRS historian and conducted new member orientation.

Hal is survived by his second wife, Marion, his elder brother Albert, his daughter Susan Hassitt and daughter-in-law Susan Moreno. He is also survived by his step-children David Farrell (Julie), Nancy Freitas (Rob), Tom Farrell (Laurie) and numerous grandchildren, step-grandchildren, great-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren.

Donations can be made in Hal's memory to the Palo Alto Host Lions Club, <http://www.paloaltolions.org> or P.O. Box 976, Palo Alto, CA 94302-0976.

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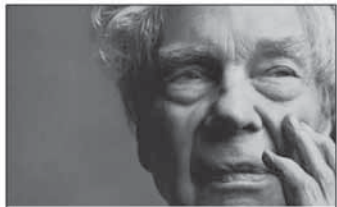
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EYE CARE NEWS



Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician



WHICH SUNGLASSES PROVIDE THE BEST PROTECTION?

Sunglasses provide good protection against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays, as long-term exposure is known to damage the eye's surface and internal structures. Should you rush out to buy an expensive pair of sunglasses with dark lenses? The answer is "not necessarily". The fact is that the ability to block UV light is dependent on neither price nor the darkness of the lens. The standards and labeling

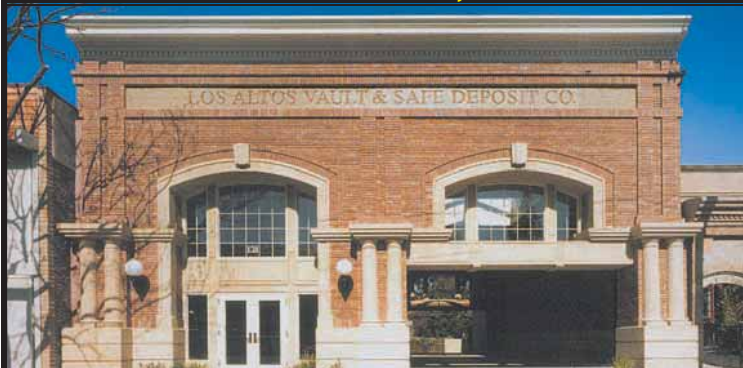
regarding UV protection are voluntary, which means that price does not guarantee quality. And while plastic and glass lenses both provide a degree of inherent protection, it is the lens' coatings that make all the difference. Sunglasses with labels that claim to block 99-100% of UV rays provide the best protection.

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

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LAYOFFS

continued from page 7

should have weighed in."

Ms. Anderson encouraged the council to consider asking residents to increase the amount of parcel taxes they are paying.

Former councilman and finance specialist Malcolm Dudley told the Almanac that he and a group of other residents plan to survey the community to see if, instead of layoffs, they're willing to pay more taxes, or to launch an initiative to put the question on the ballot, once they see how the lawsuit turns out.

"Just to cast people off and turn your backs is wrong to me. That's what motivates me. You just don't treat people that way," he said. "You have people that have worked [for the city] for years, single-parent families. This could put them out on the street."

Mr. Dudley rejected the idea that the town is in a financial crisis, and analyzed 12 years' worth of budgets to support his argument. (See his column in today's Viewpoint section, Page 15.) By his calculations, the \$856,000 budget deficit could be solved through union concessions, building department revenues, and restoring rentals of town properties such as the pavilion.

"To me the motivation for calling this a 'crisis' is clear. They want to justify their action as something that is forced upon them because of circumstances. My feeling is that there are two major reasons driving this action. It reflects a strong anti-union sentiment and a strong preference for outsourcing over in-house employment," Mr. Dudley said.

Mr. Danielson responded that no matter what someone calls it, the town spends more than it takes in. Even by outsourcing the positions now in jeopardy, city management will still need to seek concessions from both union and non-union employees going forward to be sustainable, he said. "I don't want to lay off anyone in this town again." ▣

INFORMATION

The Atherton City Council will meet Wednesday, July 20, to consider an outsourcing contract for public works, emergency staffing of the building department, and a resolution hiring a temporary police chief at a salary of \$14,500 per month. Town staff is recommending that the council award a contract for public works maintenances services to MCE Corp. for no more than \$599,000. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the town council chambers, 94 Ashfield Road in Atherton.

Teen Committee promotes local civic engagement

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

When the late Bill Lane was in town, as often as not he could be found every other Wednesday evening in the Historic Schoolhouse attending to the proceedings of the Portola Valley Town Council.

Mr. Lane, the town's first mayor and its longtime advocate, was preeminent on the importance of exercising democratic practices available to U.S. citizens, particularly the citizens who live in Portola Valley.

In the memory of Mr. Lane and in honor of his wife Jean, the town's Teen Committee has reconceived its civic mentorship program as the Bill and Jean Lane Civic Involvement Program. Under that name, the program is expected to get going in the fall, said committee chair Sharon Driscoll.

"This program ... would provide an opportunity for local high school teens to learn about the town's government, to experience firsthand the vital work of the town's committees and the importance of citizen input," a written description of the program says.

Athletes pay their way

Portola Valley's recreational field maintenance costs dropped to \$153,000 for the budget year that ended June 30, a 9 percent drop from 2008-09 figures, according to a staff report.

The change appears to reflect

PORTOLA VALLEY

the Town Council's 2009 decision to significantly raise playing fees for organized youth and adult teams, the hope being to have organized teams evenly splitting with the town the costs of maintaining two baseball and two soccer fields.

Playing fee revenues of \$80,920 covered 53 percent of the costs, the report said.

Also reported over the same period: irrigation water usage dropped 9 percent, but costs are up 14 percent.

Radio station for PV?

It's an idea: broadcasting in Portola Valley, particularly in the event of a major disaster such as an earthquake, Town Councilman Steve Toben said at the July 13 council meeting.

The Federal Communications Commission in 2000 set rules to apply for a low-power FM community radio station, and there were plenty of applicants, according to Todd Urick of the low-power FM advocacy group Common Frequency, based in Davis.

But the National Association of Broadcasters, alleging frequency interference with established radio stations, lobbied Congress for legislation that has stalled the program for years, Mr. Urick said.

A pending FCC rule would reopen community opportunities, he said. ■

Sorella Featuring the "William Tell Overture," Haydn's Symphony No. 82, and Bella Sorella, a soprano duo. July 23, 8-10 p.m. \$25. Canada College Main Theatre, 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Woodside. Call 650-366-6872. www.redwoodsymphony.org

Chef Yan Can Cook Presentation Chef Martin Yan discusses Asian cuisines and the cultures that created them. July 23, 12:30 p.m. Free. Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane, Atherton. Call 650-328-2422.

'Dad and Me' With Puppet Art Theatre This event (for dads, moms and other special adults) features a puppet-show performance of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Presented in conjunction with the Fatherhood Collaborative of San Mateo County. All ages. Aug. 1, 7-8 p.m. Free. Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane, Atherton. Call 650-328-2422. www.smcl.org

#9 Workshop Series by Harrell Remodeling

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For homeowners wanting to learn the steps to achieve a successful remodel, these interactive workshops, taught by our award-winning designers, promise to be informative and fun!

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Registration and light dinner 6:15 pm

Workshop 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

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embarcadero media

Shop Local Online Sales Representative

(20-30 hrs per week)

Embarcadero Media is seeking a self-starter and motivated individual interested in helping build an innovative new online program that helps local businesses market themselves to the local community. Our Shop Local websites, powered by ShopCity.com, offer a unique and simple platform for business owners to promote their merchandise, make special offers, announce special events, maintain customer lists and engage in social network marketing on Facebook and Twitter.

The Shop Local Sales Representative is responsible for generating revenue by selling businesses subscriptions/memberships on the Shop Palo Alto, Shop Menlo Park and Shop Mountain View websites and helping to increase awareness about the program in the broader community.

Specific duties include:

- * Heightening awareness of the Shop Local program through distribution of marketing materials to local businesses
- * Directly selling Shop Local packages by phone and in-person to businesses within the local community, with an emphasis on locally-owned establishments
- * Increasing the use of the site by assisting businesses in setting up profiles, posting offers and understanding the features of the site
- * Assist in the marketing of the site through attendance at business and community events
- * Coordinate sales efforts and work with Embarcadero Media sales team as a resource person on the Shop Local program

The Shop Local Sales Representative is supervised by the Multimedia Product Manager.

Compensation is an hourly rate plus commissions for all sales. Schedule is flexible, but the target number of hours per week is 25 (five hours per day.)

This position is currently considered temporary, exempt and non-benefited, but may evolve into a permanent position as the program develops.

To apply, submit a letter describing why this position is a good fit for your background and experience and a resume to Rachel Hatch, Multimedia Product Manager at rhatch@embarcaderopublishing.com

CALENDAR

Go to AlmanacNews.com/calendar for more calendar listings

The Bell Brothers The Bell Brothers perform country music as part of the Summer Concert Series 2011 on July 20, 6:30-8 p.m. Free. Fremont Park, University and Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park. Call 650-330-2200. menlopark.org

Brian Andres and the Afro-Cuban Cartel Brian Andres and the Afro-Cuban Cartel perform dance-friendly music July 27, 6:30-8 p.m. Free. Fremont Park, University and Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park. Call 650-330-2200. menlopark.org

Summer Pops Concert with Bella

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

Burglary report: Loss estimated at \$10,000 in break-in and theft of copper wire, Facebook Corp. at 312 and 314 Constitution Drive, July 6.

Grand theft report: Loss estimated at \$4,980 in theft of patio furniture from side yard, 1800 block of Santa Cruz Ave., July 11.

Fraud reports:

■ Loss of \$480 in check forgery, 1300 block of Carlton Ave., July 7.

■ Loss of \$728 in unauthorized use of credit card, main police station at 701 Laurel St., July 14.

Stolen vehicle report:

Tan 1997 Toyota Camry, 400 block of Burgess Drive, July 8.

Indecent exposure report:

Juvenile flashing passing cars and people, 700 block of Menlo Ave., July 11.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Commercial burglary report: Damage estimated at \$2,500 in cut window screens and pried off metal frame from window sill, Corte Madera Middle School at 4575 Alpine Road, July 11.

WEST MENLO PARK

Theft report: Purse containing pearl necklace, ID card, credit cards, checks and computer thumb drives, 200 block of Leland Ave., July 8.

ATHERTON

Theft report: Jewelry missing after residential relocation, 200 block of Park Lane, July 9.

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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.

Rescue plan for 'Granny' sounds solid

The future of "Granny," the centuries-old heritage oak tree that was threatened by crews installing a new Hetch Hetchy waterline, is now back in the hands of residents who mounted an 11th hour attack to get San Francisco water agency officials to save the tree.

But there is a catch, and it remains to be seen if neighbors will accept the deal offered by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The commission owns the right-of-way under

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

Granny and is running the \$4.6 billion project to upgrade the huge pipelines that bring water from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir at Yosemite to millions of Bay Area homes.

In a meeting with tree supporters and neighbors who live adjacent to the right-of-way where Granny has grown for hundreds of years, the commission generously said it would consider placing the pipeline in a tunnel far enough under the tree to escape the roots, which it fears could damage a line running at a shallower depth.

But before the commission will authorize what it said was an additional \$300,000 worth of work, neighbors must agree to form a 501c3 nonprofit agency to care for the tree.

"By creating an openly accessible area, we create a public benefit whereby anyone can enjoy the tree and space," said commission spokesman Tyrone Jue. He added that the \$300,000 "would be a gift of public funds to spend money on this tree to benefit the individual homeowner and adjacent neighbors."

According to Mr. Jue, the nonprofit would assume all liability for the tree and would have to allow public access, a stipulation that neighbors attending the meeting said might not fly.

"There's going to be pushback on this," said coalition member Ron van Thiel. "Definitely pushback."

A subsequent meeting was scheduled for July 13, but was postponed until this week due to scheduling problems.

Mary Ann Mullen, who also is a strong advocate for saving the tree, was unhappy that the commission was not interested in considering a proposal from the group's own arborist. That plan would involve digging a modified trench instead of a tunnel under the tree.

"The bottom line is that they just don't want to do this option," she said.

Mr. Jue told the Almanac that the commission ruled out the modified trench after deciding that it does not leave enough space between the tree roots and the pipe, which increases the risk of pipeline failure. The commission was also concerned that the beams needed to buttress the trench would endanger the tree's health and stability.

Unfortunately for the neighbors, they are not in charge of this massive, multi-billion dollar project. So while they may not like the exact solution offered by the commission, we hope they understand that creating a 501c3 nonprofit seems like a small price to pay for saving a tree that clearly was in the project right-of-way and could have been taken down in a minute.

In our opinion, this is a deal the neighbors should not refuse, if they want to save Granny and give her the space to live for many, many more years.

LETTERS
Our readers write

A good stimulus on emergency response

Editor:

I am grateful to the Almanac for its thorough coverage of recent emergency preparedness activities in Portola Valley.

The news articles and opinion editorial in the July 13 edition provide an excellent stimulus for residents living in the Woodside Fire Protection District to think anew about our emergency response capabilities.

The Almanac may have been a bit gentle with us. The fragile safety net we have in place consists of an all-volunteer nonprofit organization, an independent fire district, large pockets of unincorporated county, two municipalities, and law enforcement from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department. This makes our situation very different from a city such as Menlo Park, where the structure of public services makes a streamlined emergency response to disaster more likely.

There has not been much conversation in recent years among the agencies west of Interstate 280 to ensure that our disparate resources are efficiently deployed and that emergency response will

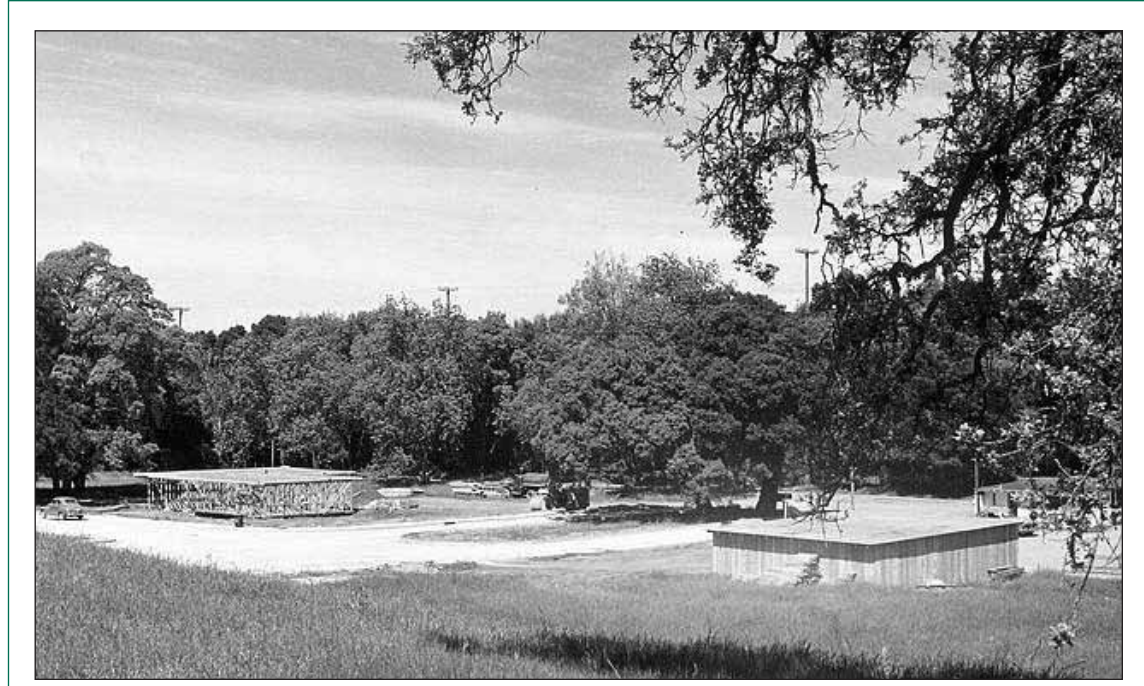


Photo courtesy of Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

In 1949 the Peninsula Housing Association began the development of Ladera as a cooperative community. Here the first structures rise on the corner of Aliso Way and La Cuesta Drive. The building on the right was the sales office.

be well coordinated and effective. Your commentary this past week provides a valuable reminder of the work we have to do.

Steve Toben
Member, Portola Valley
Town Council

Cargill site a bad place for housing

Editor:

As someone who used to work at Pacific Shores, I can tell you that the Cargill site is a bad place to put homes, schools and seniors.

Seaport Boulevard is lined with giant piles of metal and cement that are loaded on ships at the Port of Redwood City. All this activity generates dust and noise that would

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

impact the people in the housing that Cargill wants to build. Many Pacific Shores workers complain when our parked cars are coated with dust from the industrial activity next door.

Safety is also a major concern — as some of these companies have had major fires, with big plumes of toxic smoke. There have been at least two incidents (Sims in 2007 and Granite Rock a few months ago) in just the past five years alone.

Silicon Valley needs to be able to ship materials — we need metal recycling, cement and other building materials. Without those industries we would have a hard time building our cities.

Currently these port industries are far from housing. If housing is built next door, then those people will be exposed to that dust and other hazards and then they will be demanding to close down the industries. Just look to Cupertino, where residents who live next to a 100-year old cement plant are trying to shut it down. This problem is avoidable: Don't put housing next to heavy industry.

Matt Sweeney
Los Altos

'Granny' lovers should save some of her offspring

Editor:

I humbly suggest that those who love Granny, the Valley Oak in North Fair Oaks, search the area for her children and protect them, by staking and caging these young trees.

Perhaps both the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and

Hard to find a financial crisis in Atherton

By Malcolm Dudley

A few weeks ago in these pages, I urged the Atherton City Council to survey the community before firing all of our building and public works department personnel.

Many of these employees have worked diligently and loyally for many years. It is wrong to disrespect all that they have done for us. They care deeply about the town and all of the people they serve. The town is well served when its employees feel they are appreciated.

Good morale is very important, both for our employees and residents. It is not a good sign when so many of our senior staff people have recently left the town, including the police chief, city manager, assistant city manager, public works director, two building officials, and so on. I hear from many other Atherton residents who share this concern.

The firings seem to be motivated by the belief that Atherton faces severe financial difficulties. I have thoroughly researched our town finances covering the past several years. In spite of declining real estate values nationally, Atherton's secured property tax revenues have continued to increase each year since 2004-05, increasing \$557,677 between 2007-08 and 2010-11, a 3.18 percent annual rate. So revenue is not a problem.

Looking at operating costs, Atherton's expenditures have increased at a very modest

1.28 percent (\$543,465) between 2007-08 and 2010-11. Clearly these figures do not indicate any serious budget issues, either from the standpoint of revenues or expenditures.

Going even further back in the finances, and looking at each town department individually, you find that the largest percentage increase is in the city attorney's department, where expenditures increased at an average annual rate of 7.13 percent between 1999-00 and 2010-11, reflecting the level of town litigation. Increases in other departments were: administration, 4.64 percent; finance, 4.52 percent; police, 3.3 percent; public works, 4.27 percent; and building, 6.5 percent.

The building department should be funded through user fees, which should be set at a level that will fully fund this department's activities. Unfortunately current fees have not covered all of the department's expenditures. During the past three years the budgeted revenues totaled \$521,077 less than department expenditures. This number will be reduced as 2010-11 building department revenues will likely be approximately \$1,400,000 vs. a budgeted figure of \$1,005,637.

The town does receive substantial revenues from Holbrook-Palmer Park, an average of \$242,319 during the period 2002-03 through 2010-11. The town collects \$4,500 (for groups of 101 to 200) per event, when the rental includes both the Main House and the Pavilion. There is a supervisory cost of \$20 per hour during the

entire event, but the revenues are significantly greater.

Primarily because of the uncertainty concerning the location of a new library, with the possibility that it could be placed in the location of the Main House in Holbrook Palmer Park, the town has discontinued taking any new rental reservations. Therefore, the town will receive less rental income and the community will lose access to these facilities.

In addition to the financial considerations involved, there is the issue of fulfilling the wishes of Rita Corbett Evans, a very generous donor whose bequest was to fund an art center at the park. The town accepted her gift, which stipulated that an art center remain at the park. The original center has been rented out as a playschool. Subsequently the town provided an art center in the basement of the Main House. The town accepted her gift, and has a responsibility to honor her wishes. I would hope that the town keep the new library at its present location, retaining the park's Main House for community activities, the art center and as a source of future rental income.

Considering the overall financial health of Atherton, I hope the town will not fire all of the town's building department and public works department personnel. There are better ways to balance budgets. And I hope the town will not demolish the wonderful old Main House in Holbrook-Palmer Park.

Malcolm Dudley is a former Atherton councilman.



the neighbors would allow some of Granny's children to survive. Granny has become an isolated relic of a once vast oak woodland community.

I suggest that Granny is being viewed as a sculpture, not as a mother tree whose role is to produce more Valley Oaks. Too often young seedlings are mowed, sprayed or dug up because people think they're

not growing in the "right" place or people don't even know they're destroying a baby oak.

There are heritage tree ordinances, but little is done to encourage planting new Valley Oaks. Thus we have mostly lost the next generation of oaks. Consider that finding and protecting Granny's children would do more to help reestablish the oak woodland

community than would spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a questionable attempt to save one very beautiful specimen oak.

If some money is to be spent why not hire Acterra to grow Granny's acorns along with acorns from Valley Oaks nearby and plant them, where appropriate, along the aqueduct corridor or in the neighborhood. Acorns can be har-

vested starting in mid-September. Growing a new forest would be a fun and kind act ensuring future generations the opportunity to enjoy future "Grannies."

Acterra's native plant nursery currently has nice Valley Oaks ready for planting, so please consider contacting this helpful nonprofit group.

Chris Romano Woodside

Rising above the debt ceiling debate

By Rep. Anna G. Eshoo

On Aug. 2 the Treasury will no longer be able to pay our nation's obligations. Every responsible economist will tell you the same thing: If we fail to raise the debt ceiling, the result will be economic catastrophe.

Here are some facts.

Without immediate action to raise the debt ceiling, the government will be forced to delay payments on federal obligations we already owe. It means failing to pay our troops, delaying Social Security checks, and issuing IOUs instead of Medicare payments to hospitals and doctors. Default would impact 70 million Americans, and it would send a signal to the world that the U.S. Treasury bond is no longer the world's most reliable investment, endangering the savings of every American.

President Ronald Reagan put it best in 1983: "The full consequences of a default — or even the serious prospect of default — by the United States are impossible to predict and awesome to contemplate. Denigration

of the full faith and credit of the United States would have substantial effects on the domestic financial markets and the value of the dollar in exchange markets. The Nation can ill afford to allow such a result."



Raising the debt ceiling is about making good on our past obligations, paying the expenses we've already incurred. It's why Congress adjusted the debt ceiling 17 times under President Reagan; four times under President George H.W. Bush; eight times under President Clinton; seven times under President George W. Bush; and three times under President Obama.

Coupled with the debt ceiling is addressing the nation's debt and deficit, which each of us is justifiably concerned about. They weigh heavily on our collective well-being, and if left unaddressed, will dim the promise of America for us and for future generations. I'm committed to a balanced, bipartisan approach to deficit reduction. It should be fair to the middle class and retirees, and it should spur economic growth. It must cut unsustainable spending and close

corporate loopholes, end subsidies and produce some revenue.

So, how did we get here?

Over the past decade, Congress passed two rounds of Bush tax cuts costing \$1 trillion, and we're waging wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that have already cost \$2 trillion. All were deficit-financed, i.e., charged to the national credit card. When I first came to Congress in 1993, we passed the Deficit Reduction Act. The plan eliminated the deficit and paved the way for a decade of surpluses and economic prosperity, cutting spending and raising revenue. We balanced our books then, and we can do it again.

So, what should we do?

I recently surveyed my constituents about how best to cut spending. Their answers were more insightful than a lot of what I hear politicians saying. Here's what they suggested:

■ Close tax loopholes and eliminate subsidies: We need to close loopholes that encourage companies to ship jobs overseas and eliminate subsidies for agriculture and oil companies.

■ Military spending: According to a report by the Government Accountability Office, the Department of Defense spends \$249 billion on programs that are wasteful

and inefficient every year.

■ Bush tax cuts: Borrowing trillions of dollars to pay for a tax cut for the top 2 percent of Americans has never made sense to me. They have proven to cost us mightily and have not fulfilled the original purpose of creating jobs.

Medicare has serious problems and it's essential to "bend the curve" of spending. But finding cost savings in the system is different from dismantling the guarantee of healthcare coverage for 80,000 seniors in my district. Social Security's trust fund can be extended and strengthened as it has been many times in the past. But putting these programs on the chopping block to appease those obstructing a debt ceiling extension is unacceptable. Reform them, and save money.

Ensuring that our country pays its bills isn't a gift to President Obama or an endorsement of his agenda. It's a nonpartisan, patriotic responsibility shared by everyone in Congress. My hope is that in the days ahead, the needs of our country will prevail over parties and ideology.

I refuse to accept that my America will be a deadbeat nation.

Anna G. Eshoo represents the 14th District in Congress.

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